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Barriers to Accessing University in Coastal Communities:

A qualitative study exploring why young people living along the North Yorkshire Coast are underrepresented in Britain's Higher Education institutions

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is their own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the under-representation of the North Yorkshire coastal region's young people within higher education institutions using the social theories of Bourdieu. Many of the current strategies or interventions aimed at widening participation have been created under the falsehood of 'raising aspirations', a theme which is often present in social and political discourse. This thesis argues focus should be shifted from raising aspirations and instead should focus on the *capabilities* of the under-represented groups. Furthermore, arguing that the use of Sen's (1992) capability approach is a better way of understanding persistent under-representation in low participating communities. A transformational qualitative approach was utilised, employing semi-structured interviews with three different categories of participants: (i) further education students, (ii) teachers and (iii) policy makers/influencers. Students were attending a further education course at one of two institutions based within the under-represented area. Subsequent data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis to unearth common responses of participants. The findings reaffirm previous findings from the literature which argue that more focus is needed on making higher education more normalised within the under-represented areas. Additionally, it is argued that improvements to provision are also required to avoid what Bourdieu defines as doxic fantasy (unrealistic hopes/dreams). Such provisions include more early contact with higher education from compulsory schooling, more varied course options within the under-represented area, in addition to further investment toward other social arrangements.

Contents

Abbreviations

UK: United Kingdom

SES: Socio-economic Status

WP: Widening Participation

GOV: Government

CCT: Compulsory Competitive Tendering

BSA: British Sociological Association

HESA: Higher Education Statistics Agency

Part 1: Introduction

Chapter 1: Introduction

Addressing issues relating to higher education has been, and still is, a key tenet of UK government policy and its subsequent populist discourse. As such, when looking at the quantitative statistics for the UK regarding young people's higher education participation, positive efforts have been made. In England, higher education participation by young people was around 15% in 1988 (Chowdry et al. 2010; Bathmaker, Ingram and Waller, 2013), however, by 2011 that statistic rose dramatically to 47% (Department for Business, Information and Skills, 2012). Without question, such a rise in participation can, and should, be seen as positive, yet, what it does not show is under-representation from certain areas or sub-areas of the country. As such, this thesis aims to better understand why young people from the North Yorkshire coast are under-represented in the UK's higher education institutions. Furthermore, another aim is to explore why individuals are under-represented as a whole within higher education, which then in turn, can be applied to other research throughout the country in pursuit of social justice for under-represented groups.

Framing the Topic Area: Higher Education and Under-representation

Many notable academics have discussed under-representation in higher education including Hart (2016), Skeggs (2005), Sen (1992), Brown (2011; 2013), Bourdieu and Passeron (2000) and Bourdieu (1977, 1990, 1993, 1997). Moreover, within such academic explorations of the issue, many approaches have been undertaken with one predominant approach being a class-based analysis. Specifically, it is suggested that class is an important attribute toward the current under-representation in higher education (Loveday, 2015; Web et al. 2017; Grant, 2017). Intertwined with class is Bourdieu's (1997) predispositions which is the tendencies of individuals from similar socio-cultural spheres. Bourdieu gives the example of the working-class who, as their class suggests, typically go straight into low-level paid employment upon leaving compulsory education (Bourdieu, 1997). Conversely, middle-class groups would likely have predispositions more geared toward furthering their education with intentional and strategic decisions. This clash of predispositions has led to under-representation of the working-class in higher education, stemming from a variety of issues including a distinct incompatibility of values, beliefs, and in cultural terms, ways of thinking and behaving (Croll and Attwood, 2013).

Aspirations have also been given extensive focus when assessing the under-representation of groups within higher education (see Zipin et al. 2015; Gale and Parker, 2015), both within academic papers and within government policy and discourse itself. Central government has often presented low aspirations as being a main issue with working-class under-representation in higher education (Cameron, 2012). Moreover, various documents including *The Future of Higher Education*

(DfES, 2003) have been released which specifically aim to raise the aspirations of under-represented groups. However, it is suggested that central government's understanding of aspirations is too simplistic, which narrows the value of non-academic aspirations (Hart, 2016). The need to approach higher education under-representation in a critical and somewhat theoretical manner is arguably an important task to assist with challenging common political narrative surrounding the social issue. Approaching the issue through a critical lens arguably ensures sufficient scrutiny of the current methods of addressing an important issue within education, especially when it is in the interest of dominated groups who deserve empowerment through social justice.

Research Question

The question which is aimed to be answered from the research is: Are there any barriers to higher education participation for the young people of the North Yorkshire coast, and if so, what are the best methods of increasing levels of participation in the area? Other aims of the study include:

- To better understand how social factors influence chances of higher education participation.
- To further the understanding of the young people's opinions and emotions toward higher education and education as a whole.
- To provide a voice for under-represented groups along the North Yorkshire coast.

Key Terms Used in the Study

There are many terms used within this research. The most obvious and frequent one is under-representation and simply means that a particular social group (i.e. ethnic group, social class, gender) are not seen within a certain environment as often as other social groups are. Another term is aspirations which is a desired goal or ambition for and individual or group's desired future selves (Zipin et al. 2015). Adding to this, Bourdieu's *Habitus* is also used frequently and encompasses the ways an individual chooses to think, feel and behave whilst also adopting lived histories of similar social groups as well as their own biographies (Loveday, 2015, Grenfell, 2010; Moore, 2010).

Why Explore Under-representation of People from Coastal Communities in Higher Education?

Although justification should not be necessary when exploring any form of under-representation, some reasons will be presented. Often, other forms of under-representation in higher education are given preference, like for instance, ethnicity (Wakeling, 2009; Stockfelt, 2018; Arora, 2018). Other forms which are often researched include gendered under-representation (Myers and Griffin, 2018), Class (Crozier, Reay and Clayton, 2019) and Disability (Rooney, 2019). Additionally, such forms of under-representation are often heard in political discourse and, as such, arguably receive much

government funding to help combat the issue, one example being funding the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (OfS, 2020) whom funded this research project with the aim of generating methods by which, they could increase higher education participation rates along the North Yorkshire coast.

The above explanations regarding the frequency of exploration through ethnic, class only or disabled lenses serve to explain why choosing to focus on a geographical location, paired with social class is warranted. Furthermore, choosing to focus on the geographical location also serves to show the originality of the approach, arguably making positive strides for bestowing social justice upon the under-represented young people of the North Yorkshire coast. Such originality would also assist with expanding the knowledge of both under-representation in higher education as well as on a broader theoretical level, meaning future research may benefit from the findings of this research, the produced data and subsequent thesis. It is clear from The Office for Student's POLAR4 data, that there is less young higher education participation along the North Yorkshire coast when compared to other areas of the county and most of the UK itself (OfS, 2018).

Structure of the Thesis

The focus of this thesis is to better understand why young people who live along the North Yorkshire coast are deciding, or feel like they cannot, participate in higher education. In this manner, it is asked if participation rates rise nationally, why do young people from certain pockets of the country not contribute to the growing numbers? What resources are at their disposal? Is the provision right? What barriers are the young people facing structurally, culturally or logistically? Qualitative data is collected from young people, teachers and policy influencers to give their narrative surrounding the higher education situation within the area. Bourdieu's "thinking tools" are used to examine processes of class-based habitus, familial habitus and aspirations.

The structure of this thesis begins with an extensive excursion of the current literature available on the topic including overall under-representation, class-based issues as well as theoretical arguments. Within this section, there is also some areas which focus on political ideology, views, mis/understanding. Some policy documents are also discussed with the aim of either justifying or challenging some of the core opinions which reside within the justification of the documents; more often challenging some of the key statements made within the documents using academic research and rationale. In addition, some existing initiatives and projects are discussed from the literature. The methodology is then explained which used a qualitative approach toward data collection as well as a transformative interpretivist paradigm, paired with an idiographic approach towards data collection. Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary form of data

collection. Moving from the methodology, a discussion of the findings is presented, focusing on themes which emerged from the participants' responses then comparing these themes back to existing bodies of knowledge. Within the discussion, numerous hypothetical approaches toward raising the participation rates along the North Yorkshire coast are presented which are justified by existing literature, social theory and the data collected from participants involved in this research. The thesis will end with a conclusion of the overall comments based on the findings of the research which is structured upon Bourdieu's theoretical understanding of under-representation.

Part 2: Literature Review

Chapter 2: A Theoretical and Exploratory Search of the Literature

Introduction

The focus of this chapter is to explore the current literature, government policies and social theory relating to higher education under-representation. Initially, an overview of higher education under-representation will be presented that has been discussed in existing literature. Discussions will include variations of under-representation (i.e. ethnicity, class, gender) then move onto political discourse and policies. Within the political discussion various topics are discussed. First, widening participation as a theme within political policy and rhetoric is framed, which links into policies developed to increase participation from widening participation students. Next, a number of policies are discussed, the first being the education action zones under New Labour and the 'third way', including what it is, and some argued flaws. The second political literature discussed is *The Future of Higher Education* (DfES, 2003) White Paper which focuses on how it portrays central government's focus on raising aspirations of under-represented groups, and why this may be the wrong perspective to have.

The second section will give focus to social theory, specifically utilising the 'thinking tools' of Bourdieu to unpack social, cultural and political issues relating to higher education under-representation. As such, *Habitus* is a key tool used to unpack issues relating to class-based habitus, familial habitus and shared/social habitus (Bourdieu, 1992). Moreover, through Bourdieu's tools, aspirations are also discussed through a critical analysis comparing habitual norms of aspirations and Bourdieu's *Doxa* aspirational fantasy, links up aspirations to class-based predispositions and dismissals. The final section of this chapter focuses on current approaches to improving higher education participation rates within the literature. The first is centred around changing how higher education institutions operate including adaptations to teaching, learning and administrative methods. The second unpacks higher education's cultural unfamiliarity, specifically, how under-represented groups can gain cultural capital and obtain meaningful experiences with higher education prior to entry age. The final initiative discussed is a more theoretical approach, first presented by Sen (1992) and aims to shift focus away from the individual and onto structural influences and barriers. Sen defined this as the *Capability approach* (Sen, 1992) and involves assessing the socio-structural and socio-political climate an individual must negotiate to succeed rather than internalised aspirations and abilities (Sem, 1992; Campbell and McKendrick, 2017).

There have been various issues discussed in academic research associated with living in rural or working-class communities in the UK. Some examples of such issues discussed include transport and fuel poverty (Mattioli, Lucas and Marsden, 2017), economic and social immobility (Grant, 2017)

and unequitable health provision (Smith, Humphreys and Wilson, 2008). In addition, there has been a breadth of academic research into Working-Class educational experiences, exploring issues relating to things such as working-class education provision, links between economic affluence and academic success and working-class experiences in higher education. However, sociological exploration is seldom done on a regional specific area, especially when analysing Higher Education participation. Relating to higher education participation, the Office for Students collected quantitative data comparing higher education participation of young people (aged 18-19) across the United Kingdom which revealed a significant under-representation along the North Yorkshire coastal communities (OfS, 2018).

To define the differences of higher education participation, the Office for Students (OfS) created the 5 quintiles, defining 5 as indicative of high levels of participation down to 1 which indicated low levels of participation. The OfS POLAR4 data (OfS, 2018) suggests that there is a significant dip in higher education participation rates along the North Yorkshire coastal communities when compared to other areas of North Yorkshire. For example, when a comparison is made between a coastal town of North Yorkshire and York, the participation rates are substantially different, with York areas mostly having high levels of higher education participation, whilst the coastal town's areas predominantly reside in the lower tiers of participation rates. Furthermore, other areas along the North Yorkshire coastline have similar deficits of higher education participation to those of Scarborough, like for instance, Whitby which predominantly resides in quintile 1 with an average of 29.2% higher education participation rate. Overall, from the POLAR4 data it is evident that there arguably must be a socio-cultural or logistical reason for the under-representation of young people living along the North Yorkshire coast in Higher education. Additionally, for the purposes of this research it is important to first understand under-representation in Higher education on a broader level.

Under-representation in Higher Education: An Overview

Many forms of under-representation are present in Higher Education. Some forms discussed in recent academic research include ethnic minority participation in higher education (Archer, 2007), gendered under-representation as well as Working-Class under-representation (Campbell and McKendrick, 2017). Campbell and McKendrick (2017) argue that there is a gap between participation when comparing the lower Socio-Economic Status (SES) students to their middle-class higher SES counterparts, something which is also argued by Baird, Rose and McWhirter (2012). Furthermore, it is argued that middle-class students in Higher education are more likely to have made active decisions on which institution to attend, whereas their working-class peers would have more likely

to have been torn between attending higher education at all (ibid, 2012). This difference in Higher education decision making is argued to be influenced by different social and cultural environments and furthermore, is argued as being a result of completely different socialisation processes (Friedman, O'Brien and Laurison, 2016). Not only do Friedman, O'Brien and Laurison argue socialisation plays a significant role in higher education participation, but they also suggest that middle-class individuals possess more resources. They argue that this means enrolment and subsequent success in higher education is a more feasible route to take, something which is repeatedly argued by other academics (see Lareau, 2015; Zipin et al. 2015).

Other forms of under-representation include a lack of ethnic diversity in higher education institutions. Despite an increase in political rhetoric regarding a more 'diverse' student population, there is still under-representation of minority ethnic groups in higher education (Archer, 2007). Such rhetoric boasts more support for ethnic groups to aid their academic progression into higher education but currently, although these individuals have more access, they still lack the confidence to act on opportunity. Furthermore, Archer (2007) suggests that the reason ethnic minority groups poses negative feelings toward higher education are due to their inferior sense of entitlement and subsequent lack of belonging. Such statements could arguably be made based on the middle-class monopoly on higher education which is frequently described as being reinforced through establishing middle-class norms, whilst also favouring middle-class attitudes toward education and the experiences it deems more beneficial. To contrast, Croll and Attwood (2013) argue that to create a more level playing field in higher education, changing established norms would not be sufficient in accounting for feelings of inadequacy. Instead, they argue that to attain a sense of belonging, such under-represented groups need to develop intentions of participating in higher education earlier in life, in addition to a greater focus on increasing compulsory school level achievement. Croll and Attwood's (2013) argument suggests that although higher education institutions can adapt higher education expectations and customs to better account for other biographies, a more important factor is developing better compulsory school level information on higher education, and the subsequent desires for higher education participation it would potentially create amongst ethnic minority groups. It is arguably correct to acknowledge the importance of central government when the importance of compulsory school level achievement and structure is a key point of interest in Widening Participation (WP) in higher education.

In recent years, WP has been a significant point of discussion within central government. Higher education 'diversity' has become increasingly commonplace in political rhetoric, noting the importance of raising young people's aspirations; additionally, it was also mentioned in a speech by Prime Minister David Cameron who discussed the "aspiration nation" (Cameron, 2012). However,

importantly Cameron focuses the aspiration nation on unemployment, discussing the need to fill labour gaps in the UK market, promising economic prosperity. This arguably serves as an example of the aspirational expectations of central government, and furthermore, illustrates the lack of acknowledgement of varied aspiration amongst the lower classes, corroding any value toward wider aspirations. Hart (2016) argues that this narrowing of aspirational value is evidence of a type of confusion within central government about the complexity and multi-dimensionality associated with aspirations, especially when WP is discussed. Hart further argues that central governments priority of raising aspirations is misguided and suggests that their focus should reside in how disadvantaged groups are capable to *act* on their aspirations. However, raising the aspirations of lower-classes and disadvantaged groups has not been a new goal for central government (DfES, 2003; Bourdieu and Passeron, 2000).

Tony Blair became prime minister of Britain in May 1997. Upon taking office, Blair promised a new approach to political practice which he called New Labour (Power et al. 2004). Along with New Labour, the 'third-way' of political thinking was also introduced which was said to end the dualistic nature of current political practice, left or right, often based on public or private based political practice (ibid, 2004). The education action zones policy was a forerunner of the third way's public based delivery of services.

Education action zones were implemented as a way of primarily generating partnerships between schools and other local interests within the zone such as businesses (GOV, 2005). These partnerships were said to allow more flexibility to create new and innovative educational strategies that would benefit both the pupils/schools themselves and the local community it resides within (Ibid, 2005). The partnerships created were also suggested as being a way to allow more strategies to be created that would inspire pupils within the zone, enhancing their learning attainment and subsequent capacity to aspire (Power et al. 2004). The first round of 25 education action zones were introduced between 1998 and 1999, with the second round of 48 zones being introduced between the end of 1999 and early 2000 (Ibid, 2004). A typical zone was said to have around 20 to 25 schools, within that would typically be 3-4 secondary schools and the rest being feeder primary schools for those secondary schools. Allocation of zones were given through a competitive bidding process. The zones themselves were governed by a statutory forum which monitored progress, formulated strategies and adapted practice if needed (Ibid, 2004). Moreover, each forum had a budget of £750,000 per annum over the 3 to 5-year plan to implement strategies, with and extra £250,000 expected from 'kind' sources including free labour (volunteering) and helping contributions from organisations and sponsors (Ibid, 2004). Importantly, a primary goal for the education action zones was to tackle inequality within education and create a more level playing field (Reid and Brain,

2003). Worth noting is that the policies which are discussed within this section are not discussed in detail as would be the typical approach for analysing the documents but are discussed more broadly as an example of the trends seen in modern political policy change and implementation. Specifically, they are discussed to emphasise and showcase how central government has often placed the responsibility of upward social mobility at the feet of the working-class themselves, making 'failure' to participate in higher education an individual failure rather than a structural and social failure. Furthermore, how some changes to government policy surrounding funding for higher education could arguably negatively impact working-class participation.

Overall, the education action zones were argued as failing to deliver on their initial promises and struck a significant blow for the 'third way' (Reid and Brain, 2003). Specifically, Reid and Brain (2003) argue that the education action zone policy was riddled with impacting paradoxes which led to significant tension. For example, Riley and Watling (1999) discuss how because the policy never explicitly stated a goal such as raising levels of attainment, inclusion or innovation, but instead tried to mix more than one together, it created a miscommunication and kind of confusion within operational implementation. Adding to this, it is argued that another significant tension lay in the paradox of attainment and inclusion (Reid and Brain, 2003). For example, it is argued that the zones were, on one hand, used as a tool to drive educational performance, whilst on the other, used as a tool to combat inequality in education. Reid and Brain (2003) suggest that when driving for educational excellence, competition is inevitable, hence, inequalities will begin to surface which contradicts one of the many intertwined goals of the education action zone policy. In this manner, central government also developed policies to tackle issues within higher education.

The publication of the government's white paper *The Future of Higher Education* (DfES, 2003) frequently discussed "fair access" into higher education for groups of people who typically did not participate in higher education such as lower SES groups, certain ethnic groups as well as disabled individuals. The white paper also discussed the need of "raising aspirations" amongst the under-represented groups, quoting Sir Howard Newby who argues that to gain more WP students, aspirations for higher education participation need to be engrained into young people from an earlier, school level age (DfES, 2003). In contrast, it is frequently argued (see Allen and Hollingworth, 2013; Reay, David and Ball, 2005; Bourdieu and Passeron, 2000) that the notion of raising aspirations is used as a diversionary measure in political discourse to deter focus from increasing levels of social inequality and downward social mobility (Hart, 2016). Furthermore, using aspirations in political discourse could arguably be seen as a more economically safe alternative when comparison is made with creating more opportunity for disadvantaged groups to act on their aspirations. Creating and/or

promoting aspirational development whilst neglecting to provide adequate opportunity, therefore, has been seen as an inherent flaw in the 'poverty of aspirations' thesis (Zipin et al. 2015; Campbell and McKendrick, 2017; Spohrer, 2015). Zipin et al. (2015, p. 241) discuss such investment in aspirations combined with lack of opportunity is responsible for "a time of cruel optimism". Many notable sociologists including Bourdieu and Passeron (2000), Allen and Hollingworth (2013) and Skeggs (2005) have all acknowledged the reproduction and reinforcement of class traditions within education despite political rhetoric boasting WP as an increased area of policy influence, and in turn, positive social development. Therefore, if there has been significant political development on WP, why is there still what Campbell and McKendrick (2017, p. 121) define as a "persistent under-representation" of young people in higher education from rural and deprived communities in the UK?

More recently than the preceding documents discussed, central government published their *Securing a Sustainable Future for Higher Education* document, better known as the Browne report (2010). This report was aimed at assessing the higher education finance and funding systems to ensure it was efficient, fair and equitable for all regardless of biography, class, gender, (dis)ability or whether a student was full or part-time (Browne, 2010). The report boasts numerous positive developments made to the higher education system by central government including an increased percentage of the young population participating when compared to the past. However, linking to austerity measures, the report concludes by discussing reductions in public investment toward higher education but suggests this was offset and made whole by successful private investment (Browne, 2010). Furthermore, the report suggests that the current finance system is unsustainable in terms of economic impacts to public funds and argues that by adopting some of the recommendations within the report, public investment could be reduced. It simultaneously suggests that this reduction in public investment would allow room for private investment to grow and, in turn, boost higher education quality, accessibility and overall student places available by up to 10% (Browne, 2010, p. 56).

One significant theme within the Browne Report (2010) is a shift from a grant heavy system, to one which is based upon a loan-based system. Although switching to loans would be positive for long-term public interests financially, it could be argued that moving to a repayment focused system isolates groups with less economic capital like the working-class. For example, Lehmann (2013) suggests that working-class groups place monetary impacts at the heart of many decisions. Thus, it could be said that framing higher education participation around loan-based debt could hold the potential for misunderstanding amongst poorer groups, especially when limited

economic capital is paired with little or no cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977) relating to higher education.

Theoretical Examination: Class Conflicts and 'Rules'

In the words of the late Pierre Bourdieu (1977), agency cannot exist in a vacuum. This simple statement vaguely reflects the complexity of the social sphere an individual must negotiate to gain capital, and in turn, develop, grow and flourish in modern society. With this in mind, to gain a more thorough understanding of the barriers the North Yorkshire coastal young community face when attempting to access higher education, a more comprehensive excursion of the theoretical explanations is required. Therefore, Bourdieu's theoretical narrative and dissection of society and its influences will be used as a framework for theoretical discussion. Bourdieu suggests that an individual is subjected to external social and cultural influences from birth, meaning choices and opportunities cannot be made or given without some form of negotiation (Bourdieu, 1977). This intersection between choices and societal influence is specifically relevant for understanding why there is consistent under-representation of specific groups in higher education. The abstract thoughts of Bourdieu, whilst somewhat puzzling, dissect the cogs of society in an attempt to underpin relationships through what he calls his "thinking tools" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1989, p. 50). These 'tools' are based on a multi-dimensional analysis of society which focus on three aspects: *habitus*, *field* and *capital* (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1989; Grenfell, 2010). These tools are useful skeletal frameworks for understanding the complex social structure which influences choice and opportunity, ultimately reinforcing norms whilst creating conformity and resistance. Specifically, this conformity is widely discussed through Bourdieu's thinking tool, habitus, when discussing under-representation in higher education.

The theoretical concept of habitus was created by Bourdieu (1977) to explain our everyday actions, ways of thinking and feelings (Grenfell, 2010). Additionally, it also incorporates how we embody our history, and how we utilise our history in our present situations and, in turn, make decisions to act within a given social environment (Grenfell, 2010). Simply, habitus is how an individual chooses to act in a social setting or how they choose what path to take, whilst incorporating both their heritage and life history. However, in addition to habitus, Bourdieu argues an individual's *capital* (e.g. economic, cultural, and physical) and the social environment (*field*) they are in also play an important role in outcomes and expectations. This link between habitus and field is what Bourdieu (1993, p. 76) defines as an "unconscious relationship". Overall, when evaluations on higher education are made using these three thinking tools, it has been argued that higher

education has reinforced middle-class norms (Loveday, 2015), or what Bourdieu (1990, p. 190) defines as "enduring dispositions".

Class differences in higher education has been noted by many academics including Loveday (2015), James, Busher and Suttill (2015), Web et al. (2017) and Grant (2017). It is argued that rather than academic routes being culturally diverse, fair and neutral, the reality is that academic environments are engrained with cultural and class-based prejudice, seldom maintaining a level playing field (Wilkins and Burke, 2015). As a result, unless aspiring students are willing to adapt their ideals and learning to coincide with the middle-class 'rules', as Bourdieu would describe it, they will rarely be legitimated and/or rewarded for their efforts (Wilkins and Burke, 2015). In relation, Bourdieu (1997) argues that adaptation to higher education practices is a more complex process in the case of working-class individuals as their cultural norms do not mirror the preferred ones of higher education for middle-class individuals such adaptation is done to a much smaller extent as the cultural values and norms which higher education demands, middle-class individuals already possess. Reay (2001) discusses that such conflict of class-based values creates apprehension of higher education enrolment amongst the working-class as a result of both their academic desires paired with a traditionally paid-work focused social group. From this, Bourdieu argues that middle-class individuals have a predisposition toward higher education since their socialisation is more geared toward a progression of their professional life, developing skills and traits desirable for higher education institution acceptance from an early age (Moore, 2010). As for the residents of the North Yorkshire coast, the above arguments are particularly relevant considering the coastal towns and areas rank higher for levels of deprivation than other areas of North Yorkshire further inland (York Council, 2017).

This conflict between classes in higher education has been described as a hierarchy of class values (Lehmann, 2013); such conflict could arguably be attributed to Bourdieu's *Habitus-Field* relationship. Bourdieu frequently used the notion of a 'game' to explain the habitus-field relationship (see Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Put simply, a given social environment has 'rules' which the player (individual) must follow and accept to flourish in that environment. From this, if a higher education institution is the social environment, the 'rules' would be the institutions middle-class outlook on academic success, and as such, rules which also alienate and handicap working-class individuals. Furthermore, the middle-class rules can be technical, such as knowledge of registration or course selection, or cultural aspects, including how a student is expected to behave or dress (Lehmann, 2013). This alienation of working-class values and norms may add to the answer of why working-class individuals from certain areas are under-represented in higher education, as consciously deciding to enter such a value incompatible environment may not appeal to their

traditional working-class mentality, often developed through familial habitus. Furthermore, this value incompatibility may lead to an overall negative or even hostile view of higher education amongst the working-class as they seldom envision any reasonable return on their investment. Lehmann (2013) does argue that the working-class can succeed in the middle-class environment of higher education, but many adaptations to social and cultural values are needing to gain successful outcomes. Moreover, such adaptations also require a disconnection of working-class roots, including dissolving old relationships and sacrificing positive views of working-class norms (Lehmann, 2013).

Aspirations: Doxa Fantasy, Habitual Conformity and Hysteresis

Doxa Fantasy

From the literature, a frequent explanation of higher education under-representation has been attributed to differences. Differences of values, interests, and of futures all contributing to the reasons why working-class individuals are under-represented in higher education; such arguments can also be drawn for geographical under-representation. These differences are often reinforced and universalised according to Bourdieu (1992), creating *doxic aspirations* amongst the lower tiers of society. Doxic aspirations are based on meritocratic discourse and practices which are transmitted across society with powerful effect in everyday social settings (Zipin et al. 2015). Furthermore, doxic logic holds power which is dominated and held by more privileged members of society (such as the higher classes and politicians), which in turn, is arguably used as a diversionary measure to mask structural influences held over less powerful members of society. As such, Bourdieu (1992) argues that doxic logics carry forms of symbolic violence which are used to normalise the pathways of success held by individuals who hold more powerful positions in society (Zipin et al. 2015). The normalisation of privileged pathways and attitudes creates an "uncontested acceptance of the daily lifeworld" according to Bourdieu (1992, p. 73-74), meaning that less powerful members of society accept their social position without questioning their overall position within societies formation, thus, acting as a powerful form of conservatism.

Doxic logic, therefore, is often expressed through young peoples' aspirational responses to education and more generalised life goals. Such responses include working-class aspirations regarding career goals which are often embedded with themes of upward social mobility. One participant in a study conducted by Zipin et al. (2015) discusses they wanted to undertake studies in nursing; when asked why they wanted to undertake that field of study, they referred to wanting to realise the dreams of their immigrant grandmother, again referring to acts which would create more desirable futures. Zipin et al.'s (2015) participant suggested that they had made realistic subject choices from compulsory school level education to make progress toward realising their dreams.

However, Weis (1990) suggests that such conscious and realistic decisions are seldom made when attempting to realise doxic aspirations. Instead, Weis argues that doxic aspirations are often fantasy themed dreams in hope of more accumulated economic, cultural and social capitals, with little effort in consciously making realistic decisions which will benefit and build toward their desired outcomes. Such examples here may include unrealistic career ambitions to become a worldwide music artist or a professional football player. In both examples, the individual would have dreams of 'making it' in spite of the overwhelming odds stacked against them. In reality, the musician will most likely not be discovered, the football player will not be picked to play for a professional club, but their doxic logics will continue to make them believe that it can or will happen someday (Zipin et al. 2015). This unrealistic aspirational thought process is partly contributed by a lack of habitus inspired pathways of social opportunity (Zipin et al. 2015), something which Weis (1990) based her 'Working class without work' book on.

Weis (1990) discovered that in working-class areas which had undergone deindustrialisation, a lack of habitus-based choices such as factory work lead young people to create unrealistic doxic aspirations of wanting to undertake desirable positions within society, such by becoming a medical practitioner or wanting to work in law for example. However, Weis also acknowledged that whilst they may have desires of upward social mobility, they lacked the fundamental knowledge and opportunity to make rational choices which would make their aspirations a reality. Such disconnect between doxic aspirations and realistic choices often leads to failed realisation, subsequently causing self-excusing and self-esteem maintenance themed rationalisations. Such self-excusing often includes repeated responses like 'I just don't think I was smart enough' or may be based on external excuses like 'I would have done better but I didn't have the time because of other things going on in my life'. By compromising their desired futures, they subconsciously comply with their position within society. Furthermore, they arguably reinforce their dominated and often restricted position in relation to the more powerfully positioned individuals of society, becoming complicit with the symbolic violence present in doxic logics (Zipin et al. 2015; Weis, 1990; Bourdieu, 1992).

Overall, doxic logics and aspirations are argued as being grounded in ideological assumptions which are mediated and reinforced by populist discourse – in cinema, radio, television and within politics itself. Such mediations are implemented to create an ethical framework of 'work hard and you will succeed', which in its simplest form, still neglects to acknowledge the significance of powerful positions and the influence of social-structural factors (Loveday, 2015). Moreover, doxic aspirations seldom are turned into reality through conscious and realistic choices, arguably due to the incoherent and ill-informed knowledge base which resides in the mindset of the most dominated within society, thus, creating a complacency of social positioning (Bourdieu, 1977). Such

complacency arguably can also be seen in the lack of ambition to participate in higher education, instead relying on doxic aspirations to gain better futures, often leading to habitual acceptance of one's place in the social sphere they reside in. As such, unless an individual's doxic aspiration is based upon something which may require a higher education qualification, they arguably may not perceive higher education as a relevant choice post-18.

Habitual Norms of Aspiration

Throughout the literature on under-representation in higher education, habitual norms have become a common aspect of discussion. Habitual norms are the idea of an agent choosing a more easily negotiable pathway of personal development whilst compromising their desired futures, conforming to their habitual norms in the process (Bourdieu, 1977)**.** For example, an individual may want to become an English teacher, and may even take steps towards realising their desired future, however, they would also have a more 'realistic' pathway in mind which would conform to their habituated aspirational norms, such as a secondary plan to become a hairdresser. It is argued that although aspirations are often accredited as being individualistic choices, often developed by self-ambition, aspirations need to be understood as being culturally resourced, stemming from varied social-cultural sources (Gale and Parker, 2015). Bourdieu argues that there is an overall dismissal of the social-structural influences on aspirations, seldom acknowledging the importance of varied resources deemed vital for higher education participation and subsequent success (Zipin et al. 2015). Furthermore, he also suggests that whilst economic health is often understood as being a contributing factor for under-representation in society, other aspects such as cultural capital often escape such acknowledgement. This lack of social awareness on the importance of cultural capital could arguably be one piece of the puzzle to answer why young people in rural/isolated areas rely on habitual aspirations for their futures.

It is suggested that there is a present conflict between doxic and habitual aspirations (Zipin et al. 2015). Both Gale and Parker (2015) and Zipin et al. (2015) discuss that within the last 40 years, various social-political changes have led to habitus altering. Such changes include a lean toward globalised privatisation, thus meaning smaller government and corporate commitment to regions in the UK which rely on working-class labour as a means of employment. This distruction of traditional pathways into paid-work through deindustrialisation has been argued to cause shock due to the lost viability of pursuing family-based dispositions, conditioned over generations. One such example of social-political change was Margaret Thatcher's Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT), developed throughout the 1980's, which opened up public interests to the private market (Askegaard, 2015). Reasoning for such privatisation by the Conservative party was centred on the idea that if

privatisation could lead to higher quality services for the public, then it would be more beneficial to everyone. However, the privatisation of government owned industries such as railways, coal mining and shipyards lead to a disconnect between the viable futures of the young generation when compared to generations prior. This diversion from standard life practice resulted in downward social mobility for the working-class, leaving them to clutch on to doxic logics. Such drastic social changes to habitual norms, paired with a time-lag response to habitual reformation is what Bourdieu (1984, p.142) calls *Hysteresis*.

Specifically, when Bourdieu discusses hysteresis, the two elements which are out of sync are *field* and *habitus*. Hysteresis occurs when the social field which an agent resides in does not match their habitus forming dispositions. This dislocation of field and habitus, or the idea of a working-class without work, living in "employment wastelands" (Zipin et al. 2015, p. 235), is described as the fuel which the working-class use to charge their doxic fantasies in hope of more desirable futures. From this, it can be shown how there is a struggle between aspirations of upward social mobility (doxic logics) and an almost subconscious instinctive need to realise historical and often familial habitus inspired aspirations. For rural or isolated communities such as those residing on the North Yorkshire coast, hysteresis is arguably also present. Bourdieu (1977, p. 83) discusses:

> *The hysteresis of habitus, which is inherent in the social conditions of the reproduction if the structures in habitus, is doubtless one of the foundations of the structural lag between opportunities and the dispositions to grasp them which is the cause of missed opportunities and, in particular, of the frequently observed incapacity to think historical crises in categories of perception and thought other than those of the past.*

Here, Bourdieu discusses the relationship, sequentially, between continuous field fluctuation and new opportunities. Furthermore, he describes the need to have certain dispositions to fully recognise new opportunities, thus, agents in the field who have had more experiences and practices early in life constituting habitus, are better equipped to recognise and assert themselves into desirable new field positions (Hardy, 2010). Using this principle, it could be seen how class differences can be a key factor in higher education participation. Adding to this, Bourdieu (1996) argues that individuals who possess more economic, cultural and social capitals, often are the first to be suitably equipped to take new social positions, such arguments could potentially be made about higher education enrolment and active participation. Furthermore, it could be said that a new wave of doxic aspirations has added to the hysteresis of the working-class, clutching on to fantasies of

better futures whilst, paradoxically, not adjusting their habitual dispositions to account for their desired position within the new field structure.

Bourdieu's Application to Under-representation in Higher Education

Overall, a multitude of theoretical explanations can potentially be made to understand why young people on the North Yorkshire coast are not participating in higher education. Using Bourdieu's 'thinking tools', it can be seen how there are a multitude of factors which play an important role when trying to understand the phenomenon (Zipin et al. 2015; Bourdieu, 1977; Hardy, 2010). Arguably, the dispositions of the predominantly working-class population in the area are conflictive with the middle-class nature of higher education (Lehmann, 2013). Furthermore, the simplistic understanding of aspirations within society, including the argued misconception of low aspirations amongst the working-class, adds to an already hostile view of higher education for the most dominated within society. Moreover, it has been shown that due to social-political changes, normal futures experienced over generations have been dissolved, leaving habituated aspirations to decay, instead being replaced with doxic fantasies in hope of more desirable futures. However, it has also been shown that although the most dominated within society can have high aspirations, they seldom have the resources or knowledge to make reasonable choices which would, in turn, make their desired futures a reality. Relating to this, using Bourdieu's notion of capital, it has been explained how those with more advantageous backgrounds have a wider variety of resources at their disposal, allowing them to gain desirable positions within the social-structural field far easier than their dominated peers. Moving forward, it is suggested by Lehmann (2013) that the most dominated within society can participate and even succeed in higher education, however, many adaptations are often needed to truly succeed. Some adaptations include a distancing of their original habitus, instead being replaced with behaviours and values often promoted within higher education.

The literature indicates that class-based dispositions are one of the reasonings as to why certain young people do not participate in higher education. It is discussed how populist mediations are continuously used in a cyclic fashion, perpetuating powerful discourse to maintain control over the dominated (Zipin et al. 2015). As such, discourse of this nature holds forms of symbolic violence, reproducing doxic logics which are suggestively used to divert responsibility away from social-structural ownership, thus, transferring responsibility to the agent through aspiration. However, the lack of acknowledgement regarding the importance of powerful positions within the structural field is debatably rife. Moreover, the lack of acknowledgement of the importance of structural influence amongst the most powerfully positioned has more specifically, potentially led to misguided attempts

to 'raise the aspirations' of the most dominated. Thus, solutions aimed at reducing under-representation could potentially be failing to explore the correct avenues which would more effectively dampen or even solve the issue.

Argued Ways to Reduce Under-Representation in Higher Education

Solution 1: Restructuring of Learning, Teaching and Administrative methods

Widening Participation (WP) is arguably one of the most persistent challenges currently facing higher education. As discussed, young people from low Socio-Economic Status (SES) groups are less likely to participate in higher education than their higher SES peers (Chowdry et al. 2013). However, research suggests that class and socio-economic differences do not arise in education at the point of higher education entry. Specifically, Chowdry et al. (2013) argue that socio-economic differences and/or class differences emerge early in individuals' lives. They go on to suggest that there is a trend for higher SES pupils to gain better attainment within education prior to higher education entry, thus, arguing that early education achievement is a better indicator of the likelihood of higher education participation. In addition, Jones and Lau (2010) noted in their study that one key factor which resulted in lower levels of WP student success was the traditionalist outlook on both learning and teaching styles. They used the example of exams to picture such traditions; WP students feared exams citing negative experiences relating to the heightened pressure exams create. When their WP programme administrators requested to the higher education institution governing the programme to remove exams in place of other methods, they remained rigid in academic tradition, further solidifying the traditional outlook on learning practices.

Furthermore, Jones and Lau also discuss the higher education institutions strict adherence to the traditional academic year. As the standard academic year usually begins in September/October, it limited their flexibility with WP students whom required more entry and exit routes. Such traditional and uncompromising outlooks on teaching and even administration in higher education mirrors back to Lehmaans' (2013) argument, when they suggested that non-traditional students had to adapt their habitual formed values and beliefs in order to succeed in higher education. Therefore, one solution suggested by studies with similar emerging themes is an increased flexibility to learning and teaching styles, opting for a more 'blended' learning approach which would better accommodate non-traditional students who are often put off by traditionalist ideologies to learning (Jones and Lau, 2010; Dodson and Bolam, 2002). In Dodson and Bolam's (2002) study assessing the quality and retention of WP students in the North East of England, they also discovered that one major concern for many WP participants involved was the financial viability of higher education studies.

Specifically, many of the participants expressed concerns not about large fees such as tuition, but rather expressed concerns toward the financial demands of everyday study including book purchasing and printing/photocopying costs. Furthermore, they uncovered that WP students who expressed financial concerns frequently expressed dissatisfaction with the accessibility of things such as hardship funds. So, from this it is evident that higher education studies possess financial gaps for WP students, resulting in less retention, support and arguably less initial enrolment of WP students. Moving forward, Dodson and Bolam (2002) suggest that both Further Education and higher education institutions can improve WP success by aiming their efforts by assessing their financial support systems and amending policies to better support student who may have limited or no financial capital.

Solution 2: Bringing Higher Education into Compulsory Education

Duckworth, Thomas and Bland, (2016) discuss the success of cultural immersion when aiming to Increase higher education participation amongst under-represented groups. A project was developed and implemented in Australia called *QUTeach*, aimed at low SES and other under-represented groups which promoted higher education participation. The project included students from low participating schools and involved undertaking higher education level subjects from years 11 and 12 (15-17-year olds). To assist with success and implementation, a partnership was formed between a university, the school and with the State Department of Education. Similar implementation was also conducted in the UK. Students involved in the project were given opportunities to visit higher education institutions, many of which had little to no experience with higher education cultures. Moreover, students involved in the project, importantly, were given a chance to show their cognitive maturity and critical thinking skills to the institutions through a "supportive and inclusive curriculum" (Duckworth, Thomas and Bland, 2016, p. 271).

The unique and rare opportunity to experience higher education cultures, showcase critical thinking and ability to adapt learning had many reported successes. Such successes included: having an existing knowledge of higher education, establishing familiarity of cultural norms and gaining a friend base. Some reported remarks such as gaining experience with existing higher education students also emulate arguments made by Bourdieu. As discussed, Bourdieu (1997) argues the importance of cultural capital within higher education, as such it is suggested that gaining meaningful experiences and developing relationships with existing higher education students ensured students in the project had some cultural capital prior to any real enrolment. In turn, the meaningful experiences gained were turned into self-actualisation through active participation in higher education. This argument is bolstered by remarks made by schools involved, who expressed

positive impacts on aspirational goals for higher education participation amongst the general student population. One school showing high success levels, reporting a significant 10% increase in student progression to university within one year of the project's completion (Rissman, Carrington and Bland, 2013).

From this solution, it could be argued that one deciding factor in higher education participation is cultural familiarity. Specifically, this suggests that for an under-represented individual to consider higher education as a viable future, a significant wealth of meaningful prior experiences with higher education is needed to allow cultural blending to emerge. Because of such experiences, the students in this project were able to gain knowledge of the social and cultural practices within the field (Bourdieu, 1993) which regulate and develop hierarchal order within the higher education institution. Additionally, the chance to showcase knowledge and learning skills proved invaluable to *QUTeach* project. From the work created during the project it was reported that many of the initial students involved received unconditional offers of enrolment possibly (although simplistically), shows the importance of inter-institutional partnerships as a means of consistent development of meaningful experience and opportunity.

Solution 3: Deploying the Capability Approach

As mentioned, UK government policy and interventions aimed at under-representation in higher education has mostly been centred on raising aspirations. However, Campbell and McKendrick (2017) suggest that such interventions are pre-determined to have limited success because the of the already high aspirations present within the under-represented groups. Rationalisations for such aspirational measures include comparisons to wider changes within globalised society (see Brown 2011, 2013; Bauman, 1998), arguing that socially reinforced beliefs of a meritocratic outlook have led to a false belief of hard work equating to economic reward (Zipin et al. 2015). As such, it is argued that failing to aspire is perceived as a personal flaw rather than a failure within the social-structural field (Campbell and McKendrick, 2017; Archer, 2007). However, other approaches to reducing young people's under-representation have also been theorised.

The Capability Approach was first introduced by Sen (1992) and was further developed by Nussbaum (2000). The capability approach, rather than a focus on individualistic aspirations, has a focus on an individual's ability to convert available resources into rewarding achievements within a given social-political sphere. This shifts the focus from the individual toward assessing "the conditions within which individuals can create opportunities to expand their capabilities" (Campbell and McKendrick, 2017, p. 124). In other words, more focus is placed on the social, cultural and economic factors when evaluating under-representation in higher education. Within this approach,

capabilities are the potential opportunities an individual possesses which, in turn, can be turned into functions (actual achievement). Functions can be basic, such as comfortably supporting family, to complex, like being actively involved within society (Campbell and McKendrick, 2017). The key point of this approach is the distinction between capabilities and functions. The duality of this approach acknowledges the importance of intrinsic self-efficacy as well as opportunities for growth (resulting in more desirable futures).

St. Clair and Benjamin (2011) also argue that aspirations are not only individualistic but are embedded within social spheres meaning they are influenced by social-structural expectations. Here it can be seen how the capability approach, whilst incorporating aspirations, also considers external social-political influences/constraints to actualising functions. Interestingly, in a study exploring aspirations of disadvantaged young people from three different cities spanning the length of the UK, all young people involved expressed high aspirations for higher education participation (Kintrea, St. Clair and Houston, 2011). However, the same disadvantaged young people were constrained by external social influences; in this case, being a lack of academic places suitable for them. Such examples of external factors which limits opportunity to act on aspirations are infrequently acknowledged by political discourse. Furthermore, it is argued that such cultural restraints can have a negative impact on disadvantaged groups capacity to aspire, meaning self-esteem and confidence to actualise functions becomes more challenging (Campbell and McKendrick, 2017). It is suggested that by using the capability approach when discussing aspirations with young people, it was evident that structural constraints were a significant factor (ibid). Moreover, to gain more under-represented participation in higher education, policymakers should avoid the diversionary notion of 'raising aspirations' and instead focus on making more social arrangements which will allow easier access to intervention/WP programmes.

Conclusion: A Bourdieusian Lens

When Bourdieu's thinking tools are used as a framework for exploring themes within the literature, some themes are particularly relevant (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1989), one major one being aspirations. Throughout the literature, one frequently summarised argument made is that aspirations are often formed through a multi-dimensional process, whereby various social influences constitute aspiration (Bourdieu, 1997). Habitus is one such influence and is integral to the likelihood of higher education participation, which is often shaped by the individual's social class (Bourdieu, 1993). Moreover, it is argued by Bourdieu that habitus is intertwined with the field the individual resides within, meaning if the social field does not reinforce higher education as a valued pathway, it is not likely it will be adopted. Following this theme, it has been frequently suggested that class

differences are commonplace when education is at the forefront of debate (Loveday, 2015; Grant, 2017; Web et al. 2017). Specifically, it is often argued that higher education plays host to class-based conflicts, giving preference to middle-class norms, values, beliefs and ways of being and behaving, and as such, created barriers for other social groups (Lehmann, 2013).

Similarly, through various socio-political and socio-cultural changes over a sustained period of time, simultaneous responses occurred, one being the removal of traditional working-class opportunities (i.e. mine work, shipyards), whilst the other response was the creation of a lagging response of habitual reformation from the same groups (Weis, 1990). Bourdieu (1984) defines this confusion as hysteresis `and further explains that irrelevant dispositions toward field adaptation is at the root of the issue, meaning working-class groups, due to their unchanging habitus over time, lack the ability to recognise and act upon new opportunities with a given social field. Through hysteresis, Bourdieu suggests that an interesting phenomenon occurs, doxa fantasy, whereby working-class groups will often aspire toward extremely high-level life and career goals but will not fully invest their time and effort into actually turning their aspiration into real world functions (Zipin et al. 2015). As such, Bourdieu suggests that these individuals will revert back to habitual norms, or embodying their class through pathway choices, for example, dream of becoming a global music artist but will ultimately accept a less desirable social position such as a hairdresser or cleaner (Hardy, 2010; Bourdieu, 1977; Zipin et al. 2015).

Finally, some solutions were presented which emerged from the literature reviewing process. The first one was centred on the acknowledgement of the aforementioned class differences within higher education. Chowdry et al. (2013) argue that under the premise of a middle-class favoured social and administrative environment within higher education, adjusting the entry process, learning and teaching methods as well as the increasing the overall flexibility of the academic year would be beneficial. Specifically, Chowdry et al. suggest that working-class groups would find higher education more accepting of their class-based norms and values.

The second proposed method is to provide more opportunities for cultural immersion prior to higher education entry. It is argued that allowing the young people to experience aspects of higher education, or even complete some higher education level academic work, would assist with cultural familiarity and cultural capital generation (Duckworth, Thomas and Bland, 2016). Through the *QUTeach* programme, it was shown how allowing the young people to experience such social environments, both allowed networking and cultural capital generation to occur. In some cases, young people involved received offers for study at the participating institution and overall received success as levels of higher education participation improved as a result of the programme (Duckworth, Thomas and Bland, 2016).

The final approach was to deploy the capability approach (Sen, 1992; Nussbaum, 2000). This method would give focus to the socio-structural influences and opportunities in place of individual aspirations or ambitions. As St. Clair and Benjamin (2011) suggest that aspirations are often shared amongst a given social sphere, this approach would therefore allow pitfalls of structural provision and infrastructure to occur, allowing more opportunities to turn capabilities into real world functions (Campbell and McKendrick, 2017).

Part 3: Methodology

Chapter 3: Methodology

The methods used in this study will be discussed within this chapter. First, the methodological position taken will be discussed, including the paradigm adopted when undertaking data collection and subsequent analysis. Moving on, the method of data collection is given focus, specifically discussing positives and potential negatives of the approach. Next, a brief section is given to participant information including age range, gender and institution and/or profession information. Once this information has been discussed, the actual procedure which was adopted for collecting the data is discussed. Within the procedure section many areas are discussed including the sampling process, the process of consent, methods of recording as well as methods of storing the data produced from the collection process.

Researcher reflexivity is discussed which defines and acknowledges researcher bias and, in turn, procedures for reducing its effect on the data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2013). Similar to reflexivity, trustworthiness is also discussed which describes how reliable the data produced is, and as such, how reliable the study itself is (Cope, 2014; Kumar, 2011). Next, ethical considerations are focused on and discuss approaches to ethical stances (Israel, 2015) as well as study specific ones including confidentiality, anonymity, data protection and informed consent (Israel, 2015; Wiles, 2012). Finally, the methods of analysis the data are discussed, including transcription and thematic analysis, conversing both positives and negatives of the approach. To begin, the methodological position of the study is discussed.

Methodological Position

The data presented in this thesis is drawn from research exploring the barriers young people living along the North Yorkshire coast face when trying to access higher education. The research implemented a qualitative approach, interviewing participants who fit into three categories: students/young people, teachers and policymakers. Interview data were then analysed using thematic analysis. Aspirations were a topic covered in the interviews with the student/young participants, discussing overall aspirations toward higher education in addition to other aspirations held by the participants. The typical aspirations of young people in the North Yorkshire coastal area were also discussed with the teacher and policymaker participants. In this thesis, an analysis of the responses made by the participants is discussed and compared, linking to existing bodies of literature and presenting potential areas for positive developments toward the end of the discussion chapter.

The research used qualitative methodology which was constituted by a transformative interpretivist paradigm (Creswell, 2013) formed under the belief that empowerment is the key to the eradication of inequality and under-representation. As such, the aim of this research was to better understand the social, cultural and structural influences which impact upon the freedoms the young people living along the North Yorkshire coast have when attempting to participate in higher education. Thus, it was important to interpret and understand lived experiences from the perspectives of people within the under-represented area. Moreover, using a transformative paradigm was also necessary as the nature of transformational research is centred on *change* (Creswell, 2013; Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011), something which was a foundational outcome of the research. Similar to this study, Bhopal (2009) discusses in their research on Asian dowries in the UK, that empowerment and change were integral aspects of research when focuses on themes of social justice and transformation. An idiographic approach was used toward data collection as it allowed individualistic experiences and opinions to emerge from each participant throughout the data collecting process, unearthing a wider view of the socio-cultural environment within the North Yorkshire coastal area (Creswell, 2013; Kumar, 2011).

The significance of interpretivism is worthy of further justification for this study. Creswell (2013) suggests that the importance of interpretation in qualitative research is an important process to gain higher levels of insight and understanding. For example, interpretivism allows the researcher to fully articulate lived experiences of participants whilst also generating a platform for under-represented groups to amplify their voiced emotions and opinions. Kumar (2011) and Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2011) further argue that this expression of disadvantaged narrative could not be adequately represented through positivist research, which predominantly relies on numerical data as the most common form for research.

Given the nature of the research question, a brief justification of the qualitative approach as a whole is arguably required. First, although the study was small scale with a focus on a specific area of the country, there is still opportunity for transferability to other areas/fields. Some such areas of transferability include research focusing on political changes and its impact on rural/isolated communities or sociological studies exploring familial habitus amongst working-class groups. Additionally, policy makers/influencers could arguably utilise the lived experiences of the participants in this research to better understand the complex socio-political structures present within the North Yorkshire coastal area. Thus, they may be better educated on how future policy amendments or developments would benefit groups from similar social backgrounds. As such, education on lived experiences through narrative data is arguably beneficial as it opens policy makers/influencers' minds to new ways of thinking and betters their understanding of different

biographies. Furthermore, similar to arguments made by Smith, Humphreys and Wilson (2008), policy makers need to understand the often-bespoke sociological nature associated with living in a isolated area, in this context, isolation stemming from a lack of significant higher education provision.

Method of Data Collection

Bismark et al. (2015) conducted a study examining the under-representation of women in medical leadership roles; semi-structured interviews were the method of data collection. Their rationale for using semi-structured interviews was that it "enabled a deeper and more nuanced understanding" (ibid, p. 1) of the varied barriers their participants had been experiencing when attempting to progress their medical careers. Based on similar research goals of transformative understanding, and a crucial need to gain a deeper perspective of the perceptions toward higher education, semi-structured interviews were also the method of data collection in this study. Semi-structured interviews were utilised on the basis that they allowed a more comprehensive excursion of the complex structures and individual lived experiences. This resulted in the participants being able to express emotions and opinions unlike the restriction that is caused by structured interviews (Kumar, 2011; Creswell, 2013; Bismark et al., 2015; Kallio et al. 2016). Additionally, semi-structured interviews also allowed reciprocity to occur between the researcher and participant, which established rapport and, in turn, arguably produced more positive interaction within the interview (Galletta, 2012). Furthermore, the use of semi-structured interviews allowed the participant the freedom to explore ideas or topics which may have not been though of during the development of the interview guide. Thus, emerging themes and potential barriers were brought to the surface during the interview process meaning a more comprehensive understanding of the complex social environment was arguably developed.

On a more logistical aspect, the use of semi-structured interviews also allowed the researcher to prepare ahead of the interviews with the assistance of an interview guide. Specifically, as the researcher only had limited experience with conducting research in the field, the ability to have *some* structure planned prior to the interviews ensured they retained some confidence during the interview process (Kumar, 2011). The ability to remain confident in the data collection process was arguably important as the confidence displayed by the inexperienced researcher ensured that the participants felt reassured (Galletta, 2012). Additionally, the reassurance of professionalism for the participants may have also assisted with other issues including the rapport between themselves and the researcher and their reservations with ethical issues like data protection, confidentiality or anonymity (Kumar, 2011; Hennink, Hutter and Bailey 2011; Creswell, 2014).

Some negatives associated with semi-structured interviews are often encapsulated in themes of limited rapport (Walliman, 2018). For instance, the structure that is created with semi-structured interviews, often created through the use of guides created prior to the interviews, can have a negative effect on the researchers ability to build rapport with participants, arguably limiting expressed emotions and views (Creswell, 2013). To counter such issues, Walliman (2018) suggests that it is important that whenever a participant expresses an opinion or emotion it is fully acknowledged by the interviewer. This may mean moving away from the guide into unstructured 'free-moving' conversation so that the flow of the interview is uninterrupted by the robotic nature of moving to the next question immediately. Once the new strand of conversation has naturally come to an end, Walliman (2018) suggests that would be the optimal time to move back into guided lines of questioning.

Participant Information

Overall, 25 participants took part in this research with: 20 students, 3 teachers and 2 policymakers. Additionally, all participants involved in the research either grew up/lived in the North Yorkshire coastal area or worked within the field of education in the area (i.e. teaching or educational policy). The participants were mixed in terms of gender with 14 females and 11 male participants collectively. The age of the student participants ranged from 16 to 19 and included different ethnicities. Student participants were all currently undertaking a further education course within one of two institutions: *Duke College* and *Read Mount Sixth form*, both of which are located in the North Yorkshire coastal area. Students were also on a variety of courses and were on different levels within those courses. The two institutions were anecdotally described as being polar opposites, with Duke being vocationally heavy and Read Mount being traditionally academic, focusing on A-level education. Furthermore, the class of the student participants were varied and included a wide range of socio-economic status groups, with some having parents who have never worked to some who have parents who own their own business or worked in a high-level career. Policy influencer participants all worked within an area which related to increasing general education attainment within the North Yorkshire coastal area. The policy influencers were both on governing boards and/or chief executive officers for organisations that are funded directly by the Department for Education.

Although three types of participant were used within the research, it is important to acknowledge at this point within the thesis that the data attained from each type of participant was not given equal status. This decision was made on the basis that the students (young people) were the under-represented groups and, thus, were given a larger platform to voice their concerns,

feelings, emotions and ambitions relating to higher education and their overall futures. Moreover, teaching participants were used in such a way that their responses would serve as a tool to help gain a greater understanding of the students' lives and their responses.

Procedure for Data Collection

Initially, before any data was collected, access to the institutions was negotiated through acceptable gatekeepers, in this case access was granted by senior members of faculty. Participants within the research were gained through a mixture of convenience and snowball sampling (Walliman, 2018; Creswell, 2013). Student and teacher participants were gained through predominantly convenience sampling, resulting from easy access of available contacts through the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP). Policy influencer participants were gained using snowball sampling. This sampling method was deemed the most effective as policy makers were the most difficult to gain access to meaning reference from other policy influencers made it easier to gain access to others. The only inclusion criterion for this research was that to be eligible for participation, participants had to either study (student participants) or work within education in some way (teacher/policy influencer) within the North Yorkshire coastal area. Keeping the inclusion criterion small allowed a more variety of participants to take part, meaning a better outlook of the overall education system as well as the social environment it resides in could be unpacked more effectively without constraints which may have been created by utilising a more narrowed participant criteria (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011).

Once participants had been arranged through the NCOP contacts within the respective institutions, the student participants were given a *Parental Information and Passive Consent* form (Appendix A) and a *Student Information and Consent* form (Appendix B). The parental consent was made passive (the parents were informed but had to make more effort to deny rather than to allow) because of the relatively benign nature of the questions being asked to the young participants, meaning any potential harm was minimal. Student information sheets explained a variety of things including: the aims of the research, the interview process, how the data was going to be used as well as their rights to withdraw (See Appendix B and C for examples). Importantly, the information sheet also explained their right to withdraw from the research and explained that any data gained from them would be destroyed without question or judgement. Procedure for teachers and policy influencers were similar with the exception of parental consent forms due to their adequate age and sufficient mental capacity to reason for themselves, instead being given a *Participant Information and Consent* form (Appendix C).

The procedure of the interviews included the use of audio recording equipment. Audio recordings were created to aid the data analysis process through the development of transcribed textual data. Memory storage on the audio recording device was encrypted during the period between initial recording and final transfer to the secure York St. John University OneDrive folder to limit any chance of a breach of data protection protocol. Once the audio files were stored on the secure OneDrive folder, the hard copy was erased, again, limiting the chances of misuse of personal data. Also, field notes were taken both during and immediately after each interview to enable the interviewer to make note of anything of importance that the participant may have disclosed, or a personal note which the interviewer may have made deemed helpful for future interviews.

The interviews themselves were conducted in a public place (within the educational institutions for the teacher and student participants) to ensure the protection of both the participants and the interviewer. The interviews consisted of open questions based around four main themes which emerged through the current literature on under-representation in higher education; this structure was used when interviewing all three types of participants. Some of the themes include perceptions toward higher education, social-cultural influences, higher education provision, aspirations and potential solutions to under-representation in higher education (see Appendix D and Appendix E for specific themes). The interviews were assisted with structure and fluidity through an interview guide which the interviewer used to ask questions relating to the themes. For the purposes of the young participants, any questions relating to aspirations were defined through the idea of the hopes and dreams for the futures of the participants. This link to the student participants hopes and dreams was important to better explain their social experiences which may affect their decision to participate in higher education (Bourdieu, 1992).

Researcher Reflexivity

It is noted that if a researcher takes an interpretive approach to qualitative data collection, acknowledgement of subjectivity must occur (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011; Kumar, 2011; Creswell, 2013). Specifically, the researcher acknowledges that their personal experiences and opinions about phenomena in the social world will influence research, especially within the data collection and data analysis stages of the research process (Creswell, 2013). As such, Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2011, p. 19) define researcher reflexivity as "a process that involves conscious self-reflection on the part of researchers to make explicit their potential influence on the research process". So then, reflexivity enables qualitative researchers to account for their own subjectivity, including how factors such as their ethnicity, personal beliefs, social background, class, assumptions and behaviours impact on the research process. Moreover, researchers must also acknowledge the

influence such factors will have on their research participants (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011). As such, reflexivity was continuously re-examined during the research process for this study. Furthermore, some specific areas of potential influence were worthy of acknowledgement.

First, it was necessary to acknowledge the potential room for biased interpretation which could have occurred during the data collection process. Specifically, similar biographic experiences could have led the researcher to make irrational assumptions based on some responses as a result of their own lived experiences coming from a similar social background. To mitigate this experiential assumption bias, clarification and reiteration was consistently promoted to the participants to ensure a complete understanding of their own thoughts and feelings. Throughout the data collecting process, this mitigation of bias was achieved through an uncompromising adherence to the qualitative research process (Creswell, 2013; Bismark, 2015). Additionally, due to the restricted nature of the resources available for the research, increased reflexivity could not be achieved through the introduction of more researchers/interviewers with different biographies and personal beliefs. Second, an acknowledgement of the researcher's belief in the value of higher education was relevant. For example, during the interviews, discussions were taken down the topic of aspirations (hopes and dreams). As a result of the high value placed on higher education by the researcher, it could have potentially restricted the value placed on a wider range of aspirations by the participants which are non-academic in nature. Such examples include aspirations for: good health, to provide for family, to find peace or the aspirations of living a debt-free life (Zipin et al., 2015).

Cohesive with Green and Thorogood's (2004) recommendation, the researcher also maintained awareness of the social setting in which the participants took part in their interviews. As previously mentioned, the interviews for both student and teacher participants were conducted within their respective educational institutions. Furthermore, the interviews were deliberately done in a public place that their peers were not within hearing range. This isolation meant that the participants arguably felt more relaxed regarding expressing true emotions and opinions on various topics, rather than conforming to the collective opinions of their peers. For example, if a student participant found the idea of higher education appealing, but knew their peers were within hearing distance, and said peers previously mocked it as a place for 'geeks' or 'nerds', the participant may withhold their positive opinions in fear of peer judgement (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011). Additionally, in order to maintain reflexivity, again, the use of field notes were used. Specifically, field notes were to allow important responses to be highlighted for analysis, methodological notes allowed the researcher to order and connect different responses and, finally, personal notes were to account for different feelings and emotions held by the researcher. These emotions may have had

an effect on the interpretation process meaning acknowledgement of said feeling allowed revision and, if necessary, adaptation to occur (Kumar, 2011).

Field notes have been discussed as a typical method to record reflexivity (ibid), and moreover, the use of memos during data analysis. With this in mind, such methods were used during the data collection and data analysis stages of this research. Specifically, the field notes allowed a deeper and more overarching examination of the data to occur as it meant any emotions felt by the researcher could be noted and took into consideration during the analysis stage. Additionally, this ensured even simple feelings were recorded such as feeling tired, meaning the researcher could reflect on the interview with a fresh perspective at a later stage of the research process, changing their initial interpretation of a response if necessary (Polit and Beck, 2012).

Trustworthiness and Credibility

Historically, qualitative studies have been viewed as flawed due to the lack of traditional scientific rigour often seen in objective quantitative research (Cope, 2014). Some reasons for qualitative criticism include: its subjectivity, researcher influence on outcomes and lack of generalisability to a larger target audience, all criticisms which are polar to that of quantitative research methods (ibid). However, as discussed by Kumar (2011), although qualitative research lacks the standardised, experimental and objective methods of quantitative methods, it also allows the researcher to use their biographies to enhance their understanding of the researched phenomenon. This freedom to be subjective also allows disadvantaged and dominated groups, like the working-class, to generate a voice and insight into their restricted place within society (Kumar, 2011). However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) do acknowledge that to ensure good qualitative practice, trustworthiness must be developed. To ensure trustworthiness was developed throughout this research, different steps were taken. One such step discussed by Houghton et al. (2013) is through prolonged engagement. This strategy of prolonged engagement through sufficient interviewing time allowed the participants in this study to fully express emotions and opinions, which ensured that the data obtained was rich and in-depth, which resulted from the freedom to give detailed and exhaustive responses (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This was further solidified by persistent observation of the participants feelings and emotions throughout the entire data collection process (ibid).

Another way trustworthiness was developed was through the aforementioned reflexive journal (Polit and Beck, 2012). The journal, as discussed, allowed the researcher to take note of any personal emotions and opinions which presented themselves during the data collection process. As such, this allowed more segregation between what the participants were disclosing and the researcher's personal perceptions. This meant that data analysis could be approached with more

focus on the participants' responses, isolating any personal thoughts expressed by the researcher which may have infiltrated the data, (Polit and Beck, 2012; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011). Using such reflexive methods meant that the data also had an increased degree of confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Through the concept of *triangulation* (ibid), the research was more robust and comprehensive. Specifically, the use of multiple data sources including interview transcripts, field notes and methodological notes, as well as personal notes such as the reflexive journal meant the research produced at the end was well-developed and meaningful. Additionally, this multi-dimensional approach to the research also allowed exploration of phenomenon through various angles.

Whilst discussing researcher reflexivity, an acknowledgement of the researcher's ideological positions toward higher education would also be appropriate at this stage. The researcher had participated within the higher education system and, as a result, benefited from it in numerous ways including: (i) making new friendships, (ii) networking professionally as well as (iii) gaining the opportunity to expand their knowledge and professional skill set, both which are beneficial for future employment. As such, it was an important aspect to keep in mind whilst undertaking the data collection and subsequent analysis (Creswell, 2013). It was important to continuously acknowledge these benefits because of multiple reasons. First, the researcher's process of acknowledging how they had benefited from higher education subsequently allowed them to intentionally take their positive ideological position into account. An example of when this aided the research process and overall quality of data would be when a participant expressed non-education-based aspirations for their future. Additionally, as the researcher had limited experience conducting interviews, it became increasingly important that they repeatedly acknowledge any room for bias to allow them to reflect and adapt through the adherence to the systematic research process.

Piloting of the interviewing process was carried out with a postgraduate student which included interviewing the individual to assess the validity of the questions including what type of response the questions provoked. Although this process was useful for isolating any ineffective questions that may have required restructuring or removing from the guide, upon reflection the limited nature of the scale of piloting may have resulted in some irrelevant and/or ineffective questions being used with the participants. However, any effect on the overall data would have been arguably minimal as the researcher adhered to the systematic nature associated with the qualitative data collection process.

Ethical Considerations

Qualitative research is based on the goodwill of the participants who volunteer to participate in research. Without goodwill, a qualitative researcher would not have the freedom to conduct their work (Israel, 2015). Moreover, Israel (2015) also discusses the need to approach research participants in a way that develops mutual trust, allowing both a higher standard of data to emerge whilst also maintaining ethical standards. As such, it is important that participants are met with professional and fair conduct throughout their entire experience with a research project; this is done through the development and regulation of ethical research practice (Kumar, 2011; Israel, 2015). With this in mind, the definition of ethical practice which guided this research is best defined by Ferrell, Fraedrich and Ferrell (2013, p.7) who say ethics "comprises the principles, values and standards that guide behaviour in the world".

Specifically, for this research, a consequentialist, act-utilitarian approach to ethical guidance was used. The main principle of act-utilitarian ethics is to give preference to the act which would produce the greatest amount of overall satisfaction and/or happiness for all agents involved in the research project (Israel, 2015). Adding to this, Wiles (2012, p.4) discusses that the consequentialist approach to ethical decisions should be based on the premise that the act or actions are morally sound, providing it produces a positive "outcome for an individual or for wider society". In this manner, every decision and adaptation to the research process was made with the best interests of both the participants and to wider society at its centre. For example, to limit the dissatisfaction of the participants, interviews were arranged at a time and location (within the guidelines stated previously) which suited their own schedules, such as arranging an interview date within their educational institution which coincided with their daily routine. Adaptations like this meant the participants were met with minimal changes to their daily routine, arguably increasing their willingness to actively participate in the research project. Additionally, this framework which produced arguably more in-depth data, would have also had positive potential for wider society as a result of its transferability to others (Israel, 2015; Polit and Beck, 2012).

Ensuring the participants were sufficiently informed about the research they were taking part in was another important ethical consideration for this research. Informed consent is a foundational ethical principle which underpins guidelines for social scientists (Wiles, 2012). Moreover, the British Sociological Association (BSA) discuss that ensuring informed consent is a key factor when assessing the ethical standards of qualitative research (BSA, 2017). Specifically, the BSA (2017, p.5) argue that it is the researcher's responsibility to:

explain in appropriate detail, and in terms meaningful to participants, what the research is about, who is undertaking and financing it, why it is being undertaken, and how it is to be distributed and used.

From this, the BSA suggest that in order to maintain ethical soundness, the researcher must fully inform the participant about every step of the research process, including how their information will be used and why it would be used. Also, importantly, they also discuss meaningful explanations suggesting that when the researcher explains the information, they need to tailor their explanations to their participants specific requirements including their age, mental capacity to reason or their level of education. Wiles (2012) and Creswell (2013) also convey similar arguments suggesting that without informed consent, the researcher risks compromising the overall ethical standards of the research they are conducting, potentially compromising the emerging data as an unforeseen outcome.

To ensure no psychological harm or distress was caused by the interview process, any topics which were surfaced by the participants which may have led to high-risk narrative, like parental neglect or bereavement, were given considerate acknowledgement whilst also diverting the conversation to more safe lines of questioning (Wiles, 2012). This ability to show the participant that their emotions and biographies are important to the interviewer whilst also diverting conversation allowed rapport to be maintained, whilst also mitigating any chance of causing distress to the participants (Wiles, 2012). Similarly, confidentiality and anonymity were also used as a way of developing and maintaining rapport. By limiting the information presented in the recording process, the location of the interviews were kept as vague as possible, for instance, by stating a town along the North Yorkshire coast, rather than the specific town name. Similar processes were used within the writing of this thesis itself, restricting the town name in place for [hometown] or something similar.

To ensure a high level of confidentiality each participant was assigned a pseudonym (false name) meaning their identity would be protected. Kumar (2011) suggests that by using pseudonyms, research becomes more ethically appropriate and interestingly, could also alleviate some of the worries the participants may have resulting from fears of judgement. Furthermore, Kumar (2011) argues that this cloaked approach to identity arguably allows more freedom to fully express views, opinions and feelings which would allow a more accurate analysis of the phenomenon to occur.

Analysing the Data

Using the audio recordings developed from interviews with participants, transcriptions were made meaning the audio files were changed from .mp3 files to a text document. Displaying qualitative data in text format is argued as being the most common and useful form of data presentation in qualitative research as it enables the researcher to show the responses of participants verbatim (Kumar, 2011). Textual data is arguably the most effective as it allows the reader to fully understand and link the participants' responses to the theoretical arguments of the research, with tables being close behind in terms of popularity (Kumar, 2011; Creswell, 2013). Textual data are used within this study and thematic analysis to draw out common themes within the responses of the participants (Kumar, 2011). Additionally, textual data also allowed themes emerge from the comparison of different responses within this research. Thematic analysis was chosen as the appropriate way to unpack the textual data as it allowed both individual emotions and feeling to be assessed in addition to also being able to assess thoughts and opinions against other participants, unearthing common themes.

First, at the start of the data analysis process, an immersion of the transcribed data occurred through in-depth reading and note taking. This allowed a better sense of the information to occur in addition to allowing the researcher to begin to reflect on what the participants' responses meant. The next stage of the analysing process was beginning to code the transcriptions which is the process of highlighting any relevant textual data and writing a specific word/short phrase representing a category within the margin next to the highlighted text (Rossman and Rallis, 2012). The word or phrase written in the margin was always an in-vivo term (Kumar, 2011), meaning any words which emerged multiple times were hallmarks for a possible emerging theme. In this sense, all data gathered and analysed was based on grounded theory which is the practice of constructing theories on data gathered methodically (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011). Once the coding process had been completed, similar codes were grouped together to create first order themes as suggested by Bryman (2016). The themes were then compared to the research question to identify any which were relevant when trying to identify barriers to higher education participation. Next, any themes relevant were then further grouped into second order themes meaning any themes which were based on similar topics were grouped together into a 'higher theme'. The process of grouping emerging themes was done until 4 general themes were developed, allowing these themes to become the foundation of the interpretive process and subsequent discussion (Sparkes and Smith, 2014).

Summarisation of the Methods

The study adopted a qualitative approach to research with a transformative interpretive paradigm (Creswell, 2013). The data was collected using semi-structured interviews with student, teacher and policy influencer participants. The data generated from the interview process was then transcribed to create textual data (Kumar, 2011). To ensure the researcher had fully engaged with the process, the transcribed interviews were then read repeatedly, taking any notes which would assist with the analysing process (Creswell, 2013; Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011). The analysis was conducted through thematic analysis to draw out common themes between the responses of the participants and would become the skeletal structure for the first half of the discussion chapter (Rossman and Rallis, 2012). Multiple considerations were given prior, during and after the data collection process.

First, the participants were fully informed on why the research was taking place, their value in the research, and, importantly, their rights regarding handling of their data and right to withdraw from the study without prejudice or punishment. Furthermore, to counter any likelihood of detrimental effects to the participants, lines of questioning were kept relevant to the given topic of under-representation (Walliman, 2018). Also, the locations, names and some forms of specific information were either not included or pseudonymised to discourage identifying the participants. The processes and approaches to the research unearthed interesting responses which will now be presented and discussed.

Part 4: Results and Discussion

Chapter 4: Discussion: Habitus, Financial Prioritisation and Aspirational Tensions

Introduction

This chapter will be based upon two sections with the first being based upon the emerging themes from the data collection. The second section will give focus to potential areas of development which could potentially increase higher education participation levels along the North Yorkshire coast. Specifically, areas include increasing cultural immersion, opportunity development and community collaboration. From the data collected, various standout points of interest emerged. Specifically, topics relating to the young people's understanding of higher education, familial influences when making pathway decisions, local higher education provision and aspirational goals were all common themes that emerged from the interviews. Additionally, remarks were made surrounding the social environment, in which participants discussed numerous points including a distinct lack of motivation, not only for higher education participation, but also in regard to general life. As themes which emerged from the interviews are discussed, the strategy of this discussion will be based around consistently relating back to existing bodies of literature in order to assess if the arguments presented are applicable to the discussion of this research. Additionally, in the latter part of this chapter, discussions will be focused on potential areas of development which may help raise the higher education participation rates along the North Yorkshire coast. Participants discussed (i) local higher education provision, (ii) familial habitus, (iii) economic factors and (iv) aspirations as being highly influential when making the decision whether or not to enrol and participate on a higher education course.

The Disconnect Within Local Higher Education Provision and Hysteresis Revisited

Higher education provision is a frequently visited source of populist political discourse. For instance, Jeremy Corbyn (Labour party leader) often quotes national investment into higher education which will include increased levels of provision and relevancy to under-represented groups – or as frequently put, "for the many, not the few" (The Labour Party, 2019). Specifically, Corbyn implies that Conservative party privatisation of education has produced an environment which works for the privileged and creates barriers for those who are not, suggesting that education institutions are not providing the fundamental educational rights for the most dominated within society. However, to clarify, the word 'disconnect' within this subheading does not mean to say that some young people within the area will not be satisfied with the higher education provision in their local area. However, this disconnect was apparent from the comments made by many of the participants in this study, of whom a majority indicated that although there is a selection of courses within the area, when their

desired subject is assessed, the choices available to them reduced significantly. For example, when Steven (age 17, student) was asked questions relating to what he would like to do within higher education, he stated:

> *I personally don't want to go for now, like somewhere else for university [but] I don't think there's much variety for me personally!*

In similar fashion, Susan (age 18, student) said:

> *[…] I don't really want to go to uni around here because there's not really any courses that I want to do if I'm honest […]*

Here, both participants indicated that they aspire toward higher education participation, however, they indicate they feel restricted by a duality of issues. First, Steven expresses dissatisfaction when discussing the possibility of moving away from his hometown for university. Second, this desire to stay within their hometown was compounded by dissatisfaction with relevant local provision. This dissatisfaction with local provision, compounded by desires to study near home was also evident in the responses of other participants. For example, Sarah (age 18, student) showed a keen interest in higher education study but additionally made comments on not wanting to be disconnected from local ties when in response to being asked what university she would like to attend, she said:

> *[I want to go to] Loughborough.*

However, when Sarah was asked why she would like to attend Loughborough, she stated:

> *Because there's, like there's this thing in [hometown], you know the scholarship?* […] *ermm, there's like a course you can do there [Loughborough], and like you don't have to go live there.*

Again, this reiteration of a desire to participate in higher education is distinctly positive, however, Sarah had to find alternative ways of study in order to ensure she was on a course which suited her interests. The desire to undertake a higher education course within the participants hometowns could arguably be as a result of their desire to remain in a working-class environment. As discussed, Bourdieu's (1990, p. 190) "enduring dispositions" may be evident from the responses made by the

participants. Their working-class backgrounds are arguably driving their decisions to actively avoid moving from their roots (where they feel most comfortable), resulting in a diminished list of available higher education courses which would suit their preferences.

When local provision was discussed with the participants, both Mark and Sarah commented on the isolated nature of their hometown. Specifically, they both made remarks about how travel impacted on their decisions to remain within their immediate social sphere. Sarah said:

I'd probably say travel is something which put some people off from going to uni because, like, there's better places for uni that is ages away so, like, if they want to actually do it but don't want to go away from home, they are stuck here.

This was reaffirmed by Mark (age 17, student) who said:

Well I think if the whole area got funding and they didn't scam the people who lived here for transport, I think people would actually [go to university]

Again, this distinctive aversion to traveling/moving away from home is evident in both Sarah and Mark's responses. Sarah's comments on travel impacting on people's decisions whether to participate in higher education or not is significantly interesting. Her response shows a number of points, first raising issues of local provision and her thoughts on its overall quality, and second, how this aversion may lead to some people deciding not to participate in higher education. These comments show the importance of a more intentional higher education provision scheme, specifically, one that is more tailored to the desires and needs of the young people who reside within the North Yorkshire coastal area. Furthermore, it also shows the importance of a varied and relevant course portfolio within the institutions themselves, so as to avoid discouraging potential students from enrolling as a result of travel. To balance the argument, the participants may not have sufficient knowledge regarding what is truly available to them within the area. Thus, rather than investing in more local provision, efforts would arguably be better suited toward establishing a more effective strategy whereby a consistent approach can be established that better informs the young people of the North Yorkshire coast on their local opportunities.

Relating back to existing literature, HESA (2018) completed their *Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (2016/17)* survey spanning approximately six months. This involved collecting data from graduates of higher education including information about destinations post-study, satisfaction and importantly, where the students originated and studied. Their survey concluded that

an estimated three-fifths of students categorised as being from a low participation area, also studied within their own region. In contrast, students from high participation areas showed more mobility, resulting in a higher commitment to their studies meaning they were more willing to relocate from their original region in search of a better education. From HESA's (2018) survey, their findings theoretically correlate with Bourdieu's (1977) *Hysteresis of Habitus.* As discussed, class-based predispositions exist within all social environments. As such, since lower participating areas are often predominantly working-class, the agents within these areas will potentially be less equipped to act on opportunities outside their own region when compared to their more affluent counterparts. The responses from both Mark and Sarah showcase the significance of high-quality provision within areas that have low higher education participation rates. Perhaps it is best summarised by Sunita (age 19, student) who stated:

> *[…] It's pointless even going to uni when all I can do is nursing and artsy stuff […] I'm just not that interested in that stuff, so I think I'll probably just get a job when I finish sixth form.*

Clearly, relevant provision is needed in order to increase higher education participation levels. Furthermore, it is evident that Bourdieu's argument that class-based issues surrounding higher education participation is just as applicable in present times. Additionally, worth noting is that incentives have already been created by some higher education institutions. The University of Oxford (2018) have pledged funding for interview travel expenses for low income students as a way of drawing in potential students from other low participation regions. Arguably, however, although a positive step, more impacting and lasting schemes need to be introduced on a national level to encourage people from low participating areas to move away from home in search of a meaningful experience within higher education. The second theme which emerged from the data was familial influences, in which participants expressed numerous points including familial habitus and emotions toward higher education.

Familial Habitus, Alternate Futures and Persistent Doxa Permeation

As participants were answering the various questions it became clear that family was an integral part of not just their educational decisions as discussed by Glaesser and Cooper (2014), but also played a significant role in many other life decisions. Specifically, when discussing what their hopes were in the future, where they would like to be as a dream outcome, many participants expressed a desire to emulate a family member's pathway. For example, if their father was their main role model, and he participated in higher education, then the participant generally expressed positive responses

when answering questions related to if they are planning to attend higher education. Conversely, however, whilst some participants expressed positive interaction with family as a form of higher education promotion, others showed a distinctive aversion to higher education as a direct result of family experiences. Dave (18, student) was asked about his thoughts on higher education, specifically, if he was/would consider participating in the future. He responded by stating:

> *Well, really most of my life, I've had negative thoughts of uni because my sister went to uni and she quit because it wasn't that good, my uncle went, and he quit.*

Here, without a doubt, Dave's response shows how even experiences not directly lived by the subject can have a significant and lasting effect on desires for higher education participation. In this scenario, Dave discussed how two members of his family had undertaken a degree but became non-completers as a result of negative experiences. In turn, this negatively influenced Dave's opinions of higher education, spite Dave not having any of his own lived experiences to make an informed decision. Following a similar argument, Liam (age 17, student) said:

> *It's like, if you've not got any parents who've been to uni, it's kind of hard…*

Liam here discusses how without any family, or in this instance, parents to emulate, envisioning attending and actively participating in higher education becomes more difficult. Bourdieu (1997) makes the argument that cultural capital in this sense, becomes an important factor. As Liam's parent had not attended higher education themselves, following Bourdieu, Liam's parents would also have reduced levels of cultural capital as a result of their decision.

As discussed within the literature review, having sufficient cultural capital prior to enrolment of higher education is an important thing to possess. As such, without anyone to emulate, paired with depleted cultural capital (capital deemed valuable for higher education), Liam ultimately summed up his desired alternate future by stating:

> *I want to join the Royal Navy.*

When questioned why his desired future was military service, he replied:

> *Well I'm in sea cadets, and my dad's ex-military.*

Here, Liam demonstrates how habitus (Bourdieu, 1997), specifically familial habitus, has influenced his desired future. Liam has ambitions centred around the reincarnation of family history as a direct result of his father's lived experiences serving in the military. Furthermore, Liam's response has additionally shown how early experiences with a social field (sea cadets) has allowed him to build some fundamental cultural capital, which in turn, can be utilised within the similar social field of Naval service.

Sunita had similar approaches to her life decisions, although polar in terms of pathway as she stated that:

> *I really want to, sort of, follow in my mum's footsteps and become a solicitor because she's always coming home sort of, like, exhausted but really happy all the time and I think it's because she really enjoys what she does for a living. That's why I want to go to university!*

From both participant's responses, and in agreement with Bourdieu (1997), arguments can be made that not only do agents possess their own forms of capital, but also have a shared capital amongst family. For instance, although Liam has minimal cultural capital for military social fields, by sharing his father's lived experiences through the reproduction of military stories, photos and other memorabilia, it has allowed Liam to collectively tap into the shared cultural capital within his family. In turn, this has permitted him to pin positive experiences to military life, allowing military service to become a realistic alternate future instead of higher education participation. Likewise, for Sunita, her lived experiences observing her mother progress and develop in a specialised career has bestowed a positive association with becoming a solicitor in the legal profession. This has resulted in generating a pronounced desire for higher education as a means of emulating her mother's professional successes, tapping into her shared capital for guidance and reassurance.

One unusual phenomenon which emerged from the interviews was one of a conflicting paradox. Some participants expressed ambitions to emulate relatives who had specialist careers; however, the same participants also sometimes expressed an aversion to higher education participation. For example, Mark's grandfather had a career as a train engineer, hence, Mark expressed similar ambitions. Conversely, when Mark was asked what his opinions of higher education were, he said:

> *I'm just winging it, see what happens […] I don't know about uni.*

This contradiction of high aspirational goals of familial emulation and low motivations for higher education is something discussed by Bourdieu (1992). As mentioned, doxa fantasy is well documented by academics such as Bourdieu (1992), Zipin et al. (2015) and Weis (1990) who discuss that the most dominated within society often accept their place within the social field, sometimes actively or subconsciously sacrificing desired futures in place of more 'realistic' ones; this argument can be put forward from Mark's response. Mark has simultaneously expressed positive aspirational goals of an advanced specialist career which would promote upward social mobility, whilst also making choices (or lack of) which are detrimental to his chances of turning his desired future into actual lived experiences. So then, from these participants' responses, it can be suggested that not only is doxa an influential phenomenon, but also, is connected in some form to familial habitus when discussing higher education and under-representation. Whilst sufficient in-depth analysis of this interconnection is beyond the scope of this discussion, it is still nonetheless, an important factor when assessing the under-representation of the North Yorkshire coastal young people within higher education institutions within Britain.

Economic Prospects: Priorities and Acceptable Investments

Without question, whenever higher education is discussed, financial impacts are also at the forefront of discussion. Financial implications are commonplace within higher education populist discourse, whether it is through media outlets discussing rising tuition fees (Waddup, 2019), public protests over said rises in tuition fees (Pells, 2017), or within the house of commons itself, debating fees and the cost of living as a higher education student (Parliament, 2019). Such focus on economic impacts did not escape discussion within this study; many participants discussed economic aspects as an important factor throughout their interviews, using it as the primary focus of their responses to a variety of questions. Similar to Harrison et al. (2015), participants in this study almost constantly linked higher education with costly tuition fees as their first responses. Furthermore, linking fees with what can be interpreted as a fear of the debt they would accumulate as a result of higher education participation.

At the beginning of Mark and Liam's Interview, discussions started with what they knew about university:

> *Interviewer: Fantastic! So, what do you guys know about university?*
> *Mark: It costs a lot of money.*
> *Interviewer: Costs a lot of money? Right, is that the first thing you think of?*
> *Mark: Yeah!*

Liam: Yeah! Going into debt.

From this, it can be seen how even on a first thought basis, the financial impacts of higher education are at the forefront of the participants minds. Specifically, the thought of going into what the participants perceive as debt, could arguably be deterring and/or limiting their ability to aspire to higher education. Bachan (2014) conducted a study exploring students' expectation's and fears of debt within UK higher education institutions. Bachan concluded that not only do existing higher education students have fears of debt which fluctuate over their undergraduate studies, but also reaffirmed other studies which found similar fears amongst students considering higher education as a choice. Bachan (2014) also argued that fears were more pronounced by the participant within the lower socioeconomic groups, often meaning that the participants' parents were disadvantaged on various levels including: limited income, were non-homeowners, and/or had no experience with higher education. However, Evans and Donnelly (2018) conducted a study exploring attitudes toward debt amongst comprehensive school students (age 17-18) and ultimately concluded that their participants did not show tangible concern toward debt accumulation. Furthermore, Evans and Donnelly rather suggested that opportunity of choices was a more relevant and immediate concern, as opposed to deterrent of participation resulting from fears of debt. When arguments are made surrounding reactions to higher education being varied depending on a young individual's class, questions need to be raised regarding why such reactions occur. As many participants in this study were from average working-class families, it is worth discussing the mixed economic priorities expressed.

Dave was asked what the young people of the North Yorkshire coast typically did post-compulsory education. Dave discussed how his opinions of the were that:

I'd say it depends on the person really. Like, some probably want to stay in education but I recon more want to just work.

When asked why Dave though that, he replied:

Just for the money…

This simplistic response to the pathway trends in the area echoes Bourdieusian logic. Specifically, it can be argued that the need to seek economic sustainability or growth is reflective of the social field the participant considers the 'norm'. Bourdieu (1997) has effectively shown how certain choices

within a social field are given more merit, and in turn, preference over others. Within Dave's social field, paid work is arguably perceived as the primary goal to aspire towards. Furthermore, it could be said that the predominantly working-class social field along the North Yorkshire coast is one which effectively perceives higher education as a second-class choice, behind the focus of establishing economic independence. Such independence may stem from having limited economic capital during their early years of life, thus, they crave immediate economic affluence as a strategy of gaining social mobility.

Similarly, the participants who did indicate they aspired towards higher education, also often linked their desires for studying with thoughts of more economical prosperity in the form a specialised, thus, higher paid career. Baird and McWhirter (2012) discuss that when higher education is being considered, the ways which the individual approaches the decision to participate changes depending on their class, and what that classes predispositions are. For instance, a young, middle-class woman wants to enrol onto a higher education course, therefore, given her class, Baird and McWhirter would argue that she will make more effort deciding what institution and course is suitable for herself. On the other hand, if the same scenario was occurring with a working-class woman, she would arguably be less likely to ponder over the specifics of the learning, instead taking a greater focus on what the potential economic outcomes in the form of paid work could be post-completion. So then, Baird and McWhirter (2012) would argue that, in essence, working-class agents have a far higher level of overall focus on the economic values of higher education when compared to their middle-class counterparts.

Although economic viability and prosperity is an undebatable influence on working-class higher education participation (Zipin et al. 2015), it must be acknowledged that this is equally measured by a significant undervalue on other important forms of capital. In line with Bourdieu's (1977) argument, the influence of cultural capital cannot be pushed aside when economic aspects of higher education are discussed. Specifically, it must be acknowledged that the working-classes cultural influences often engrain and bind a successful individual with their economic stability and prosperity (Bachan, 2014). An example of such engrained ideology is evident in Susan's (age 18, student) response to her being asked why she wanted to attend higher education:

> *[…] I only want to go to uni so I can get a really good job that pays well! […] every time my mum talks about, like, people doing well for themselves, they've always been to uni so…*

In similar fashion, India (age 18, student) said:

Money! That's why I want to go to uni! Sick of being skint all the time… growing up seeing me mum and dad struggling for money… I don't want to be doing that when I'm older!

Susan's and India's response here shows the significance of how working-class individuals place economic prosperity as the principal measure of a person's success in life. Furthermore, they have also demonstrated how working-class cultural norms can affect and mould a young person's decisions regarding higher education. Specifically, these decisions include whether to participate initially, but also the purpose and significance placed on the experience of higher education, which in this discussion, is what can you gain economically for your efforts. Moreover, this finding also reaffirms Baird and McWhirter's (2012) findings who found that their working-class participants frequently cited their principal aspiration as being either in a well-paid career or related to future employment in general. Moreover, further agreement is made through a similar finding of high level, but vague career ambitions. Participants who did have high career goals, seldom expressed a specific career they would like to be in, again, arguably the previously discussed permeated aspirational doxa (Bourdieu, 1992) amongst the working-class young people of the North Yorkshire coast.

Multiform Aspirations: Structural Confusion and Divergent Aspirational Pathways

Aspirations could be perceived as a simple idea of one's goals and ambitions for their future, however, contrary to political discourse which repeatedly reinforces such mis/understanding, aspirations are a complex and fluid phenomenon (Zipin et al., 2015). An individual's aspirations are not just created on a whim but are often the result of a multitude of factors, including familial habitus, peer socialisation/influence, lived experiences and many other factors (Bourdieu, 1992; Weis, 1990; Loveday, 2015). Moreover, it is discussed that aspirations arguably cannot be formed without utilising cultural resources as a means of forming realistic aspirations deemed feasible for actual realisation (Gale and Parker, 2015). With this in mind, it would be reasonable to suggest that working-class individuals cultural dislocation from higher education should not be unexpected to a certain extent. That is not to say that the under-representation is acceptable by any means, but rather, is arguably a cultural probability that is something which needs to be resolved, or at least improved upon in the interest of social justice.

The working-classes aspirations have historically been heavily based upon familial habitus (Bourdieu, 1997), usually passed down by older generations within the family (Askegaard, 2015). Such examples may be a grandfather being a lifelong career fisherman, hence, their child or grandchild would aspire to a similar career pathway. However, through various political and social changes within Britain, many working-class careers, often seen as secure in the past, are now not

viable futures for many young working-class individuals today (Gale and Parker, 2015; Zipin et al. 2015; Askegaard, 2015). The resulting aspirational environment is argued by Bourdieu (1992) as being highly based around populist media and social discourse for the working-class. Therefore, such an environment promotes top-level, highly skilled careers as being the principal aspirations of much of the working-class. Similarly, such misalignment of aspirations, paired with ill-informed ideology is also evident in central government's methods of tackling under-representation amongst the working-classes, both within higher education and within the working world of Britain. According to Brown, Lauder and Ashton (2010), Government rhetoric has been heavily based upon inspiring under-represented groups to gain *human capital*. Human capital is the idea of 'lifelong learning' and development though increased literacy, numeracy and computer-based capabilities, portrayed as beneficial to educational environments and prospective employers (Zipin et al., 2015). Such ideas of social development are used by intergovernmental organisations as a means of driving up the 'knowledge' and 'service' labour market needs. However, Brown et al. (2010) argues that the spike in competency levels of skills deemed 'right' for human capital, has not resulted in filling labour market gaps, but has instead resulted in greater competition for both employment and academic places.

Academic competition, therefore, could be argued as being detrimental for working-class individuals with no prior familial experiences or understanding of the higher education system. Furthermore, such competition could arguably also result in diminished aspirational desires for higher education. Government understanding of aspirations is also described as being rather simplistic in nature, and moreover, government has also been described as having a misunderstanding about the working-class's aspirations as a whole (Hart, 2016). Adding to this, Hart (2016) also suggests that central government have a poor understanding of what constitutes as 'acceptable' aspirations. As such, aspirations which did not conform to middle and upper-class norms would, therefore, be seen as having lower intrinsic and extrinsic value. Examples of divergent aspirations would include more manual jobs including refuse collecting, mechanical engineering or health and beauty pathways, like hairdressing or nail technicians (Zipin et al. 2015; Hart 2016). Military service, therefore, would also be within the category of divergent aspirations. Participants in this study also expressed aspirations which diverged from aspirations commonly deemed 'acceptable' by central government.

During the interviews, participants often discussed their heightened aspirations for their futures, which widely varied in terms of career pathways. Jason (age 17, student) was asked what he hopes for his future; he replied by stating:

I'd love to be in a job that, like, is really impressive […] something medical or something like that! Really, any job that makes people shocked when they hear what I do for a living would be awesome! Just as long as I don't end up doing factory work because that's all that there is around here!

Interestingly, Jason referred to a specialised pathway, however, neglected the specifics of his aspirations, for example neurology, general surgeon, general practitioner, nurse. Moreover, Jason also commented negatively on the local opportunities available being centred around traditionally working-class career pathways, in this case, factory work. In similar fashion, Sarah discussed her aspirations:

I want to go into, like, a football coaching sort of thing.

Again, there is a sense in Sarah's response that, similar to Jason, she has high standards for her desired aspiration, but lacks the specifics of what kind of coach she would like to be. To clarify, Sarah was asked if she wanted to be a professional football coach and, if so, what role she would prefer within the club, she stated:

Yeah [a professional club] … I mean, just any [role], don't fancy being a hairdresser like my mam is!

Again, Sarah has discussed a specialised career pathway as a means of upward social mobility. Additionally, it could be argued both participant's responses show a distinct repugnance toward opportunities which are traditionally working-class. It could be said that distaste for such opportunities is a result of consistent populist discourse centred around upward social mobility and 'raising aspirations', or as Hart (2016) discusses, conforming to 'acceptable' aspirations which are more valued by middle and upper-class groups. Furthermore, their responses indicate doxic permeation in the form of generalisation. Specifically, participants often have high aspirations for their futures but arguably lack the cultural capital to act upon such aspirations which would be diverging from their class-based norms (Bourdieu, 1992). This could theoretically also be linked to the increased specialisation within the working world, meaning what the working-class traditionally perceived as a good job, is now seen as a compromised future.

Conclusion: What do the Themes Show?

Overall, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that there are a multitude of factors contributing to the under-representation of the young people from the North Yorkshire coast within higher education. Significantly, provision was often discussed negatively by the participants, especially for those who gave preference to local study, often near their family homes. Bourdieusian philosophy would argue that such ties for local study are indicative of the fears of working-class cultural abandonment, being replaced by more middle-class structural norms (Bourdieu, 1977; Croll and Attwood, 2013). Adding to this, Lehmann (2013) suggests that successful working-class higher education students, often detached themselves, both socially and culturally, from their working-class biographies in order to better merge into the middle-class norms of higher education. Such arguments may be made for the participants of this study, potentially at a subconscious level, as they infrequently wanted to uproot their life in search of realising their aspirations. Furthermore, themes emerged which directly contradicted common central government discourse.

Government schemes have often been founded on the basis of 'raising' working-class aspirations (Spohrer, 2015; Campbell and McKendrick 2017), however, the aspirations of the participants in this study were notably high. Specifically, a variety of aspirations emerged from the participant's responses including, military service, a professional football coach, train engineering, international cyber security as well as others. So then, correlating with Hart (2016), arguments can be made regarding central government's misunderstanding or lack of acknowledgement regarding the complex nature of aspirations. Furthermore, it could also be said that there is evidently a hierarchy of aspirations within government. This hierarchy may hold alternative aspirations down whilst also promoting ones which conform and bolster middle-class values and norms, including traditionally middle and upper-class pathways. However, although aspirations were high amongst the participants, they became doxic due to their bewilderment of how to logistically realise their desired futures (Zipin et al., 2015). The confusion held by the participants may be a result of the alien nature of higher education, meaning as they have had minimal experience with higher education, they do not understand how to negotiate their desired futures. In addition, Doxa fantasy was evident within the participants aspirations as a result of their high goals but significant lack of active engagement which would make said aspirations a realised future (Bourdieu, 1992; Grenfell, 2010). This may show that Zipin et al.'s (2015) argument that doxa and habitual norms are truly striving to overcome one another.

Familial influence was another key theme which emerged from the data. Similar to Glaesser and Cooper (2014), many participants indicated they either wanted to emulate a family member, or at least indicated that their family played a significant role in their decision-making process. In this manner, familial history also held significance for many of the participants. When discussing how

family influenced opinions on higher education, their family member's experiences with higher education also proved important. For instance, as his sister and uncle did not take to the middle-class higher education environment, Dave described having negative opinions of university for most of his life. Moreover, such themes of familial influences on education outcomes and pathways has also been discussed. David-Kean (2005) conducted a study examining parental influences on their children's educational success and concluded by showing that familial socioeconomic factors indirectly impacted on the educational attainment of their children. This further adds to bolster Bourdieu's (1997) argument which claims that the working-class have a disadvantage within higher education as a result of their reduced resources of capital. The diminished capital resources (cultural, economic etc.) held by working-class individuals arguably means that familial experiences will play a more significant influential role on higher education participation, especially compared to their middle-class counterparts.

The final theme shown by the participants was stemming from either a misunderstanding of the financial aspects of higher education, or an almost instinctive urge to enter into the world of paid employment. Interestingly, most participants had a fairly comprehensible understanding of how the UK higher education finance system works, in terms of tuition, loans and repayment. This understanding of the finance system, however, did not reassure the participants, but created apprehension and fear of debt. Similar findings were discussed by Callender and Mason (2017) when, through surveys, they showed that working-class young people were far more likely than their middle-class counterparts to avoid higher education as a direct result of student debt. Therefore, the participants heightened fears of debt could potentially be interlinked with their working-class roots, which typically involves economic restraints, budgeting and increased contact with others who have financial difficulties. Specifically, this study corroborates with Callender and Mason (2017) by showing this immersion of an environment which holds many financial pressures, like the one within their working-class social sphere, may contribute to their increased weariness to future debts of their own.

The other aspect of the emerging financial theme was a 'tunnel-vision' focus on paid employment. Participants who did want to participate in higher education, suggested they wanted to as a means of getting a higher paid career. On the other hand, participants who did not want to attend higher education, often said so because they wanted to earn a wage immediately after their further education studies had ended. The somewhat instinctive need to earn a financial income could be interpreted through Bourdieu's thinking tool *habitus* (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1989). The working-class historical habitus of the participants may compel them to seek out paid employment as a significant measure of their success amongst other working-class peers. For instance, within the

working-class social sphere, it could be argued that paid work holds more social value than higher education. Furthermore, it would not be unreasonable to say that higher education may hold distinct negative connotations within certain working-class value systems, and as such, may be perceived as time wasted which could be better utilised by earning a financial income.

All of the themes could be argued as having underlying links to the social, cultural and class-based factors along the North Yorkshire coast. Furthermore, it is important that active steps are taken to drive equality and equity within higher education in order to promote more higher education participation along the North Yorkshire coast. In this manner, some potential areas for development were discussed with the participants.

Chapter 5: Potential Areas of Development Along the North Yorkshire Coast

This chapter focuses on strategies which may help increase higher education participation rates along the North Yorkshire coastal area. Importantly, to ensure relevancy, all strategies are based upon a mixture of influences including the responses made by the participants, academic literature/past research and the theories often used within such studies which focus on higher education under-representation. The structure of each strategy presented will follow a similar framework of first, discussing what prompted the suggested strategy which is then followed by, second, a description of the strategy which is justified through peer-reviewed academic literature. Moreover, all the strategies put forward are also based upon existing initiatives or suggestions given in said peer-reviewed academic literature meaning by collecting suggestions from multiple sources, it should allow the strategies to be more holistic in their effectiveness.

Strategy One: Cultural Immersion for Meaningful Experience Generation

The first strategy which will be put forward is based upon the understanding that many of the working-class young people within the under-represented area do not possess any predispositions which are positive toward the higher education environment. Additionally, many traits which are positive for higher education such as persistence, which is often present within working-class groups, is often not fully acknowledged as a useful character trait for higher education. Bourdieu (1977) expresses his idea that many working-class individuals have never been exposed to the middle-class nature of the higher education social environment meaning they would either fear isolation or simply not consider it as a viable future for themselves. As such, strategy one aims to encourage meaningful experiences to be generated in the higher education environment, something which Bourdieu (1977) suggests would be an important tool for the young people to draw upon when considering participation. In this sense, by generating meaningful experiences with higher education, the young people should be able to envision themselves within the unique social environment of higher education, thus, promoting positive thoughts and emotions toward participation in the process.

An important aspect of the research from the outset was to unearth potential areas of development within the North Yorkshire coast. As such, toward the end of the interviews, questions for the participants began to explore hypothetical strategies which had an aim of increasing their desires for higher education or increasing the desires of others within the area. Worth noting, the hypothetical strategies were based upon existing documented ones which had successful outcomes. One hypothetical way of improving participation was based upon cultural immersion. In this

scenario, the participants were asked what their thoughts and opinions were toward being more exposed to higher education in various forms throughout the third key stage of their compulsory education. Such exposure included more educational visits to multiple institutions with a mixture of fun and educational tasks, opposed to just informing the students on course cost and modules. Participants seemed to respond positively to this suggestion, an example which can be seen from Ethan's response:

> *if they could take us on a trip there and show you around […] when you're in year 7, you don't really know what you want to do in the future, so it might give them ideas of what they want to do […] So yeah, learning about what courses are best for certain careers would be good!*

Worth noting, as well as Ethan's positive response to being more immersed in the higher education environment, he specifically mentions the link between being informed on available course and the potential careers it prepares you for. This perhaps highlights the importance of creating a clear cognitive pathway from compulsory education, to further education, into higher education and, finally, a professional career. Also, similar to Duckworth, Thomas and Bland's (2016) discussion of cultural blending, within this proposed strategy, it would also allow the participants to begin to build cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1997) and increase their understanding of higher education.

One other important issue this particular strategy would combat is higher education cultural unfamiliarity, often held by a number of working-class young people. As discussed, many working-class families do not have a family member who has participated in higher education (Bathmaker, Ingram and Waller, 2013). Therefore, the young people within those families will not have as easily accessible recourses they can tap into; cultural capital is potentially the most important for this discussion. As such, allowing the young people of the North Yorkshire coast to gain meaningful experiences within a higher education environment will serve to promote multiple things. One, the young people will be able to draw upon positive memories of higher education when deciding on a post-compulsory education pathway. Two, they will generate forms of cultural capital, something which Bourdieu (1997) argues as being an important resource to possess prior to enrolment to minimise the chances of young person feeling alienated from their more culturally affluent peers. This particular benefit is discussed by Paula (student), when she stated *"[It would help with] like settling in and stuff"*. Three, the educational tasks completed during the visits to the institutions could arguably showcase some young people's ability to think critically, a vital cognitive skill to possess which is extremely valued within higher education. This particular advantage is discussed by

Duckworth, Thomas and Bland (2016), who argue that having prior experience with higher education, paired with a documented ability to think critically will be advantageous if the young person applies to pre-1992 universities. Additionally, showcasing key cognitive abilities will allow the young people to develop key connections with staff within the institution (Duckworth, Thomas and Bland, 2016). Moreover, this opportunity to network with higher education staff is potentially magnified if partnerships are formed through a meaningful interinstitutional programme, as was discussed in the *QUTeach* initiative (Rissman, Carrington and Bland, 2013).

Strategy Two: Substituting 'Low Aspirations' Discourse for Opportunity Facilitation

The second scenario which was initially discussed and put forward by participants Bethany (age 16, student) and Jackson (age 17, student), was relating back to the trending issue of aspirations. To redefine, aspirations are an individual's hopes or ambitions for their future self and could be self-created or formed through socio-cultural influences (Hart, 2016). During Bethany and Jackson's interview, they were asked what ways they thought would help raise the participation rates of the young people in their area. Bethany's initial response was:

> *I think, ermm, if people like set their aspirations a bit higher as well. Like, instead of going "I'm just going to work at Plaxtons…", or whatever "like my dad". Instead, going " Right, I want to work in design" or whatever…*

Bethany's indicated that aspirations are low within the area and whilst this backs government rhetoric of raising aspirations, it also directly contradicts academic conclusions that the working-class have high aspirations. Furthermore, her response again frames typical working-class career pathways as bearing lower value than more specialised ones, emphasising the limited opportunities available with the area. Jackson responded to Bethany's comment by suggesting that:

> *the only reason people's aspirations are going to get higher is if, like, if there were more opportunities in this town, like some people just don't want to leave.*

In both responses, it is evident that opportunities play an important role for the participants in aspiration generation and significance. To explain, their responses indicate that, in order to aspire toward higher education, opportunities within the area need to include the need for a higher education qualification. Conversely, lack of such opportunities arguably seems to influence aspirations that are perceived to be realistic for the area. In this manner, it can be seen how

developing and/or promoting more varied opportunities within the area is an important step to take; such developments should arguably aid the young people's aspirational capabilities (Zipin et al., 2015; Sen, 1992; Campbell and McKendrick, 2017).

Within the *Capability Approach*, opportunities are discussed as being instrumental in aspirational generation, maintenance, development and, if needed, reorientation (Campbell and McKendrick, 2017; Sen, 1992). Specifically, in this approach, opportunities to expand capability are given primary focus over individual aspiration. This shift in focus arguably targets and unearths structural limitations (Bourdieu, 1992), thus exposing socio-structural downfalls that limit an individual's ability to develop aspirations (Loveday, 2015; Campbell and McKendrick, 2017). Using this approach as a framework for aspirational rejuvenation is arguably more effective as many academic conclusions have similar arguments of already high aspirations amongst working-class groups (Hart 2016; Zipin et al., 2015; Bathmaker, Ingram and Waller, 2013). Therefore, in line with Sen's (1999) argument, moving away from raising aspirations and instead, giving focusing to how aspirations are embodied in choices and opportunities could been seen as a more appropriate strategy to improve participation rates. Opportunities in this sense would need to include more infrastructural investment, promoting business growth that would give the young people to aspire to as they negotiate their pathway through education.

Jessica, a policy influencer who works along the North Yorkshire coast and focuses on getting more young people into higher education, discussed in detail such depleted opportunities when she stated:

> *The young people in this area have absolutely nothing to aspire towards. Every day, they see their parents, family, friends going to the same factory or retail job! What does the government expect these young people to aspire towards, a specialised middle-class job? Haha, of course they aren't going to do that if they don't see it at all! All they see is your everyday, run of the mill jobs that barely make people enough money to live! The area needs a massive boost in terms of opportunities, or these young people won't be able to aspire towards it and go to university, so they can actually emulate what they've seen locally!*

With clarity, Jessica showed her irritation regarding the lack of opportunities available locally. Interestingly, she also explicitly argues that if all the young people see on a daily basis, is working-class entry level jobs, then that is what they will aspire to. As such, she further argues that the area needs a significant infrastructural boost, promoting local growth and the professional careers that

come with it. Deploying the capability approach could potentially ensure Jessica's frustrations are managed.

If the cultural, economic and social factors are assessed against typical aspirations then it could be better understood as to what causes the under-representation within the area (Hart, 2016). Furthermore, linking back to Steven's earlier comment on limited educational opportunities, further assessment on capabilities in terms of academic viability would also be beneficial. Specifically, assessing what the young people want to pursue academically against opportunities available locally, would arguably expose any restrictions on their ability to turn capabilities (opportunities) into functions (Campbell and McKendrick, 2017). In essence, what relevant opportunities, as in those deemed relevant by the young people themselves, are available which could realistically be turned into active higher education participation. Additionally, focusing on how capabilities, or limited capabilities, can become function is potentially a more effective approach, especially when compared to diversionary aspirational rhetoric, which is commonly used within political discourse (Bourdieu, 1977; Sen, 1999; Hart, 2016; Zipin et al., 2015).

Strategy Three: Increased Community Collaboration for Effective Outreach and Travel Easement
Strategy three is centred on the assumption that more collaboration between institutions and the community will yield more relevant and accessible higher education provision within the North Yorkshire coastal area. Furthermore, higher education provision relevancy could be amplified by deploying more communication strategy between institutions and the young people within the local community themselves. This particular strategy was inspired and adopted from Scull and Cuthill (2010), who utilised a unique approach to raising higher education participation levels from two pacific island immigrant communities in Queensland, Australia. Specifically, they suggest that traditional university outreach programs were too narrowly focused, missing out on key influences of higher education participation. As such, their approach was to engage a far wider range of stakeholder and key personnel than previous initiatives/projects had done, which was thought to collectively promote higher education as a viable pathway through communication, consistency and awareness (Scull and Cuthill, 2010).

The strategy was based on methodological underpinnings of 'engaged scholarship'; to which Scull and Cuthill (2010, p. 59) define their approach "engaged outreach". Overall, their approach consisted of three stages:

1. Stage one was centred on preparedness and involved the researchers gaining intelligence, and thus, a deeper understanding of the local area and/or community. Furthermore, within this stage of the project, as information which would create sufficient understanding was unlikely to be available, ethnographic data was collected to identify potential partner communities. This allowed the researchers to initiate relationship creation between potential stakeholders, creating opportunities for collaboration in the process. A similar process would be needed within the North Yorkshire coast.

2. Stage two is where in-depth data collection can occur on a wide scale. This stage is key to facilitating and voicing concerns from the under-represented young people of the North Yorkshire coast. Key issues will arise at this point in relation to issues regarding why young people are under-represented. Scull and Cuthill (2010) suggest that incorporating parents, organisations, institutions and the community at this stage will also help with awareness of the under-reported issue. Additionally, this stage can also incorporate workshops and presentations within the local community to (i) gain community awareness and (ii), find more potential stakeholders for the project. Importantly for this research, this stage is also vital in endeavours of social justice as arguably stifled voiced can be projected further, allowing policy influencers to acknowledge and adapt.

3. The final stage projected by Scull and Cuthill (2010) is a collaborative response to the data collected within the former stage. Meaningful relationships should be created at this stage, allowing collaborative working relationships to occur with one well-defined collective goal of raising participation. Some sub-stages occur at this point including:
    a. Acquiring key stakeholders/groups of stakeholders
    b. Creation of potential strategies, and with it, monitoring of progress or revision if required
    c. Evaluations of identified strategies

It is suggested that this skeletal guide is a useful tool when trying to improve upon higher education participation rates but should be adapted to fit the bespoke nature of each individual outreach initiative/project (Scull and Cuthill, 2010).

Along the North Yorkshire coast, many issues are entrenched within the social fabric of the area. The issues which emerged from the data collection process indicate that much more interorganisational communication is needed to better voice the concerns, fears and confusions of the young people within the area. One such concern was previously voiced by both Mark and Sarah, who both displayed anxieties about the cost of travel within their area. Additionally, both made remarks surrounding their respective desires to remain within their hometown, thus placing

significantly more importance on the need for meaningful and relevant provision of inclusive local higher education in the area. The guidelines Scull and Cuthill (2010) discussed for identifying numerous stakeholders, collectively acknowledging and defining key issues within the area, and finally, utilising the information gained to identify strategies that would potentially alleviate some of the issues which hinder higher education participation.

The guidelines set out by Scull and Cuthill (2010) have potential to be a useful tool for the North Yorkshire coast, however, some issues do need to be managed. It is suggested that upon the implementation of the initiative, all stakeholders had high interest, resulting from time invested paired with their desires to be actively involved with developing their local area. However, as the project continued, it was reported that some key stakeholders begun to lose interest. Scull and Cuthill (2010) suggest that in order to prevent interest plateau or reduction, institutions play a vital role when managing initiatives. As such, they need to ensure consistent encouragement in addition to providing ongoing support to stakeholders . Such suggestions would also arguably be valid to alleviate some concerns surrounding the time needed to sufficiently invest into such initiatives or strategies. Furthermore, institutional support would arguably be a vital tool when maintaining and/or gaining community support and interest, both of which could be perceived as key sources of information by many young people along the North Yorkshire coast.

Social Justice: What is it and why Does it Matter?

Overarching the strategies within this discussion are themes of social justice which, in this manner, empowers young people to overcome socio-political and socio-cultural barriers (Hanley, 2019) that may otherwise keep them from participating in higher education. It Is discussed that Bourdieu argued the only way true equity would occur within society is through intentional and persistent social reflection and, in turn, strategy formation to bring about social justice for under-represented groups (Grenfell, 2010). Social justice in as of itself is a term often used when a research project aims to explain under-representation in some form within a socio-cultural setting (Bourdieu, 1992; Hanley, 2019). Furthermore, as well as being a focus within academia, it is also used as a political olive branch to the working-classes, promising opportunities for upward social mobility (Hanley, 2019).

An example of such populist political use can be seen in the Department for Education's (2017) *Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential: A plan for improving social mobility through education.* Within this government document there are numerous points of celebratory reporting including the governments "huge strides" (Department for Education, 2017, p.23) regarding tackling under-representation in higher education within Britain. However, a distinct focus seems to be placed at the doorstep of elite institutions, assessing the under-representation of working-class and ethnic

groups only within a select few top universities. Arguably, and with substance, Blackman (2017) voices their suggestion that the Department for Education is becoming a marketing platform for the most socially impressive institutions. Furthermore, the government's only indicators of success are based upon data handed to them by these few select institutions themselves; this arguably creates issues. For example, it is shown through many studies (see Kelly, 2019; Boliver, 2015) that these select institutions or the people who represent them, often present their data in such a way, either through simplification or deceit, that disguises the true inequality they uphold within higher education (Hanley, 2019). Similarly, Nahai (2013) undertook a study exploring the experiences and feelings of Oxford university admissions tutors. Nahai concluded that in a social situation where the rich are increasingly affluent whilst the poor simultaneously become increasingly entrenched in hardship, widening participation initiatives will always be futile efforts if admittance is based on prior academic achievement (Hanley, 2019).

In the interest of social justice, Reay (2017) argues that focus should be taken away from academic ability, instead focusing on an inclusive approach to admittance, in essence remodelling teaching approaches toward higher education. Reay (2017) goes on to argue that such shifts would celebrate diversity within the institution rather than focusing on how advanced the prospective students are; using the latter approach is argued as causing social segregation (Hanley, 2019). Within Blackman's (2017) discussion of more comprehensive higher education provision, they discuss a significant pedogeological advantage of an all-inclusive admittance approach to higher education, which does not focus on academic biographies. Specifically, Blackman (2017) give the example of a student struggling with a task whilst another can comprehend it, meaning each can learn something from one another. The first can be assisted with the given task, broadening their academic abilities, whilst the more academically inclined can gain aptitude by exploring cultural and interpersonal perspectives (Jayakumar, 2008; Blackman, 2017; Henley, 2019).

Although this simplistic model of inclusive admittance would arguably help raise the participation rates along the North Yorkshire coast, it would also be likely to meet with resistance (Francis et al., 2017). Reasons to resist would hypothetically include disagreement from individuals or groups who believe competition and, thus, segregation is a natural process within academia. Moreover, Hanley (2019) argues allowing some under-represented groups to enter higher education without 'earning' it, could result in mockery and hostility from students who transferred through standard forms into higher education. Again, this would likely be due to the belief held by those given people who believe education is earned, hence, not a right. However, in the interest of social justice and empowerment, it is put forward that such under-represented groups should be given

access, regardless of what they have earned academically. To justify this proposition, Bourdieu's thinking tools will again be used.

Habitus is something which has been spoken about on a specific, individualistic scale within this thesis. However, what has not been discussed in-depth is structural and institutional habitus (Bourdieu, 1992). Bourdieu argues that social structures themselves hold indicators of habitus meaning any social changes in search of social justice, would only be successful by structural changes to habitus (Grenfell, 2010; Maton, 2010). Moreover, Bourdieu argues that individuals who live their daily lives through similar social structures, for instance, the working-class will share similar positions within the social field (Maton, 2010). Sharing positions within structures means engenderment of similar social experiences of structures and processes. This means if an individual's social position is foreign to the processes involved, it will be more difficult to participate and, in turn, succeed in higher education. Thus, it can be argued that structural changes need to occur within higher education which specifically promotes participation for everyone, not just for the select groups who have the resources and academic merit to gain entry. Making changes to the entry requirements for higher education would arguably allow under-represented groups, like the working-class, to envision their own participation without creating barriers (i.e. academic competency) which would discourage them (Maton, 2010). In essence, changing institutional and structural habitus which, in turn, would allow under-represented groups the freedom to explore new opportunities in search for social mobility.

Although changing academic entry requirements is a large change that would require much planning and adaptations to normal processes, it would be a vital part of creating a system which focuses on social justice, rather than academic excellence (Jayakumar, 2008; Henley, 2019). Something which may assist with creating habitual familiarity for higher education was discussed by Bathmaker, Ingram and Waller (2013) who argue immersion of activities deemed valuable by higher education can allow individuals to understand and play the game (Bourdieu, 1997).

Strategy Four: Utilising Extra-Curricular Activities (ECAs) for Capital Development

Through the responses made by the participants within the findings, it became clear that cultural differences were a significant issue which requires addressing, so because of this, it is arguably useful to present a second strategy aimed at cultural blending. The nature of the social environment higher education resides in is potentially one which is unlike any other social environment, which Hart (2016) describes as an environment where class difference is seen regularly if not consistently. This is arguably more-so evident in older and more established institutions which are often held up to high standards. So, as class is regularly defined as one of the baseline issues of higher education

under-representation, Extra-Curricular Activities (ECAs) can be utilised as a tool, from which, cultural capital can be gained to expand the individuals knowledge and experiences (Bourdieu, 1977).

Within their study, Bathmaker, Ingram and Waller (2013) discuss Bourdieu's analogy of 'playing the game' (Bourdieu, 1997). Using this analogy of a game is important as, within a game, resources and knowledge can prove vital to winning. In the context of higher education, middle-class accumulated capitals may hold important value and relevancy for higher education, meaning working-class capitals are made redundant, or at least, less valuable (Bourdieu, 1986). Within Bathmaker, Ingram and Waller's (2013) study, they found that all their participants, whether they were middle or working-class, demonstrated knowledge of the 'game' and its 'rules' within higher education. Furthermore, their participants acknowledged that capital plays an important role in determining your success in higher education; Bathmaker, Ingram and Waller (2013) give the example of internships. A working-class participant within their study made the strategic choice of an economics degree, hoping this would prove advantageous for their ambition of working in a big city bank. However, they were unsuccessful noting that although their degree was relevant for the internship, their inability to mobilise their capitals proved to be their downfall.

In this manner, Bathmaker, Ingram and Waller (2013) argue that actively generating capital through Extra-Curricular Activities' (ECAs) may be a key part of a successful individual's transfer into the graduate labour market. This argument could be made for the process of enrolling into higher education. Bathmaker, Ingram and Waller (2013) acknowledge this when they argue that the working-class participants in their study were disadvantaged by not being ready for the game, resulting from a limited predisposition toward the generation and mobilisation of accumulated capitals. As such, ECAs may prove to be an important tool to allow working-class young people to generate capital which is valued by the middle-class entry process of higher education. In this manner, if working-class young people do not participate in ECAs that would generate valued capital, they will continue to be disadvantaged when compared to their middle-class counterparts, who have more accumulated capitals, and have more experience mobilising these capitals for their own advantage (Bourdieu, 1997).

Conclusion

A breadth of issues are voiced within this discussion by individuals from a range of backgrounds including policy influencers, teachers and the students themselves, all working or studying along the North Yorkshire coast. Most noticeably, many social influences evidently play an important role in either promoting or deterring higher education participation in the area. For instance, it has been shown how shared habitus (Bourdieu, 1997) plays a diverse role when young people decide what

pathway they should take, weather it is an academic one or more class-based, like leaving compulsory education and entering the world of paid employment. Many of the participants expressed such diverse shared habitus, displaying differences in aspirations which for some, are polar opposites. Specifically, whilst some want to explore higher education in search of emulating family successes in a specialised profession, others opted for more divergent pathways, instead choosing to aspire towards military ambitions as their parent did.

Economic returns and overall focus was a particularly salient finding from the participants' responses. Firstly, the participants often associated higher education with financial themes as a first response, for example, immediately stating high levels of debt as a result of participation. However, most participants did have a sufficient level of understanding surrounding the way the student finance system works, including tuition and overall loans. However, it was interesting to see how the working-class mentality was framed through their focus on monetary factors. This related back to Bourdieu (1997) when he suggests that predispositions exist within classes, and for the participants in this study, how working-class individuals, even when young, still hold great symbolic value of value for money. This glorification of financial worth was particularly evident from participants who expressed desires for immediate fulltime paid employment upon leaving compulsory education.

Summarising, the under-representation of young people from the North Yorkshire coast in higher education is, without question, impeding social justice. To ensure participation rates rise in the area, engagement must be increased between the community, institutions and the young people themselves. Furthermore, such developments will not be made without creating and managing strategies, specifically made to better the chances of the under-represented groups within the area. It is evident from the responses of the participants that higher education is for the most part, a foreign thought, which does not run parallel to their working-class habitus (Bourdieu, 1997). Therefore, to better their chances for upward social mobility, and to facilitate the realisation of aspirations, actions need to be taken that widen the young people's cultural experiences, thus generating valued forms of capital for higher education. Such actions include developing collaborative partnerships within the region that create more opportunities for the young people to turn their aspirations into tangible pathways for self-improvement and enlightenment.

Part 5: Conclusion

Chapter 6: Conclusion: What do the Themes Indicate and What Should be Done?

The nature of under-representation is complex and often stems from a wide range of social, cultural and political issues (Bourdieu, 1997). Along the North Yorkshire coast, the same complex socio-cultural environment has led to a situation whereby higher education is not seen as a viable option, or at least, is not perceived as the most logical one. As such complex answers were likely, a qualitative approach to research was undertaken. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews which allowed the participants the freedom to express their thoughts, feelings and emotions because of the open-ended question style. In addition, the nature of semi-structured interviews meant that if the discussion became diverted, the guide was there to refocus on the themes of the questions. Once the data had been collected, it was then transcribed verbatim to avoid obscuring the participants' views and opinions on the topic at hand. The transcribed data was then thoroughly analysed through thematic analysis, searching for themes within a participants response, and comparing it to other responses. This comparison of themes allowed the general themes to emerge which became the points of interest for the discussion and analysis. Importantly, the participants were given the opportunity to suggest ways which would help promote higher education participation along the North Yorkshire coast, thus combating/reducing the under-representation.

Theme 1: Familial Influences and Shared Historic Habitus

One major theme which became apparent was an almost instinctive need to relive family history. The participants frequently expressed their hopes of emulating a relative in whatever they did themselves. For example, whilst Liam wanted to relive his father's history of military service, other participants wanted to participate in higher education because their parents had been and describe the experience positively. This indicates that when creating initiatives to combat low participation rates, parental and/or family influences must be included when assessing what course of action is best. This argument can be bolstered by Dave's anecdotal remarks expressing how his family member's experiences with higher education played a significant part when he expressed negative views of participation himself.

Furthermore, this study has shown that Bourdieu's (1992) presentation of doxa is evident within the participants' responses. The participants simultaneously had high aspirations for themselves, often choosing high level, specialist careers as their desired future. However, the same participants often had little desire for higher education regardless of the fact that it would be a vital part of making their aspirations a reality. In addition, doxa was also expressed through the

dissatisfaction with local opportunities. Specifically, the local opportunities which were available in the area, both academically and career wise, were met with negative views. For instance, there was a distinct underwhelming attitude regarding local higher education provision along the North Yorkshire coast. On a theoretical level, consensus can be made with Zipin et al. (2015) who argue that symbolic violence is evident within the higher education system within Britain. This is because the nature of the dominators who hold the power (i.e. political figures) is to divert their own responsibilities of provision aside, in place of allegations of low aspirations amongst the working-class. In direct contradiction with popular social belief, this study has shown how working-class young people in fact, do have high aspirations for their future self, *but* lack the cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1997) to fully understand the higher education system, effectively immobilising any valuable capital they do possess. In this manner, this also bolsters Bourdieu's (1997) and Moore's (2010) reaffirmation of class-based predispositions, arguing that middle-class predisposition toward preparation for higher education, will unequivocally lead to better higher education participation than their working-class counterparts.

Theme 2: Class conflicts and 'rules'

Finding from this study also suggest that class conflicts are present along the North Yorkshire coast (Bourdieu, 1993). Specifically, when utilising Bourdieu's (1977) concept of habitus, which is our ways of feeling, our ways of thinking and our ways of acting within the socio-structural field, it has been shown how class plays an important role in determining pathways. This process of learned norms, both subconsciously and consciously, has arguably created a distinct desire for paid employment amongst working-class groups, including the much of the North Yorkshire coast. As such, participants in this study frequently acknowledged the importance of obtaining paid work as soon as possible. Furthermore, although some participants had the ability to assess their options on a long-term basis, analysing weighing up pros and cons of gaining a degree in search for a higher salary, many did not. Such participants expressed desires of paid employment as a means of gaining independence, and furthermore, mobility to relocate geographically, sometimes to international desires. This need for paid employment, whilst shows the validity of Bourdieu's (1990, p. 190) "enduring dispositions", should be accepted with caution. The working-class' need for paid employment will indeed fill labour market gaps, which political discourse has discussed previously in this thesis. However, it will deter working-class individuals from experiencing meaningful higher educational experiences, which reinforces the idea that higher education is earned and not a right. In turn, this will arguably perpetuate the idea that learning is only to be used as a means to an end (paid work), rather than

what it should be, learning for its own sake meaning gaining meaningful experiences and a wider view on social issues and lived experiences.

The distinct working-class predisposition toward paid employment also proves coherent with other academics (see Loveday, 2015; James, Busher and Suttill, 2015; Web et al. 2017; Grant, 2017) who argue that although higher education is often perceived as an all-inclusive environment, reality shows such arguments are seldom the case, and in fact often reinforce outdated social differences and prejudices which would otherwise not be tolerated in other socio-structural fields. Adding to this, findings in this study also support Reay's (2001) and Reay, David and Ball's (2005) arguments, suggesting that this conflict of class-based norms and acceptable behaviours seen in higher education, produces apprehensive thoughts of higher education enrolment amongst the working-class. Arguments like this, further support the idea that higher education requires socio-cultural, socio-structural and procedural changes to ensure equitable access in the future if social justice is to be satisfied.

In this sense, the argument put forth which suggest that there is a reproduction and reinforcement of outdated class traditions within higher education (Skeggs, 2005; Allen and Hollingworth, 2013; Bourdieu and Passeron, 2000), could also be argued as being valid. This reproduction, therefore, is insightfully titled by Zipin et al. (2015, p. 241) as "a time of cruel optimism", suggesting that the working-class are given hope without any substance to allow them to act. Hence, this false hope given to working-class communities, like the one along the North Yorkshire coast, could be understood as a symbolic betrayal at the hands of political figures, in spite of their repeat rhetoric arguing the exact opposite.

Theme 3: Financial Implications of Higher Education

This research has unearthed a variety of issues regarding the financial implications of higher education within Britain. Dodson and Bolam (2002) argue that when widening participation students are interviewed, many acknowledge and stress the financial costs of higher education study. They further argue that such fears of financial pressure, apart from making existing widening participation students have negative thoughts and experiences, could also result in less retention or even initial enrolment. Such themes did not escape this study. First, a significant focal point for the participants was the initial overwhelming cost of a three-year undergraduate degree. Specifically, many utilised the term "debt" as their first response to what they know about higher education, arguably showing the importance placed on the financial expectancies of higher education for working-class young people. Second, although it was obvious that all student participants had a fundamental understanding of the processes involved, it was also clear more in-depth information is needed to

allow them to fully understand the differences between student 'debt' and other forms of actual debt.

Using Bourdieu's (1997) thinking tool capital, it could be explained why these students have a high level of focus on the financial implications of higher education. Although Bourdieu (1997) discusses various forms of accumulated capital an individual can possess, the one which is particularly relevant here is economic capital. Although Bourdieu understands economic as an external and obvious capital (Moore, 2010, it is nonetheless, still an important factor for the participants in this study. It should not be difficult to comprehend that working-class individuals are typically less affluent in terms of monetary wealth when compared to middle-class groups. As such, one significant predisposition (Bourdieu, 1990) of the working-class is naturally to assess financial implications and the financial viability of studying more than their middle-class counterparts. This is mainly due to middle-class' opposing predisposition to not worry about financial implications to the same extent (Moore, 2010; Grenfell, 2010; Bourdieu, 1997).

Remaining with the issue of economic viability, it could be suggested that in addition to being more informed on the process of student tuition and maintenance loan, working-class young people should also be better supported through financial aid by higher education institutions themselves. Similar arguments were concluded by Dodson and Bolam (2002) who suggested that institutions should assess their financial support systems, like hardship funds, to better account for the limited financial aid available to working-class widening participation students. Interestingly, Dodson and Bolam (2002) also suggest adjusting policy requirements, making it easier for working-class students to apply for funding; this may better account for their limited experiences with middle-class norms of policy adherence.

What Now?

Throughout the interviewing process, participants had various ideas and opinions which they thought would help raise the participation rates along the North Yorkshire coast. Within the literature, various successful approaches to reducing similar instances of under-representation were assessed.

Literature Initiative one: Restructuring of Learning, Teaching and Administrative methods

Restructuring the ways which higher education institutions operate was an initial find early in the literature reviewing process (Jones and Lau, 2010). Specifically it was argued that a common issue with widening participation students was their distinctive lack of available time. It could be argued that a middle-class resource is in as of itself, time. Jones and Lau (2010) presented the idea that to

allow more freedom to participate, higher education institutions should create more flexibility overall. This included adaptations to teaching styles, learning styles and the ways which widening participation students are examined. Furthermore, and in agreement with arguments made in this study, Jones and Lau (2010) argue that flexibility is a major issue within the application process involved with higher education enrolment. It could be said that adhering to a strict set of guidelines and policies for entry is for the most part, going to isolate and deter some less affluent individuals from participating. Adding to this, Jones and Lau (2010) suggest that not only should policy upon entry be more flexible, the times which students can participate should vary, allowing more entry and exit routes.

Allowing more freedoms to participate would hypothetically serve to inject social justice into the higher education system through a more equitable set of guidelines and policies deemed accessible by all, rather than only by those who have the resources to do so (Jones and Lau, 2010; Hanley, 2019). In doing so, this would also allow working-class groups the freedom to fit higher education studies into their other life commitments, including caregiving (Kim et al. 2012), childcare (Chung, Turnbull and Chur-Hansen, 2017) or paid employment (Merrill, 2015). Such adaptations to the higher education system would also allow other freedoms to occur, including the ability to potentially develop unique courses that would otherwise not be possible with a rigid learning schedule. For example, perhaps a working-class single mother wants to undertake higher education studies; she may not be able to enrol due to her obligations as a mother, prioritising her child's education which follows similar schedules as the higher education system. Hence, making more entry and exit routes would hypothetically allow more freedom to negotiate a learning plan to begin the long process of getting a higher education.

Restructuring the way under-represented groups are taught and dealt with in higher education would also help address concerns made by Bourdieu (1977). Specifically, by removing or adapting some policies and procedures associated with 'normal' higher education, it may better suit under-represented groups which, otherwise, would not participate. Procedures could include enrolling initially, adapting how applications are submitted and assessed by administration departments. Furthermore, adaptation could also be in the form of more flexible assessment methods. Wilkins and Burke (2015) suggest that adapting the ways which students are assessed, or increasing the ways to be assessed, could help promote participation amongst under-represented groups. It is suggested that some working-class groups fear higher education studies because of their past experiences with education, fearing examinations and similar forms of assessment (Wilkins and Burke, 2015). As such, it could be argued that adapting assessment methods to more flexible forms, could reassure less confident learners that they have the freedom to express what they have learned

without strict guidelines. Additionally, these adaptations would arguably help alleviate class-based dispositions (Bourdieu, 1997) which restrict higher education participation.

Literature Initiative Two: Bringing Higher Education into Compulsory Education

The idea of bringing higher education study into compulsory level schooling may sound farfetched, however, Duckworth, Thomas and Bland (2016) suggest that doing so allows the young people to begin to gain some cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1997). The *QUTeach* programme in Australia gave young people the opportunity to undertake some low-level higher education academic work. This is said to have allowed the young people to showcase their cognitive abilities including their important critical thinking (Duckworth, Thomas and Bland, 2016). The project was reported as being a success as it allowed the young people to network with influential people within their local higher education institution, allowing development of cultural capital to occur.

As Duckworth, Thomas and Bland (2016) suggested, cultural immersion was an invaluable effect of the project, as such, similar suggestions were given to the participants during the interviews. Responses were overall positive to the suggestion with some participants commenting on their desire to better understand the processes involved with higher education. In addition, comments were also made surrounding becoming better acquainted with existing students within higher education. This would arguably allow the young people to become more culturally familiar with existing students, developing meaningful experiences which will positively reinforce their aspirations for higher education participation (Bourdieu, 1997; Zipin et al. 2015). Overall, if this project was to be recreated along the North Yorkshire coast, it is suggested that it would have a positive impact on the participation rates, allowing the young people to explore higher education, develop cultural capital and, importantly, allow them to generate positive experiences with the higher education environment.

Literature Initiative Three: Deploy the Capability Approach

Using Sen's (1992) capability approach toward combating under-representation would allow new ways of thinking. Specifically, by focusing on the structural field rather than the individual, essentially becoming unaccepting of the meritocratic outlook, would open up new strands of thought around how to better equip the young people. As a result, the recent focus on aspirational development would be reshaped, acknowledging the structural aspirations (St. Clair and Benjamin, 2011), that are embedded within a social sphere.

Deploying the capability approach would require both logistical and ideological shifts within policy maker practice (St. Clair and Benjamin, 2011). Furthermore, consensus is made with Campbell

and McKendrick (2017) who discussed the opposing views of aspiration centred political rhetoric and the capability approach. On one hand, government discourse has frequently attributed low aspirations as the cause of low participation of young people in higher education from rural and working-class areas (Zipin et al. 2015). However, the capability approach would require more attention to structural constraints placed on dominated groups within society, thus, reaffirming similar points made by Bourdieu. One significant issue seldom acknowledged is structural limitations on generating cultural capital. As discussed, Bourdieu (1997) argues that as structural limitations are rarely acknowledged by the dominators, this also impacts the dominated groups ability to explore beyond their typical social environment, thus, limiting their ability to generate cultural capital. As such, moving forward it would be important that, through the capability approach, more opportunities are also made available to generate the cultural capital, an integral part of a successful students resources (Bourdieu, 1997; Lehmann, 2013).

In summary, this research has served to voice the concerns, opinions and thoughts of the young people participating in this study who reside along the North Yorkshire coast. Significantly, it has also reaffirmed arguments made by many academics including noted sociologist Bourdieu. Although areas of development are needed in order to raise participation rates, it is not unachievable. Through interinstitutional and interpersonal communication, planning and support, the young people of the North Yorkshire coast can begin to approach higher education with positivity, all in search of equitable social justice.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Owen Sloanes
Postgraduate Researcher (MSc)
York St. John University
School of Sport
Lord Mayor's Walk
York
YO31 7EX
owen.sloanes@yorksj.ac.uk

Dear Parent or Guardian,

I am completing a research project examining the underrepresentation of young people in higher education (university) within the North Yorkshire coastal area, as part of my masters by research. I request permission for your child to take part in this study. The school is aware of the project and has agreed to allow me to conduct my research with the institution.

What does the study involve?
The study is exploring why young people for the North Yorkshire coastal area are underrepresented within university. To better understand why, I would like to interview young people like your child. The interview will be approximately 30-40 minutes and will contain questions relating to your child's educational experiences, their values toward education and their knowledge/opinions on higher education (university). The interview is the only point in the study where your child will have to actively be involved. Further information about the study is included in the accompanying Participant Information Sheet. Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate is also voluntary. As well as your consent, your child will also be asked if they want to take part in the study. The project will be explained to your child in terms that they can understand.

What happens with the study findings?
Only myself and my research supervisor (Sr. Spencer Swain) will have access to the information from your child. Your child, school and tow/city will be kept anonymous in any work that is produced from this research to ensure anonymity. All information will be stored in line with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The study should not encourage conversations of a personal nature. If your child discloses any information that needs to be reported, the school's child protection policy will be used.

Who can I contact if I have any questions?
If you have any questions about this project, my contact details are included at the top of this page. Alternatively, you can contact my supervisor:

Dr. Spencer Swain,
01904 876803,
s.swain@yorksj.ac.uk

If you have any concerns, queries or complaints regarding the research project please contact Nathalie Noret, Chair of the Cross-School Research Ethics Committee for Health Sciences, Sport, Psychological and Social Sciences and Business, on 01904 876311 or n.noret@yorksj.ac.uk.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

Yours faithfully,

Owen Sloanes,

Postgraduate Researcher (MSc)
York St John University.

Please sign below, **only if you do not wish your child to participate** in the research described above.

I have read and understood the above information and **do not consent** to my child taking part in this research investigation.

Print Name: ………………………………………………   Date: ....

Signature: ....

Participant Information Sheet for Parents/Guardians

Name of school: School of Sport, York St. John University
Title of study: Barriers to accessing university in coastal communities: A qualitative study exploring why young people living along the North Yorkshire Coast are underrepresented in Britain's Higher Education institutions

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Introduction

Your child has been invited to take part in a research project examining the under representation of young people from the North Yorkshire coastal area within higher education. Before you decide whether you are happy for your child to take part, it is important that you understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read this information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. If there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information, please contact me (Owen Sloanes, Postgraduate Researcher (MSc) in the School of Sport, York St John University) or my supervisor (Dr. Spencer Swain, School of Sport, York St John University) using the contact details on the following page.

What is the purpose of this investigation?

The aims of this investigation are to first, establish and better understand the barriers to higher education for the young people of the North Yorkshire coastal area, including understanding perception toward higher education. In conducting this investigation, I am trying to establish ways which children such as your own, as well as others within the area, can become more involved in higher education (university) as students or just simply ensure they are sufficiently educated about the process of starting higher education and its potential values. This will ensure your child and others have all the information they need when deciding what to do after they finish compulsory education.

What will you do in the project?

Part of this study involves interviews with both students and teachers within your child's school/college in order to gain their perspectives and experiences of the educational climate within the North Yorkshire costal area. Participants will be asked to take part in one interview each, which will ask about topics such as their experiences within education, their values of education and their views and knowledge regarding higher education. The investigation will take place within the school/college in a public place such as the library between January and March 2019 at convenient time.

Does your child have to take part?

No. It is up to you to decide whether you would like your child to take part in this study, but their contribution would be greatly appreciated and could prove valuable to the research. Your child will not be treated any differently, whether you or they choose to take part, or decide not to do so. If you/they do decide to take part, your child may withdraw from the study at any point without giving a reason and without penalty.

Why have you been invited to take part?

Your child has been invited to take part in this project because they live within the underrepresented area meaning data gathered may, in future, improve the higher education prospects of your own child and others within your area. Furthermore, it may also improve education strategies for compulsory level education (eg. Secondary school) through useful schemes.

What are the potential risks to you in taking part?

As the study is looking into education and is a relatively harmless topic, the study poses minimal risk to your child. In addition, and as previously mentioned, your child will have the right to withdraw from this project at any point, without giving a reason. You can withdraw your child (or your child can choose to withdraw) from the project by informing me (the researcher) in any way that is convenient, including in person, via email or through a third party such as a teacher. If they withdraw from the research, any words used by your child will be removed from the data that has been collected and deleted/destroyed. They may request that the information they have provided is removed from the study at any point until the data has started to be analysed. This means that they can request that their data be removed from the investigation until four weeks (28 days) after the date that they took part in the study.

What happens to the information in the project?

All interviews will be audio recorded for transcribing purposes, but all answers will remain confidential. Pseudonyms will be used for any people and organisations that are mentioned in order to maintain anonymity. The only way confidentiality would be breeched is if in the unlikely scenario, a participant revealed something that would be classed as illegal such as abuse. All data collected whilst conducting this investigation will be stored securely on the password protected One Drive storage system and a password protected private computer which are used for the storage of research data at York St John University, in line with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation. The information collected whilst conducting this project will be stored for a minimum of 6 months.
Thank you for reading this information – please ask any questions if you are unsure about what is written in this form.

What happens next?

If you are happy for your child to take part in this project, you do not need to take any further action. However, if you do not want your child to take part in this project, please sign the accompanying letter and ask your child to return this to me, at their school.

It is possible that the results of this research project will subsequently be published. If this is the case, appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that all participants remain anonymous.

If you do not want your child to be involved in the project, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for reading the information above.

This research project was granted approval by the York St. John University ethical approval committee.

Researcher contact details:

Owen Sloanes,
Postgraduate Researcher (MSc),
School of Sport,
York St John University,
Lord Mayor's Walk,
York,
YO31 7EX.

Email: owen.sloanes@yorksj.ac.uk

Dr. Spencer Swain,
Lecturer in Sport Development and Sociology,
School of Sport,
York St John University,
Lord Mayor's Walk,
York,
YO31 7EX.

Email: s.swain@yorksj.ac.uk

If you have any questions/concerns, during or after the investigation, or wish to contact an independent person to whom any questions may be directed or further information may be sought, please contact:

Nat Noret
Chair of the Cross-School Research Ethics Committee for Health Sciences, Sport, Psychological and Social Sciences and Business,
York St John University,
Lord Mayors Walk,
York,
YO31 7EX.

Email: n.noret@yorksj.ac.uk

Student Participant Information Sheet

Name of school: School of Sport, York St John University
Title of study: Barriers to accessing university in coastal communities: A qualitative study exploring why young people living along the North Yorkshire Coast are underrepresented in Britain's Higher Education institutions

Introduction

You have been invited to take part in a research project which is looking at why there are fewer young people in university from the North Yorkshire coast. Before you decide whether to take part, it is important that you understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read this information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. If there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information, please contact me (Owen Sloanes, Postgraduate Researcher (MSc) in the School of Sport, York St John University) or my supervisor (Dr. Spencer Swain, School of Sport, York St John University) using the contact details on the following page.

What is the purpose of this investigation?

The aims of this investigation are to understand why young people such as yourself, who live along the North Yorkshire coast are not going to university. Once it is better understood why they are not going to university, new schemes can be created to better inform such people about the value of university, as well as universities being able to better aim toward getting more young people from the North Yorkshire coast into their institutions.

What will you do in the project?

You will be involved in one short interview with myself (the researcher), lasting around 30 to 40 minutes where questions will be asked including topics such as your experiences with education, your opinions on education as well as questions about university including what you know about how to get into university and its potential value later in life. The interview will take place in a public area within your school such as the library or your year base. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions, whatever you say will be the correct answer.

Do you have to take part?

No. It is up to you to decide whether or not you would like to take part in this study, but your contribution would be greatly appreciated. You will not be treated any differently, whether you choose to take part, or decide not to do so. If you do decide to take part, you may later withdraw from the study without giving a reason and without penalty.

Why have you been invited to take part?

You have been invited to take part in this project because you live in the area where less young people have decided to go to university. Also, information gained may help people such as yourself increase the number of individuals who go to university from your area.

What are the potential risks to you in taking part?

The way this research focuses on education should pose minimal risk to all people involved as topics will be centred on values and opinions around a subject most people have experience in. As previously mentioned, you will have the right to stop participating in the project at any point, without giving a reason, by informing me (the researcher) in any way that you wish to do so, whether it be in person, via email or through a third party such as a teacher. Also, you will be able to request that the information you have provided is removed from the study at any point until the information has started to be analysed. This means that you will be able to request that the information be removed from the investigation until four weeks (28 days) after the date that you took part in the study.

What happens to the information in the project?

All interviews will be audio recorded so it can then be copied into a text document, but all answers will remain confidential. False names will be used for any people and organisations that are mentioned in order to hide identity. All data collected whilst conducting this investigation will be stored securely on the password protected One Drive storage system and a password protected private computer which are used for the storage of research data at York St John University, in line with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation. The information collected whilst conducting this project will be stored for a minimum of 6 months.

Thank you for reading this information – please ask any questions if you are unsure about what is written in this form.

What happens next?

If you are happy to take part in this project, you will be asked to complete an assent form in order to confirm this.

It is possible that the results of this research project will subsequently be published. If this is the case, appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that all participants identities remain hidden.

If you do not want to be involved in the project, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for reading the information above.

This research project was granted approval by the York St. John University ethical approval committee.

Researcher contact details:

Owen Sloanes,
Postgraduate Researcher (MSc)
School of Sport,
York St John University,
Lord Mayor's Walk,
York,
YO31 7EX.

Email: Owen.sloanes@yorksj.ac.uk

Dr. Spencer Swain,
Lecturer in Sport Development and Sociology,
School of Sport,
York St John University,
Lord Mayor's Walk,
York,
YO31 7EX.

Email: S.swain@yorksj.ac.uk

If you have any questions/concerns, during or after the investigation, or wish to contact an independent person to whom any questions may be directed or further information may be sought, please contact:

Nat Noret
Chair of the Cross-School Research Ethics Committee for Health Sciences, Sport, Psychological and Social Sciences and Business,
York St John University,
Lord Mayors Walk,
York,
YO31 7EX.

Email: n.noret@yorksj.ac.uk

Child Assent Form

What is the purpose of the study?
The aims of this investigation are to understand why young people such as yourself, who live along the North Yorkshire coast are not going to university. Once it is better understood why they are not going to university, new schemes can be created to better inform such people about the value of university, as well as universities being able to better aim toward getting more young people from the North Yorkshire coast into their institutions.

What does the study involve?
The study involves a discussion between me and yourself.
The conversation (interview) will take place in a public place within your school such as the library or your year base.
During this discussion you will be asked some questions. These questions will be about:

- Your experiences in education

- Your opinions on education

- Your knowledge about University

- What you have been taught/hear about University and its values

Do I have to take part?
Your parents said it was ok, but I also need to ask you.
It is your choice whether you want to do this project – you do not have to.
It is ok if you decide that you do not want to be in the project.
If you choose to take part, you can stop at any time.
You don't have to answer any questions that you don't want to answer.

Your answers
This is not a test with right or wrong answers.
I am interested in your opinions and experiences.
I will record your answer's, so I can look at them privately later.
You will not be named in any of my work, but if an incident needs reporting to help keep you safe, I will need to tell the school.
To record your answers a voice recorder may be used.

Contact information
My name is Owen Sloanes and I am a student at York St John University.
Email: owen.sloanes@yorksj.ac.uk

If you agree to be in the project:

☐ I have either read or had this assent form read to me.

☐ I understand that I have been asked to be in a project about why young people from the North Yorkshire coast are less likely to go to University

☐ I have been asked if I have any questions about the project and these questions have been answered.

☐ I understand that this session will be audio recorded.

☐ I agree to be part of this project.

Participant name (please print): _____

Researcher signature: _____

Participant Information Sheet

Name of school: School of Sport, York St John University
Title of study: Barriers to accessing university in coastal communities: A qualitative study exploring why young people living along the North Yorkshire Coast are underrepresented in Britain's Higher Education institutions

---

Introduction

I would like to invite you to take part in a research project examining the under representation of young people from the North Yorkshire coastal area within higher education. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important that you understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read this information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. If there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information, please contact me (Owen Sloanes, Postgraduate Researcher (MSc) in the School of Sport, York St John University) or my supervisor (Dr. Spencer Swain, School of Sport, York St John University) using the contact details on the following page.

What is the purpose of this investigation?

The aims of this investigation are to establish and better understand the barriers to higher education for the young people of the North Yorkshire coastal area, including understanding their values toward education. In conducting this investigation, I am trying to establish ways which teachers/schools, education policy makers and higher education institutions can better target the North Yorkshire coastal area young people in order to enable better provision for the underrepresented group within higher education.

What will you do in the project?

Part of this study involves interviews with you in order to gain a wider perspective and understanding of the current educational climate. You will be asked to take part in just one interview which will ask about topics including your experiences with education, views on current education, attitudes toward higher education (both of yourself and of the young people) as well as current provision within the North Yorkshire coastal area. The interview can be arranged at a location, date and time deemed convenient for you.

Do you have to take part?

No. It is up to you to decide whether or not you would like to take part in this study, but your contribution would be greatly appreciated and could prove valuable to the young people of the North Yorkshire coastal area. You will not be treated any differently, whether you choose to take part, or decide not to do so. If you do decide to take part, you may later withdraw from the study without giving a reason and without penalty or prejudice.

Why have you been invited to take part?

You have been invited to take part in this project because you have experience in education within the underrepresented area. Furthermore, your knowledge of the current social and cultural

environment within your area could be a unique and invaluable resource that may improve the prospects of higher education for the young people of the North Yorkshire coastal area. Also, you may have experiences with young people who have not went to higher education meaning you could have some insight into the reasoning of the students you have seen throughout your career.

What are the potential risks to you in taking part?

Due to the relatively benign nature of the study, the research and your involvement pose minimal risk to yourself and other involved. However, if in the unlikely scenario issues are raised, there will be a support system available to you through third party organisations in the debrief sheet. Again, if you did change your mind at any point throughout the study, you do have the right to withdraw from this project at any point, without giving a reason. You can withdraw from the project by informing me (the researcher) through any form of communication including email, by post or by any other way which you find convenient. If you withdraw from the research, any words or data used by you will be removed from the data that has been collected. You may request that the information you have provided is removed from the study at any point until the data has started to be analysed. This means that you can request that your data be removed from the investigation until four weeks (28 days) after the date that you took part in the study.

What happens to the information in the project?

All interviews will be audio recorded for transcribing purposes, but all answers will remain confidential. Pseudonyms will be used for you and any people that you mention in order to maintain anonymity. The only way confidentiality would be breached is if something which needed to be reported was mentioned. All data collected whilst conducting this investigation will be stored securely on the password protected OneDrive storage system and password protected computer account, which are used for the storage of research data at York St John University, in line with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation. The information collected whilst conducting this project will be stored for a minimum of 6 months.

Thank you for reading this information – please ask any questions if you are unsure about what is written in this form.

What happens next?
If you are happy to take part in this project, you will be asked to sign a consent form in order to confirm this.

It is possible that the results of this research project will subsequently be published. If this is the case, appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that all participants remain anonymous.

If you do not want to be involved in the project, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for reading the information above.

This research was approved by the York St. John University ethical approval committee.

Researcher contact details:

Owen Sloanes,   Dr. Spencer Swain,
Postgraduate Researcher (MSc),   Lecturer in Sport Development and Sociology,
School of Sport,   School of Sport,

York St John University,
Lord Mayor's Walk,
York,
YO31 7EX.

Email: Owen.sloanes@yorksj.ac.uk

York St John University,
Lord Mayor's Walk,
York,
YO31 7EX.

Email: S.swain@yorksj.ac.uk

If you have any questions/concerns, during or after the investigation, or wish to contact an independent person to whom any questions may be directed or further information may be sought, please contact:

Nat Noret
Chair of the Cross-School Research Ethics Committee for Health Sciences, Sport, Psychological and Social Sciences and Business,
York St John University,
Lord Mayors Walk,
York,
YO31 7EX.

Email: n.noret@yorksj.ac.uk

Participant Consent Form

Name of school: School of Sport, York St John University
Name of researcher: Owen Sloanes
Title of study: Barriers to accessing university in coastal communities: A qualitative study exploring why young people living along the North Yorkshire Coast are underrepresented in Britain's Higher Education institutions

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Please read and complete this form carefully. If you are willing to participate in this study, please circle the appropriate responses and sign and date the declaration at the end. If there is anything that you do not understand and you would like more information, please ask.

- I have had the research satisfactorily explained to me in verbal and / or written form by the researcher.   **YES / NO**
- I understand that the research will involve: an interview with the researcher lasting an estimated 30-45 minutes.   **YES / NO**
- I understand that I may withdraw from this study at any time without having to give an explanation. This will not affect my future care or treatment. I understand that I should contact you if I wish to withdraw from the study and that I can request for the information that I have provided to be removed from your investigation for a period of four weeks (28 days) after the date that I took part in your study.   **YES / NO**
- I understand that all information about me will be treated in strict confidence and that I will not be named in any written work arising from this study. This does not include if any information requires reporting which is required.   **YES / NO**
- I understand that any audiotape material of me will be used solely for research purposes and will be destroyed on completion of your research.   **YES / NO**
- I understand that you will be discussing the progress of your research with your research supervisor Dr. Spencer Swain at York St John University.   **YES / NO**
- I consent to being a participant in the project.   **YES / NO**

Print Name:	Date:
Signature of Participant:	

Appendix D

York St John University

Interview Guide:
Student Participant (16-18)

Pre-interview briefing information:

- Hand out *Student Participant Information and Consent* form
- Just to remind you, we will be talking about your experiences with education as well as what you currently know about higher education and its potential value.
- Please feel free to talk openly. I am looking forward to hearing your thoughts and opinions.
- There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers to any of the questions, so you don't need to worry about saying the wrong thing.
- If there is anything that you don't want to answer, that is fine, please just say so and we can move on to another question.
- Do you have any questions before we start?

Potential follow-up questions/prompts:

- Why is that?
- Can you tell me more about that?
- Go on…
- Can you expand on that?
- Could you provide an example…?
- [Staying silent]
- "Oh is that right"…?
- Why would you say that is the case?

Theme 1: Perception toward higher education

1. What do you know about higher education?
    a. Can you talk more about [topic discussed]?
    b. Is there anything else?

2. What is your opinion on higher education?
    a. How do you come to this opinion of higher education?
    b. How does the media contribute to this?

3. How has your educational experiences so far contributed to your views toward higher education?
    a. How have you been taught about higher education so far?
    b. Has there been any specific classes in school about higher education?

4. Why have you/ have you not thought about higher education much?
    a. Is there any other path you would want to take after school?

Theme 2: Social & Cultural Influences

1. How has other people's views on higher education shaped your own views?
    a. What are the typical views you hear about higher education?
    b. How do you typically respond to such views?
    c. Prompt 3

2. What are the typical views on higher education in your area?
    a. What are some of the negative views?
    b. Why do you think they have such views?
    c. Prompt 3

3. What do people usually do when they leave school (compulsory education)?
    a. How much does wanting a paid job influence people's decision?
    b. How do people usually decide what they want to do?

4. Why do you think fewer young people such as yourself are deciding not to go into higher education in your area?
    a. Why do you think that is?
    b. Could you discuss […] further?

5. How does your family influence your opinions on higher education?
    a. How would you compare that to how your friends influence you?
    b. Why is that?
    c. That's interesting…

6. What do you hope to do in the future?
    a. Why do you want to do that?
    b. Do any of your friends want to do something similar or different?

    c. [Depending on response] – Is that why you want to do [Response] in the future?

Theme 3: Higher education provision and knowledge in the area

1. What can you tell me about the choices regarding higher education in the area?
   a. Are there many locations you could go to if you wanted to go into higher education?
   b. Could you discuss [topic] further?

2. What are the subjects you would choose to do if you were signing up to higher education now?
   a. What higher education location would you attend to do that subject?
   b. Go on…

3. What are your opinions on the current options in the area for higher education?
   a. Could you give an example?
   b. Why do you think that?
   c. How much would it help you if there were more options within the area?

4. What would you do if you had to move away from the area to study a subject you wanted to do?
   a. Why is that?
   b. How do you think it would affect your decision if you had a suitable choice within your area?

5. Are there any ways you think would make it easier to access higher education in your area?
   a. Could you talk about [topic discussed] further?
   b. Do you think they are any challenges for you personally accessing higher education?

Theme 4: Potential Solutions

1. What would make you want to go to higher education?
   a. How do you think financial help would benefit you?
   b. Why is that?

2. Would you rather stay within the area or move away for higher education if you had both options, and what would be your reasons for your choice?
   a. Go on…
   b. That's interesting…

3. Are there any other ways which you think would make you want to go into higher education more?
   a. Why is that?
   b. Why would that increase your desire to attend higher education?

4. How would being more informed on higher education at your school help with your decision?
   a. Do you think being more aware of your option would make it easier for you to get into higher education?

      b.   Who do you think would be best to give you more information on getting into higher education?

5. Is there anything which could be provided to get you more motivated to attend higher education?
    a. How would long distance educational support help you?
    b. Is there anything else?

6. How do you think being taught about university from the beginning of secondary school (year 7) would help?
    a. Why do you think that?
    b. That's interesting…

7. Is there anything else you would like to say on the topics we have discussed today?

Interview Guide:
Mature Participant (Policy Maker/Influencer)

Pre-interview briefing information:

- Hand out any required forms including participant information/consent sheet.
- I would just like to remind you that the topics being discussed today are based on education and specifically you're experiences with within education and the current educational climate within the North Yorkshire coastal area.
- Please feel free to talk openly. I am looking forward to hearing your thoughts and opinions.
- There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers to any of the questions, so you don't need to worry about saying the wrong thing.
- If there is anything that you don't want to answer, that is fine, please just say so and we can move on to another question/topic.
- Do you have any questions before we start?

Potential follow-up questions/prompts:

- Why is that?
- Can you tell me more about that?
- Go on…
- Can you expand on that?
- Could you provide an example…?
- [Staying silent]
- What is your opinion on…?
- Could you clarify what you mean by that?

Theme 1: Educational Climate

5. What do you think about the current overall educational climate within the North Yorkshire coastal area? (the options and provision)
   a. What is your opinion/could you expand on [topic or issue they have mentioned]?
   b. *Probe about current legislation on education if necessary*

6. How would you describe the current motivations of the young people in education at the moment?
   a. Specifically, attitudes toward learning?
   b. What do you think their main goals are upon leaving compulsory education?

7. Why do you think the young people are deciding not to go to higher education?
   a. What influence do you think the desire for financial independence has on that decision?
   b. Specifically, what do you think in terms of the education experiences, are making them avoid HE?

8. In what ways do you think the current guidelines in compulsory education promote or deter young people from going to HE in the North Yorkshire coastal area?
   a. Can you expand?
   b. Why do you think that?

Theme 2: Social and Cultural Trends in North Yorkshire

7. In what ways do you think the pathway trends affect the HE participation?
   a. What are the common trends people follow when leaving compulsory education?
   b. Does the desire to work deter HE participation? (expand as necessary)

8. What are the attitudes toward education like as a whole in the area?
   a. How do the attitudes of the young people's peers and family affect their decisions?
   b. Is there any positive or negative narrative regarding HE?

9. Could you describe some of the common habits which form as young people leave their compulsory education?
   a. Reiteration of working class mentality and habitus?
   b. Are any of these habits regenerated from their families' choices?
   c. Potential lack of information about HE?

10. What are the current methods/schemes in place that aim to promote knowledge and/or desire for HE to the young people in the area?
    a. To what extent is the **value** of HE promoted to the young people?
    b. What do you think could be done to improve the promoting of HE?
    c. Could you provide an example of a scheme which is in place to improve the HE participation levels in the area?

Theme 3: Higher education: Choices, Knowledge and Provision

6. What are your thoughts on the current HE provision in the area?
    a. Are there any reasons why you think that there is less provision within the area?
    b. Could you give an example of an institution that specifically targets the area for participation in HE?
    c. What do you think could be done to create better provision?

7. How are the young people educated about HE?
    a. At what age do the young people begin to be educated on HE and how the process works?
    b. What age do you think HE should begin to be discussed?
    c. What do you think the young people should be educated about regarding HE?

8. What are the current methods on how they should be educated about HE?
    a. Is there anything specific that they try to teach, as in something they may need to learn for HE writing?

9. To what extent does family history with HE affect a young person's choice to avoid or promote HE participation?
    a. Do the young peoples' habitus stem from their parents or family members?
    b. Prompt 2
    c. Prompt 3

10. Could you describe some typical examples of why young people in the area choose not to go into higher education?
    a. Expand on topic/issue discussed?
    b. Could you explain [TOPIC] further?

Theme 4: Potential Solutions?

1. How do you think participation levels could be increased in future?
    a. What do you think could be done in regards to policy changes?

2. How do you think HE institutions could better target the young people of the North Yorkshire coastal area?
    a. How would you achieve that?
    b. How do you think education on HE directly from the HE institutions themselves in schools would help?
    c. What do you think would be another way that you think would help the participation rates increase?

3. What schemes could be created in order to assist with easier access to HE in other areas for the young people of the North Yorkshire coastal area?
    a. Would monetary schemes be effective?
    b. Could you expand on that?

4. How do you think creating outreach centres within the area would affect the participation rates?

      a.   What are the barriers to creating such centres?
      b.   Are there any similar ways which could be effective?

5. Are there any other ways which you think would help increase the participation rates?
      a.   Why is that?
      b.   Could you expand on that?

6. Who do you think should be involved in improving the participation rates by creating the solutions and/or schemes?

Appendix F

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York St John University,
Lord Mayors Walk,
York,
YO31 7EX

22nd January, 2019

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York St John University Cross School Research Ethics Committee
(Health Sciences, Sport, Psychological and Social Sciences and Business)

Dear Owen,

Title of study: Barriers to accessing university in coastal communities: A qualitative study exploring why young people living along the North Yorkshire Coast are underrepresented in Britain's Higher Education institutions
Ethics reference: Sloanes_22/01/2019
Date of submission: 27/11/2019

I am pleased to inform you that the above application for ethical review has been reviewed by the Cross School Research Ethics Committee and I can confirm a favourable ethical opinion on the basis of the information provided in the following documents:

Document	Date
Application for ethical approval form	21/01/2019
Responses to feedback	21/01/2019

Please notify the committee if you intend to make any amendments to the original research as submitted at date of this approval, including changes to recruitment methodology or accompanying documentation. All changes must receive ethical approval prior to commencing your study.

Yours sincerely,

Nathalie Noret

Appendix G

Research Student Supervision Log

Name of Student:	Owen Sloanes (O.S.)				
Name of Supervisors:	Spencer Swain (S.S.)				
Degree:	MSc by Research			**Start Date:**	1st October 2018
Supervision Number	**Date of Meeting**	**People Present**	**Main Topics Discussed**	**Action Points Agreed**	**Targets for Next Meeting**
1	4/10/18	S.S. O.S.	1. Ethics submission. 2 Carry on working literature review/ methods. 3. Needs analysis.	1. Rough draft within two weeks. 2. Highlight areas of literature review and methods.	1. Rough draft submission. 2. Submit needs analysis.
2	8/11/18	S.S. O.S.	1. Ethics feedback and submission 2. Continue literature review/methods section.	1. Complete ethics edits and send through email. 2. Complete ethics documents (e.g. participant information sheet)	1. Complete ethics form 2. Created ethics documents
3	26/11/18	S.S. O.S.	1. Ethics submission 2. Draft up structure of literature review 3. Contact NCOP representative	1. Submit ethics for Dec 3rd deadline 2. Create draft of literature review structure	1. Draft of literature review structure complete 2. Ethics submitted 3. Contacted NCOP representative
4	13/12/2018	S.S. O.S.	1. Theoretical approaches 2. Academic writing at MSc level 3. Structure of Literature Review	1. Continue working on literature review	1. Have draft of literature review complete 2. Begin to explore Methodology
5	03/06/2019	S.S. O.S.	1. Developing report 2. deadline for thesis draft	1. Develop report for 10th July 2019 2. Complete first draft of thesis by 24th July 2019	1. Completed first draft of thesis 2. Submitted report for review
6	17/06/19	S.S. O.S.	1. Review of draft 2. Review/feedback of report	1. Make improvements on discussion	1. Submitted updated thesis for feedback

Name of Student:		Owen Sloanes (O.S.)			
Name of Supervisors:		Spencer Swain (S.S.)			
Degree:		MSc by Research		Start Date:	1st October 2018
Supervision Number	Date of Meeting	People Present	Main Topics Discussed	Action Points Agreed	Targets for Next Meeting
				2. Improve detail of report	2. Made changes to report
7	31/06/19	S.S O.S.	1. General updates on progress of thesis	1. Create an updated thesis draft by 10th September 2019	1. Sent updated thesis to S.S. for review by the set date.
8	10/09/19	S.S. O.S.	1. Feedback of thesis 2. NCOP report	1. NCOP report needs more proof reading 2. Thesis needs some minor alterations	1. Proofread report, make any changes and return to S.S. 2. Made final changes to thesis.
9	20/09/19	S.S. O.S.	1. Thesis submission 2. NCOP Report	1. NCOP report is complete and meets the requirements of NCOP 2. Thesis proof reading and formatting	1. Proofread, formatted and submitted thesis for grading 2. Explored doctoral studies
10	27/09/19	S.S. O.S.	1. Thesis submission 2. Doctoral studies	1. Thesis submission date 2. Look for doctoral studies	1. Have thesis submitted a day before deadline to avoid any difficulties 2. Contact institutions and potential supervisors for doctoral studies