Subjectivities of the Future:

The Role of Habitus, Experience, and Knowledge

in Positioning School Students

in the Present and Their Imagined Futures

Anthony Scott EDWARDS, B.Ed.; M.Ed.

College of Arts and Education, Victoria University

February 2018

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Abstract

Australian education policy in the 21st century has given rise to the provision of programs that seek to enhance participation and learning outcomes for disadvantaged or underrepresented groups in education. This study aimed to determine what university–school "bridging activities" offer to the agency of young people with regard to their developing imagined futures. This thesis draws on the work of Bourdieu, G. H. Mead, and Habermas to position its critical analysis of the subjectivity of young people as they construct their future possibilities.

Qualitative data were gathered from active engagement with young people in years nine and ten through classroom projects and visits to universities. The analysis of data has drawn on the process of bracketing as a way to focus on the experience and then clustering the data in order to facilitate interpretation. Findings from this research show how young people contribute to the construction of their imagined futures and how aspirations can be enhanced through reflexively informed agency. The frame of reference young people use to position their learning and career goals is both enhanced and restricted by their past and current life experiences and their capacities to explore the possibilities, expectations and opportunities which contribute to one's sense of self and agency.

Those who constitute schools and universities would welcome the accounts given in this study as they mark the subjectivities that inform and influence a young person's sense of possibility. Additionally, this study has examined the contexts and opportunities for universities and school partnerships to impact student habitus and enhance personal agency around aspirations. The data constituted by this study indicate that it is only when the school and the university collaborate upon their respective understandings of personal and institutional knowledge that young people can engage with navigating the emerging forks in life trajectories.

Professional editor Cameron Duder provided copyediting and proofreading services, according to the guidelines laid out in the university-endorsed national *Guidelines for Editing Research Theses*.

Student Declaration

Doctor of Philosophy Declaration

"I, Anthony EDWARDS, declare that the PhD thesis entitled Subjectivities of the Future: The Role of Habitus, Experience, and Knowledge in Positioning School Students in the Present and Their Imagined Futures is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work."

Signature: Date: 14 June 2018

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my family who have made me who I am today through their support and encouragement. My wife and partner in all my endeavours, Kerry Renwick, remains instrumental in her guidance and questioning throughout every aspect of my learning journey. To my mother, Mavis Edwards, I am grateful for all that was done in support of our family. Gareth and Casey, the young adults of our family, continue to impress upon me the need to question the present and be considerate of others that come to make up our experiences.

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have come into being as what is now presented had it not been for the thoughtful insights and support of Associate Professor Tony Kruger, Professor Marie Brennan and Dr Lew Zipin. From the first conversation Tony has shared this challenge with me and reminded me of the value to be had in every experience of this undertaking. I see need to acknowledge the young people that I came to meet and engage with in the various spaces of my research. They have impressed me with conversations and honesty about their experiences in the present and the aspirations they continue to construct.

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1   Sociological Perspectives on Access to Higher Education in Australia—A Question of Aspiration and Agency

Australian education policy, like that in a number of Anglo-American countries, trumpets the need for young people to "raise their aspirations" (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008). It does so based on a deficit view of those young people from poor, rural, Indigenous, and working-class families (Hartas, 2016). Yet the policy discourse and even many critiques of it (Birrell & Edwards, 2009; Birrell, Rapson, & Smith, 2010; Gale & Parker, 2013) still tend to ignore the highly personal ways in which a young person's view of their future and their agency in working towards that future is formed. There is a major gap in the literature that speaks to the subjectivities in play for young people seeking to navigate the field of higher education. This study emerges from an intent to address this gap.

The call by Bradley et al. (2008) for universities to engage in partnerships with schools and other education providers to raise aspirations and provide mentoring has been met by a variety of responses from universities. Lowering enrolment requirements and adding points to achievement results, based on where a young person lives or attends school, is a far cry from what the young people the research has encountered in schools actually need. Simply lowering the metaphoric drawbridge would be inadequate if practice were to reflect the intent of policy. First-hand experience of what it is like to be a university student has proven to the researcher to leave an enduring impact on one's perception of possible futures.

Burke (2013) presents a critique of the hegemonic discourse of raising aspirations, arguing that the main problem in the conceptualisation of widening educational participation is that it is attributable to the failure of people and communities to recognise the value of such participation. This

study has not sought to question a lack of aspirations on anyone's part but rather to investigate the limitations of the formation of, and engagement with, a person's developing perspective. In order to do this, a closer examination of how a person's perspective and dispositions come into being is warranted.

An examination of Australian education in the 21st century cannot ignore the context of social inequity and disadvantage of the wider community that frames education for many young people and their teachers (Lamb, 2007; Lamb, Walstab, Teese, Vickers, & Rumberger, 2004). Schools, especially those that serve disadvantaged communities, face significant challenges related to student engagement and academic performance. While schools such as those in Melbourne's west contend with societal and familial challenges that contextualise student learning, they do so in a systemic setting that often adds to the responsibilities of schools in such communities (Teese & Polesel, 2003).

Quicke (1998, 1999) views a contemporary model of education as one which involves a system characterised by the selection and differentiation of pupils leading to the reproduction of inequities; a form of teaching and learning which is competitive and hierarchical; a way of organising schools which is undemocratic; and the embrace of instrumentalism which harnesses education only to the economic goals of society. Since the birth of the modern era, there have been critical examinations of the stratifications within society, particularly in the field of sociology. These examinations have highlighted social distinctions that are both a cause and effect of differences between communities and the people who live in them. Access to and participation in higher education has become significant in sociological research on stratification. One focus has been around the identification, need, and impact of policy, and the associated practices associated with a desire to achieve what could be considered an equitable system of education.

1.1   Research aims and questions

Engaging in a detailed case study of a sample of Year 9 students (Appendix A) from selected schools in Melbourne's west, the study sought to explore the current aspirations, perceived capabilities and influential factors by which young people view their world. The nominated group (Year 9 students) was viewed as being suited to explore the young people's developing ideas and expectations, past experiences, as well as their responses to societal and familial expectations. At this year level many students are constructing their perspectives of pathways or alternatively are presenting as being disengaged from their school education.

Thus the primary research question aims to determine:

How can the university, acting as an advocate for socially—critical schooling, enhance schools as autonomous public spheres?

And the secondary question:

What is the role of habitus and experience in positioning school students in the present and imagined futures?

To facilitate the exploration of these two questions it was necessary to reflect on both what and who would provide insights. As a result, this study sought to generate and interpret data related to:

1. Students' changing perceptions of their horizons throughout the course of the study; and
2. Teachers' perceptions of students and respective changes in their attitudes, application, and aspirations throughout the study.

For Year 9 students it is a time of transition from child to young adult. The intent of this study was to determine how school students respond to experiences of higher education and how these responses impact upon their pre-existing perceptions and horizons. The researcher views these perceptions as being the embodiment of each young person's subjectivity. This subjectivity is also regarded as being both product and producer of life world experiences. For a young adult, school constitutes a

significant part of their lifeworld. With teachers they co-create the learning experience. As a consequence of this the subjective views of these teachers inform a view of who the student is together with their potential. Thus the perceptions of teachers about the daily experiences of education for students and themselves constitute the information basis for teachers' awareness of students' aspirations.

1.2   Setting the Scene

Systemic approaches to improve access to Australian higher education have, in recent times, taken into account the sociopolitical imperatives that provide fertile ground for those seeking to shine a light on the shortcomings of approaches and political agendas, particularly equity in education. When the perspective of young people is positioned against their respective possibilities, detail of their situation is necessary, if not essential, before a comprehensive critique of policies and practices that are favoured or resisted within the education system is possible.

Schools are social institutions, yet little recognition is given to what is outside of schools that contributes to a multifactorial effect. For example, the role played by the school as an institution and particular entities in the social space (Bourdieu, 1985) such as community and family all contribute to a young person making connections about their present to imagined futures. The daily focus and practice of schools is largely done in isolation of life after school. School accountability under the neoliberal and conservative agendas has called on educators and school leadership to determine classroom performance in a relatively narrow paradigm. Therefore, it is highly likely that the possibilities of and for the future of young people have become less implicit in classrooms.

> None of us knows his or her final destination, but all of us can know about the shape makers of our lives that we can choose to confront, embrace, or ignore. (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005, p. 967)

Richardson's declaration encompasses both the intent and the problematic of this study. By exploring the cause and effect of knowledge upon life-making and life-changing decisions it is possible to reveal those decisions that are made, enacted, ignored, or never consciously posed. This single sentence is the basis of this study, where the researcher's ethnographical endeavours were to reveal insights around the conditions that are played out in the lifeworlds of young people as they consider their respective future.

Such an endeavour comes from a time when the researcher's thinking in the present came to make meaning of past events as they pertain to his postsecondary school experiences. In doing so, the researcher made sense of the many encounters that came as a series of fortunate events. They remain personal and fortunate as without the encounters with the many significant others the researcher would not have enhanced his view of the world and engaged with emerging possibilities as opportunities. Without this, leaving his working-class family home and embarking upon study and work in a cosmopolitan city would not have happened. The researcher believed that the struggles experienced in his life, especially as a young adult, have come to inform and challenge his thoughts and actions to this present time. The trial and error of his life to date has fed a reservoir of stock experiences the researcher draws upon in his empathetic encounters with young people who, like him, find themselves at the edge of all that they know whilst prompted by all that surrounds them to acknowledge that there could be more to what they experience in the present.

> It has been noted that human experience is made human through the existence of associations and recollections, which are strained through the mesh of imagination so as to suit the demands of emotions. As imagination becomes freer and less controlled by concrete actualities, the idealizing tendency takes further flights unrestrained by the reins of the prosaic world. In the degree in which life is placid and easy, imagination is sluggish and bovine. In the degree in which life is uneasy and troubled, fancy is stirred to frame pictures of a contrary state of things. (Dewey, 1920/2004, pp. 59–60)

Dewey's conceptualisation is relevant to young people positioning themselves or being positioned for future possibilities for the future. What the researcher will unearth is to what extent events in the present play a role in speculating about possibilities. How people make themselves up over time is evident in the exploration of the past as an informant of the present. For me, this became both the necessity and the problematic. The necessity is in the recognition that it remains difficult to fully know another in the present, especially in terms of experiences encountered. The problematic is in the phenomenological or ethnographic account where there exists little or no space for exploring details that precede the present.

This study seeks to contend with the thoughts and actions of young people as they locate themselves in the present, yet there is value in borrowing from the past to provide insight into past complexities at play in the present. It is not the expectation here that each participant be foregrounded with regard to personal history.

Fivush's (2012) concept of autonoetic knowing, or mental time travel, "calls on the self to create a coherent personal timeline that stretches back into a continuous past and perhaps into the future," giving cause for the self "to link multiple events together into an overarching life narrative," to create the "story of me" (p. 228). Further to this, and of great connection to this study, is Fivush's conceptual premise that one's development of subjective perspectives and the construction of a personal timeline are dependent upon the opportunities an individual has to interact socially with others in contexts that permit what are culturally provided and therefore appropriate models of themselves and their lives.

The present in a person's life occurs in response to particular needs that act as catalytic moments occurring with little opportunity for or explicit accessing of any account of previous encounters that would serve as experience. Capturing and taking account of such encounters therefore can be achieved by accessing the past in order to gain awareness of the content and perceptions that are discoverable by the person, and that constitute the basis for reflexivity. While interpretations of the term

reflexivity vary across contexts and fields, for the intent and purpose of this thesis each reference in this text is proffered towards the accounting of an act of critical self-reflection, as contingent to one's meaning making around personal subjectivities, experience and agency in social spaces.

1.4   Setting Out the Territory: Higher Education as 'field'

The interactions within a person's lifeworld make for an exploration of the notion of what eventful experiences give rise to thoughts and actions beyond the present. By exploring the encounters with "others" that enter into the lifeworld of a young person (Ashtiani & Feliciano, 2015), it is possible to see what bearing they may have. These encounters may not become influences in any particular or regular way, yet such encounters could have some long-lasting impact. These impacts may not have had an explicit intent yet the potential of the encounter could remain with the young person well after the event occurs.

There are those in the field of higher education who try to determine the programmatic requirements of access and success as a way to bottle some magic elixir for wide-scale consumption. Gale et al. (2010) have undertaken an extensive review of international research literature and an extensive survey of Australian university programs focused on pre-Year 11 school students. While the researcher questions the inference of the term interventions for its implications that a young person is in need of some form of remediation, these policy-driven initiatives are framed by how the system might be enacted to manoeuvre a population in a particular direction (Gale et al., 2010). Such a purpose is not the intent or focus of this study. Rather this study seeks to highlight the significance of small things that have the potential to grow large upon germination. Within the systemic approaches to the provision and maintenance of higher education in contemporary times, there are increasing accounts of the institution not offering agency to all lifeworlds (Archer, 2000; Archer, Hutchings, & Ross, 2005; Reay, 2017).

What Gale et al. (2010) have offered to this study is that a sophisticated approach is called for if young people are to be included in any programmatic undertaking aimed at attaining greater participation from people from underrepresented groups. The analysis in Gale et al. (2010) gave attention to the conditions of entry to university, using the constructs of availability, accessibility, achievement, and aspiration to guide their assessment of outreach programs. The researcher was encouraged by the exposing of program typologies that raised the importance of those programs that would be classified as being people-rich in that there is intent to develop an ongoing relationship between young people and those in a position to offer ongoing guidance. People-rich programs are in contrast to interventions that value school students enhancing their note-taking skills as a form of introduction to life in higher education. What stands out in the accounts linked to these program typologies is that those considered to be people-rich recognise that the knowledge and capacities of disadvantaged students are assets to be acknowledged and valued by formal education. Programs of this type are in stark contrast to the weakly composed attempts to raise student aspirations through strategically narrow means. Such weakness comes through one-off events involving university staff or students visiting schools or students visiting universities. This analysis also emphasises the problematic of programs that have been successful in one context being borrowed without redesign for implementation in new contexts. Program weakness, according to Gale et al. (2010), can be attributable to a singular intent to build students' aspirations for university. Driven by this intent, such programs are unlikely to see significant success due to being premised upon the assumption that disadvantaged students lack aspiration. Evaluations of these interventions are, according to Gale et al., are about the program effectiveness as informed by participants. There remain little definitive accounts of the responses that come to life for participants of such undertakings. Having concluded program participation there remains a need for ongoing connections to be maintained and grown in response to the initial participation. People-rich programs are potentially limited by not valuing what young people bring to both the program and higher education in general.

The researcher's awareness of this shortfall was seminal in forming the research questions of this study. With thirty years as an educator, he remains well versed and immersed in the work of schools and faculty. This work is contextualised through the details of the everyday, beyond the structures and practices blanketed by curriculum and pedagogy. It is in exposing the significance of this context that the researcher developed an internalised discourse around the value of what schools do, which, for the most part, is not measured, and thereby remains unacknowledged within benchmarks of success.

The current era can be referred to colloquially as "interesting times," where the accountability of schools and educators has come to be explicit in both intent and consequence. The call on student performance has rarely been recognised, let alone celebrated, the hourly work of supporting young people in schools. Broad-brush classifications of what schools do have sought to become informed by the metrics of value adding. The failure to count the support for students, other than the narrow view informed by indices of literacy and numeracy accomplishment, became a catalyst for this study.

My standpoint about the challenges of widening participation in higher education has come through the direct experience of being professionally engaged in managing projects aimed at addressing the problematic of access and success in university. This role was explicitly focused on developing projects between the university and schools, with a particular objective of improving the access to higher education (Archer, 2000) for young people identified as belonging to underrepresented groups, i.e., women, people with disabilities, indigenous people, and, in this case, those in low socioeconomic communities. As specific projects were negotiated between school and university representatives, it became evident that the capacities and needs of young people varied considerably, and that in many cases, students encountered and embraced such undertakings from a range of experiences and perspectives.

Within these projects came conversations that carried accounts of the extent to which these experiences would count as the school students become engaged in them as an event. Such connections made evident the value-add to personal lifeworlds. Of specific noteworthiness was how some students and teachers came to frame their daily efforts and opportunities for reflection, albeit in the form of some unarticulated recapitulation of particular standpoints.

Small but rich insights were delivered in conversation, and it soon became apparent that such exchanges promised to be a primary and significant source of insight about how individual students might explore their experiences in the present as a means of considering the future. Further to this is the exploration of what might make for an "appropriate" experience to facilitate an encounter for each participating school student. This insight has become the centre of this study. The impact of connections and encounters eventuating from the personal experiences can highlight the significance that young people place on their experiences.

There is merit in questioning the role of the university as a proactive means to stimulate the expectations of the future. Yet examining what actually occurs within, and to, the self during small encounters, albeit in large settings, remains. Such accounts have promoted inquiry into how schools play a role in a student's engagement in the present and—if at all—position them for the future.

This study explores the experiences, subjectivity, and reactions of a relatively small number of young people as they are positioned and position themselves in particular social and economic contexts. An insight into their expectations and responses to their immediate futures was the initial catalyst for this research and study. However, the researcher's interactions with each of the participants also called forth an ethnographic account of environmental features and how they contribute to the everyday construction of the self, and as they (we) construct ourselves in the present in anticipation of something only observable (if at all) in our imagination of the future.

Aspirations are the thoughts that germinate within, having sometimes been initiated from the smallest of seeds. It is this seed that is derived from either explicit or discrete experiences; thus, the power of the experience is not always fully measurable in situ. If we perceive such seed as being alive, it might also be possible to view subsequent experiences with the potential to either nurture or hinder growth.

Experience is derived from the social and physical environments and is interpreted through intrapersonal interactions, drawing from the past while reflecting on the present. The self is often agency for mere reflection; however, reflexivity calls upon knowing what is yet to be known— something akin to "Meno's paradox" (Fine, 2014). Meno's paradox essentially posits that if you don't know what something is, you will not recognise it when you see it. And if you know it, you don't need to look for it. Thus the act of reflexivity enables the self to move past reflection on actual experience/s, and instead to invoke other possibilities and to imagine what might be. It is therefore reasonable to consider the role that significant others play in the potential enhancement of aspirations, for creating the conditions for clarity of futures imaged or what be viewed as possibilities (Ashtiani & Feliciano, 2015).

If we consider that aspirations are aligned with imagination, then possibilities become boundless. And it is in the realisation of such possibilities that there are encounters through relationships with others. The concept of the other is a tangible/measurable paradigm in terms of the distance between aspiration and realisation. This has come to be understood as a relationship of the power of the individual or as is often observed, the disempowerment of the individual.

As with any seed, once an imagined future germinates, it seeks out favourable conditions that support growth. Put simply, one is drawn to the "light" and what it has to offer. In far more complex terms, the environment modifies initial thoughts and humans, not being fixed in any one place, may either deliberately or by haphazard means find themselves located in surroundings that either promote or hinder possibilities.

1.4   Responding to Conditions That Promote Aspirations in Growth of Self and Others

A person's sense of agency is one way that the initial, imagined future is viewed, partly due to personal awareness of the distance between what is imagined and what can be realised. Those around the young person, their families, friends, and other role models, are the fuel of imagination and facilitate a particular awareness. They offer a means to view and measure what is in the immediate environment and therefore current imaginings— current in the sense that they are often in a state of promotion or hindrance. Such a state is not static and predictable as that of a plant might be, in general.

Emergent opportunities are unexpected events. They arise out of the environment or circumstances where social actors find connections to their imaginings in ways that were unanticipated, such as when a young person undertakes work experience and in doing so finds out they are employable. Emergent opportunities can be both planned and haphazard, but they place a person in a complex surrounding that calls for an extensive interpretation to determine suitability between their imagined future and the means of realising it. Drawing on their prior experience, the person measures each opportunity for the possibilities of actualisation. In such instances, the evaluation is not about success or failure, life or death; rather, it is a relatively vague perspective, more like is it possible or not possible. When something is judged as being *possible* it draws us forward with purpose. The *not possible* judgement will modify either growth or direction in some way. Modification is driven not by the environment one is located in but by the interpretation of that environment. The interpretation is based primarily on one's experience, which is contextualised by initial expectations and imaginations.

Offering plausible insights (Van Manen, 1990) into the lived experiences of young people as they encounter challenges and opportunities is the focus of this study. Using the philosophical insights of Habermas, G.H. Mead, and Bourdieu, the study is driven by the intention to

provide a greater understanding and appreciation of the educational challenges and aspirations of young people in disadvantaged communities (Archer et al., 2005; Gale et al., 2010; Hart, 2012; Reay, David, & Ball, 2005). These theorists provide the framework for a detailed exploration of the role of environment in affecting student aspirations and achievements. Further to this is an account of the role of familial, educational, and community factors in the restriction or enhancement of a young person's ability to navigate a course to new horizons within a field of education.

This study seeks to substantiate that the wider society acting through its institutional agents—schools and universities—does not or should not be concerned with the question of how to generate aspirations in young people. Rather, and better still, they should address the question of how each individual may best be able to attain their aspirations through the exploration of daily interactions within the sociology of the present. The factors that constitute the present of an individual's existence and "awareness" will, as depicted and explored in this study, contribute to the notion of possibilities within particular life trajectories.

The encounters with and questioning of the participants in this study provided an insight into those factors occurring in daily engagements that connect with the larger notions of learning and living in general. Of significance are the findings about the role institutions such as schools and universities and the various personnel that "hold office" within these entities play in creating and enhancing opportunities for young people to imagine both their broad and their specific futures.

While it remains reasonable to consider that enabling futures has been a feature of each constituted institution/mechanism since its establishment, there has not been widespread recognition or exploration of this feature. Consideration of this feature is seminal in the questioning around widening participation in higher education as these very institutions have, are already or can become active agents in limiting, overshadowing or removing the possibilities for young people. This limiting role occurs in spite of the fact the same institutions are primarily charged with being

responsible for the realisation of the historical, intellectual, and sociological being put into play.

This study explores this enhanced insight into the contexts in which the future is imagined in the present for young people. The current economic imperatives provide for a variety of experiences and encounters which can either promote or limit the perceived or actualised sense of agency for young people as they operate within the realms of institutional performativity (France & Haddon, 2014). This study is, therefore, more than a simple attempt to set the scene for an examination of each participant in the study. Rather, it lays bare the choices that schools and universities make on behalf of those that constitute its very existence: young people.

In seeking theoretical support and direction the researcher found particular connectivity to the perspective drawn by Reay in that:

> The range of possibilities inscribed in a habitus can be envisaged as a continuum. At one end, habitus can be replicated through encountering a field that reproduces its dispositions. At the other end, habitus can be transformed through a process that either raises or lowers an individual's expectations. Implicit in the concept is the possibility of a social trajectory that enables conditions of living that are very different from initial ones. (2004, p. 434)

Further to this, and far more precise in description and intent, Reay elucidates that:

> Choices are bounded by a framework of opportunities and constraints the person finds himself/herself in, her external circumstances. Dispositions are inevitably reflective of the social context in which they were acquired. (2004, p. 435)

In referencing this writing the researcher was drawn to Reay's (2004) view of Bourdieu's conception of habitus as a multi-layered concept, stating that "a person's individual history is constitutive of habitus, but so also is the whole collective history of the family and class that the individual is a member of" (2004, p. 434).

For the young people in this study, the lack of fit between a habitus of a "working class past and the middle-class field of higher education generates a sense of uncertainty and feelings of anxiety" (Reay, 1998, p. 523). What then do young people call upon in their search for reference and direction, to something that does not exist in their present, yet is located on the edge of their horizon?

1.5   Lived Biographies

We make ourselves up within the information we provide and construct about ourselves. (Ball, 2004, p. 144)

Ball's assertion speaks to the particular learning that the researcher became aware of over the course of this study: that such information was cause for much questioning by the study participants. Observations and discussions drew out the impact of experience on young people as they spoke of what they called additional information. There were emerging questions that came from the destabilising of what they had thought an informed way of being and interacting in their world. The young people's initial and small experience of university had caused a self-wondering and a calling for further information that could potentially respond to the "what ifs" and "how can I" questions occurring when they perceive a fork in the road.

Young people's lives are the very embodiment of what we might call *complicated conversations* (Pinar, 2012), in which the social, emotional, intellectual and the physical often interplay at the most challenging and opportunistic times. The young people who participated in this study demonstrated both strengths and frailties to the researcher during all of the interactions. These young people offered an external presentation that was often made for show (akin to the lads "having a larf" in Willis, 1977) and it would be easy to be distracted from the primary focus of each encounter. Yet the essence of each person was also not far from view, for those who bothered to look for it.

That social and cultural capital is an expression of one's social position is found in the manner that capital is applied in contexts of

particular fields (Bourdieu, 2011). Those fields are social spaces that exist for and are sustained by the people who benefit from the close association between their capital and the function of the field (Bourdieu, 1985). Social fields are human constructs that depending on the nature of the field determine what a person is called upon to do to achieve field-oriented goals. For the young people participating in this study, their social and cultural capital was derived from their families and communities in the context of the western suburbs of Melbourne. The particular field that was a focus of this study is the educational field that these young people experienced: their secondary school and two universities.

1.6   Thesis Outline

This thesis offers one way to speak back to the interventions that claim to raise the aspirations of select groups of young people, particularly those whose communities are underrepresented in university contexts.

In the following chapters of this thesis an account of the existing and emerging knowledge about those contextualising factors that contribute to a young person's developing view of self in the present and the possibilities of their future is provided. By telling of the relationships between young people's lives and the emerging possibilities for their future, it is intended that this thesis will interrogate how emergence is brought about and how the field of education could be enhanced through bridging social capital (Putnam, 2001). Within this telling is the examination of the sense of agency that is communicated through the young people's responses to encounters with experiences of social structures including schools and universities.

Chapter 2 speaks to the connections between the social positioning of young people and the reports of academic success that are associated with reporting of raising aspirations. The particular question raised in this chapter pertains to the nature and construction of one's sense of choice with respect to the possibilities of the future. Bourdieu's view of education as a contributor to social reproduction is explored through his thesis on forms of capital. The social justice view of access to education indicates the

significance of events as turning points in a person's life that bring about the exploration of social settings beyond that previously experienced as part of a renewed sense of self. McLeod and Yates (2006) speak to the place of school in one's construction of self in a context of social class and the world beyond the school. The interrelationships of engagement and personal success in education are pertinent to a thesis that would focus upon the impact of one's experience upon the capacity and propensity to explore possibilities and opportunities. In addition, Chapter 2 calls upon the theoretical constructs of Bourdieu and sees the contemporary applicability of his propositions of class, capital, habitus, and field.

Chapter 3 builds upon the insights around class and habitus to review the knowledge posited to interpret how a developing sense of self plays into the relationship between experience and agency. Drawing upon the work of Dewey and G. H. Mead, this chapter inquires into the meaning of human agency, as it is constituted through one's habitus and reflexivity to what comes to count as eventful encounters (Joas, 1997).

Social position determines what can be perceived as choice from the available options apparent in the daily experiences within one's lifeworld. Chapter 3 takes account of the element of risk that a person might contend with as part of the perceived extent of agency, within particular fields (Beck, 1992; Lehman, 2004). Schools are social spaces that call on social actors to draw upon or modify their existing habitus and dispositions as an integral function of decision-making. In light of such complexities confronting young people, there is exploration of the current theoretical perspectives regarding the significance of reflexivity as a navigational instrument for social actors seeking to assert their agency within and through field specific-structures (Adams, 2006; Caetano, 2014; Sharrock, 2010). Within this examination of agency and subjectivity is thinking about the significance of experiences within the social space in the context of an increasing focus on individual action. This view remains a foundational concern for this thesis and was the basis of the intent of the study design and data collection.

This thesis was intended to obtain data that would offer a refined insight into the relationships between subjectivity and agency, as promoted through the eventful encounters experienced by young people. This intention called for the study to involve school students as they came to take account of their views of their possible futures. Chapter 4 outlines the methodology that was utilised to locate the telling of personal narratives in the field of education as well as the wider community that constituted each young person's social space. Chapter 4 gives evidence of the problematic nature of undertaking such endeavours in schools.

This thesis has sought to explore the nature of a young person's emerging view of the future, so the use of the term aspiration was included in the exploratory dialogue with educators and leaders in the school sites approached to host the study. Aspiration has come to be problematic in both its definition and nature as the education system, as embodied through schools, has yet to fully appreciate the diverse conditions in play that limit or promote the formation of one's ambitions (Gale & Parker, 2015; Zipin, Sellar, Brennan, & Gale, 2015).

The intention of the methodology had been to undertake the data collection through observation of phenomenological expressions (Freebody, 2003), particularly the responses school students had as part of their experiences of university. Through necessity, the researcher has taken a bricolaged approach to the data collection (Kincheloe, 2011). The complex nature of schools necessitated collecting data in opportunistic ways and drawing these together as a means of meaning-making for the course of the study. This approach enabled the respectful account of the contextualised ways of the young people's subjectivity and sense of being in the world, whilst navigating the ever-present unpredictabilities of the school.

Chapter 5 accounts for the stories of the participating North West Secondary School (NWS) students as they told of their way of being in school and how the world outside of school had contributed to their current views of the future. In conversations about the formation of their views of

the future came the articulations of self as an expression of what informants accessed to construct their subjective worldview. The use of images to prompt initial conversations about personal preferences in career choices gave way to wider aspects of lifeworld and connections to informants about such preferences. Chapter 5 identifies the voids that become apparent when a young person's dispositions are mismatched to ways of being in a particular field, such as that experienced in places of higher education. The tenuous relationships that these young people had with the education system came to be represented in dissipated levels of participation and presence in the school, making the subsequent phases of the study unviable.

Chapter 6 gives an account of the study at another school, Calder College. Upon selection of the students to be invited to participate in the study, the researcher undertook to ascertain the extent of the knowledge that the teachers had of these young people. This offered up informed insights into the constructions of contexts and emergent aspirations as well as the uncertainties that constituted the present way of engaging with school. The teachers' accounts are telling in the depth of the teachers' awareness of the young people with whom they had engaged in different subject-based classes and educational settings. The extracts reported in Chapter 6 reveal teacher knowledge beyond mere curriculum and pedagogy. They report on the humanistic stories that offer evidence of teachers' knowledge of who a young person is and is capable of being, in light of academic accomplishments as well as the known and acknowledged personal circumstances in social spaces beyond the realm of the school.

Chapter 7 discusses the telling of the lived biographies by the young people themselves. As was the case with NWS students, as reported in Chapter 5, the participating Calder College students presented their accounts of how they were constructing their views of the possibilities for the future. The data speak to a dilemma where the language of possibilities for postsecondary education becomes part of the expressed dialogue associated with emerging aspirations, whilst tangible meaning has yet to be

encountered through one's direct experience. The data-rich personal accounts of the young people of Calder College give evidence of the challenges confronting those who bring broad thinking of a potential future into view yet such a view remains distant and without adequate detail so as to permit the construction of pathways to that vision. Beyond the dialogue, the participants took up the offer to visit some university campuses. The purpose was to draw out their refined questioning of what knowledge would be required in order to navigate the journey of being at university.

Whilst supportive of student development, the school was unable to offer readily accessible and ongoing opportunities for the participating students. This impediment called for a bricolage approach as a means to expose the extent of such experiences for the agentic self. Chapter 8 recounts the detailed insights of a Calder College teacher in her encounters with her students in response to their experience of a university campus. The dialogue with this teacher revealed the tangible and ongoing impact that was expressed by the students as she sought to recognise and engage their reflexivity and emerging sense of agency.

Chapter 9, brings together the conceptual background to this study and position the findings from Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 to construct an account of the experiences of young people as they contend with the challenges emanating from the respective distance between one's habitus, as an enactment of social position, and the field of higher education, as encountered in a primary experience of university. Chapter 9 offers an account of emerging theoretical conceptions that the researcher posit as a means of telling of the current challenges for those that seek to make access to higher education equitable and possible through democratic policy, process, and undertaking.

The distillation of what Chapter 9 reveals is represented in Chapter 10 in a semi-structured inquiry protocol. This protocol is a visual account of the researcher's theoretical constructs of the phenomenon of eventful encounters in the production of personal agency. A consequence of these constructs is the implications for enhancing the manner and means by

which young people compose agency over their present and toward the future. The theoretical constructs are then used as leverage to explore the potential to inform advances in agentic practice. At the centre of these agentic practices exist the contextual foundations of a person's possibilities. The exploration of the theoretical constructs of eventful encounters is offered within the inquiry protocol. By working through each of the four constructs, it is possible to inquire into possible futures and guide the dialogue that would offer expressions to the self, and others, about emerging ambitions as informed by developing knowledge of supportive structures within the field of education.

Conclusion

This thesis intends to provide a different way of locating young people as school students within and through the system of education as it promises to promote connections to possible futures. In doing so, the thesis exposes the potential of schools and teachers to work as a conduit to possible futures, through their refined understanding of the lifeworld of their students. The work of democratic educators should have at its core the intention to create experiences and environments that make tangible connections between a young person's potential and possibilities.

This is an account of how young people may attain agency for their respective futures through university encounters that are likely to be eventful. Further to this is the importance of recognising the significance of supporting intersubjective space for dialogical expressions around each young person's responses to such experiences as further support for their personal reflections, questioning, and eventual reflexivity. There is a call from this thesis for rethinking the place of the self in the construction and enactment of experiences that would seek to make effective the horizons for action exposed through detailed knowledge of a young person's lifeworld.

The aspirations that come to be expressed in this study are evidence of the disparate ways of seeing and being in a young person's world. The following chapters take account of young people's expression of

their sense of position within social space. In these accounts are found the challenges, and the opportunities, that one's social and cultural capital draw into being as each person forms their ambitions for the future. The place and potential of schools and universities to collaborate with young people is a consequential need brought to light through the accounts made and given of their subjectivities of the future.

2 The Social Significance of Aspiration

The aspirations young people have for their futures concern how they see the world and themselves in that social world. Exploration of an individual's view of the future calls for an in-depth examination of what factors contribute to their perceptions of self and society. To understand the construction of perception, there is need to account for the influences that form the individual's *present* experiences and their understanding of them. How a young person is positioned towards a particular potential future is directly related to the significance of specific social relations and interactions in their learning. Learning, then, is considered in this thesis in the sense of all aspects of one's life that have contributed to the individual's means, which they call upon to interpret and engage the world (Mezirow, 1990).

This research is primarily concerned with the way in which people embody the social building blocks of identity, particularly the manner in which their thoughts and actions are informed and constructed. In order to highlight insights into the phenomenon of aspiration, this chapter surveys the literature on aspirations with the aim of charting the conceptual geography on which speculation on possibility in life is seeded. This research arises from curiosity and speculation about an individual building a view of the world, given that much of that construction is located in a lifeworld of networks. The research is based on the proposition that it is the relationships formed in these networks that establish the social domain that structures the experiences and consequential perceptions of young people as they inform their views of themselves and the world. This view of a person's positioning calls the researcher to recognise and inquire into those distinctive characteristics in networks and social settings societies that are responsible, in part at least, for the formation of a person's perceptions of and engagement with the world. Accordingly, this chapter seeks to consider

the role of education as a socially formed mechanism in shaping perceptions of oneself in and of the world.

2.1   Aspiration: The Connection of the Personal and the Social

According to Teese (2006), the Australian experience of education offers a challenge for the field of education, particularly for the creators of curriculum and education policy:

> Real innovation would be about breaking the link between social positions and learning outcomes so clearly evident in the map of achievement. It would be about depth of learning, about intrinsic learning satisfaction, about interactive teaching styles that fully engage learners, about transparency of learning objectives, evaluation of programs from a pedagogical perspective, about freedom of choice based on interest and enjoyment of learning. (Teese, 2006, n.p., cited in Black, 2007)

The basis for this position is that some, if not most "learners" have experience that offers less satisfaction, engagement, and freedom of choice. Teese's (2006) research is grounded in the conclusion that education both reflects and contributes to a divided society. He draws on the social theorising of Bourdieu, whose work is directly related to the role of education in producing social division. Bourdieu's work (1984, 1999) has become a powerful theorising source for many researchers in education, not least because much of Bourdieu's investigations articulate education as a principal social institution in forming a socially divided society (Grenfell & James, 1998). Importantly for this study, recent research (Hart, 2013; Zipin, Sellar, & Hattam, 2012; Zipin et al., 2015) has shown the applicability of Bourdieu work to understanding young people's aspirations for the future.

The next section presents a summary of those elements of Bourdieu's writings relevant to the conceptual complexity of the question of aspirations. It will be followed by a discussion of Bourdieu's explanation of the ways in which three forms of capital—economic, cultural, and social— interact to promote the reproduction of social division. Diverging from the cultural capital emphasis in the studies conducted by Zipin et al. (2012, 2015), the summary of the effects of the three forms of capital (Bourdieu

2011) will serve to introduce the proposition that a worthwhile starting point in education action for social justice can be found in seeking connections between Bourdieu's theorising and that of what might be termed conventional or at least less socially critical authors (e.g., Coleman, 1988, 1994: Putnam, 2001; Woolcock, 1998, 2001, 2010). This argument is the source of the personally formed proposition that turning points or events in a young person's life might result in a change in self-awareness about future possibilities (See Chapter 3, pp. 66). The content of such events include those personal relations that prompt a young person to explore social settings beyond what might appear to be narrowly framed future options.

2.2 Social Division and Education

The impact of disadvantage on educational achievement and engagement is well documented. According to the 2007 *Crossing the Bridge* report (Black, 2007), Australian students from low socioeconomic backgrounds when compared to their more affluent peers are:

- less likely to have educationally supportive social and physical infrastructure at home;
- twice as likely to under-perform in literacy and numeracy;
- more likely to have negative attitudes to school, truant, be suspended or expelled and leave school early;
- more likely to struggle with the transition from school to work; and
- less likely to enter university or to succeed in further and vocational education (p. 8).

Findings such as these mirror the findings of Teese who, in multiple studies, has surveyed the results of decades of educational achievement in Australia (Teese, 2006; Teese & Polesel, 2003). These are compelling insights for this study into young people's aspirations, since the conclusion to be drawn from Teese's research is that as young people are reaching senior high school they "have already weighed up the value of committing themselves to schoolwork against how they well they are performing" (Teese & Polesel, 2003, p. 211).

McLeod and Yates (2006) present the view that when we consider young people in schools in the context of class, we can align the role of the school context for identity formation with the review issues of "work patterns and work characteristics beyond the school" (p. 177). This is pertinent for young people as they construct a career identity in a time of seemingly perpetual social change, its impact on the nature of work, and the potential to change jobs a number of times over a working life. McLeod and Yates describe this career identity as significant since certain representations of self are the capital that is used to succeed in the workforce.

> Class is not something that you can pin down once and for all, but it embodies concepts and discussions that remain highly important for studying young people in the context of schools and in the context of coming from (family) and becoming (a type of person, a type of worker). (McLeod & Yates, 2006, p. 186)

McLeod and Yates' premise is that young people's developing insights around aspirations and expectations become "a story of change and reproduction within a context of change" (p. 187). Bland (2004) points out that students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds often find schools alienating, and successful completion and subsequent entry into higher education should be viewed as a "remarkable" success.

The frame of reference by which young people position their learning and career goals is often enhanced or restricted by their past and current life experiences. This may also be reflected in the young person's capacities to explore the possibilities, expectations and opportunities that may, in turn, affect the degree of success they attain (Apple, 2000; Connell, Ashenden, Kessler, & Dowsett, 1982; Sikora & Saha, 2013; Teese & Polesel, 2003). In the relationship between experience and future is the significance for action about Bourdieu's thinking on education. Bourdieu (1988) argues that "knowing agents" have a practical sense in thinking about possible visions that are aligned to possibilities for action, such as when young people and their families tacitly accept a choice from a narrow set of life aspirations. Educators and educational institutions base their

understanding of young people on this tacit acceptance and subsequently adhere to the narrow set of aspirations in an iterative process.

2.3 Bourdieu and Education: Social Reproduction, "Habitus," and "Cultural Capital"

For Bourdieu, the most evident characteristic of the modern world is its enduring inequality. Bourdieu employs the term "reproduction" in his analysis of how social division results from the structural organisation of the modern world. Bourdieu does not intend to convey the meaning that reproduction is "determining" of a person's social location and relationships. Rather social reproduction, for Bourdieu, is the outcome of the knowledgeable interaction between people and the social worlds they inhabit. The relevance of Bourdieu's work (Bourdieu, 1998; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) for the question of aspiration lies in the complex interplay he establishes between the people's responses to the social settings they inhabit. He argues against a mechanistically determined effect that society and its structures and power have on the distribution of wealth and people's lives. For Bourdieu, each person is active in his or her interaction with the social milieu.

To understand how people make decisions and enact their lives is to engage with how they see their own social settings: it is to engage with a person's everyday practices, the perceptions they have of the world, and how they act on those perceptions in practice.

> The habitus is this kind of practical sense for what is to be done in a given situation—what is called in sport a feel for the game, that is, the art of anticipating the future of the game, which is inscribed in the present state of play. (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 25)

Bourdieu posits that people's experiences—their practices—are expressions of the complex conceptual terrain bounded by class, capital, habitus, and field. The social space that is of human construction is a challenging construct in that it represents the assemblages of social, cultural, and economic references to commonalities. In such social spaces, the "cloud of individuals" (Crossley, 2014) is mappable for dispositions as

much as the cultural, economic and social resources that are recognised and accessible. The mapping of such clouds led to Bourdieu's construction of class, one that precludes definitive typologies. Contextualised social spaces are the fields that see capital, as conceived by Bourdieu, come into play and where some players are advantaged through their access to, and application of, particular forms of capital. Of significance to this research is the account of field given by Thomson (2014):

> A social field is not fixed, and it is possible to trace the history of its specific shape, operations and the range of knowledge required to maintain it and adapt it. To do so is to understand how change happens within a field. (p. 70)

In *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) consider a difference between the middle and the working classes is the way class members respond to potential rewards on offer with the attainment of academic qualifications. Here then, according to Bourdieu and Passeron, is the root of the relationship between formal education, as a representation of *pedagogic authority* in the production and rewarding of dispositions, and the construction of the "habitus" of individuals. The consideration posited here is that *pedagogic work* primarily seeks to establish certain dispositions. The dispositions sought are those that fit with the expectations of the pedagogic authority, acting as a socialising agent of the dominant classes.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) see a person's habitus as a "system of schemes of thought, perception, appreciation and action" that can produce misrecognition of the limits of thought and practice through cultural impositions. They draw attention to the success of pedagogic work being derived from the many agents living under the false impression of "freedom and universality." Bourdieu and Passeron argue an agent's disposition can only be transformed through a process that results in the production of a "new irreversible disposition" (p. 42). This for them is especially relevant to the intent and undertakings of educational institutions and provides fertile ground to consider the contrast of class-based dispositions and the expectations of schools as pedagogic authority.

> The success of all school education depends fundamentally on the education previously accomplished in the earliest years of life, even and especially when the educational system denies this primacy in its ideology and practice by making the school career a history with no pre-history: logical dispositions are mastered in their practical state. These dispositions predispose children unequally towards symbolic mastery of the operations implied. (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, p. 43)

The potential for disjuncture between expectations of the school and the dispositions of young people, from this point on to be read as agents, is found in the habitus acquired in the family as the basis for cultural assimilation and the messages conveyed and enacted in the classroom. The cultural reproduction work of schools is extended to critique the manner by which educational systems undertake an implicit pedagogy that seeks to produce social actors that in turn are well suited to continue the work of cultural reproduction. Thus Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) identify the inertia that educational systems attain through the legitimisation of particular dispositions constituted in the habitus of graduates that go on to professional lives that are part of the purveyance of the legitimate culture.

Bourdieu (1984) seeks to reconcile the person within the social structure of class through the assertion that one's undertakings and view of the world go largely unquestioned due to the sense of being "natural," especially in the company of objectively harmonised social practices and products. Maton's (2008) review of Bourdieu's position on social class reaffirms the significance of others in setting a basis for the assumptions of agents. Maton argues that social practices are characterised by regularities, drawing for example, on the question posed by Willis (1977) as to why working-class kids tend to get working-class jobs.

Maton (2008) draws attention to Bourdieu's view of habitus as the property of social agents and the complexity found in its existence as "a structured and structuring structure" (p. 50). Where someone lives and goes to school and the consequential interactions they experience as a member of a particular community plays a role in the development of how they view and respond to the world (Johnston, Raab, & Abdalla, 1999;

Parekh, Killoran, & Crawford, 2011). What is worth exploring is the extent to which the person refines their perspectives, insights, and reflexivity. This is some of the theoretical context for asking what is to be gained from insights about the means which personal trajectories become modified.

> The habitus fulfils a function which another philosophy consigns to a transcendental conscience: it is a socialized body, a structured body, a body which has incorporated the immanent structures of a world or of a particular sector of that world—a field—and which structures the perception of that world as well as action in that world. (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 81)

Bourdieu thus sets the stage for the interpretation of how an individual can or cannot engage in a particular setting, event, or context. Within a philosophical standpoint of the principle of "sufficient reason," Bourdieu promotes the view that agents do not engage in gratuitous acts, calling forth the importance of determining such reason or reasons to understand acts and perhaps inaction according to a unique principle. Bourdieu examines such a principle under the title of *illusion.* His view is that what is experienced as obvious by some is something of an illusion to those who are non-participants "in the game." He contends that it is knowledge that "seeks to defuse this sort of hold that social games have on socialized agents" (p. 79). It is possible that Bourdieu raised such insight from his early work with Passeron, resulting in the publication of *The Inheritors* (1979), which argued:

> Even if they are not consciously assessed by those concerned, such substantial variations in objective educational opportunity are expressed in countless ways in everyday perceptions and, depending on the social milieu, give rise to an image of higher education as "Impossible," "possible," or "natural" future, which, in turn, plays a part in determining educational vocations. The experience of their academic future cannot be the same. (p. 2).

In line with this view, Ball et al. (2002) draw on Robbins (1991) to examine the role of habitus in enabling people to enact practical mastery in particular situations, and on Bourdieu's (1977) cultural capital to focus on

the relationship between culture and language and associated subtle modalities. Reay et al. (2005) also argue that in the intrinsic decisions of everyday life lies the logic of practice, since

> normal biographies are linear, anticipated and predictable, unreflexive transitions, often gender and class specific, rooted in well-established lifeworlds. They are often driven by an absence of decisions. (p. 33)

Thomson (2002) puts forward the concept of the virtual school bag (conceptually informed by insights of habitus) to highlight the diverse nature of young people arriving at school. Such diversity does by its very constitution create significant points of difference; "their life trajectories are connected and differentiated through the school system" (Thomson, 2002, p. 2). In arguing that previous insights of the relationship between habitus and capital have been generalised and were often based on deficit views of particular socioeconomic groups, Thomson states:

> In the past, many people believed that working-class children, and children from particular races and cultures, were just less intelligent, and that somehow "smart brains" were distributed according to the thickness of parents' wallets and the colour of their skin. Others have argued that the culture of working-class homes and neighbourhoods is hostile to school success and that working-class parents do not want to help their children do well. Research shows this to be untrue: the vast majority of parents, regardless of their bank balance, think that school is very important and try hard to help their children succeed. (2002, p. 3)

Further to this, Thomson draws on the work of Connell et al. (1982) and Bourdieu (1984, 1998) to explain how educational disadvantage is more about differences in power than any deficiency of intent or capability. Recognition of schooling as a social institution conveys how the institution facilitates the allocation and distribution of material, symbolic and cultural resources and the capital produced in the interests of only some young people.

The opportunity for schools to positively impact each student sees Thomson following Bourdieu and arguing that it is the combined and

institutionally proscribed and discursively regulated actions of all "players" that work to produce or reproduce socially and culturally differentiated symbolic and cultural capital. Bourdieu has referred to this as the "destiny effect" (1999, p. 63). If there is to be systemic and individual change in so-called predetermined trajectories then each student will be permitted to use and build on their local "funds of knowledge" (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2013) and pedagogical practices would be developed and enhanced in ways to connect young people to knowledge by working with the personal and collective knowledge "resources" that the children bring to school.

For a young person to effect and embark upon an atypical trajectory, there can be a cost. The person may have to become a "different" person from the rest of her/his family, peers, and lifeworld—acquiring much of the dominant habitus in order to meet the requirements of the field/space. This may mean leaving an existing place behind. In her view of the sociology of school and the potential impact for a person, Thomson (2002) posits:

> The production and reproduction of educational advantage is complex. It is embedded in everyday micro-transactions in the classroom and schoolyard where virtual schoolbags are variously opened, mediated and ignored. (p. 9)

2.3.1   Class and Destination: The Reproduction of Possibility

Particular trajectories are born out of a young person's habitus. A personal view of the future is inclusive of class, family, and individual perceptions around the idea of what is "reasonable" to expect (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). In support of this idea, Ecclestone (2004) suggests that habitus offers a construct for representing how knowledge and action display the realisation of socialisation and personal agency in particular fields, such as education. For Hansen (2002), there is significance for developing *plasticity,* by utilising the ability to learn from the experience, and for developing the power to retain from one experience something that enables coping with the difficulties of a later situation. The cultivation of traits and attitudes, including straightforwardness, open-mindedness, breadth of outlook, integrity of purpose, and responsibility has long been considered to

be the quality of a person who is deepening an interest in learning from all of their contacts in the world. Hansen argues that this is regardless of such contacts being "momentary" or "enduring," pleasant or trying. Institutions such as universities may therefore play a significant role in enhancing the current habitus of people.This links with Bourdieu and Passeron's argument that:

> Social origin, with the initial family education and experience it entails, must not be considered as a factor capable of directly determining practices, attitudes and opinions at every moment in a biography, since the constraints that are linked to social origin work only through the particular systems of factors in which they are actualized in a structure that is different each time. (1990, pp. 88–89)

Bourdieu and Passeron challenge the manner in which educators and researchers can falter in their observations and deductions based on a restricted "cause and effect" viewpoint of culture. Instead, they call for awareness of the "ensemble of the social characteristics" (1977, p. 88) of the person if there is to be any clarity regarding the probabilities and possibilities of educational destinies. The caution here is the potential inaccuracy based on overdependence of a single aspect of a person's biography when trying to explain all characteristics, personality, and potentiality. In too many realities,

> the means by which young people obtain a livelihood are influenced significantly by the patterns of structural and cultural inequity. Schools are intimately involved in the processes of cultural formation, and as such, become arenas in which the tensions and conflicts of the cultural dimensions of social division are of central importance. (Wilson & Wyn, 1993, p. 6)

In support of such complications brought about by social externalities, there exist the wider consequences of economic occurrences. For example Willis (1977) argues that:

> The collapse of the youth labour market, the replacement of factory work with new technologies and the expansion of the service industries all fundamentally affected the opportunities for these young men's

employment after school. Willis's [sic] "lads" could no longer expect the conventional transitions from school to work through traditional apprenticeships and familial contacts. (Arnot, 2003, p. 111)

A person's social positioning is affected by particular entities such as family that go beyond a shallow, uncomplicated view of the interplay between the person and society. The following account demonstrates this.

> Though our parents had far less formal education than the parents of middle-class kids, they had a far more sophisticated understanding of how hierarchies operate, no doubt because they spent their lives at, or near, the bottom of several. They knew that attending university was about social class and power—getting to go to one was a manifestation of class and power, and once you were there, class and power were bestowed and reproduced. Suffice to say growing up in these environments, and as a result of a host of other structural and transformative interpersonal factors . . . serendipity had little part to play in our lives. (Muzzatti & Samarco, 2006, p. xi)

These statements are offered as a contemporary reiteration of Bourdieu and Passeron's (1990) caution regarding speculation about connections between circumstances of birth and unfolding biography. Such statements validate this research, serving as a marker of the complicated nature of the lifeworld, as each person writes it out. There is no life script that is assigned at birth based on geographical address, bloodline, or inheritance.

Bourdieu's (1984) insights into how the subjective self is constructed from and within a social space, and how agents are never fully aware of the many relationships at play and yet a person is able to view the objective space from their perceived position within it and "in which their will to transform or conserve it is often expressed" (p. 169). Further to this Bourdieu posits that one's habitus is formed through dispositions that "generate practices and meaning-giving perceptions" (p. 170). On this point, Bourdieu contends that the habitus, in turn, is responsible for classifiable practices and products as well as judgements that constitute distinctive systemic social signifiers. It is this consideration that has

potential to illuminate the nexus of social class and one's experience of the field of education.

2.3.2 Habitus and Doxa: The Constraining of Young People's Aspirations

Schooling is an extensive system of preparation for employment—not only at the entrance to working life, but also as continuing education becomes a requirement for career development and change. Therefore, there is a need to confront the university's philosophy and practice if it is to embrace the challenges of the community in which it is a key stakeholder, and well before it can begin to celebrate any achievements in terms of student success. Observations that schools and universities establish and build what has been termed by some as *institutional habitus* (Morrison, 2009; Reay, 1998; Reay et al., 2001; Smyth & Banks, 2012; Thomas, 2002a, 2002b) are worthy of further inspection (Bland 2004). According to Thomas (2002a), institutional habitus is

> more than the culture of the educational institution; it refers to relational issues and priorities, which are deeply embedded, and sub-consciously informing practice. This is possible as educational institutions are able to determine what values, language and knowledge are regarded as legitimate, and therefore ascribe success and award qualifications on this basis. (p. 431)

While some of the intent behind the use of the terminology has merit, it does stand that such a use of habitus is conceptually inaccurate (Atkinson, 2011). The researcher considers it to be more precise to describe the entities (institutions) as fields where the embodied doxa (Eagleton & Bourdieu, 1992; Grenfell, 2014) of the person may be either embraced or resisted. Blackmore (2010), in examining the role of doxa, presents a view of habitus in the context of the field of education and concludes:

> The mutually constituting relationship between field and habitus therefore provides ways of conceptualising agency and change at the individual level as the field of education changes, in turn producing habitus and a disposition to adopt some practices rather than others. Within each field, certain knowledges and capitals are privileged, providing a common sense

or orthodoxy that Bourdieu calls doxa. A focus on the social practices that re/produce habitus offers explanations of purposeful and intelligent behaviour that takes into account the constraints of structure, rules and relationships, how doxa works, but still leaves space for agency. (p. 102)

Postsecondary education, as a field, will provide the conditions for the nature and effectiveness of a relationship between the university and (prospective) students. The desire of university personnel to enhance the opportunities and learning outcomes of school students must be positioned in the university's particular manner of operation. The researcher contends that, in seeking such an objective, a university must have a transformative curriculum (Mezirow, 1996, 2003). The university operates and presents through the explicit *means of its existence* rather than as Thomas' *institutional habitus* (2002a, 2002b). This difference is significant in that the very *means of existence* is derived from the university's culture that determines relational issues and priorities, which in turn inform the organisation's practice. If the university as an organisation is to enhance student capacity and aspirations then it must be both willing and able to improvise and use whatever flexibility it has, through policies and procedures, to initiate, implement and support constructive relationships with students.

Maton (2008) considers the implications of Bourdieu's insights into the interplay between habitus and field, particularly where there exists something of a match between them. The result of this match is a key contributor to what Bourdieu views as social reproduction. Further, Maton highlights the work of Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) in addressing "why social agents from middle class backgrounds are more likely, and those from working-class backgrounds less likely to attend university" (p. 57) as the practices and beliefs of a particular upbringing act as stimuli for particular educational trajectories. For young people from "non-traditional backgrounds," Maton reads into Bourdieu and Passeron's work that it is not the educational system that prevents access by working-class students but rather it is because they regard the field of higher education as not natural (Archer, 2000). They are informed by their habitus and come to view

university as "not for the likes of me" (Maton, 2008, p. 57), therefore establishing a relational nature between habitus and aspirations.

> We learn, in short, our rightful place in the social world, where we will do best given our dispositions and resources, and also where we will struggle. In this way we achieve "subjective expectations of objective probabilities"—what is likely becomes what we actively choose. Social agents thereby come to gravitate towards those social fields (and positions within those fields) that best match their dispositions and to try and avoid those fields that involve a field-habitus clash. (Maton, 2008, p. 60)

Zipin et al. (2015) add to the exploration of habitus and aspirations, constructing a view of habituated aspirations, where

> what we call habituated aspirations, based in the dispositional structures of habitus, embody the possibilities-within-limits of given social–structural positions. This dispositional sense of self-limiting possibility abides as deeply internalized, latently felt estimations of probable futures, unlike doxic aspirations that channel a skin-deep intake of ideologically articulated messages. (2015, p. 234)

Zipin et al. go on to suggest that the aspirations of young people are informed by the norms of worthy futures and inherited dispositions in what they describe as the "past made present." This is extended to interpretations of young lives that are cognisant of the "present-becoming-future." Thus a view of emergent aspiration brings to the fore elements worthy of further exploration that include the subjectivities at play in the construction of a person's aspirations. This can be challenging as Zipin et al. (2015) have speculated:

> In theorizing emergent epistemic phenomena of social presents-becoming-futures, the "logics" of which (as we will theorize) do not yet have language—not just in young people's subjectivities, but among academics who would research those subjectivities—we find ourselves needing further conceptual resources, offering concepts that get more at "feeling," "sensuousness" and "imagination" as materializing social processes. (p. 236)

Here, then, is both the opportunity and the challenge in thinking through the discernible possibilities for researchers who are seeking to both appreciate and communicate the sociocultural formation of aspirations. The discrete manner by which particular futures are both imagined and perceived is not easy to articulate let alone identify using particular research methods. Opportunities for an enhanced understanding around the emergent aspirations of young people from disadvantaged contexts, are explored by Zipin et al. (2015), and they posit:

> the emergent as a locus of agency wherein young people have possibilities to exceed older generational inheritances, reading the world anew and—particularly if power-marginalized—wrestling anew with the cruel optimisms that history bequeaths to them. In lived-cultural grounds of emergent possibility, they may read the world in new-generational ways which exceed—even as they entwine with—habituated dispositions and populist doxa, leading towards reformations and transformations. (p. 243)

Bourdieu in his writing in *Distinction* (1984) considers this same line of thought when considering how capital is drawn upon to inform personal trajectories. People are subject to forces that create a space that may in turn act as a means to resist the forces of the field and associated capital Bourdieu as the "field of possibilities." Within this field, according to Bourdieu, trajectorial shift may occur due to collective events such as war and crisis or personal events involving encounters, affairs, and/or benefactors, yet remain subject to dispositions of the given agent that are presented with such events (be they fortunate or unfortunate).

Yet Bourdieu references statistical variances that, for him, indicate that within a given class there exist different trajectories (above and below) to that most associated with such social positions.

> The correlation between a practice and social origin is the resultant of two effects; on the one hand, the inculcation effect directly exerted by the family or the original conditions of existence; on the other hand, the specific effect of social trajectory, that is, the effects of social rise or decline on dispositions and opinions, position of origin being, in this logic,

merely the starting point of trajectory, the reference whereby the slope of the social career is defined. (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 111)

The nature of trajectory for a given agent is, for Hodkinson (1998), the point of variation between agents of a common social position, derived by the new experiences that in turn modify the schemata for recognising the surrounding world. According to Hodkinson, this context for decision-making, specifically regarding careers, is a reference to horizons for action where perspectives and possibilities are imaginable because of the choices being made. Horizons of action are, according to Hodkinson, able to both limit and enable the agent's view of the world and the choices that are made. This informing of class-related predictability leads Hodkinson to add a caution to any overgeneralisation, arguing that:

> Because the patterns resulting from behaviours of many people can be measured, it is sometimes assumed that they are a sufficient explanation for the individual actions that they are made up of. Having made that assumption, individual behaviours, based on class, gender and ethnic identity are then assumed to "explain" the patterns with which we started. Some find this sort of determinism in Bourdieu. (Hodkinson, 1998, p. 100)

Hodkinson then takes up the question of the determinability, if not predictability, of career paths, that is in line with class and associated capital. To explain the phenomenon of the mismatch of predetermined norms he calls upon the notion of turning points, as constructed by Levi Strauss, when a person goes through a transformation of identity that results because "career decisions are pragmatically rational and embedded in the complex struggles and negotiations of the relevant field" (Hodkinson, 1998, p. 101). Hodkinson contends that there are various types of turning points discernible in the nature of the factors giving rise to transformation within an agent. A structural turning point is one largely determined by an external institution, as compared to a self-initiated turning point resulting from a response to a range of personal factors in a given field, and those turning points are the consequence of events or the actions of others. Thus turning points highlight an appreciation of the complexities at play in trajectories that are not in line with what is predicted based on social class.

Hodkinson considers that conceptually "routines and turning points can only be understood in combination with habitus, horizons for action, capital and field" (1998, p.102).

2.4   Distinguishing between Capital: Economic, Cultural, and Social

Drawing on the preceding insights of the relationship that one's social position has to the capital that can be accessed, this section looks to offer detailed accounts of what meaning can be made of the forms of capital, within particular fields, and the implications for personal agency. Bourdieu (1986) positions the construct of capital as a means to appreciate sociological forces, inscribed through the objectivity of things, that contribute to the construction of a world, and where success in practice is not determined in equal circumstance. By acknowledging the field in which an agent is positioned, Bourdieu draws attention to three guises of capital, their points of distinction, and the relationships between each. The following provides a brief scoping of economic, social and cultural capital.

Economic capital is directly convertible into money whereas cultural capital may be converted into economic capital and institutionalised in the form of educational qualifications. Social capital is about social obligations (connections). Bourdieu offers insight, most relevant for this research, in his telling of how he found theoretical clarity in his construction of cultural capital:

> The notion of cultural capital made it possible to explain the unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from different social classes relating academic success to the distribution of cultural capital between the classes and class fractions. (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 82)

While using the terminology of economics, Bourdieu has pointed to a shortfall where economists have failed to take account of those forces that contribute to the differential chances of profit from educational investment. He sees this shortfall being derived from the failure to fully locate such investment in the discrete and socially powerful system of cultural reproduction, a system born through the investment of time and cultural capital. From this standpoint, Bourdieu views the lack of acknowledgement

of the education system as a contributor to the reproduction of social structure in that it sanctions the transmission of hereditary cultural capital.

Bourdieu considers how the connectivity of cultural and social capital within educational action is determined by the social capital that a person can draw upon to "back it up." He views the cumulative value of cultural capital as being "work on oneself" in that it remains an investment of time (a personal cost) so that such capital becomes embodied into a habitus, yet such accumulation is limited to the capacities of the individual agent. On this point, Bourdieu maintains that cultural capital in the form of academic qualifications is very much tied to the biological limits of the bearer. That is to say the transmission of such capital, unlike economic capital, is not possible beyond the life of the individual attaining academic qualifications.

The reproduction of social class for Bourdieu is implicated in economic determination. Without the means to prolong an individual's formal education beyond the minimum, there is a continuation of the labour–power relations. It is one's family's cultural capital that Bourdieu (1986) sees as the early instigator of the accumulation of useful capital. Where a family's cultural capital aligns with the education system, little time is wasted in building on the learner's existing cultural capital deposit. Bourdieu's position is that the time taken by an individual to engage this acquisition is determined by the family's capacity to postpone economic necessity, and offers potential for longer, deeper, and consequently more productive participation in education.

Bourdieu's use of economic principles highlights the relationship between cultural and economic capital. Thus in his view, any profits that result from the attainment of academic qualifications may actually be less than the investments made because wide-ranging factors determine, at particular points in time and contexts, the conversion rate between academic capital and economic capital. Strategies for the conversion of economic capital into cultural capital, according to Bourdieu (1986), remain a pivotal motivator in the growth of schooling and the associated "inflation

of qualifications" in the various attempts to profit from the different types of capital.

Bourdieu's (1986) construction of social capital is a conceptual means of exploring and explaining social relationships. The resources available to an individual are, as Bourdieu contends, connected to the "durable network of mutual acquaintances" in which the person is embedded. The extent of the social capital processed by an agent is largely determined by the size of the network that is available to be mobilised by that agent and the economic and cultural capital possessed by the network's members. Further, Bourdieu suggests that social capital is never completely independent of economic and cultural capital, as these factors produce the homogeneity of a person's social connections as well as enhancing the capital that an individual brings to the network: "The profits, which accrue from membership in a group are the basis of the solidarity, which makes them possible" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 86).

In speaking to the distinctive feature of social capital, that is the durable subjective obligation of each member, Bourdieu contends that such a state is not achieved in a haphazard or complacent manner. Such networks are the result of conscious and unconscious efforts aimed at establishing or reproducing usable relationships. Based on this, Bourdieu contends that social capital is profitable through the accumulation of individual invested capital.

The perpetuation of dominant classes has been assumed by the educational system. According to Bourdieu, education adds legitimacy to the investment in academic qualifications as means of attaining additional cultural and economic capital. There exists a paradox in the utilisation of institutional means of accessing and distributing such capital. Bourdieu's (1986) assertion that types of capital are convertible is at first viewing depressing: whatever the least advantaged understand about their lack of social power, the dominant class can manipulate the various forms of capital to ensure social reproduction. But the possibility exists for a confounding of a deterministic reproduction of inequality (See Chapter 5).

Chapter 5 (see Section 5.6, p, 130) presents, in Bourdieu's terms, a single case of a young person who through participation in a set of fortuitously formed networks experiences an explicit shift in social capital which he transforms into the kind of cultural capital which has purchase in formal education. With the understanding conferred by hindsight, the researcher can represent these transformations as a series of events or "turning points" (Hodkinson, 1998).

The research in this thesis is the outcome of the asking of a question. Can the event in Chapters 5 and 8 become the prompt for a program in which young people might be introduced to experiences, to open up new social networks, and which connect directly to new educational horizons? The question implies that the field of "something other" is possible rather than an education characterised by the "doxa" of competitive achievement that offers rewards only to the winners of such achievement. Nothing less than an alternative to what might be termed a "hard" interpretation of Bourdieu's reproduction thesis is the answer!

2.5   Aspiration: Towards Turning Points in Social Capital Formation

A notable aspect of Bourdieu's body of work and accounts given by sympathetic commentators (e.g., Field, 2008; Fine, 2010; Grenfell & James, 1998; Swartz, 2012) is the emphasis accorded cultural capital in explanations of social reproduction and the muted place social capital occupies. The imbalance is replicated in aspirations-related research (Zipin et al., 2015) where the links between cultural capital and forms of knowledge come to have explanatory priority. Given the significance of the "social" in Bourdieu's theorising, this research asks why social capital has only received limited attention in accounts of reproduction. Without an explicit inclusion of social capital, explanations of social reproduction emphasising cultural capital, this research argues, can give unintended credibility to the *doxa* of education as a matter of individualised achievement and reward.

Through its interest in opening up the doxa of the university (Baker & Brown, 2007), this study asks if young people might be able to generate

aspirations beyond what might be expected given their cultural capital. The university is uniquely situated at the intersection of multiple local, national, and global networks. Arguably, the university is as powerful an institutional possessor of social capital as it is of cultural capital. Whereas Bourdieu defined social capital as a contributor to class distinction and social reproduction (Field, 2008; Fine, 2010), the proposition that young people might become aware of alternative future possibilities through exposure to a university's knowledge and cultural networks requires a constructive definition of social capital.

What is required is a social capital pathway into the aspiration question in much the same way that Zipin et al. (2015) have applied the "funds of knowledge" idea to the ways in students might link their families' and community's cultural capital to that valued by formal institutions of education. In the last two decades, new interpretations of social capital have pointed to means of re-generating democratic community practices to build-up networks of communication, learning, and politics (Grenfell, 2009; Inaba, 2013; Schuller, 2007; Woolcock, 2010). As already highlighted, there are real differences between the definitions of social capital advanced by Bourdieu and the understandings associated with Coleman (1988) and Putnam (2001). That conclusion notwithstanding, this study explores the possibility that in the theorising of the latter authors, there might be the seeds of a program of action which could transform a university's relationships with its local and extended communities so that young people can perceive that higher education might offer hitherto unexpected options for adult futures.

Social capital may be best viewed as constituted by intangible relationship and network resources (Inaba, 2013; Schuller, 2007). For Woolcock (2001), social capital is a concept with distinctive components related to the ways the network of social relationships in which people are embedded affects their participation in education and community life. Bonding social capital is a term linked to the close relationships of family and friends whereas bridging social capital relates to the connections of more distant associations (Putnam, 2001). Such a distinction permits

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refined considerations of the implications of social connections as experienced by individuals in particular fields. Leonard (2004) highlights that transition from bonding to bridging social capital is "beset with contradictions" as attempts are aimed at enhancing inclusivity in a community (Christoforou, 2013). Another way to think about networks is Granovetter's (1973; 2005) strong and weak ties. Strong ties occur when similar people bond and cluster, creating mutual but limited connections. Weak ties enable individuals to "bridge" into otherwise disconnected groups that enable access to a "wider" world and therefore a greater impact for the person (Granovetter, 1973, 2005; Krackhardt, 2003).

Field (2008) seeks to refine the understanding of social capital in the context of the nature of connections that are required if there is to be a positive impact upon people's well being. He considers that recent evidence presents a case in support of the value of connections between people, and when they make use of such connections there are "strong positive links between social capital and educational attainment, economic success, health and freedom from crime" (Field, 2008, p. 69). Field presents social capital as dependent upon the person not only being aware of others but also that they must trust one another if there are to be cooperative efforts to attain goals. Thus the very nature of connections can be used to differentiate the type of social capital as a consequence of the type of connections constituting a person's network. Here Field draws in the work of Putnam (2001) and Lin (2001) to explore the refined view of social capital in the distinction of bonding and bridging or strong and weak ties. In doing so, he raises a key point of Putnam that bonding social capital is good for getting by whereas bridging social capital is pivotal in getting ahead. Extending Granovetter's (1973) work, Lin (2001) also considers the nature of connections utilised by young people seeking employment. Having identified two ties—strong and weak—Granovetter highlighted how more and novel information would flow through to individuals through their weak ties (1973, 2005; Krackhardt, 2003).

While Field's position includes the distinction of homogeneity and heterogeneity in viewing how social capital functions, he draws upon the

capacity of agents to activate such, as there is for him the question of how one acquires and develops the social competence required in order to activate social capital.

> Many of the skills required to access the different resources made available through people's networks are tacit ones that are deeply embedded in the practices of the relationships themselves. This quality may, of course, help explain the great difficulties of transferring one's social capital from one context to another, or translating it into another type of capital. (Field, 2008, p. 76)

Endreß (2014), in his exploration of the relationship between social capital and belonging, sees three structures informing any analysis of societal belonging: structural, sociopolitical, and sociocultural. His view is that it is essential to recognise the intertwined character explained by such structures for identity development and a sense of belonging.

In his discussion of social networks, trust, and reciprocity, Endreß posits social capital as a multidimensional concept. Of particular interest for Endreß are the meanings and significance of trust in relation to the concepts of social capital and belonging.

> We have to avoid both an individualistic (Coleman) as well as an ontological (Putnam) understanding of the ideas of "social capital" and "belonging." Because both are open to socio-historical interpretations, they have to be seen as historical as well as relational concepts, as structurally ambivalent, pointing necessarily to the structure of social inequity and the structure of power differentiation in the society they refer to. (2014, p. 71)

Schultheis' (2014) deliberations regarding the various insights and positions of social capital contrast contemporary positions, largely informed by a context of national and personal economic capital, and an "older" sociological view of social and economic relationships based on power and class structures. In response to a study of the structures of everyday life, Schultheis offers a view of social capital that is less about successful economic systems and high levels of political integration and more concerned with the access and utilisation of social space Schultheis' findings and analysis give credence to the earlier work of Bourdieu.

Spatial mobility, flexibility in reaction to the demands of the labor market, living according to the pattern of short-term projects instead of long-term career plans, the constant expansion of networks and improving social capital, etc.: none of this can be reconciled easily with a social habitus that is based on down to earth family values . . . one remains in a weak position due to a lack of networks or few economic or cultural resources; one does not know where advice and support can be found. (Schultheis, 2014, pp. 161–162)

It is possible to move beyond debates about social capital (Fine, 2010) by examining the phenomenon the terminology and theorists have sought to encapsulate. The interactions, inclusions and exclusions, and access to and utilisation of connectivity to other individuals through various means remain important when considering how agents go about meeting their respective needs. What is up for some consideration is the ways an agent can recognise the means, and the consequences, of a network promoted through social interactions no matter how strong or weak they are for trust or reciprocity (Lin, 2001; Lin & Erikson, 2008). Webb, Schirato, and Danaher (2002) conclude that Bourdieu (1992) attributes a person's capacity to navigate and negotiate various cultural fields to what he terms practical sense or logic of practice and a "reflexive relation to cultural fields and one's own practices within those fields" (p. 49). Thus Bourdieu's insight considers how social actors may overcome the limitations they encounter in particular fields. In order to achieve this, Bourdieu theorises the imperative need for agents to have a reflexive relationship with their practices. This includes regard for one's particular social and cultural origins and contexts and the refined sense of position the agent has within a given field.

Conclusion

To simplify how social capital has been, and continues to be, seen as a social enabler that results in resources being utilised to achieve a desired outcome, it might serve to think in terms of the analogy provided by physical science. When using a lever, there are the four components—the load, the force, the lever, and the fulcrum or pivot. The individual components are brought together and then subsequently actioned to create

a response—leverage. In a similar vein, a good deal of social science understanding of social networks often goes unwritten or unspoken. The accessing of individual components with the conscious drawing upon one's social networks, in deliberate attempts to achieve a specific and desired outcome, is in line with expectations of the membership of such networks.

A person's social context is constructed with web-like connections that provide overall support often in indirect ways and are therefore open to being either taken for granted or absent in considerations or calculations. Deciding where best to locate a lever in relation to the fulcrum assumes detailed knowledge and familiarity that may not in fact exist. The leverage that can be applied to a load is often known through experimentation or what many know as "trial and error." Sociologically this is in line with the capacity and inclination of agents to engage with possibilities and to be reflexive of experiences to achieve goals. Such actioning might only be considered with an awareness of the possibility of bridging to other fields. Bridging potential can be found in Granovetter's (1973) thesis of the strength of weak ties, the social phenomenon that can be explored at the edge of respective social spaces. The nature of social connections is formed around reciprocity that offers obligation as much as it might offer support. The sense of obligation, however, can be more nuanced than explicit, yet the impact of moving beyond one's existing social space comes with personal challenges.

What follows in the subsequent chapter is a review of literature focused on how agents go about accessing and utilising social networks to attain a desired outcome. The presumption that agents are conscious of this capacity and what effort is entailed to exert any force is yet another facet of this study engaging with the potentiality of experience to inform an agent's view of themselves and their possible futures.

3   Experience as Agency

In the previous chapter, the ways in which young people perceive themselves and their place in society were discussed with reference to experience and how they are positioned towards particular futures. Social capital was used as a lens to understand how class, habitus, and doxa can predetermine futures and limit young people's aspirations. Thinking about social capital as enabling also offers an optimistic possibility for young people to leverage connections and utilise weak ties to access a "wider" world and more opportunities.

> None of us knows his or her final destination, but all of us can know about the shape makers of our lives that we can choose to confront, embrace, or ignore. (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005, p. 967)

Richardson and St. Pierre's statement prompts thinking, "What are the conditions at play around young people's involvement in the choices they make regarding the future?" This chapter explores the interplay of internal and external forces as key contributors to a person's perspective on life beyond the present as well as the relationship between experience and agency, subjectivity and reflexivity. It will consider the conceptualisations of agency, how agency interrelates with class and structure, and how young people draw on experience to manage risk. This is followed by insights on how subjectivity and experience influence young people's choices and actions. The chapter concludes with an account of reflexivity and how it is linked to and influenced by habitus, as well as its transformative potential in the lives of young people.

3.1   Agency

A person's experiences and the consequences of those experiences are at the centre of both philosophical and pragmatic views into human "being." For the purposes of this study, the insights of other authors will be utilised,

with particular reference to Dewey's (1920/2004a) seminal insights on the nature and impact of experiences.

> As imagination becomes freer and less controlled by concrete actualities, the idealizing tendency takes further flights unrestrained by the reins of the prosaic world. (Dewey, 1920/2004a, pp. 59–60)

Dewey's statement highlights the value of research that seeks insights into why people can and do engage in actions that are aimed outside the scope of what might be viewed as their previous trajectory (Brückner & Mayer, 2005; Macmillan & Eliason, 2007; Shanahan, 2000; Ulrick Mayer, 2004).

In *Experience and Nature* (1958) Dewey posits that there are distinctions between the "gross, macroscopic, crude subject matters in primary experience and the refined, derived objects of reflection" (1958, pp. 3–4). The distinction, according to Dewey, is to be found in the extent of reflection, and he emphasises that the experience has consequence because of systemic thinking and "continued and regulated reflective inquiry." Dewey draws attention to a general limit about attitudes as a means of reflective experience, stating, "the things of primary experience are so arresting and engrossing that we tend to accept them just as they are" (1958, p. 14). He recognises "subjects" as the centre of experience and the development of "subjectivism" as a significant advance in remaking the objects of primary experience.

3.1.1   What is Agency?

In developing their work beyond what they see as a one-sided point of view of human agency, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) recognise that theorists such as Bourdieu and Giddens have focused primarily on the habitual and taken for granted practices associated with agency. Emirbayer and Mische also see an overemphasis of other approaches that have centred upon goal seeking or deliberation as the foundation to construct theories of agency. They have sought to construct a view of agency that is a temporally embedded social engagement. This reconceptualisation sees human agency as situated "within the flow of time." Accordingly the full complexity of agency, as social action, is informed by the past, oriented to

the future, and contextualised in the present. In their conceptualisation of human agency, Emirbayer and Mische see the potential in examination of the variable and changing orientations of social actors within the flow of time in order to better appreciate

> how the structural environments of action are both dynamically sustained by and also altered through human agency—by actors capable of formulating projects for the future and realizing them, even if only in small part, and with unforeseen outcomes, in the present. (1998, p. 964)

Emirbayer and Mische build upon the work of G. H. Mead (1932) on the relationship of the human experience of temporality to emergence. Their view is that in response to changing environments, social actors are continually reconstructing their account of the past in an attempt to understand the causality of the emergent present as it potentially informs responses to an unfolding future.

The imaginings of a young person may well be fuelled by a single experience, one that disturbs the existing "natural" life and results in a tangency (Bandura, 1998). The potentiality of an experience is about an agent being cognisant of its objective and subjective elements (Dodd, Laverie, Wilcox, & Duhan, 2005; Raju, Lonial, & Mangold, 1995), together with the construction of factors that contribute to the eventuality of experience (Dwyer & Wyn, 2004; McDonald, 1999; Miles, 2000; Threadgold & Nilan, 2009). Active engagement appears paramount if the young person is to have a sensory awareness that she or he was in the midst of what is beyond the "norm." The complexity is around the capacity to identify what is/was at play and the components that contribute to particular reactions be they positive or negative (Hansen, Larson & Dworkin 2003). This would be essential if there is to be any action beyond mere reflection, in particular the reflexivity of the self.

3.1.2 Agency, Habitus, and Reflexivity

Not all agents draw upon the same primary point of reference. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) argue that social actors from diverse structural contexts construct human agency, as habit, imagination, and judgement all

contribute to the reproduction and transformation of such structures occurring in response to encounters as experiences in the present. These authors draw from Mead's (1932) insights into the "deliberative attitude" of human agency. Their theory of human agency argues that a person's capacity for imaginative distancing and communicative evaluation is pivotal in shaping one's responsiveness to problematic situations. A "taste of something" means that agents reference differences and similarities, but different or similar to what is worth thinking about (Kelly, 2006).

This consideration is relevant to this study as referencing not only the variances in dispositions or schemas but also the construction of one's habitus in the context of previous events is what consequentially becomes experiential. Accepting that habitus has a role in how an agent sees and engages with contextual events gives gravitas to pursuing insight into how habitus, cultural capital, and reflexivity interplay.

Threadgold and Nilan (2009) state that there is a relationship between reflexivity and class as they view negotiating real and perceived future risks as an embodiment of privileged cultural capital. These authors make direct reference to the generative dispositions that underpin reflexivity, which is in turn reliant on an agent's socioeconomic or class position. Further, they argue that successful fulfilment of a person's trajectory remains contingent on access to "socioeconomic resources and opportunities." They contend that:

> For some with a more materially and ontologically stable habitus, the process of reflexivity is routine, normal and easy. Employing reflexivity as a form of cultural capital, such individuals self-regulate, adapt and compete. For others, reflexive self-discipline, flexibility and adaptation are much harder to achieve, a circumstance manifesting as less effective cultural capital through a more uncertain, less privileged type of habitus. (2009, pp. 54–55)

Such considerations assist in exploring how young people position themselves or are positioned towards possibilities for the future. What the researcher seeks to unearth concerns the extent of events in the present

playing a role in informing and leveraging possibilities beyond the present. Joas (1997), following Mead, contends that "Reconstruction of the past is begun by the new event. New events constitute new pasts" (p. 178).

In theorising how people might make themselves up over time, it is evident that the past is an informant of the present. Bray, Lee, Smith, and Yorks (2000) explore what it means for an individual to have an experience, and they contend that what is problematic is central to exposing the "taken for granted." Thus for these authors, there is a point at which a person actively engages with an awareness of the problem actually existing, and subsequently interprets the facts in search of some logical response. From the perspective of hermeneutic phenomenology, Bray et al. (2000) declare that learning involves a fusion of the horizon of the person (their respective life-world) and the horizon of the lived experience. They therefore see this as "the dialectic act of interpretation between the interpreter and what is interpreted" (Bray et al., 2000, p. 23), and any fusion in this context results in new meaning for the person.

3.1.3 Questioning Choice: Risk and Agency

To determine how social backgrounds influence dispositions towards postsecondary education, Lehmann (2004) explores the elements of perceived risk and agency in the context of young people making decisions about education and career pathways. Lehmann draws on the insights of Wyn and Dwyer (1999), arguing that agency and choice are significant aspects in young people's lives given that traditional structural constraints have lost some of their predictive bearing. This, in part, requires young people to make decisions in a context of increased uncertainty and risk. In following the theoretical perspectives of Beck (1992), Lehmann (2004) highlights how the transition from school to work has become more of an individualised process. It is a process calling for greater reflexivity about the likely consequences of perceived choices.

> There is little doubt that the experiences of young people making the transition into adulthood are quite different now than they were 20 years ago. Many of these changes are the direct results of labor-market restructuring, workplace reorganizations, and changing educational

demand. As a consequence, all young people regardless of social backgrounds, gender, or race are faced with increased uncertainty and risk. (Lehmann, 2004, p. 380)

Lehmann posits that there are factors that constantly call on young people to engage reflexively with choices constructed in response to an increased range of alternatives in the context of an "individualized transition process," framed by Lehmann as "choice biographies." Thus Lehmann draws upon the work of Evans and Heinz (1995) to inform the view that a young person's capacity to reveal alternatives and construct (and engage) strategies is largely informed by their social position. Of particular significance, however, is Lehmann's insight into the exception of such social constraint to cultural bonds. He points to situations where the habitus, dispositions, and expectations are "in conflict." In such cases, the young people enact a reflexive individualisation whilst being aware of the challenges that may arise as a consequence of a "discrepancy" between their social context and future expectations. These instances are what Lehmann sees as representative of structured individualisation or bounded agency—an agency that is "influenced but not determined by structures" (Evans, 2002, p. 248). Lehmann's research leads him to conclude that:

> Schools, school culture, curriculum, and interaction with teachers play an important role in both reinforcing and modifying habitus and dispositions, creating conditions for individualized decision-making, and consequently in either reducing or increasing feelings of risk and uncertainty. (2004, p. 293)

This account of how young people as social actors are supported or thwarted in their planning and imaginings, by their experiences of the education system and associated encounters, is borne out in the data analysis presented in subsequent chapters.

3.2   Social Experiences and Reflexivity

Sharrock (2010) explores the social structures that assist in forming the way people engage with experiences and either position themselves or are positioned by social means. The problematisation of the duality of social structures sees, according to Sharrock, a person as a free agent creating

social reality around them whilst this is a social reality filled with the ciphers of constraint that are likely to be repeated and reinforced by the actors. The significance is in understanding how social life is produced through each actor's engagement in practices as the substance of their respective social experience. This, for Sharrock, is in contrast to the reproduction view of social life that sees the patterned and routine experience that is a significant factor of institutions, organisations, and cultural identity.

The duality of freedom and determinism of social experience is a question raised by Sharrock about the freedom actually utilised by actors. There is an apparently limited utilisation of such freedom, as actors tend to reach for distinction via the customisation of standard practice, what Sharrock sees as embroidering upon standardised forms. He posits that consideration of a more cyclical relationship between spontaneity and routinisation is needed, and in order to fully appreciate the action of an individual there is a need to direct attention to where the person is located in terms of the "action sequence." Further to this, Sharrock considers the significance of what he terms situated action, involving the figuring out of what is actually taking place and any such "understanding of 'the situation' involves apprehension of its relation to spatiotemporally extended collaborative affairs" (2010, p. 190). Sharrock argues that it is what arises from actions within a situation rather than the intentions of those actions that is significant for understanding consequences. Thus the interplay of actions and consequences should be examined for their view of the collective or collaborative action. According to Sharrock, "situations are sites for diverse forms of participation in organising a large project, with the sense of whatever is being done in any situation having a concerted relation to the extended collaboration" (2010, p. 111)

Such thinking brings an emphasis to the competence required of individuals operating within relationships and social settings. O'Connor (2014) explores the means by which young people go about decision making about their immediate future with particular reference to school and work. The focus taken is on the subjectivity of agency and reflexivity and resulted in further exploration of the variances between the two. O'Connor's

insights are noteworthy for the classification of "serendipitous reflexives," "cautious pragmatists," and "thoughtful individualists." Behind such a conceptual framework is, for O'Connor, the finding that older, more experienced youth expressed great personal reflexivity.

While the relationship of insight and experience should not be surprising, O'Connor promulgates that research findings provide emphasis towards the significance of young people having a greater range of experiences, to enhance the potential of a person's reflexivity on school, work, and risks. The idea being raised here by O'Connor is that if the young person experiences the risk in a tangible way then risk more likely to be considered "than it is to envisioning abstract risks brought on by social changes" (2014, p. 388). If we accept this premise then how might such risks be made tangible to young people? In his own research, O'Connor found that young people in both secondary and postsecondary school reported a low sense of agency at their school and in career-related decision-making. This finding is in contrast to the accounts from other research has found that there is an overemphasis, by young people, of their ability to take control of their lives (Brannen & Nilsen, 2005; Furlong & Cartmel, 2006; Wyn & Dwyer, 1999). O'Connor gives credence to the notion that any overemphasis is due largely to social structures being obscured in late modernity, and calls for more attention to be paid to the local contexts of young people's understandings.

Adams (2006) explores the relationship of reflexivity to habitus as a means of gaining an insight into the social sources of identity. He explores reflexivity beyond the habitus/field requirement. In recognising that reflexivity can be produced in response to any crisis, Adams contends that in such cases, reflexivity is not transcendent but is more an enactment within the existing form of "collective cultural capital." For Adams, there is a form of reflexivity that permits an awareness of the limitations of knowledge within a field yet apprehension remains informed by a person's habitus. In developing this insight, Adams explores McNay's (1999) view that while reflexivity is a "creative possibility," it remains informed by the foundation of the actor's social world, a view that Adams considers to acknowledge

Bourdieu's view of habitus rather than raising any substantive significance of reflexive capabilities. These considerations provide Adams with the impetus to raise a perspective of reflexivity that is located in fields, across social existence, and as a relational response to power differentials between actors, rather than exposure to a broader range of choice, located in social systems. There are clear challenges posed by Adams, in scrutinising the insights of other authors that the transformative nature of reflexivity is set in a context where habitus and field are regularly in a state of disjunction. Reflexivity is less apparent as a response to a "lack of fit" and is embedded as dispositional or habitual. Adams positions such insights in a time where social structures of class remain, a time of "growing polarity in the distribution of wealth and associated life chances" (2006, p. 521).

Furthermore, Adams offers the idea that reflexivity, as a dispositional attribute informed through particular techniques, is more readily available to some than others and, as a consequence, the reflexive self becomes implicated in social class power relations.

> An acknowledgement of the complex coexistence of reflexive awareness and habitual dispositions can only take us so far in coming to terms with the generation of contemporary identities and their relation to an increasingly differentiated social structure. (Adams, 2006, p. 522)

Further to this, Adams posits that even well-qualified reflexivity facilitated by social change will still require exploration of what takes place around the "post-reflexive choice." Thus for Adams, identities are formed through the ability or inability to translate choices into reality. This is underpinned by access to resources that are necessary to convert choice into reality and therefore highlights complexities of the choices made given the context of underlying social structure and inequality. It is perhaps best captured in Adams' statement that:

> Reflexive awareness and the delimitations of field enclosures uncoupled from resource realization amount to frustrated isolation. Reflexivity in this context does not bring choice, just a painful awareness of the lack of it. (2006, p. 522)

Deliberations by Emmeche (2015) focus on the relationship of reflexivity to what is referred to as internal conversations. In exploring the deliberations of agent's "subjective ontology," Emmeche looks to the differentiation made by Archer (2003) in presenting the development of selfhood. Insights gained through empirical informants have generated a view of reflexivity using the stances agents take in their deliberations of situations that are not of their own making. Such stances have been categorised on the basis of responses being evasive, strategic, or subversive.

Emmeche provides a summation of the manner by which reflexive types may be embodied as a way of considering the implications of respective agents. Those agents who are communicative reflexives actively avoid opportunities that threaten the contextual continuities of their lives. This is in contrast to those agents who are representative of autonomous reflexives and are "upward and outward bound" as they take sole responsibility on attaining project objectives, as they engage with both social constraints and enablements. Meta-reflexives are focused on moving on but as they engage with their plans they also fix upon their ideals as they interrogate their motives. If a project is perceived as being too separated from their personal ideals meta-reflexives are likely to "quit" which, according to Emmeche, makes for biographical volatility. Fractured reflexivity comes about when internal conversations cannot provide purposeful action for young people instead creating personal distress and limiting any learning from their experience. Consequently the internal conversations typified as fractured reflexivity create affective distress and are to be avoided, as the interpretation is that they do not scaffold positive responses to situations.

3.3   Reflexive Modernisation

Caetano's (2014) examination of reflexive modernisation and individualisation draws on the insights of Beck, Giddens, and Lash (1994) about the relationship of social structures to individual life experiences. This relationship, according to these authors and applied by Caetano, sees self-

knowledge as embedded in social systems, which construct environments for lived daily experiences. The premise of living in times when an agent's biography is not restricted to previously existing "externally given factors" is highlighted by Caetano when individuals are more able to create themselves, in what Beck termed "do-it–yourself biographies."

According to Caetano these biographies promote reflexivity that locate responsibility for projections and choices on the individual. This has consequently brought about an emphasis on agents becoming more reflexive about their social circumstances. Caetano considers that such conditions are likely to have led to Beck (1992) to raise the importance of risk in modern societies arising from the loss of "solid identity foundations." Caetano offers that Lash viewed such conditions as placing emphasis on access to information and communication structures. The variances of access, according to Lash are fundamental in creating the "winners" and "losers" of reflexivity. Drawing on Giddens' work (1994a, 1994b) Caetano views institutional reflexivity as a determinant of individual experience, and that this activity is located in the reproduction of social systems, so that any new information results in states of "chronic revision."

According to Caetano (2014) the emphasis of reflexivity has been promoted by the de-contextualising work of institutions such as the education system and the labour market, as they re-contextualise individuals in terms of production. Since individual action is viewed as an expression of empowered agency, individuals become the basic form of social reproduction as class, family, work and gender lose their framing power. Caetano's review of the work of Giddens, Beck, and Lash (1994) highlights how individualisation and highly differentiated societies place emphasis on the significance of contemporaneous information and knowledge. Premised by the view that reflexivity implies change Caetano highlights the view that agents can conceive of future action not constrained by structural forces and "pre-determined orientations" (Caetano 2014). The significance of self-knowledge in the process of agents exploring potential trajectories raises the idea that knowing and having more choices enhances the capacity to change. The potential to change

does not always eventuate given that reflexivity does not take place in a social vacuum and is contingent on the utilisation of available structural resources (Caetano 2014). Thus Caetano (2015) sees shortcomings in the individualisation and reflective modernisation theory, given the lack of recognition of the existence of social inequalities.

In examination of social structures and reflexivity Caetano (2014, 2015) acknowledges that the impact of structures such as social class cannot be reduced to the polarised notion of winners or losers. She contends that traditional ties have weakened, so too has the idea that agents have fixed and essential identities, because human action is contextualised within dynamic social relations. Such is the nature of contemporary structures that Caetano argues that such structures promote social positionings that are always subject to change:

> Identities tend to more and more to emerge from different kinds of belonging, different forms of identification and differentiation—depending on the social relations in which agents take part—that may even contradict each other. (2014, p.102)

There are particular problematic aspects that can be associated with such fluidity and flexibility in social structures. Broader choices present degrees of uncertainty and feelings of insecurity as individuals are left feeling isolated, particularly around the life paths that they might take. For Caetano this implies that in personal reflexivity there is significance in acknowledging, "social reality has a material and mental existence" (2014, p.104). She instances both Bourdieu's dispositional theory and Archer's work on "internal conversations" as ways to distinguish internal and external dimensions of action. As agents engage in discursive deliberations they remain rooted to the "continuity of daily lives and biographical trajectories" (Caetano, 2015, p. 105).

Furlong and Cartmel (2007) argue that life is very different for young people compared to previous generations and that social changes have contributed to these young people experiencing subjective uncertainties. They question if social class and gender remain structural elements,

providing an understanding of experience, or are agents now subject to a "kaleidoscope of microcultures." Furlong and Cartmel contend that in late modernity economic and cultural resources remain central elements to agents' life chances and experiences. Therefore late modernity typifies lives as contextualised around an "epistemological fallacy" in that as social structures have become more obscure they remain fundamental in constraining or promoting young people's life experiences and chances. These chances in turn have an impact upon the "subjective orientations" of young people as agents individually encountering experiences.

Furlong and Cartmel put forward that despite varied individualised experiences and "non linear routes" it is still possible to predict labour market outcomes, based particularly on academic performance. Thus while social structures have apparently promoted individuality there remain limited changes to the effects of social reproduction. On this point Furlong and Cartmel express their view that Giddens and Beck have overstated the role and impact of individual reflexivity and seek to clarify their standpoint, pronouncing that:

> The development of biographical perspectives that draw on interpretations of lived experiences while showing how structures are recreated both through actions and interpretations offers an appropriate tool that can be used to understand modern life contexts. Our opportunities and our life chances continue to be structured by our lived experiences rather than our mediated experiences. (2007, p. 143)

Risk and uncertainty accompany young people's individualised undertakings as they negotiate education and the labour market. They are expected to take greater responsibility for courses of action in a society still characterised by interdependency. This contributes to, according these authors, a society where crises become attributed to the deficiencies of the individual rather than the outcome of systemic processes that remain largely beyond the control of any one person. Furlong, Cartmel, Biggart, Sweeting and West (2003) consider how the attainment of an educational qualification or a job an relies on a young person mobilising structural resources including economic, social and cultural capital together with the

attributes of agency such as effort and motivation. The point made here by Furlong et al. (2003) is that agents are never fully aware of the resources they are enacting or the contextual constraints they are acting within. This accounts for the tendency of agents to overestimate the power of individual action.

Furlong and Cartmel (2000) promulgate the view that biographical approaches provide a way of understanding how agents make sense of their lives in the dynamics of transition and change, as contextualised by society in late modernity. Specifically they argue that taking a methodologically biographical approach offers ways of learning about "young people's interpretations of their experiences and of discovering the ways in which they attempt to plan their futures and put together the pieces of life's jigsaw" (p.7).

3.3.1 Subjectivity and Agency

In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey (2004b) argues that there are aspects of a person's way of being that connect them to the objective world through what he articulates as being interested in the possibilities perceived in one's objective world. The emphasis on results that is ascribed to this objective world is according to Dewey, in contrast to the manner by which a person may embrace the consequences of their own actions. These actions may emanate from a person's interest that in turn arising from a "developing situation" where the self and world are engaged with each other.

In taking a temporal view of education Dewey looks to discovering both objects and modes of action in play for a (young) person, as constituted in their particular present powers. Between the present and the assigned goal is the space where tasks are undertaken, challenges overcome, and resources utilised. Dewey sees this space as being of interest as it is where conditions for the development of activities exist. Accordingly it is in this space that we see the means for the achieving of present tendencies between the agent and her/his end. Understanding the intermediate position between the present state and a desired one is of

interest in this thesis. This interest is centred on the thoughts and actions of young people as they go about making connections between the present and imagined futures. It is the primary focus of examining that agency that a person as agent is both aware of and enacts to realise aspirations.

This intermediate position is the context of much of the social self, in development and expression. Mead (1934) offers an understanding about the implication of the significance of one's social group, as it acts as referential for the structure, evolution, and expression of each self. Accordingly Mead sees the development of self as both inter- and intra-personal emanating from the interactions taking place between different people but undertaken through co-operative activity that create experience for the self. Of significance for this thesis is Mead's view that out of such cooperation come subjective experiences. These are experiences that take place in Dewey's intermediate space, where the interest exists in the experience and what Mead accounts for as being reflective and subjective for the self. Mead expresses this explicitly:

> The essence of the self, as we have said, is cognitive: it lies in the internalized conversations of gestures, which constitutes thinking, or in terms of which thought or reflection proceeds. And hence the origin and foundation of the self, like those of thinking, are social. (1934, p. 173)

The interest that Mead has for the reflective nature of the self's experience is that he contends that the self, through the "conversations of gestures," is not only shaped by the social process but goes to inform the modification of the process itself. Mead attributes this to the possibility of a person using experience and the attitudes of others to reflect, rehearse, refine, and react "back on the organization of which he (sic) is a part" (1934, p.179).

Coole (2005) argues that the concept of agency has been inseparable from the notion of subjectivity and as a consequence it has continued to be "a complex and contested term that provokes fundamental ontological as well as social and normative questions" (p. 124). Given such complexity Habermas (1987) considers the place of agency in providing insights into significance in the context of the social process. Habermas,

according to Coole (2005), sees greater insight in the development of a philosophy of agency and selfhood as generated through intersubjective relationships, relationships that are derived through communicative action. In appreciation of the intersubjective process it then is possible to understand that a person's agentic capacities are differentiated through a their experience and interest in the social process.

Using a phenomenological approach to the explanation of agency Coole exposes the phenomenal processes within the "ontological individual or transcendental subject." In order to do this, Coole seeks to breakdown the notion of agency into contingent elements of being that would lead to a better explanation of the emergence of a person's propensities for agency within the social process, as experienced through a variety of interests and interactions. It is within such understanding that Coole sees the body as responding to practical tasks through perception rather than reason and where one is active in generating perceptual meaning. Coole regards agency, as being in part one of exteriority where on the outside of the body is an intersubjective experience that remains beyond conscious control. Yet actions have the intention of efficacy, holding some consequences in a person's collective life. This collective life, according to Coole, is a social condition embodying the rituals of social life that come to be conservative agency. A person's habitus can be directed by the dispositions attained from the "objective relations of the social field." Coole extends the examination of habitus in one's agency to take account of the place of the field in constructing and constraining the manner by which a person engages with social structures. This offers an insight that sees personal agency emanating from the experiences within and in response to the social field. Such responses create agency as a personal capacity tied to reflexivity and interiority. This insight from Coole subsequently has agency, as a consequence of collective life, moving from a body of subjective reasoning to be "replaced by the lived rationality of an intercorporeal and intersubjective flesh" (2005, p.140).

Macmillan (2006) explores the role that agency plays in the human experience, as a contributor to the forging of a person's own future, looking

to the interplay between agency and the enabling and constraining nature of social structures. This is contextualised in that a person will engage in various actions that have collective purpose within the cultural system that contains and inducts the sense of agency for the self. Notions of self-efficacy, Macmillan observes, indicate that people see themselves as not just being productive members of society but additionally that they are able to exercise control of their lives in order to achieve intended outcomes. In examination of the significance of this sense of agency Macmillan points to the context of one's stage in the life span. This point is tied to the development and utilisation of "adolescent competence" as primary in the manner by which a young person might have a sense of being able to discern the social scripts of others in a social context. Macmillan sees the practical evaluation of available scripts for agency as being a key aspect of the construction of one's life course. He underscores this in referencing Mead's (1934) assertions that the self is a social product and as such comes into being and is exercised through social interaction. In the context of current views of the multi-faceted and dynamic nature of society, Macmillan argues that young people call on multiple "others" as role models and thus this process is a complex process in developing a sense of themselves as separate agents. This is in keeping with a view of agency as being drawn from intersubjective experiences as a consequence of "one's embeddedness in networks of social relations" (Macmillan, 2006, p. 14).

Furlong and Cartmel's (2006) "epistemological fallacy" accounts for the disjuncture between the objective and subjective dimensions of lives in late modernity. This phrase is used as means of drawing attention to the phenomenon of people's life chances being highly structured whilst seeking to attain goals as an individual rather than as a member of a social collective. According to Furlong and Cartmel the personal action one enacts remains affected by structural constraints that can be offset by the extent of one's actions as driven by the desirability of perceived outcomes. Under such social conditions Furlong and Cartmel contend that taking a biographical approach allows an appreciation of how people engage with

transitions and change, as acts of agency in attempting to manage their respective lives. The search for congruence takes place, according to Furlong and Cartmel, in a time of rapid social change where a young person's experiences are likely to be fragmented. Consequently any planning for the future becomes difficult. There is good cause to appreciate the subjective feeling of risk around a young person's experiences, arising from a "perceived lack of collective tradition and security" (2006, p.9). The social space that a young person experiences is a primary informant to perceived risks associated with particular behaviour and their perceptions of possibilities for the future become expressions of their intersubjective view of their future.

Edwards (2005) references the work of Taylor (1977) to highlight the growing focus on individual action that comes at a cost, taking the focus away from our responsibility to and for others in one's social space. In such a context the emphasis is placed upon a person developing a capacity for their agency and the expression of mutual responsibility. The cultural reciprocity of late modernity is intersubjective in the context of cause and effect. Edwards argues that relational agency promotes our insight into negotiations and rethinking of tasks "that are possible in different sets of socially and historically situated practices" (2005, p. 174). For Billett (2011) the social space calls on a (young) person's agency to actively engage and transform the practices of that social space. The social space, as observed by Billett, is a source of knowledge for those operating within it, through historical and cultural practices embedded in the work within this space.

In contextualising agency the social experience is comprised of societal "norms, practices and values, and their enactment, which constitute the requirements for work, and are shaped by local factors" (Billett, 2011, p.53). Billett posits that the social experience is also one that is never extensive enough to ensure the comprehensive and unquestioned transfer of knowledge. As a consequence people need to construct their views of particular social fields, such as the workplace. According to Billett this construction is based on what the person knows, that is their cognitive experience. One's learning is therefore viewed as being personal as it is

attained "through a unique set of personal experiences" (2011, p. 53). Here Billett argues that the negotiations between the social and the personal contributions are relational and become based on "social suggestion and individuals' construal and construction" (2011, p. 53). Thus thinking, acting and learning are inclusive in the formation of one's subjectivity in addition to the active role played by the person in constructing meaning for their self, in response to eventful encounters. Therefore learning through experience is both shaped by and shapes agency. As an informant for this thesis, Billett states that:

> of necessity, individuals' engagement with and construction of those practices is premised on the agency of individuals' construing, negotiating and remaking the practice of work, which is premised in their subjectivities and mediated by the exercise of social and cultural norms and practices. (2011, p .54)

There is a relational aspect that one would have with the social world. According to Billett the social world may offer its "suggestion" in regards to a person's engagement with elements of the social that vary in degrees of intensity, focus and intentionality. In part, Billett argues, such variance of engagement may be attributed to one's selective reading of the social suggestion or may even be unaware of any suggestion be offered. On this aspect Feather (2000) argues the significance in this relationship is the unevenness of intersubjectivity that comes into being around a person's decision to enter or leave a situation. As such a decision can be examined from the perspective of the person as they construct meaning with regards to the encounter as much as there can be a view made in terms of the social context of the situation as experienced. Taipale (2014) too is concerned with the relational aspect of social relations and uses a Husserlian lens in looking at the reciprocal intersubjective experience as a constitutive dimension of one's social world. Taipale contends, "it is only through concrete experience of (particular) others that a shared environment is constituted" (2014, p. 90) and that "neither the self nor the other serves as the absolute center of orientation: the intersubjective space is rather orientated in relation to us" (p. 91). One negative consequence of

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this, according to Taipale, is that the social space is not shared with those who do not participate in the social unit. Entering into social units that have been already established calls for a person to take on what Taipale sees as intersubjective norms.

3.3.2 Subjectivity and Event

Mead (1932) argues that the conditions leading up to the creation of an event becomes history and as such the uniqueness of the event makes that history relative to the event. Further to this the conditions that contextualise the event and in the uniqueness of the event gives "rise to past and future as they appear in a present" (1932 p. 33). According to Mead the past is in the conditions that led to the unique event and the future arises out of the present through the occurrence of subsequent unique events.

Bourdieu (1990a), in his thinking on the temporality and the self, diverges from Mead's (1932) thesis. Bourdieu puts forward that one's present is insignificant when compared to past that has culminated in the self at the present. Bourdieu posits that people are largely unaware of the influence of past selves that are assimilated into the unconscious self. Bourdieu sees habitus as embodied history that is enacted as "second nature" and is therefore not recognised as the history to the making of habitus. Further to this Bourdieu argues that the habitus gives practices autonomy over external determinants of the present as "a consequence of the functioning of accumulated capital, making the individual agent a world within the world" (1990a, p. 56).

The context of living and learning, for most agents, is a tangle of externalities and personal reflexivities. As a means of exposing and untangling threads that contribute to the subjective social identity, a critical ethnographical undertaking is a refining a lens to explore some of those threads. Boylorn and Orbe (2013) explore both the manner and means by which social actors engage in responding to contexts as eventful encounters, as those actors "attempt to enact sense back in to the world in which they live" (2014, p. 190). They posit that while "sensemaking" is an ongoing, evolving process it occurs when people experience dissonance in

their everyday lives. In situations where expectations of social life become disrupted is according to Boylorn and Orbe (2013), the attempt by a person "to reduce uncertainty and create acceptable meaning of the event that triggered the enactment stage. The goal is the creation of plausible interpretations that become part of one's identity" (2013, p. 190).

The present in one's life occurs responds to particular needs, acting as catalytic moments that take place often with little opportunity for or explicit accessing of accounts of previous encounters that would serve as experience. Dietmeyer, Howsepian, and Saenz (2013) provide an account of how agents build upon the way they perceive themselves in response to a developing awareness of lifeworld, as "possible selves become more vivid and realistic, containing greater detail about the means to achieve them" (p. 188).

Dietmeyer, Howsepian, and Saenz go on to suggest that fostering clear images of possible selves and having some information about steps towards realising possibilities, contributes to one's developmental outcomes. Building on from this insight they address the question of how young people move from multiple possibilities to settle on "individualised selves" and then enhance those visions with the steps necessary for their realisation.

> Media may fire children's imagination, but older peers and adults whom children know well may live out many of the end states that can become personally motivating to a child. Other people affect the selection and articulation of possible selves through the hopes, fears, and expectations they hold for children. Exactly how these dreams and expectations are conveyed is not altogether clear, nor is the mechanism by which others' dreams become one's own. (Dietmeyer, Howsepian, & Saenz, 2013, p. 190)

For Dietmeyer, Howsepian, and Saenz, visions of the near future are better developed than those pertaining to long-term career goals. They therefore argue that the motives behind the self-regulatory skills underscore successful academic performance. Over the course of their

experiences young people come to encounter success or failure, praise and criticism that inform likes, dislikes and values that "become the fodder from which children select and elaborate possible selves" (2013, p. 191).

Conclusion

In this chapter insights into the theoretical views of experience as it relates to agency have been presented. Apposite to this review were the accounts raised about the place of one's subjectivity in engaging in the social space which restricts or promotes the way of being and engaging in the social world. This review has highlighted the subjectively constructed experiences of a (young) person, yet there remains within the social space the experience of the other. As such the intersubjectivity of the social space a person exists in is an informant to the personal reflexivity of encounters occurring in that space. These informants remain essential to the development of self, as there are few definitive constituents of the social world and so the self is called upon to make meaning as being a participant in the social world. This meaning making is significant for this thesis and study in that it seeks to highlight the challenges that are experienced by young people as they look to the future as a temporally constructed collection of possibilities.

The theoretical propositions of agency that have been referenced in this chapter have underlined the importance of young people being engaged in intersubjective experiences as a means of developing and enhancing their view of their self in the context of the social structures of their lifeworld. The imaginings of some particular position in one's life span is in part a product of a growing awareness of the constructive contributions that a person can make upon the social space rather than only be subjected to what already exists as accepted practice. A person's reflexivity therefore becomes essential in order to create and enable the means by which certain possibilities might be attained. And by necessity a young person's subjectivity becomes pivotal in the expressions of their agency-loaded aspirations.

Personal aspiration is constructed through a person's habitus and contextualised by social experiences. These experiences offer a young person as a social agent an initial construct to articulate burgeoning thoughts and images of what is experienced and how they begin to locate their selves within what has been experienced albeit indirectly but is yet to be lived out as a constituent of their lifeworld. Aspiration for a young person comes to be something of a naïve expression when they have limited social experience around what might be constructions of possible futures.

It is the limitations of a person's social world in reference to particular fields that have led to those outside of the lives of such young people coming to critique the apparent limited expressions of aspiration for the future. Such critiques come from a place that is set on fixing the deficiencies that are associated with lifeworlds that have been bluntly labelled as low socioeconomic. Aspirations are highly personal and constituted by the young person's opportunities to review each experience and take account of how they might reconsider ways of being. Experiencing an eventful encounter requires a judgement about its significance for the reconsideration of their current habitus.

Critiques that call for whole scale policy and programmatic responses to address the need to raise aspirations are deficient because of responses to accounts from young people who have limited or unrealistic aspirations. Expectations and anticipation of what may be possible come from the roots of the developing self. Thus there is a need for spaces that permit the self to be explored as much as a need to have the academic development to open doors into the world of higher education and varied career pathways.

In an attempt to bring together this chapter, and that preceding it, the following statement by Bourdieu (1990) goes some way to signifying the complexities in a person's social space as the self seeks to find a way forward. It also seeks to be embodied in the deliberate thoughts and actions of ascertaining what the way forward is directed to and by.

Thus the dualistic vision that recognizes only the self-transparent act of consciousness or the externally determined thing has to give way to the real logic of action, which brings together two objectifications of history, objectification in bodies and objectification in institutions or, which amounts to the same thing, two states of capital, objectified and incorporated, through which a distance is set up from necessity and its urgencies. (Bourdieu, 1990, pp. 56–57)

The habitus is filled with history that is naturally drawn upon in order to engage with the rules of the game encountered in particular fields and impacts on agency. Those fields are often under the auspice of institutions that function to represent, enact, and maintain social structures. The aspirations that one has are acts of agency in that they are a declaration of intent toward particular social structures. This declaration might only be articulated in the self's internal conversations, as some part of drawing upon the person's social and cultural capital, and taking account of the sense of.

Subjectivity of the self is both product and producer of experience. In the social space the experience a person has are eventful encounters that bring forth emerging personal aspirations. These aspirations may in turn give rise to a person's self experiencing of particular social distance between their lifeworld and the developing construct of a desired position, potentially beyond one's current world. In such a case the growing awareness of any social distance between body and institution is an appropriate reference to one's personal sense of agency. Eventful encounters may act as catalyst for the self's sense of "real logic of action." The reaction to such encounters is a reflexive account of one's social and cultural capital, an account that could result in the person seeking to enhance their way of seeing the world. Thus Grenfell's interpretation of Bourdieu's conception of the habitus as a relational structure with regards to one's intention is valid and as such it "aims to shape our habitus—it aims to help transform our ways of seeing the social world" (2014 p. 61).

In Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8 the analysis of data exposes the interplay of experiences and reflexivity of young people had within their social

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spaces, as they account for developing awareness of the construction and agency of their aspirations. These chapters are offered as explicit evidence of the phenomenon of aspiration as an expression of subjectivity and therefore as being a social act. What follows in Chapter 4 is a detailed account of the means by which the eventual approaches to attaining the data and eventual insights into the experiences of young people. In doing so, the chapter presents explanations as to the context of deliberations around the suitability of methods and methodology. Such suitability is contextualised by the intent and questioning of the means that would best expose the internal and external forces contributing to a social actor's perspective of life beyond the present.

4   Method and Methodology

> The life-world is always present, but only as the background for an actual
> scene. (Bray, 2000, p. 24)

4.1   A Cautionary Preamble

The multiple interests presented in Chapter 1 point to the complexity of the
personal and historical contents of research questions in education. While
a desired result of research in education might be to achieve systematic
techniques leading to generalised improvement, inevitably hopes for
technical effectiveness must acknowledge that lifeworld conditions colour
the intentions of inquiry, the formation of theoretical frameworks and the
characteristics of chosen research methods. Claims for the trustworthiness
of research findings, then, would need affirmation within the lived
circumstances of the study participants, including the researcher as much
as being in accord with system standards of validity.

This chapter aims to present the methodological standpoint adopted
in this study. It is a position adopted from the commencement of
candidature, based on the impetus to the study given by the researcher's
personal history, reported in Chapter 1. The methodological processes
were utilized to explore the research questions that encapsulate the
researcher's commitments and directions that have emerged from both
personal/professional practice and the literature. Thus the primary research
question poses:

> How can the university, acting as an advocate for socially—critical
> schooling, enhance schools as autonomous public spheres?

Followed by the secondary question:

> What is the role of habitus and experience in positioning school
> students in the present and imagined futures?

Following the discussion of methodological principles, this chapter will describe the study's procedure planned and approved prior to entry into the research field. The chapter will then provide an account of the variations to the intended procedure that experiences in three schools compelled the researcher to adopt. These changes, while personally challenging for the researcher, justified and reinforced the study's methodological position of authenticity in social and educational research being a condition of encountered experience.

4.2   A Statement of Intent About the Nature of Inquiry

The following points represent the researcher's questioning around the problematic experiences within the lived circumstances and methodological consequences encountered in the research settings. The questioning at the commencement of this study was both unclear and uncertain. There were many stumbles through the tricky ground (Smith 2007) of schools and much internal debate in generating statements that were close to the nature of the discomforting experiences that lay within the researcher. Attempts to articulate such questions for the benefit of others, particularly in the early days of the candidature resulted in continuing and clarifying changes. Therefore the three points are posited as being representations of the realm of explorations, which this project sought to illuminate.

1.   Student perceptions and overall awareness of their horizons as perceived in a present context

This point recognises that many young people go about their daily interactions from respective standpoints, each informed through a particular viewpoint of an immediate future. In seeking to explain their disparate mental constructions there is a need to explore what informs and constitutes such awareness and anticipations that might be viewed as constituting their horizons. Here there is purpose in listening to students locating their present selves as they express notions of their futures.

2. Perceptions of individual students and how they appear to follow a trajectory within particular contexts

Against the expressions of how young people may restrict personal career horizons, is the desire to capture those occurrences that impact in the present. Such events could be viewed as trajectorial "forks in the road" leading to particular possibilities in the future. The perceptions that a young person develops can be the result of the habitus that can in turn be attributed to the experiences had within the lifeworld as it is navigated through one's social and cultural capital.

3. Student awareness of, and responses to, encounters with human and institutional artefacts within a higher education context, as potential trajectorial moments

This key curiosity is linked to the exploration of the responses that young people have to experiences that present as being beyond their "evental" (Badiou 2013) knowledge. Such explorations were driven by the potentiality to provide an insight into the significance of first-hand experiences at a higher education institution as a means of informing personal views of possible futures. The underlying notion here is that there is social value to be had in some version of guided university experience in young people's exploitation of relatively unknown terrain. A particular value may be around what actions might offer an opening-up in the present for individuals, thereby enhancing future oriented choices and decision-making.

4.1.1 A Methodological Discussion: Underpinning Principles of the Study

> Qualitative examinations of the details of educational activities, informed by a theory that emphasizes co-ordinated production of recognizable accountable events, amounts to an exploration of how people produce social order though teaching and learning events. (Freebody, 2003, p. 128)

Freebody's statement gives credence to qualitative research undertakings around the complexities of life in educational settings. The complexities in this study are positioned within the challenges and opportunities to engage with a school community and members of that community.

Verstehen explanations, according to Carr and Kemmis (2003), seek to bring clarity and exposure to the "intelligibility of human actions" as informed and contextualised by the mores of a given lifeworld. Meaning is in their view explanations not aimed at providing "causal explanations of human life, but to deepen and extend knowledge of why social life is perceived and experienced in the way that it is" (Carr & Kemmis, 2003, p. 90). In keeping with this conceptualisation of qualitative research, interpretative research seeks to reference actions in relation to the respective "understandings, purposes and intentions of the actor, and the actors' interpretation of the significance of the context of the action" (p. 92). Furthermore "interpretative accounts offer opportunities to see more deeply under the surface of social life and human affairs" (p. 92).

Thus this study is guided by the view that an actor's "practical deliberation is informed not only by ideas but also by the practical exigencies of situations; it always requires critical appraisal and mediation by the judgment by the actor" (Carr & Kemmis, 2003, p. 95). These authors consider how interpretative social science places value on the potentiality of each practical situation, in the new experiences to be had, and the subsequent enhancement of the actor's practical wisdom (*phronesis*). Thus Carr and Kemmis provide the ontological standpoint of this study.

> An individual's ideas and beliefs are not merely a set of true or false statements that have been adopted on the basis of purely rational considerations. Rather, they are intimately related to the individual's way of life, and, as such, they provide the sort of ideas and beliefs about oneself and others that are appropriate to the way one lives. (1983, p. 97)

The method used in this study reflects the sentiments and intent of interpretative social science and making a commitment to *verstehen* explanations located in the eclectic essence of being a *bricoleur*. The nature of research as bricolage corresponds with the challenging circumstances encountered by the researcher in the conduct of the inquiry. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) view the bricoleur as a qualitative researcher who brings together odds and ends in order to create a pieced together set of representations (patchwork quilt), as it defines and extends the

researcher. They argue, "the bricoleur's life story, or biography, may be thought of as bricolage" (p. 5). Further, that the "interpretative bricoleur understands that research is an interactive process shaped by his or her own personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity, and by those of the people in the setting" (p. 8).

Such theoretical versatility offers potentiality for research within overlapping perspectives and paradigms (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). This versatility, according to the authors, is called into presence in the methodological undertakings of the bricoleur, through the undertaking of diverse tasks, "ranging from interviewing to intensive self-reflection and introspection" (p. 8).

Kincheloe, McLaren, and Steinberg (2011) view the position of the researcher in the context of the "interactions with the objects of their inquiries" (p. 169) as one open to unpredictability and complications. They argue that bricoleurs engage in the research as "methodological negotiators" and where the researcher is "conversant with numerous modes of meaning making and knowledge production" (Kincheloe et al., 2011, p. 169). In doing so, these authors make clear that, beyond the mere nature of bricolage, are the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of researcher and the research. The researcher is called to question philosophical commitment as the underpinnings of the intent and expectations of and for the research. Thus reviewing philosophical preferences became an ongoing task for the researcher in his research practice in school and university settings.

This research study is characterised by Kincheloe et al.'s view of bricolage, utilising approaches that represent the researcher's commitment to an inclusive, respectful and collaborative approach with the study participants. At the heart of this study is the bringing forth of the forces that construct the subjectivities of school students and teachers as they engage in the lifeworld. Bricolage as a qualitative method (Kincheloe et al., 2011) requires data collection approaches that are inclusive of the lifeworld and

the subjectivities of human actors. This is the researcher's pre-existing position and is not merely subscribed to retrospectively.

> In social research, the relationship between individuals and their contexts is a central dynamic to be investigated. This relationship is a key ontological and epistemological concern of the bricolage; it is a connection that shapes the identities of human beings and the nature of the complex social fabric. (Kincheloe et al., 2011, p. 170)

Recognising the complex ontological importance of relationships alters the basic foundations of the research act and knowledge production process. Bricolage deals with a double ontology of complexity: first, the complexity of objects of inquiry and their being-in-the-world; and second the nature of the social construction of human subjectivity, the production of human "being." These open a social research process where becoming human agents is appreciated with a new level of sophistication (Kincheloe et al., 2011, p. 170).

Another aspect this study relates to the challenges of modernity that have been experienced by the youth, most precisely in and by the structuring and enactment of "performativity driven" education systems. Within a social structure that is underscored by economic imperatives the attainment of qualifications becomes a marker of one's suitability to enter into particular sectors and levels of the workforce and consequently economic possibilities. The insights to be gained from this study are aimed at attaining a greater understanding of how young people make sense of, and respond to everyday experiences, particularly in an educational context. As Crotty (1998) has explained, experiences do not constitute a sphere of subjective reality separate from the objective realm of the external world. Further, Freebody (2003) draws a focus on qualitative research that seeks to explore notions of subjectivity as a means of "capturing the unpredictabilities, idiosyncrasies and quirkiness built into the experiential 'life-world' of human beings" (p. 37).

Individuals approach the lifeworld with a knowledge composed of ordinary constructs and categories that are social in origin. These funds of

knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) are applied to aspects of experience to give them meaning and familiarity. As experience is given shape, so too the stock of knowledge is itself elaborated and altered in practice. Individuals, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2008), interact with one another in an environment that is concurrently constructed and experienced, even while mistakes may be made in its particular apprehensions.

Crotty (1998) believes that phenomenology requires us to engage in our world and to make sense of it directly, with prior understandings being "bracketed" so as to let the experience of phenomena speak to us first-hand. Therefore phenomenology, according to Crotty, requires us to place our usual understandings in abeyance and have a fresh look at things. Freebody (2003) provides a foundational view that the significance of qualitative research is that it offers "a coherent collection of propositions about the world, their relative importance, and particular ways of finding out and knowing about them" (p. 38).

The seeking of an authentic telling is the primary impetus for this study in that the stories to be told have often remained "unsaid" in the everyday activity of schools and universities. Attempting to capture lived experience as a means of describing interactions with the known and unfamiliar is representative of the researcher's personal positioning in seeking to highlight the educational challenges and opportunities as encountered by each participant. Being prepared to wade into the murkiness of the outward representation of respective lifeworlds was a means of understanding and learning for the researcher. Exposure to the unpredictability of schools and their respective populations offers access to narratives that are viewed as "educational" in the contextualisation of formal and informal learning.

Denzin's (1997) caution is apposite: "Self-reflection is no longer an option, nor can it be presumed that objective accounts of another's situation can be easily given. Truth is always personal and subjective. An evocative and not a representational epistemology is sought" (p. 266). Thus the researcher has sought to explore the "ethnographic poetics" (Denzin

1997) of school students as they seek out spaces to confront the "new world," as much as they might be suspected of retreating to the corners of compliance. Further Denzin posits that:

> If there is a warrant to the narrative turn in the human disciplines then this warrant directs researchers to the study and collection of the personal experiences and self stories people tell one another about the important events in their lives. These narratives will work outward from the researcher's biography, entangling his or her tales of the self with stories told by others. As lived textualities, these personal experience narratives and "mystories" recover the dialogical context of meaning, placing the observer on both sides of the "keyhole." (1997, p. 47)

This study then seeks plausible insights into the lived experiences (Van Manen 2016) of young people as they encounter their challenges and opportunities. But in doing so the study is informed by the researcher's biography as reflexive text. The learning from this study is considered by the researcher to be in a person's thinking about their subjective positioning. In the case of a school student the interplay between experience and reflexivity may be apparent in their speech and action that constitutes the present lifeworld horizon.

In this study there is a theoretical and practical construction based around a *space in between* (Hansen 2009) for individuals as they engage, or are supported, in responding to an encounter in a form of cosmopolitanism. In the context of this study, cosmopolitanism is looked to as being involved with an educational outlook in context of formal education and the place of experience, taking account of 'prior human achievements and one's own life encounters to craft a humane, meaningful life' (Hansen 2010, p.8). This study sought support around cosmopolitanism, for what it offers in an ontological sense. Of particular note is Popkewitz's (2012) reasoning that "The agency of cosmopolitanism is formed through connections with, for example, a notion of time in which the individual could see one's self as having a past, present, and future" (p. 23). In seeking philosophical insight and justification around agency, Popkewitz's standpoint is that cosmopolitanism is "a strategy to explore historically the

intertwining of the problem of social exclusion with the very impulses to include and enlighten" and "brings into focus the politics of knowledge in the production of the self and the world" (p. xiv).

Such theorising is further informed by a valuing of an overarching view of, and subscription to particular readings of poiesis: "Poiesis is not to be grasped in its features as a practical or voluntary activity, as Agamben persuades us, but rather in its being an 'unveiling,' a-letheia, a making known which produces or leads things into presence" (Whitehead 2003, p. 4).

In recognising the conditions necessary to create such awareness is the conditional expectation that to have an experience one must actively observe and attend in a manner that the "taken for granted" becomes problematic (Bray, 2000). The awareness of the problematic subsequently calls upon an interpretation of facts as well as the application of logical principles (Mezirow cited in Bray, 2000). Accepting this as a foundational element for this study, it is assumed that an individual's capacity to interpret, "involves a fusion of horizons between the horizon of the person (who is immersed in his or her life-world) and the horizon of the lived experience that is the object of attention. This is a dialectic act of interpretation between the interpreter and what is interpreted. The outcome is a fusion of horizons from which new meaning emerges" (Bray, 2000, p. 24).

4.1.2 Planning to Engage with Educational Research

The intentions for this research were developed in response to the researcher's concerns for interventions that focused on young people, the focus on raising aspirations and the associated lock-step processes (see Chapter 1 p. 5). The researcher's initial approach to the study aimed to gain insights into students' aspirations and what they saw as the edge of their world—their horizon. There was also intent to interview parents however when the students were asked to invite their parents into the research they were resistant and refused. This initial scoping of the research is presented in further detail in Appendix B. Here the research

process was positioned to be less about academic reproduction (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) and instead to evolve the discussion around the students' experience, their responses and the meaning within their lifeworld.

The intended research process was planned in a space that allowed for logical, linear development based on the researcher's experiences in schools and readings from other researchers. However the intended process remained just that. The following sections describe this researcher's experience, when the best of intentions encounters the reality of the school context.

4.2   Methodology as Planned

The methodology of this thesis is framed around an integrated approach to identify how those communities that are underrepresented in universities are constrained by their educational experiences. The role of habitus and experience is significant in the positioning of school students in their present and imagined futures. Therefore how might the university act as an advocate for socially—critical schooling and what might it be able to do that enhances schools as autonomous public spheres.

Drawing upon the experiences of an extensive career as an educator in secondary schools, the researcher viewed Year 9 and 10 students as having challenges in navigating the present whilst also being confronted by questions pertaining to possible futures. Desire and dilemmas that live in the imaginings of students at this point in their formal education were viewed as an opportune stage to address both opportunities and challenges faced by young people (Furlong and Carmel 2007) as they move into a young adults' life.

4.2.1   The Research Study as Designed and Enacted

Schools are often viewed as being pretty much identical yet much is also unique creating each one as an entity in its own right. Points of difference may be attributed to the personalities that exist and function within the architectures. However the collective intent and approaches that build over

time create a particular field that exists through catalytic moments that are more than policies and practices. How such an environment is constructed is not of the primary concern of this study. Rather the intent is to expose how these settings actively, and frequently surreptitiously, set the scene for much of the cause and effect impacting on each individual who operates within that field.

Contextualising the place and space in which young people (students) engaged in their formal education, the social interactions of life in school are valid in this study. In this written account of such contexts there are subjective views of how some people are bound by what are incidentals to the core business of schools. Subjective views can be dismissed unquestioningly, yet they do contribute to the textualities for learning and teaching practices.

Both of the schools that figure in this study provide insights into how they promote or problematise the habitus of young person. Proper significance is given to the "surroundings," as key determinants of expectations for students and teachers. The contextual factors might include organisational visions of the institution and its population, facilitations such as enactments of goals relating to equity and social justice, and limitations that include systemic benchmarking of student success. The two fields (i.e. the schools) encountered in this study are contrasted by their daily encounters and operation.

North West Secondary (NWS) is one that has considerable historical baggage. This "baggage" includes the struggle to address or overcome broad-based challenges and to constructively respond to community expectations, with limited resources at its disposal. Calder College in comparison is a new school, without the hallmarks of any long past. The fresh construction and building works still interrupt any natural flow and movement around the campus. This interruption acts as a metaphor for the way in which young people locate the right place for themselves, and others, to be positioned in the "right spot." The newness appeared to be something of an uncomfortable sensation to many, particularly those in

leadership positions, as they assumed responsibility for "ploughing fresh fields." Such work seemed daunting but was coupled with an apparent "shared" desire to develop a purpose, a vision and philosophy as common ground for the daily thoughts and actions of the school as a single entity.

4.2.2 Methodology as Enacted

What follows is an account of the procedural undertakings that were enacted in order to establish the study. This is presented to convey the technical obligations that framed the method of data collection as well as ensuring that they were at least ethical. These commitments were not straightforward and became problematic beyond the researcher's initial expectations. The researcher drew on prior experience with a range of schools to consider how any activity would have traction for the school selection process. In particular, factors reviewed included the degree and likely impact of current connections with university programs and personnel, the proximity or otherwise to a university campus, and how proximity influenced the likelihood of students having direct interactions with a university.

Application and subsequent approval of an ethics application to the Victoria University's Human Research Ethics Committee helped to communicate the procedural intent of the study. Ethical considerations about the interviews and interactions with school students and other intended participants called for the anticipation of their potential vulnerabilities. These anticipations included detailing each phase of the study. While the ethics application was approved there were still questions for the researcher. How might students taking part in the study get to ask their questions? Subsequently it was decided that in order for the students as participants be given opportunity to provide an insight into their thinking, a "space" would need to be created in order for individuals to feel supported and therefore able to express their questions.

Explorations around the possibilities of working in a government school called for the obligatory permission being granted by the state Department of Education. Having received permission to approach

individual schools and invite them to participate, a number of possible options were reviewed. These included i) the likelihood that the project would be located in a population of students that had little or no prior connections with a university; and ii) that geographical/logistical aspects around transporting students from the school site to one or more university campuses. The researcher set out to resolve these concerns, as they had been raised in previous research and the media as potential barriers for higher education participation.

It is important to note here that the names of the students, teachers, schools, and university settings used in this study are pseudonyms.

The following Table (Table 2) summarises the elements of the planned methodology and those that were possible at the school,

Planned Research Procedure Component	Comment on Research Practice at NWS	Chapter Location	Comment on Research Practice at Calder College	Chapter Location	
Students nominated for participation in research	Selection criteria ignored by school personnel and replaced by insights of one teacher	5.1.2	Teachers nominated students perceived as effective learners yet lacking confidence in their academic achievement	7.1	
Meeting with all students nominated to participate in research	Nine of the nominated students agree to participate in research	5.1.5	Fifteen of the nominated students agree to participate in research	7.1.1	
Participants view images of occupations as stimulus for considering their views of their future in terms of occupations	Seven of the participants nominated their top three occupation choices and least preferred occupation	5.1.3	Fifteen of the participants nominated their top three occupation choices and least preferred occupation	7.1.1	
Participants take part in individual interviews with researcher	Six of the participants take part in interviews with the researcher	5.1.3	Fifteen of the participants take part in interviews with the researcher	7.1.2	
Participants take part in an excursion to the university with the researcher	Small group of participants visit a university campus	5.1.4 5.2.1 5.2.2	Thirteen of the participants visit a university campus	7.5.1	
Participants take part in excursion follow-up discussion with researcher	General discussion with researcher—some areas of inquiry raised by participants	5.2.3 5.6	Collaborative session results in the development of refined questions for subsequent campus experience	7.5.1	
Participants take part in an excursion to another university campus	Only four participants took part in excursion	5.2.2 5.6	Twelve of the participants took part in the excursion	7.5.2 7.5.3	
Teachers interviewed regarding their perspective of participating students	No teachers interviewed		Ten teachers participated in semi structured interviews	6.1.3.2 6.1.3.3 6.2.1 6.2.2 6.2.3 6.3.1	6.3.2 6.3.3 6.3.4 6.4.1 6.4.2

Table 1   Anticipated and realised data collection

North West Secondary College (NWS) and Calder College. The table is presented as a way to assist the navigation of the interconnectedness of the research activity due to the complicated nature of the sites. It is these complications that give credence to the challenges faced not only by the researcher in this work but also because of the nature of schools as they operate in unpredictable contexts.

4.3   An Initial Foray

The researcher established an initial connection with a particular site, having explored some of the publically available facts about the school. This selection process was enhanced through the researcher using network connections with other educators and their "insider" knowledge of the school.

After contacting the school, an appointment with a school principal was facilitated where the study was discussed. This meeting subsequently resulted in approval being granted. The researcher was given permission to speak to a group of Year 9 teachers at a forthcoming forum, to explain the intent and nature of the study. At this meeting a general discussion ensued covering both logistical and descriptive outlines. At a point in the meeting one of the teachers informed the researcher about comparisons to program that they were due to commence that was in broad terms associated with student aspirations for higher education and was to be directed at the Year 9 cohort. Investigations by the researcher not only confirmed some of the details of the program but that it was individuals from the researcher's own university who would facilitate it. Due to the perceived risk of the program to prevent clarity around student perceptions the decision was made by the researcher to pursue another school to partner in the study.

4.4   A Second Chance

An alternative school site was subsequently identified and the researcher made an approach to the school's Principal. The rationale for selecting this school—North West Secondary—was consistent with that applied in the selection of the initial school.

A meeting with the school's Principal about the study also resulted in a positive response. The Principal forwarded the details to a particular campus Principal for consideration. There was an extended lapse of time before a meeting was arranged with the campus Principal. It was at that time that there was an agreement to present an outline of the study to a whole staff meeting.

In speaking to the nature of the early encounters within North West Secondary the following extract from the researcher's journal provides a description of the thoughts and reactions to trying to start research in schools and the impact of institutional power. It is representative of not only the setting but also the scenes that played out as experienced by the researcher and as such it is filled with emotion and speculation.

> Doing research is challenging for a wide variety of reasons—doing research in schools is bound to be complicated, because of the complexity of the environment. But this particular school seemed to be presenting challenges for even someone who thought that they were experienced in the ways of a "difficult" school. (Extract from researcher's personal diary).

While such accounts were not expected to be a contributing aspect of this study, the narrative has resonated (Mulcahy, 2012) in a manner that constituted learning for the researcher. This learning was viewed as having a bearing on the overarching nature of the thesis and therefore is included as a measure of process and researcher reflexivity. Finlay (2012) gives cautionary direction with regards to the voice of the researcher as actual and legitimate data, articulating that: "Researchers need to bring a critical self-awareness of their own subjectivity, vested interests, predilections and assumptions and to be conscious of how these might impact on the research process and findings" (p. 17).

4.4.1. Methodology as Enacted in North West Secondary

Following the researcher's introduction of the intentions for the study at a NWS staff meeting, preliminary arrangements were made to meet with the students who were invited to participate in the study. In preparation for this initial meeting, a script was developed that was constructed to guide the

researcher in presenting a full account of what participants would be expected to undertake should they agree and have the necessary consent.

Criteria had been developed to assist teachers in their considerations around the nominations of individual students for participation in the study (see Table 1). The notions behind the each criterion bears some witness to the researcher's own subjectivity as it has been "informed" over his professional life as an educator in schools. This development was to be an initial exposure to the complexity that educators often have to confront in their daily endeavours. The consideration that there might be a bracketed type of student that would clearly fit into a subset and who might be labelled as "low aspirational in light of their potential" is thereby problematic.

As a research action the need to guide teachers in their nominations appeared to be significant. But as the accounts of encounters between school personnel and the researcher will expose there was little opportunity to address each of the criteria, as nominations were made by individuals on behalf of other educators, using a particular broad-brush response to the request. The view of the researcher, at the time, was one filled with puzzlement and concern, in terms of the level of engagement by the school coordinator making choices in such a manner.

The student is to be nominated on the basis of apparent limited aspirations. The basis for nomination should relate to the criteria listed below.

These guidelines are designed to highlight that the nominated student is academically capable yet is considered to lack the application and commitment required to best apply and demonstrate her/his knowledge and ability.

- ❑ *The student has indicated some well developed knowledge and skills related to the area of study being taught*
- ❑ *The student appears to have well developed general knowledge*
- ❑ *The student is well regarded by her/his peers*
- ❑ *The student is considered by the teacher to respond to learning opportunities in a limited manner*
- ❑ *The student has not fully responded to assessment tasks and this is considered to be due to a lack of motivation rather than her/his understanding of the topic or concepts being studied*
- ❑ *The student has not been able or willing to articulate connections between her/his current learning opportunities and her/his future*
- ❑ *The student's achievements do not appear to be limited by restricted literacy development*
- ❑ *The student does not volunteer her/his contributions to class discussions or request clarification of new concepts, instructions and expectations*
- ❑ *The student has lower than average attendance in the class.*

Table 2 Student Participant Selection Criteria

The criteria supplied to the school were never referred to rather the Year 9 pathway coordinator took the opportunity to review the list of Year 9 students and compiled a list of candidates based primarily on what appeared to the researcher as impressionistic behavioural aspects. This approach to the nomination of students to participate in the study is

described in further detail in Chapter 5 (see p. 101). The coordinator communicated their interpretation the nature of the study as being for "disengaged" students, and that meant identifying the young people in the school that the coordinator considered to be "scatty, defiant and lazy."

And so with this insight into the manner by which the school had selected the students to participate in the study, the researcher was guided to the Conference Room. He was told that the students would be sent to the room to be introduced to the study and invited to participate.

While the researcher was appreciative of the opportunity to work with some of the young people attending NWS, there remained significant doubt for the researcher that the school personnel would support the intended research undertakings in thoughtful discussions about their knowledge of the students. An account from the researcher's journal is presented in Chapter 5 (see p. 99) and is offered as another artefact of the circumstantial insight attained by the researcher that can be counted as an event (Badiou, 2013), in the resulting questioning of the contextualised experiential learning.

4.4.2 Bringing Students Into the Research Activity—North West Secondary

Having received the consent forms from the students invited to participate in the study at NWS, the researcher presented to them an account of the anticipated steps to be enacted throughout the project. A number were open for modification depending upon the interest and desires of those participating. For instance the excursions to the university or having an individual from the university speak to them would be open to inclusion.

Beginning to understand each student's perspective and building a connection through conversation, an icebreaker activity around the topic of career possibilities as facilitated. Fifty images of "jobs" were provided in the form of colour photographs. Each student was invited to nominate top three images according to how they currently viewed their future employment options. A further photograph was to be nominated as the image least desirable as a potential career (see Appendix C for examples).

The results of each response were subsequently used as the basis for a semi structured interview with each of the participants. The aim of each interview was to gain an account of their view of self in the context of school participation, expectations of the immediate and long-term future, and thinking about further study, linked to career pathways. The resulting conversations were recorded and transcribed to enable the identification and analysis of statements and themes prevalent in the dialogues and will be reported on in Chapter 5.

An "initial" experience for all participants was developed that focused on providing something of an introduction for each participant to experience a university. The participants travelled from their school to one of the university campuses where they experienced both formal and informal accounts of activities, educators and students, and facilities. Engaging in some hands on activities facilitated by a science educator and a current student was one example of the more organised agenda components of such a visit.

The less organised aspects included a visit to the university sporting facilities, where the swimming pool remained a point of attraction and distraction. Due to the opportune timing, participants were able to sit amidst the bustle of the university cafeteria. While primarily focused on lunch, the participants were able to observe at close quarters the variety of activities occurring. The visit to some focal points of the university, including the library and the bookshop, included formal introductions provided by current university students acting as guides to the facilities and ways to access what is offered to university students. Some of the less planned elements of the initial visit included the wandering around the grounds, through the corridors of the university, and passing by occupied lecture theatres and classrooms.

The initial visit provided opportunity for the participants to begin to explore specific aspects related to broad categories of interest such as hospitality and nursing. In response to this, the group subsequently visited another campus that hosted some of the specific courses of study that had

been referenced in collaborative discussions. The group engaged in some free exploration of the general environment, such as a large lecture theatre and participated in some activities facilitated by educators in paramedic studies.

Additional university experiences were not undertaken as most of the NWS students were no longer available to attend or participate in the study, due to suspension from attendance or no longer being enrolled at NWS. As a result the planned interviews with the teachers became an irrelevant task.

4.5   A Third Try

Following the disappointing encounter at NWS, the researcher reached the conclusion that yet another school and group of students was needed in order to fully explore the nature of young people's perspectives on the future. The researcher's experience with NWS led to a reappraisal of the selection of the subsequent school to engage with regarding the study. The selection of Calder College was made in light of the social and economic demographics of the community it served but also on the fact that there was a preexisting relationship between the school personnel and the researcher. This relationship had been developed over time and on the basis of reciprocity based on placement of pre-service teachers and the facilitation of university courses on site (see Chapter 8, p. 210). Calder College was a new, rapidly expanding school and was preparing for the inaugural senior year cohort. A leadership team had been developed with portfolios that reflected the school's strategic plans for the immediate future.

Following an initial meeting with the Calder College principal the researcher was given permission to proceed with the study and a time was allocated for him to present an overview of the study's expectations to the leadership team. At this time it was decided that the researcher would liaise with the teacher responsible for the student leadership portfolio. The focus of the initial conversation was around the nomination of students that might be invited to participate in the study.

4.5.1 Methodology as Enacted in Calder College

In a collaborative approach with the researcher, Calder College personnel undertook the selection of students to be invited to participate in the study. The criteria were clarified with the researcher and revisions made to the list of possible candidates. While the potential participants were to be initially drawn from a student leadership cohort, the revised list was constructed around some of the notions connected to unrealised or limited articulation of personal aspirations. The students were considered from a viewpoint of what school personnel knew about them. This consideration was particularly informed by an apparent awareness of each student's personal circumstances, including life beyond the classroom. The information regarding the project aspect of the study was then presented to a larger group of students facilitated by the school to highlight how their participation in this study would support and contribute to their decision-making about post-school futures. Once the list of nominated students was compiled the necessary requirements of the study were initiated.

The researcher was asked to make a presentation to the complete student leaders group. This enabled an introduction to the study as well as highlighting the significance of pathway planning. The nominated Year 9 and 10 students were provided with the required information and permission forms to be read and approved by a parent in order for them to participate in the study. For the researcher this was a level of engagement subscribed to and completed by those at Calder College in an efficient manner and in direct contrast to the researcher's experience at NWS.

The initial activity with the Calder College students as participants focused on the same 50 photographs of people undertaking particular occupations as a way to build connections between their views of school and life after school. Each participant took part in a semi-structured interview using their selected photograph as a basis for the researcher's questioning about their career expectations. These interviews are presented in Chapter 7.

The researcher, through the support of the leading teacher–student leadership, arranged a meeting with the Calder College participants to explain and explore the possibilities for the initial visit to a university campus. In light of the researcher's observations that the NWS students were not actively engaged with the university experience, the researcher concluded that the Calder College participants would not only raise their own questions about the university but would explicitly seek out responses to those questions.

4.5.2 Bringing Students Into the Research Activity—Calder College

The students were given a general tour of the campus. They were provided with small video cameras and asked to interview university students on campus. Prior to the tour, the school students were supported to develop a range of interview questions based on the questions they had around postsecondary education and being a university student. The students brainstormed these questions at their school as part of the collaborations with the researcher and the questions were scripted prior to the students departure for the visit to one of the university campuses.

- What are you studying? Why?
- Is it hard or not?
- How many hours do you spend studying?
- Do you get many breaks?
- Is uni what you expected?
- Do you still enjoy what you selected to study?
- What was your second preference?

Moving around the university campus in groups of three or four the participants used these questions to engage with a number of university students. The video recording was used to provide a focus for the participants as they went about interviewing some of the students. They were able to consider the responses they obtained as they reviewed the recordings later in the day.

These responses were of interest to the participants but it was the asking of these questions that was of primary interest in this study. The observed interactions between university students and participants were viewed as seminal action in permitting the participants to have ownership of their presence on campus and the associated enquires. The act of talking to other people who were already experiencing university life, was to be far more eventful than merely being shown around the campus and being addressed by representatives of the institution.

Following the initial excursion to a university campus the participants were offered the possibility of a visit to another campus, one located in the heart of the city. Once again the students were supported, through collaboration, to develop a range of inquiry questions aimed at enhancing their prior experiences. The new questions were to be a measure of what the participants had begun to consider in light of the initial experiences and events during the first campus visit.

- What different subjects are available at this university?
- Why are there different campuses in different locations?
- What are the different facilities at this university?
- Why did you choose this university?
- For you what does this university stand for?
- Is it still worth studying a uni course?
- What made you lean towards your course?
- Do you still think your course is worth it?
- What is the cost difference between TAFE and uni?
- What are the different pathways available for your course?
- What do you expect from the course—what do others expect of you as a student in your course?

For this visit the participants met the researcher and one of the school's "leading teachers," responsible for student pathways, at a city campus. There was a formal presentation made by a university recruitment officer, followed by an orientation activity, where the participants located various aspects of the campus, taking time to observe typical activities as

architectures. This introduction to the university and experienced by the NWS students is a common approach developed and enacted by marketing and recruitment units of a university.

Following the formal presentation the students joined the researcher and their teacher to consider how they might best go about obtaining responses to their collective questions. Small groups were formed and each sought out people on campus to interview, based on the scripted questions. All participants returned at the designated time and place to consider the responses that they had gained in the interviews. Both the teacher and the researcher asked a range of prompting and clarifying questions and various members of the group engaged and offered up contributions to the discussion.

Once again the responses from those (university students) interviewed were not of primary concern to the researcher but rather the responses of the students as they grappled with their own take on what others had presented to them. In subsequent exchanges with the participants they were asked a range of questions relating to how they felt they have responded to the overall experiences of the project i.e. the visits to the university campuses and the associated conversations and explorations. Their individual responses were recorded and reviewed as a means of gaining an insight into the impact their participation had upon perceptions of the future. These responses will be reported on in Chapter 7.

4.6   Engaging in Bricolage

Ongoing connections with the participating students at Calder College were not possible due to competing factors. The crowded curriculum and the multi-faceted undertakings that schools are expected to address, disrupted any in-depth connections between the study participants and the researcher. Seeking to enhance the insights into the impact that experiences of a university would have upon a young person, the researcher sought to bring together a more comprehensive account of how young people at Calder College had begun to reflect upon their university

experiences and more poignantly what impact, if at all, the experiences had upon their present perspectives.

Acting as bricoleur, the researcher drew upon his awareness of Calder College's projects for enhancing student pathways and sought to capture the detailed insights of one of the Calder College teachers. This teacher was involved in organising a university experience activity that was largely parallel to that which the researcher had enacted. The significant point of difference was that the teacher had taught many of the participating students over a number of years and had developed a detailed and ongoing appreciation of the lifeworlds of her students.

Ideally the researcher would engage on a daily basis with the study participants who were interviewed and subsequently attended the university campus visits. If this had been possible then deeper insights around their responses to their experience would have been possible; not merely reactions but notions of how the encounters had been eventful would have been possible. In this study the intent remained an accounting of how young people position and reposition their selves as they interact with experiences.

The participant students had similar characteristics to the university students who had participated in the interviews. There was a sharing of what it meant to be attending the school and living in the community. The social demographics were common and were key contributors to much of their lifeworld.

The researcher, in another capacity at the school, had liaised with the teacher over the planning and facilitation of the university experience. Pre-service teachers in the researcher's university class that occurred each week at the school supported this. In consultation with the teacher it became apparent to the researcher that she had detailed insights into challenges of her students and their expectations of the future. Thus the manner and impetus of the university experience would unfold in parallel to that planned by the researcher.

Conclusion

Doing research in schools is challenging and the preceding accounts offer detailed evidence that the challenges of such research projects come up against complications within an education system. These complications are pragmatic-logistical and systemic in that the agency for young people in schools is constrained by the raised levels of accountability for time and effort. The extensive accounts of the crowded curriculum (Crump, 2005; Polesel, Rice, & Dulfer, 2014) shows that schools, like those involved in this study, have limitations that are rooted in internal and external contexts. Any project that might impinge upon the core business of the school is unlikely to gain access to and traction with the young people that are the subject of the institution's core business (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2013).

As schools are positioned in a paradigm of accountability they, as pivotal entities of the social structure that is the education system, can be enablers or inhibitors to the agency of each person. The experiences of the researcher offer insight into those complexities encountered and contended with, especially any that move outside of the official curriculum. The experiences of the researcher thereby stand as data as much as any from other interview or observation that had initially constituted the methodology (Van Manen, 2016).

5 North West Secondary Students and Their Aspirations

From the outset the researcher sought to engage with young people in schools and how they viewed their futures. This focus was anticipated to display the complexity and distinguishing social processes that promote or restrict a person's perception of the future.

Initially the researcher had conversations with young people to determine how they had begun to formulate their expectations (Brinkmann 2013). These conversations proved to be illuminative in their constricted nature. They provided the underlying participants' stories that accounted for developing perspectives of the world beyond school.

5.1 The NWS School Context

This chapter focuses on contextual elements to understand the challenges of imagining a detailed pathway into the future that a young person experiences. In uncovering how their lives are contextualised and attaining some clarity around the relationship of self and the sense of agency, the researcher draws from one particular story. This story emphasises the meaning that community, school, family, and friends can have upon the possible constructions that a young person makes about the future. These accounts of and by one young person are offered as an insight into the extent that uncertainty comes into play amidst the complexities of a social and cultural context.

This chapter is an account of the researcher's first attempt to set up their intended investigation in a secondary school. The data collection for this chapter was bricolage—opportunistic and resourceful drawing from the potential insights offered by the young person. From the outset, the study appeared destined to fail as "a project" in this setting: it required the researcher to accept that the experience at the school had to be truncated

and therefore data could only be addressed by the bricolaged methodology described in Chapter 4. However, the initial inquiry at this school did produce valuable data.

While the inability to complete the planned research at NWS was distressing for the researcher a compensating feature was the surprising participation of one student. The student, given the pseudonym Brunetti Boy (BB), had an active presence and offered a rich account of his developing aspirational imagination. Recognising that the research at NWS was becoming unviable, the researcher was able to utilise data collection possibilities of the kind afforded by Brunetti Boy's participation.

The first half of this chapter (Sections 5.1—5.2) reports the data and analysis related to those components of the planned research procedure able to be implemented at NWS. The second half of the chapter (Sections 5.3—5.6) explores the highly relevant account of Brunetti Boy.

5.1.1 The School and Its Setting

> As an educator I have sat in the apathy of down beaten teachers, shared the insights of frustrated administrators, and experienced first-hand the "tough" students, the "bad" classes, and the disempowered parents. As a researcher I have experienced a school context from a standpoint of how the education system was creating a perspective that had become resigned to the view that there were limited means and opportunity to contend with expectations of a future beyond the ever-present immediate expectations. (Extract from the researcher's journal)

North West Secondary (NWS) was sought out for this research, primarily for its geographical and socioeconomic factors. The Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority's (ACARA, 2011) Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage (ICSEA) scale measures the level of educational advantage that students would have because of their parent's level of education, educational achievement and their occupation. The ICSEA scale indicated that the school was constituted by around 85% of the student population being in the bottom or lower-middle quarters of the scale and more than 50% of the students coming from language

backgrounds other than English. Located within the hinterland of the researcher's university and serving a diverse community, NWS was operating in a context that was both familiar to the researcher and pertinent to the question of how young people construct their expectations of their futures.

What follows is an account of the researcher's experience of engaging with the school to have opportunity to engage with young people around their expectations of the future. This experience resulted in further questioning about the role a school plays in supporting student connections to possibilities for the future. The agency of the school (Priestley, Biesta, & Robinson 2013; Zipin et al. 2015) in influencing young people's sense of self and future was to become a critical contextual component for this study. At times there would be apparent voids about how a young person might be supported by the school. The edge of such a void could well be delineated by the view of Hart (2012) in her emphasis that: "The greater awareness adults have of what individual students are trying to achieve, the more ways they may identify which can help to support them" (p. 189).

In the research schools, the lack of such awareness and pedagogical practice to address aspirations of young people became a key focus.

5.1.2   The Project

From the onset of this study the multiple interactions offered data about the context that participating students encountered as lived experience. The challenges that presented as limitations to the research provided rich insights about possible causality in the perspectives of young people. The following is a third person re-writing of the researcher's journal notes about his first school visits.

> Sitting in the library waiting for the staff meeting to commence, the researcher felt as though he was about to sign up for another teaching "tour of duty." He had confidence in being able to call upon his own stories and experiences as an educator to give him some credibility, to speak to the usually unspoken dimensions of a school, which might be viewed as underperforming. His first impression of this was derived from the Principal

being required to not only make an announcement that there was in fact to be a staff meeting but that he then proceeded to "herd in" a reluctant audience.

This reflection is understandable. The researcher's explanation of what he was hoping to undertake with some students in the school was accompanied by some detail around the "why." There were some questions about logistical considerations: how many students, how often would he be in the school, and when would he start? The presentation ended with the same disjointedness that it had commenced with.

The researcher didn't enjoy what he was feeling and thinking—the critical thoughts around the teachers, whom he didn't really know, for being disinterested or disengaged. This first response to the study came to be representative of how hard it was to work in the school. The researcher became focused upon whether the students create this environment or whether they are the product of it. If the researcher's experiences of schools were any indicator, then such thinking would necessarily reach into an extensive and often problematic past (Hargreaves, 2001; McLaren, 2015; Slee, Tomlinson, & Weiner, 2003). The doxa of schools as institutions is cultural in nature, since what is presented and experienced in the present has come about through reflexivities of many people. These result from extensive experiences that question the very nature and purpose of that institution.

On a subsequent visit the researcher happened to be present at a time when a "morning tea" was provided to mark an occasion for the staff. The pleasant, relaxed atmosphere indicated that this was at least a better part of the day to connect with some of the teachers. Invited to join in the researcher was able to make some small talk about what he was aiming to do with the school. As the recess came to an end the Year 9 Pathways coordinator scanned through the list of possible candidates to be "invited" to take part in the project. The detailed criteria that the researcher had previously supplied were never referred to, but in its place a range of letters were placed next to the particular students on the roll. The researcher was informed that these were the students who presented as

behavioural challenges at particular times. She thoughtfully made marks next to students' names, such as D for defiant and S for scatty. "How many do you need again?" she enquired. The researcher confirmed at least 15 would be the most suitable size for the group. She deferred to another teacher and asked about a couple more students. The researcher reinforced that he was particularly interested in students that might not be even thinking about further study and were thought by some to be disengaged. The Year 9 coordinator made a suggestion to the other teacher—"how about David he is fairly clever but can be lazy." The response from the other teacher was to clarify that she was being generous and that this student was in fact mostly lazy.

And so, with this snippet of an insight into how the school liaison had selected the students to be invited to participate in the research project, the researcher was guided to the Conference Room. He was told that the students would be sent to him in the next few minutes.

Looking about the tiny conference room and considering whether this would be where the first encounter would take place (after all it only had five chairs for at least fifteen students), the researcher began to consider just how it feels to be on "new" ground and the impact on one's confidence. This consideration was explored and re-explored over subsequent years. The time and effort it had taken to get this point had been daunting; the researcher was left feeling that any start would/should be welcomed. The limitations of being from outside of the school could be worked through. But operational limitations had stymied his attention to what the research was truly about and that intended to be achieved, discovered, facilitated, and related.

When a neoliberal agenda determines that schools are more accountable than in any other time and measured by relatively narrow benchmarks, it would seem that schools are no longer able and, in some cases prepared, to buffer the harder edges of society so that students are able to discover and begin to enact their knowledge, in their respective time and place (Apple, 2006; Cassell & Nelson, 2013; Connell, 2003). If schools are no longer able to provide a curriculum that builds resilience, independence, and offer bridges from one's lifeworld into potential futures, then it would not be any great surprise that academic engagement and

successful graduations will elude those potentially in greatest need of such knowledge. In short, the school system that once promised democracy is in danger of being constituted by schools that are themselves subjugated to the point of becoming a subjugator of many young people who populate their classrooms (Hursh, 2007).

This conclusion has been well represented by Giroux (2011) stating that:

> the battle waged over education must be understood as part of a much broader struggle for democratic public life, the political function of culture, the role of intellectuals, and the importance of pedagogy as a hegemonic technology in various aspects of daily life, (pp. 51–52)

Within that daily life are the experiences of young people in schools. This study looks at the means by which young people develop their particular dispositions towards their expectations. Without this agency the school curriculum remains limited in its reach and attainment of its democratic purpose.

5.1.3 Habitus and Agency

To ascertain how the participating students considered their futures they were presented with 50 photographs depicting a wide range of occupations. These images were to be the catalyst for participants to express their particular interests in careers. In subsequent interviews about their choices it became apparent that while they were able to indicate some preferences about the images provided, most of them struggled to find the words to express the reason why such choices were made. This struggle was often communicated by the phrase "I don't know." In some cases there were some explicit references to the fact that it was a parent's idea of what they could do and in one case some disagreement between each parent was cited but still there remained little account of why the young person had settled on such a choice.

The vagaries expressed by most of the participants were best represented by one response that indicated that the young person was

looking to be a doctor, because one of her cousins was in a medical program. The combinations of her parents' desire for her to be a doctor and her cousin undertaking studies to become a nurse were the most tangible insight to be offered for her current career choice. Her uncertainties and those expressed by other young people about the thinking behind their particular preferences was an indication of doxic aspirations (Zipin et al. 2015), aspirations that complied with dominant expectations. The responses from many of the participants were constructed with reference to the expectations others had of them but also through a broad and naïve understanding of what it would take to attain such expectation. This is in line with Zipin et al. (2015) who have written that: "These 'desirable futures' are only rarely capacitated among low SES groups because they are simplistic in their constructions, and selective for those from privileged social positions, putting them in the order of fantasy for most others" (p. 233).

The "I don't knows" are data in that they are expressions of the limited agency that existed in the group. The means by which these young people were selected provided the researcher with a recognisable nexus for these doxic aspirations. Disengagement through defiance and scatty-ness is likely to be both product and producer of limited perspectives of the future.

The responses that a young person might construct, when considering what the future might hold, is a distillation of their experiences, to date, that offer a point of reference towards a particular field. The ways a person engages and interprets events are shaped by current reflections upon previous and similar occurrences or "habitus" as Bourdieu (2004) terms it. The formation of a person's habitus is useful when considering how young people form a view of life beyond school (Colley, James, Diment, & Tedder, 2003). The experience of life as constant change (physically, emotionally and socially) in the present is a constant call on a young person's interpretive intelligence (Furlong et al., 2006). The following sections take account of these challenges in the context of how a young person accounts for their expectations and the extent that they have agency in their lifeworld circumstances (Zipin et al., 2015). Andrews offers

a view of how the future acts, as a point of reference for one's past and present:

> We constantly move backwards and forwards in our mind's eye, and it is this movement, which is a key stimulus behind our development. We learn from our pasts, not only as things happen but as we reflect back on experience, in light of subsequent unfoldings. (2014, p. 3)

Preparing for potential encounters that may be personal opportunities, a person is called upon to enact their sense of self in multiple fields that constitute the social experience. Questioning one's potential future draws from meanings of the present lifeworld as a means of exposing the construction of the personal lens. The following sections uncover some of the cause and effect regarding a young person's view of the future.

5.1.4 Planning for an Excursion and Hoping for an Experience

Conversations with the participating NWS students included outlining possible activities in the research project. On hearing about the possibility for an excursion to a university campus their initial reaction was around the logistics of where and how and not so much focused upon the why. The researcher saw this as a marker of restricted expectations derived from previous direct experience. The thinking for the researcher concerned how these young people might begin to anticipate and question what was likely to be the unknown. Thus the researcher came to contemplate a proposed excursion to a university campus, one that would create an educational "experience." Dewey argues that the educator must "have that sympathetic understanding of individuals as individuals which gives him (sic) an idea of what is actually going on in the minds of those who are learning" (1998, p. 39).

The researcher has witnessed numerous tours on university campuses and has questioned some of the responses from young people. How would school students' views of the world and their place in that world be internalised and contextualised by such an experience (Baker & Brown, 2008; France, Bottrell, & Haddon, 2013)?

This early questioning was impetus to inquire with Year 9 and 10 students and explore what it might be like to study at university. This study as a research project was intended to ascertain the impact of experience and to determine how eventful touring the university is, on the thoughts and reactions of young people (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014). Taking a tour of the university would bring out a variety of responses based on the match or gap between the doxa of the university and the young person embodied as a member of a family and community (Gale & Parker, 2015; Zipin et al., 2015). Again the words of Dewey (1998) came to inform the intent and subsequent review of this initial experience.

> A primary responsibility of educators is that they not only be aware of the general principle of shaping of actual experience by environing conditions, but that they also recognize in concrete what surroundings are conducive to having experiences that led to growth. (p. 40)

Observations and interactions would offer contemporaneous insight about the personal connections of each of the young people to the experience of the university. This is only possible if the opportunities to interact with the apparently objective nature of the university were perceived by the young people as an opportunity they could avail themselves of.

It is common practice for universities to facilitate tours for student groups as a way to inform young people about the choices they could make about studying in higher education. Typically the school makes a booking with the recruitment section at the university, and on the day the student group is shown around the various highlights of the university. The guiding is often done by university students who are employed to communicate some of their personal insights as the tour proceeds in and around the physical aspects of the university. Whilst there is a set routine to the event, there are opportunities for the participating students to ask questions while on the tour.

Would the tours that the researcher organised and witnessed end with questions coming from the participants? Would it only be those that had the confidence and cultural capital to raise points of concern derived

from previous conversations with significant others, utilising a "dining-table doxa" (Bourdieu, 1996)?

5.1.5   Positioned in and by the Present

In the initial meeting with students at NWS one student asked:

> "So do we have to be here or can we go if we don't want to be in the project?"

The researcher was not prepared for such an out of hand rejection at the first meeting but staying true to the words contained in the ethics application, he said they could go—expecting now to be sharing the room with five empty chairs. But only one student left the room. Another seemed intent on clarifying just what the researcher wanted to get out of this. No matter how he presented his take on the research project the student continued to state that the researcher was more likely to be some sort of a counsellor or a psychologist. The student physically and verbally indicated that he would not be staying and moved from where he was seated to just near the door. But to the researcher's surprise remained for the whole of the meeting.

As the researcher eventually got down to discussing visiting the university and what might be possible for the group to do—having reassured them that there would be no "work" involved—there were already some articulations being made of "I don't think I'm going there, I am going to work at McDonalds." The student who had articulated leaving the group but had stayed near the door made some interesting contributions to the discussion, along the lines of "I am going to own a restaurant." The researcher viewed this as an attempt to close his inquiry down by the student stating that he had his pathway mapped out so there would be no need to visit the university. The researcher countered with some details about the different courses that existed in relation to hospitality, especially at the degree level in business and law and indicative of a familiarity with the systemic operation of higher education institutions.

While this response was recognised at the time by the researcher as being inadequate, it was not until another conversation (reported in section

5.4) that the researcher began to take account of the extent of just how inadequate it had been. The inadequacy was how the researcher had assumed that sharing some details of the university operation might naturally build a connection for the school student and his ambitions. The student's vision of the future and the researcher's understanding of the pragmatics of higher education and career shared a common direction but were actually positioned on different paths.

5.2   The University Visits: Students' Impressions and Understandings

5.2.1   Experiences as Being Eventful

In order to contextualise the insights and thinking of the young people taking part in this segment of the study, an excursion was facilitated to a university campus. The intention was to provide a general introduction to some of the activities that can be encountered as a university student. The small group from NWS were interested, yet their individual behaviour indicated some apprehensiveness of encountering this new environment. Bourdieu's reference to the phrase "fish out of water" (Reay, Crozier & Clayton, 2010) was an apt one to capture given the researcher's observations of facial expressions and nervous conversations.

The preceding encounters with the researcher had led to the students feeling somewhat comfortable in expressing some of their questions in a direct manner. They wanted to know about how to navigate from one building to the next and other pragmatic aspects that were to be expected when moving into new geography. In anticipation of a need to make the young people feel welcomed, in a symbolic manner, they were presented with university branded windcheaters at the commencement of the tour. With the garments tucked away the group made their way on the tour as scripted by the researcher.

5.2.2 Impressions of Observations of Students' Reactions

As the group was shown around and moved from one building to the next, one of the young people in the group, identified as Brunetti Boy (BB), was keen to engage with the architecture in terms of what it offered as a

potential for *parkour.*[1] He explored the idea of doing something that many others would never consider. It struck the researcher that he had confidence in himself and the insights he had attained from his previous experience. Any thought that BB lacked attributes, knowledge, and skills could only be made with reference to some fields that were unfamiliar to him. He was able to calculate risks and recognise spaces for opportunities to be taken. Those facets of an individual's engagement in their lifeworld that are often regarded as "street smarts" are an apt description of BB's intelligence (Hatt, 2007).

The "tour" continued, with the researcher's plan to expose some of the typical aspects and activities that might be encountered by students attending for the first time. The students from NWS witnessed science demonstrations presented by a faculty member and university student, and were able to respond to questions put to them about the science being explored and explained. They appeared more at ease in the presence of the student as she was close to their age, and was in the process of taking a less traditional approach to her studies by enrolling in the community science course. The experiments had been designed to grab attention and interest in the scientific principles involved. Some of the young people readily offered their thoughts around the questions posed to them. It remained difficult for the researcher to attain any detailed insights into the actual thoughts at the time. From this activity, the NWS students visited the library, the fitness facilities including the gym and the swimming pool, the bookshop and cafeteria. Following a lunch break the group was guided to the hospitality-training restaurant and kitchen, located on another nearby campus, which had a focus on vocational education. While the restaurant was not in operation there was an opportunity to see the spaces and gain some information about focus of study that included both practical and theoretical learning. The absence of university students in classes was to

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[1] "As innovated by French "free runners" David Belle and Sébastien Foucan in the 1990s, *Parkour* is a physical cultural lifestyle of athletic performance focusing on uninterrupted and spectacular gymnastics over, under, around, and through obstacles in urban settings" (Atkinson, 2009, p.169).

be one limiting aspect of this experience as it reduced the opportunities for enhancing the imaginations of the young people from NWS and seeing people like themselves engaging with the site.

Travelling back to their school, using public transport, it was noted that all participants had elected to wear their new university branded windcheaters, not only on the journey but also back into the school building. This was viewed by the researcher as a mark of symbolic connection to the experience (Pagis, 2009) and one that was to be reiterated on a subsequent visit to another campus, when some of the participants elected to wear the windcheaters again, as part of their preparation to set foot back on campus.

5.2.3 Self and the University

This initial "tour" experience was used as the impetus for subsequent conversations with the group some time later back at the school. The questions about the visit to the campus and their reflections merged with personal comments—contextualising how they view their immediate future and the questions emerging in their lifeworld. These considerations were often delivered amidst blurred exchanges and tangential comments that called for "teacherly" redirection. The research-related aim was to provide an opportunity for the young people to voice their thoughts and reactions in response to observations. These included meeting a faculty member and the student who demonstrated a science experiment, and the visit to facilities. The participants spoke of their observations that the university students appeared relaxed and "comfortable." They were surprised to see that eating was permitted in the library, a place they were impressed with for its architecture rather than "all those books."

The questioning continued to seek out what the participants could say about what they now know about the university.

Freddie: You have to work hard
Researcher: How do you know that?

Freddie responded with "people that go there are smart so that they are already prepared." This caused other participants to add that this was the role of the "VCE" (Victorian Certificate of Education—the senior school certification) and why senior students had to work hard as a way to get ready for university (Mendick, Allen, & Harvey, 2015). Other responses led to the summation that being at university seems hard because it is a long way off. The conversation turned to talking about how people actually go about their learning at the university (Gale & Parker, 2014). There were observations about how being in a lecture could be a challenge, to get all the information written down. When it was explained that some lectures are recorded and these can be reviewed later, the question was asked "so why do you need to go the lecture?"—an indication that the person asking the question was engaging in some of the complexities of learning in a context not previously experienced (McInnis, James, & Hartley, 2000).

5.3   Aspiration and Agency

The opportunity to get close to how another person imagines their future possibilities was always going to be a challenge: a challenge for how the researcher could create an environment to build a trusted relationship as drawing out the participants' telling of such imaginings. In keeping with the bricoleur methodology, the researcher was receptive to the unanticipated conversation with one of the participants in the research project. The contribution of this single student (BB) becomes important data in this chapter in that his story and interactions with the other participants convey something of the catalysts and content about the internal conversations and imaginings. His articulations around his current views of career possibilities were not filled with the abbreviations of "I don't know" but rather of how he was beginning to bring small pieces of insights together to create a clearer vision.

This student had been intent on leaving early in the initial meeting but actually remained behind after the others had left the room. His conversation went straight back to his intention for his future.

BB: So sir, do you know Brunetti's in the city?

Researcher: Yes, there are a few of them now, one in Carlton, another near Melbourne Uni and there is even one just off Swanston Street.

BB: Yeah but the Carlton one is the best.

The researcher agreed to this notion.

BB: Well I'm going to own that one day!

The researcher was immediately impressed with how he was able to express his aspirations so explicitly.

And then something unfolded that, even after years of anticipation, the researcher had not prepared for. The student asked:

BB: So how do I go about owning a restaurant like that?

The student was identifying the void within his ambitions and imaginations that he was now aware of. This definitive statement was a real act of reaching out to collect more pieces for his vision.

Researcher: Well most people start working in a restaurant and become managers and then become a partner or buy the business overall.

BB: So how do you get to work in a restaurant like that?

Researcher: Some students start by work experience and then get some part time work. A Careers teacher can organise some work experience for you. Do you have one here?

BB: No.

The definitive response came as a marker of the disjunction between person and school—it appeared from his emphasis and frustration that the school had not offered him agency in his personal endeavours and expectations.

Researcher: Well I could find out if we could arrange for you to talk to someone at Brunetti's, maybe we could get some cake and have a coffee.

The student thought that would be a good idea, shook hands, thanked the researcher (unsure exactly what for), and left the room.

This young man clearly had aspirations, yet he was also able to demonstrate the challenges of not being able to see ways realising what he aspired to. His apparent lack of agency was loaded with questions related to social capital (Field, 2016; Lin, 2002) and the role of the school in

bridging the connections necessary to inform future oriented actions. Here was a young person standing at the edge of a void, with the palpable sense of no way forward (DeJaeghere, McCleary, & Josić, 2016).

It had been a whirlwind of emotions, especially for the researcher, who recognised with all of the side conversations and BB's verbal bravado, that is part of being an adolescent (Corprew & Cunningham, 2012). This aspect the researcher realised was going to be hard work, and that maybe he just ought to cut out there and then. On reflection the researcher also began to consider that these young people didn't really want to be in that room and talking about research, university, and the future. It was only when the researcher found some silence in the drive back to the university that he could see that it was for these very reasons that he should return to see what difference any future experiences might offer.

The researcher sought and realised a reasoned insight in the words of Willis (2013), whom he considered as having encountered similar "frustrations" in his seminal ethnography, and who contends:

> Insofar as knowledge is always biased and shot through with class meaning, the working class student must overcome his (sic) disadvantage of possessing the wrong class culture and the wrong educational decoders to start with. A few can make it. The class can never follow. It is through a good number trying, however, that the class structure is legitimated. The middle class enjoys its privilege not by virtue of inheritance or birth, but by virtue of an apparently proven greater competence and merit. The refusal to compete, implicit in the counter-school culture, is therefore in this sense a radical act: It refuses to collude in its own educational suppression. (p. 128)

5.3.1   Personal Attributes

An individual's attributes are highly valued in late modernity. In a society, which measures what a person can do as a metric of personal success, it is incongruous that an education system is not attuned to a young person's emerging skills and knowledge in a particular field (McWilliam & Haukka, 2008). Yet there remains evidence that schools are unable or not motivated

to embrace the skills and knowledge that are derived from experiences beyond the walls of the school (Lingard, Sellar, & Savage, 2014; Rodriguez, 2013; Zipin, 2013). BB did certainly not see this school as doing so.

By trying to develop insights into the contextual conditions that could illuminate the nexus of one's habitus, cultural capital and the field of higher education, the researcher understands that such relationships are best established through mutual trust, respect, and reciprocity (Tisdall, Davis, & Gallagher, 2008). The researcher had experienced such relationships in his teaching career and recognised that they are not the product of forced or contrived approaches. They are not produced by careful planning or orchestration but are often constructed in shared experiences that gain some traction from those experiences.

5.3.2   Disclosing Dispositions

Through conversations and interviews, BB's background was presented as he described how he was currently engaged with his experiences and deliberations. In response to questions regarding his interest in food, BB spoke of his family and how his life had connected with food preparation and the value it played in life as he viewed it. Part of his family's culture involved going out to a local café where his parents would talk with other community members. According to BB such meetings went for many hours, and as the young boy was easily bored with such talk he turned his attentions (or may have been directed) towards helping out in the kitchen. It was clear from the way he related such occurrences that these were significant for him and his growing confidence. It seems this confidence was translated into activity in his home. BB's parents and extended family soon identified him as being the "cook" in the family and from his telling it also appears that he did not resist the title.

What remained unclear were constructive influences to connect to a specific place (Brunetti's), as a way of referencing his aspirations for the future. How had this young person come to see the Brunetti café as being the embodiment of his aspirations for the future? Drawing on what

presented as a brief encounter, BB had been able to see what he came to view those aspects, considered by him, as being successful in the hospitality field (Lugosi, 2008).

While school teachers and university selection officers may sit engaged by television programs promoting celebrity chefs or seeking to unearth the next master chef, there appears to be little regard for these attributes as a window into the life and potential of a young person, such as BB, who is located in and measured by the current education system. This lack of regard sits as one of the primary challenges to and consequences of the neoliberal system of education in the world of young people like BB. The personal attributes and lifeworld of young people remain largely unaccounted for, as each lesson and each test is constructed as a means of taking account of the effectiveness of the education system and measured through the indices of student performativity (Davies & Bansel, 2007).

> BB: Out of school interests—my mum has always taught me to cook and stuff like that.

Having an insight into the lifeworld of the young people who constitute the student population remains a necessary element in understanding the potential not just of a particular individual. This also applies to understanding the school, its curriculum, and the enacted pedagogy. It is also relevant to the aspirations of educators of individual students.

When asked about his thoughts for the future and specifically careers, BB was provided with the portfolio of photographs depicting a wide rage of jobs. He was asked what his top three choices would be for his possible future career. In addition to this he was asked to nominate one photograph that represented an occupation that he was least interested in.

> BB: The first one would be a cook, the second would be a sports player, the third would be an actor, and the fourth one would be a mechanic.
>
> I love cooking. I've pretty much been brought up with it. My mum's always taught me how to cook and I've always wanted to own my own restaurant. The second one, I'm really into sports. I do

kickboxing and Taekwondo, and I was wanting to go probably to the Olympic games for Taekwondo. And the third one was an actor. I want to be a stunt man because I like to do parkour and freerunning and stuff like that.

His responses were connected to what many would see as aspirations for the future, as being goal-oriented towards a developing vision of the future. Some key markers were articulated as an indication of BB's contemporaneous imaginings. The responses made by BB were far more thoughtful than those of other participants in that he was able to find the means to explain how some of his views of the future had come into being. His explorations, expressions, and desire to find out more details were to be the foundation for the reciprocity within the research relationship. The substantiation for these choices having been made clear, BB was asked as to why he selected the fourth photograph as being his least likely occupation, he indicated that he had no interest in being a car mechanic stating that:

BB: I'm not really into cars.
        Well, I like cars, but I don't like fixing them.
        Yeah. Looks too hard.

This notion of a job being perceived as "hard" comes into play in a subsequent encounter with BB .

He was asked about how he imagined his life would be in five years' time and BB gave a response that continued on from his consideration of the photographs that depicted his top three job preferences. In line with the first conversation between BB and the researcher his initial response came emphatically but upon further questioning BB revealed some tenuous connections to the possibility of owning or managing a restaurant. BB's awareness of his limitations, about how he could achieve his aspiration, sits as a most pronounced account of the self, contending with limitations of one's social world.

BB: *Ever since I was young. Because my mum has always taught me to cook and stuff like that.*

His response was then used to explore what were some of BB's experience around food beyond his home to which he gave an insight into some formative aspects of experiential learning as part of the formal education system.

> BB: *Ever since in primary school, they have the Stephanie Alexander program. So yeah, we've been cooking. It was the whole class who had teachers who teach us.*

BB acknowledged his awareness that cooking food was only part of his engagement. That the "plating up" of a meal was something he recognised as not only being an important aspect of food preparation and service but also something he had developed a talent in. This was clearly represented by his reference to "designing the plate." When asked about how this approach to presenting food came about, BB felt that he had developed it on his own but did acknowledge that some initial insights came from his mother. This was the level of thought that was apparent in this young person's undertakings outside of the school. There was a sense of purpose in the manner by which he engaged in his personal endeavours that was readily recognised by his peers and the researcher. Amongst this small group of students taking part in the study he readily offered up colourful data that stood in contrast to the monochromatic responses of the other students.

The social ontogeny (Eccles et al., 1993; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002) of schools remains largely disregarded despite considerable efforts to deal with "unmotivated" or "underachieving" students. There remains a disjunction between the experiences of BB's lifeworld and those within the current education system (Gokpinar & Reiss, 2016; Lingard & Thompson, 2017; Reynolds, 2011) as represented by BB's school.

Aspiration.

The view that the young people of disadvantaged communities lack aspirations has been the focus of much research, policy, and discourse in the wider community (Appadurai, 2013; Dalton, Ghosal, & Mani, 2016). Concerns fuelled by a deficit perspective of people within complex social

settings have led to assertions around their lack of capacity to engage with appropriate orientations towards future career options (Bok, 2010). Such thinking is at the centre of policy, programs, and projects that have sought to respond to the need for widening participation in higher education (Gale et al., 2010; Sellar & Gale, 2011; Sellar, Gale, & Parker, 2011). Burke (2012) has offered a concern around the hegemonic discourse of raising aspirations given that the main problem of widening educational participation is attributed to "failure" of people and communities recognising the value of such participation.

This research has not sought to question any such lack of aspirations on anyone's part but rather to get close to the limitations that confront the formation of and engagement with a person's developing perspective. In order to do this there needs to be a closer examination of how one's perspective and dispositions come into being.

5.3.2.2 Uncertainty and doubt.

How might a situation exist where one's aspirations can be clearly communicated yet the means by which to attain them appear "cloudy" to the extent that there appears to be no way forward? For young people who have little or no experience with tertiary education and varied career paths uncertainty regarding the nature and the means by which to realise potential trajectories (Fadigan & Hammrich, 2004) appears to be inevitable. Having a view of the present self (Meeus, 2011) is instrumental in pulling together the pieces that offer orientation towards possible futures.

In thinking of how all this might figure in his own career choice, BB spoke about how he had begun to make connections to his living in the present.

> BB: *I like cooking and it makes me feel good, and then I can feed it to other people and it makes them feel . . .*

When asked about how he might go about achieving his expectations of a career in cooking and food, BB was able to provide some generalisations

but hesitated in his considerations of what steps might play a role in fulfilling his intentions.

> BB: *I'd be working at a restaurant. I'm trying to look for—and I've already—like, I would like to work at a restaurant now, and be able to work my way up there, get a couple degrees, and then probably go into a higher—I mean hospitality, like. Yeah, a qualification.*

BB grasps the essence of the position he lives in. He is not connected to the school because it does not address his most immediate and personal challenges about informing what he is interested in doing. BB also recognises that being at school is the cause of a lost opportunity for him since he cannot establish himself in the field of hospitality without "on the job" experience.

Regarding his insight about this type of occupation, BB was able to give reference to having "worked a few times" and on further exploration could give details of what the nature of that experience was. There had been no formal arrangements such as school organised work-experience but rather learned from more opportunistic in that he had made use of the family connections within the community.

> BB: *I always used to help out. I used to go to the restaurant, like every weekend or pretty much every second day, and my family, they know the owners and the head chef, so we pretty much—I just offered to help out with her. My parents would stay there and—well, with their friends as well, over—until, like, three a.m. in the morning drinking coffee and tea. So I pretty much got bored and just started helping out.*

The place of community connections to enhance the experiences of an individual (Ellison, Wohn, & Greenhow, 2014) around the present day can be significant, yet those same connections remain a marker of uncertainty when it comes to navigating the means by which personal interest might become a more significant element of a person's future life.

5.4   The Present: Finding a Way

Within the broader view of young people's aspirations sits the question of how an individual sets out to realise what constitute the key elements

associated with attaining expectations. As previously mentioned, it is apparent that regardless of the context of a young person's life, the empirical data support the contention that being aspirational is not at issue (Bowden & Doughney, 2010). The navigation of social structures however would be a key challenge to the realisation of such aspirations. For some young people, never having been party to the knowledge of systems will test their resolve and in many cases creating a sense of "not for the likes of us" (Reay et al., 2010).

5.4.1 Navigating the Education System

In the thinking about his formal schooling BB put forward English Maths and PE as subjects that he found interesting. Upon further questioning he discussed why he thought these were areas of school where he had some strengths.

> BB: *You need maths very much for cooking, and English, just I can speak it fluently, and P.E. because I like to do physical education.*

When asked about the areas of school that he thought were the weaker aspects of his participation in school he admitted that he was "not really into" the subjects of History and Science. BB qualified this response in saying that he considered these as not necessary in his future. This in turn led to a questioning about whether he saw any connections between science and cooking.

> BB: *Well, it's not really the science that we learn here. It's about all mixtures and bones and stuff like that. Yeah. I don't really think I'd need that.*

The interview moved on to consider how BB viewed his connection to school participation overall.

> BB: *Last year, I was a bit—I wasn't paying attention in class a lot. But yeah, this year I think it's starting to get back. I'm just trying to focus and do the work. I just think if I don't do good now, then I won't be able to get my future up.*

The regret around what might have or should have been signals about a young person's present vocational aspirations became a determining factor (Caroll, Gordon, Houghton, Unsworth, & Wood, 2012).

The self-efficacy that an individual directs towards a desired career appeared to be no match for the lack of academic aspirations and achievement. This is a major factor in determining how aspirations may be realised. The academic and social experiences of a young person have consequences far beyond their aspirations (Bond et al., 2007).

5.4.2 Exploring Connections: Family and Friends

Family and friends represent a significant source of information and an archive of experience for young people (Gale et al., 2013). The insights that a family can offer to a young person will differ according to family member's personal interactions and experience. When there are limited offers and opportunity from the family then it stands to reason that a young person would seek out trusted potential informants (Ceja, 2006; Perez & McDonough, 2008).

BB considered how others might regard him. He thought that some people might describe him as funny and that he helped others when something was wrong. This response led into BB remarking that he has trouble concentrating on tasks when he thought there were problems that he might be able to help with. He went on to report his view of himself by saying that he liked to do volunteer work and "be on the move all the time." This response led to BB expressing his approach to some of his school experiences, from the perspective of where he thought he could improve.

> BB: *I don't think that I struggle a lot with anything, but probably paying attention. Because like, as soon as they tell me something, I want to get up and go do it. Don't listen to the whole thing.*

To explain, BB suggested that he did think that this had resulted in some problems with particular subjects that required a methodical approach. While he enjoyed the subject of Science he was aware that not paying full attention to the instruction had led to "problems."

> Researcher: *Okay. And cooking will be a bit like that too maybe. Does your mum ever say that to you? Like, you can't rush this?*
>
> BB: *Yeah, you have to take it easy.*

The connection to taking a methodical approach in cooking led to a discussion about the food that BB liked to prepare and whether he had a favourite.

> BB: *It's an Arab dish. I haven't really perfected it yet. I like to make cakes. Yeah, Lebanese [ones].*

At this point BB clarified that he was most interested in cooking food from Lebanon, where his parents had come from. This led to an exploration of how he went about preparing this food and the guidance he received.

> Researcher: And what feedback do you get about some of those things when you make them? Do people like them?
>
> BB: Well, my mum tries not to give me too much confidence. She always says, "It's good. It's all right." She doesn't—yeah.
>
> Researcher: Why doesn't she do that?
>
> BB: So I think she doesn't want me to be up myself.
>
> Researcher: But she'd be happy if you became a cook or a chef or a person working in the—
>
> BB: Yeah. I use all her recipes and stuff like that.

In response to questions about how he felt he got support in school and life in general BB did not nominate particular others but rather positioned himself in the act of becoming informed.

> BB: I don't really like asking people for help. I like to try to figure it out myself.

However when asked about specific people BB nominated his friends as his primary source of support. Getting support for school related matters BB's response was to reference his family. It followed that he felt that there were no teachers that he sought assistance or support from at school beyond the classroom interactions and the interview moved to his considerations of his future.

> Researcher: And do you speak to your folks about what the future might be for you?
>
> BB: They already know what I want.

BB spoke of the fact that his parents knew that he was determined to follow through with his intentions for the future that included two distinct areas of

interest that apparently occupied most of his time outside of school. Having spoken about his interest in cooking, BB explained his involvement in *parkour*—an activity based on climbing structures in urban areas. He described the activity and then spoke of his interest in becoming a professional stuntman. This was followed up with his accounting of his parents' views of his activities and intent for the future occupations.

> BB: Yeah—they'll support me in it as long as I follow three rules which is one, no trespassing, don't do anything that will inconvenience others, and don't hurt myself.

When asked about how he went about gaining the skills needed to engage in parkour he spoke about participating in a training group in the city, that he found out about on Facebook.

> BB: *So there's about twenty or thirty of us go out at Southbank and we train there. We help each other. This is one of the sports that they actually encourage you to do better. They don't actually, like, discriminate against you if you can't do certain things.*
>
> *With parkour, you can't really be the best at it. It's just about—your abilities. It's really fun, yeah, seeing all of them do the stunts. Because there's various people. There's people that do parkour and there's freerunning. That's all the flips and stunts and all that. Parkour is jumps, yeah. But it's pretty good learning different skills.*

In the interview BB was asked about his interactions with others in the group and what he had gained from being part of the training group.

> BB: *We've talked and they've helped me with some documentaries for school and stuff like that. But yeah, they're pretty fun people.*

Given that the group was made up of young adults, BB was asked if he knew if any group members were going to university.

> BB: *Yeah, there's—they're—some of them are doing English literature and stuff like that. They use big words. I don't know what they're talking about. I just, like, nod. Yeah, they have different backgrounds. I—they all go to uni, I think, pretty much.*

In response to a question about if they ever talked about their studies at university BB said that they did but usually he could not pay attention because there were too many distractions. Then having discussed

the places he and the group go to in order to practice their moves, BB was asked to consider if he thought how his interest in parkour could be turned into a career.

> BB: *Yeah. I've seen people—you'd have to be really, really good at it, but people who have been successful have been in movies and made millions of dollars. Yeah. There's people do movies and stuff, but I'd really love to do it as a professional if I'm good.*

In speaking about the locations that he had visited to practise parkour, BB spoke specifically about Melbourne University. This permitted the discussion to return to the question of what he knew about universities.

> BB: *Difficult. Yeah, I don't really know much about university, just that I have to go there. Well, I'd need it for a qualification.*

The lack of knowledge around post secondary education and university sits as a primary source of limitation despite the articulated awareness of a young people, such as BB, that it is a requirement if one is to "succeed" in attaining the certain goals in life (Brooks, 2003; Reay et al., 2005; Ball, Macrae, & Maguire, 2013; Unwin & Wellington, 2013). The significance of attaining a qualification, expressed here, is that there is some awareness that society at large values the academic credential. The growing acceptance that the credential is the marker of preparedness for later life, in particular one's potential contribution to a productive workforce becomes for the young person, the developing image of what they should be aiming for.

One consequence of the emphasis on formal qualification is that learning is a means to some sort of "golden ticket." Such a simplistic idea is not only found in the domain of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds (Pope, 2001). The view of school and post secondary education as stepping-stones to a desired destination underestimated the knowledge needed well before any graduation (Arum & Roksa, 2011). The statement made by BB that he needs the university to get the qualification is symptomatic of the naïve understanding of the education system. Young people find themselves on a doxic pathway—what they think is expected of them, yet they are often unable to achieve that path, and as a consequence

come to rely on family and friends for illumination (Slack, Mangan, Hughes, & Davies, 2014).

5.4.3 Habituated Aspirations

When young people are questioned about the future it is anticipated that the response will include some specific career examples that have figured in their considerations. These are understandably drawn from an individual's proximity to people occupying such careers (Howard et al., 2015). This includes the representation of such roles as portrayed by mainstream media, including reality television shows (Gehrau, Brüggemann, & Handrup, 2016; Mendick et al., 2015). As Zipin et al. suggest, "These 'desirable futures' are only rarely capacitated among low SES groups because they are simplistic in their constructions, and selective for those from privileged social positions, putting them in the order of fantasy for most others" (2015, p. 233).

This remains the nub of the problem around why such primary aspirations become or remain elusive to some achieving their aspirations (Perry et al., 2016). In simple terms one might have a desire to stand on the distant bank of a river, yet without direction to locate the obligatory bridge then all that is possible is to look off into the distance and only hope for a way make the crossing.

When asked to elaborate about needing it [university], BB clarified that he needed to get a qualification in Hospitality. This point was clarified and confirmed that BB's parents saw that having a university qualification provided some flexibility. He agreed with this suggestion, acknowledging that such a qualification would allow him to change jobs if he needed to.

> BB: *I was thinking about* it, but *I'm fairly strong, I really feel, for cooking. But yeah, I'll take the thing into consideration, so I might go to university.*

This young man had begun thinking about the future by referencing what his parents considered as being tangible attributes of a qualification. The flexibility to change jobs was an apparent advantage. Such a view might have been formed by observations by the parents of other people they had

known that were able to move between jobs because of their qualifications. The parental views had resonated with BB as part of his thinking about what university studies could offer him.

It was apparent from his responses that his thinking around the university as an institution was superficial and derived from what could be considered vague insights. Taking a functional view had BB speaking to his hopes for the future that could be facilitated by the university, yet once again he expressed little detailed understanding of how he might actually come to undertake studies at a university. This lack of detail was a constant source of limitation to expressing his imagined pathways into a desired future. It was a case of seeking to navigate a border crossing (Black, 2007; Deuchar & Bhopal, 2017) that required resilience shot through with imagination yet apparently undermined by a growing sense of limited agency.

5.5   The University as Imagined

BB   It just seems a bit too complicated.

The imagination is both producer and product of expectations (Benson, 2016; Nasu, 2014). In the context of what to expect of the experience of attending university perceptions are fuelled by whatever insights a person is able to compile. It therefore stands that how young people imagine life at university will be constructed from sources that exist in their respective lifeworlds (Allen & Hollingworth, 2013; Sellar et al., 2011).

BB was asked what he imagined it would be like going to a university. This question was framed by the conversation that BB would be joining the other participants in an excursion to one of the university campuses. His response contained very specific references to his prior experiences, beyond the use of the grounds for his *parkour* activities.

BB: I've been to Melbourne Uni quite a lot for lectures and stuff. I do
             lectures on religion and stuff like that.

He was then asked to clarify about his attendance of these lectures, to which he explained that they were organised through his community. Then he was asked about his impression of the university.

> BB: Big. Yeah, I usually don't really stick around for the lectures. I just go around looking at the buildings, check them out and do some tricks. Sometimes I do go to the lecture, but yeah, sometimes I'm doing volunteering so I can help out. But when I'm not, I just— just to help out with the lecture.
>
> They usually have a thousand people there. They sometimes get chefs from overseas to come talk and stuff like that.

There is evidence here that BB had some direct insights of university and was able to make some descriptive accounts of the form if not the function of the university. This gives rise to additional questioning around what it would be like to be a student at the university.

> Researcher: What else do you imagine that universities are like? I mean, if we got up now and went walking through a university, what do you think we would probably see?
>
> BB: It's great. I think it's quite confusing. They're really big, and like, people just come and go whenever they want. I thought it would be like school—but yeah, people just go and come whenever they want.

This account gives a small insight into how students like BB are both attracted and intrigued by their observations of the freedom in university life. It speaks as much to the limitations they experience in the school structure as it does to the flexibilities of the university. But for some young people like BB, there is likely to be some trepidation as they begin to consider what accompanies such flexibility.

The interview then turned to a focus on what BB thought about people who went to university. There had already been a consideration that most of the older people in the parkour group were going to university so that BB knew something of their lives.

> BB: Oh, they're pretty good. I thought the people that go to do parkour were pretty much mindless and dumb people. But it's actually surprising how qualified they are and stuff like that.

> I was actually surprised that so many of them go to university and go to school. I had a typical thing that they—when I've seen parkour, it looks like people just do it a lot for fun. They don't really go out—I mean, they don't really have a qualification, stuff like that. But when they said they all went to university and they're studying . . .

The sharing of this refined awareness gives insight into how BB had previously had a particular subjectivity about people who took part in the *parkour* activity. He also offers a current view of how attaining a university degree provides some understanding into how people consider others. BB's comments give an insight into how he constructs his view of being a university student.

When asked about his thoughts of people who attended university before he met those in the parkour group, BB had some difficulty in fully expressing his deliberations.

> BB: Ah. I don't know. I thought they'd be all high—mostly, I thought they'd most be mostly be Asians. A lot of smart people that are really . . .

This response led to what differences, if any at all, BB thought there might be between school and university.

> BB: Teaching-wise and just school hours and stuff like that. Teaching-wise, it would more difficult, but yeah, as you progress it would be—obviously be more difficult. But yeah, it just seems a bit too complicated.

"Complicated" is a broad term for how a young person might come to think about university. Being hard, challenging and difficult are adjectives that speak to the confronting nature of imagining oneself in a place that is not fully understood but is often highly regarded within one's community. When a young person attempts to imagine being in a university there are preconceived images based on current experience, and often predicated on mainstream media images (Thomson & Holland, 2002). The gap between a young person's present archive of experience and the imagined future marks a particular subjectivity and thinking about the available

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resources they are able to draw upon (McDonald 1999; McDonald, Pini, Bailey & Price 2011).

5.6   Subjectivity, Imagination, and Aspiration

Responding to BB's view that studying at university seems "too complicated" the researcher sought further insights around how a young person's subjectivity might inter-play with the choices to be made about the future. The other participants were invited to share their thinking of the future. The researcher provided some provocative statements to establish a particular line of thought.

This was not a divergence from the line of inquiry used with BB rather it was intended to seek depth to what he had put forward as his current positioning and his attempts to give account of how he perceived his future. The idea of university being too complicated or too hard was one that the researcher came to examine in closer detail, with some of the other participants.

Researcher: No matter what the future holds it will involve work.

Is it easy being told what you have to do—isn't that part of being a kid—being told what to do. What if you were able to not come to school for a week and instead were asked to spend the week finding out about your future careers?

If you don't have to come to class for the next week but go off and find out about the careers that you are interested in—would that be easy?

Students: No that would be hard

What if you don't choose the right one and get the wrong career

You can't ask for help.

Grace (student):   If I couldn't play professional basketball then I would look at being a midwife.

Researcher: These careers are the end result but do you know how to get there?

Freddie (student) suggests doing some research.

Grace: I would try and go to places and do some work experience.

Researcher: So where would you go—what door would you knock on?

Grace: A hospital, interview someone, they might ask for a resume.

Researcher: If they said that before you did your work experience that you needed to find out what it means to be a midwife what would you do? Would you come back to school and ask some questions?

Grace (after some consideration): Do some research—maybe read some books.

Researcher: Do you have any idea what it takes to be midwife, at the moment? Have you done any reading about it?

Grace: No.

Freddie asking about "could a guy be a midwife?" trying to derail the discussion—the immediate response was "Yes," which was immediately followed by his suggestion that he would be a "mid husband" then.

Amidst this conversation Grace had voiced her doxic aspirations (Zipin et al., 2015) constituted by her broad expectations and limited refined knowledge that she held about her imagined futures. Her challenge was representative of many young people who have few detailed insights of careers and the necessary pathways (Hooker & Brand 2010). Lack of detailed information and insights that are fuelled by experience give cause to appreciate the indecision that sits in corner of many young lives in the present (Creed, Patton, & Prideaux, 2006).

The participants were presented with the idea that career choice and decisions are "big questions," as was the question of "what is a university?." Some participants had responses to these questions. This included Grace's contribution that "I can't visualise myself at university."

A young person's inability to visualise themselves in a particular context in the future is not a deficit account of the individual's intellectual capacity, rather the extent of the gap between personal experience and possibilities. Here then, Grace was confronted with a void that prevented her from constructing any connection in her visualisation (Andrews, 2014). A consequence of such gaps is attributable to an individual's habitus in the context of a specific field, and thus the number of people forming underrepresented groups in higher education (Gale & Tranter, 2011; James, 2000; James et al., 2004).

In the resulting discussion the researcher suggested that during the next visit to a university campuses it could include Grace visiting the midwifery education department, and talking to teachers and students there. Then it was suggested that at the end of the visit she might decide that she did not want to be a midwife. That perhaps an important part of finding out about career choices was identifying what someone didn't want to pursue (Foskett & Hemsley-Brown, 2001).

After exploring his thoughts about the university and careers, Freddie, another student, provided an initial view that he thought he wasn't smart enough. This came after one of the other participants had suggested that Freddie wanted to go to clown college. While it might have been something of a humorous jibe, Freddie had clarified that it was actually something he had considered as a ten-year-old. Added to this was the researcher's awareness of Freddie's persona in the school, due to an earlier conversation with a staff member. Reference had been made to Freddie's family life, and speculation that his limited success at school was implicated in his parents' use of marijuana. Yet in the same conversation the staff member made it known that he had nominated Freddie to participate in a stand up comic competition run by a national radio station. This, for the researcher, was affirmation of Freddie's sharp wit and awareness of occurrences in his life. Such wit was a very apparent part of his participation and contribution to the research experience.

In discussion around how the participants might consider the choices they based on their interests on, what they knew, what they would like to do, and what they would not like to do, BB reported he had decided not to be a chef. This was confirmed by Freddie as a way of communicating that there had been some conversations around BB's change of mind. Upon enquiring as to what had caused his change of mind BB reported that he had discovered that being a chef involved long hours so he was now looking for something else to do. This declaration drew Freddie to challenge BB "What did you think it would be—just make one soufflé and go home?"

On further exploration of his announcement, BB admitted that the information had in fact frightened him. This change of direction came as a surprise to the researcher but not as much as his blunt and honest expression, in the presence of other group members. As a means of moving on, BB then contended that he might want to become a stuntman in movies. This caused a range of responses from others, such as "How many people actually get to be a stuntman?" Some participants were not sure of what that career entailed and others called into question the likelihood of achieving such an expectation. His questioning then turned to asking if it was *hard* to be a policeman. The researcher recognised that BB was grasping at what appeared to be some limited options for his aspirations. He was apparently looking to lock in some destinations to aim for as a means of having a goal and purpose as part of his transition from school to work (O'Connor 2014).

It was Freddie who drew the conversation back to some explicit aspects of being a chef, asking "Do you get good pay for being a chef?" This was then followed by his speculation to BB that he still should think about being a chef. BB's response to Freddie's view was "it is not just about the money!" As the conversation continued Freddie went back to BB to challenge his decision to no longer pursue being a chef. He was able to qualify his questioning by saying he had seen pictures of BB's cooking endeavours—this was an expression of his respect for what BB was capable of. Not to give up, Freddie made the suggestion to BB that why wouldn't he "just be a baker." This challenge drew a response from BB in the form of the question "Why do you want me to do something that I don't want to do?"

This statement is evidence of a young person's trepidation about the unknown. It was clearly undesirable for BB to entertain the idea of working long hours as a chef-in-training and his change of mind had apparently come in response to some abrupt insight. It was also apparent that BB did have many of the attributes that would be suited to the culinary arts and associated careers yet this this was dismissed largely due to what BB had perceived as challenges but from some distance. The lack of experiential

insights of the actual workplace appeared to undermine some admirable aspects of BB's present being (Vaughan, Roberts, & Gardiner, 2006).

Little did the researcher know that this would be the last direct encounter with BB. As the next visit to another campus was organised, the number of participants began to dwindle, largely due to their disconnections with the school (Stamou et al., 2014). It was reported by other participants that BB was interested in the next visit but had not been attending school classes for some time. He had begun to present as a "school refuser" (Hancock & Zubrick, 2015).

As the small group of participants collected together at the front of the school for the next visit there was no sign of BB, although the other participants indicated that BB had intended to take part despite his being away in the previous days. With time running out and no direct communication from BB, it was decided to travel to the campus without him. Upon reaching the university the researcher received a call from the receptionist at the school who indicated that BB had arrived at the school after the group had departed and was now making his way to the university—apparently being driven by a family member. As time elapsed and with no sign of BB the group continued on to tour the campus until another message was received from the school saying that BB had arrived at the incorrect campus and as a consequence would now not be taking part in the visit.

Conclusion

Undertaking research in NWS was a challenge. Engaging with young people who on a daily basis present as disengaged, created difficulties and challenged the standard practices around teaching and learning. The complexities of life for young people are left behind at the entrance to the school. A young person's responses to the challenges they are confronted with become translated into actions that are unacceptable to the school. The young people who had been defined as "disengaged and disenfranchised" and who participated in this study were, however,

thoughtful and generous with their accounts of their lifeworld experiences and their reactions to some of the shared experiences of the research.

The logistical and administrative elements of the researcher's undertaking at NWS were countered by the exposure to the aspirational dilemmas that some young people were contending with. The void that comes with the "mismatch" of social capital and certain fields presented in social structures including schools is evidenced in the experiences of some of the young people of NWS. The accounts given and the responses to the campus visits suggest that the future for young people is often something "in play" as they go about their lives in the present. Yet any examination of how the future can be anticipated and engaged with is often troubling given the limited view that confronts them.

The researcher's experience with the NWS students included the deeper insight of one young person who expressed clear ambition from his standpoint in the present. He was able to articulate an expectation he had of the future. However this was tempered by his restricted view of any potential pathway that might be available to enable his ambition. This encounter gave a definitive example that there is not a great challenge to raising aspirations of young people in disadvantaged communities. Rather there is much work to be done to create ways to move toward the aspirations. A young person's dispositions are the product of social experiences that get played out in their families and wider communities. The young people of NWS, encountered by the researcher, offered their accounts of how individual dispositions play out in the daily interactions and reflexivity that are lived in particular fields such as education and more precisely schools. The seminal thinking raised from this encounter was around how an individual comes to create a vision of a new way towards the future.

From what was evidenced in this chapter it is apparent that some young people are confronted by disempowering social structures as they endeavour to move forward from their respective experience of the present (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007). As a person calls upon the known connections

that are engaged to achieve a desired position, and they are also making known the limits of their selves. Thus cultural and social capital will become apparent when a young person seeks to enact their transposability as a social agent (Moore, 2014).

By necessity the researcher was attuned to the advantages offered in a bricolaged approach (Kincheloe, 2011) to this study. The bricolage approach was necessary in the given circumstance and it offered a way to gain a detailed insight to the complexities that students as agents engaged with in their present. These insights are not offered as a distillation of commonalities of all young people but rather to exemplify the challenges presented by their habitus in a particular field.

The researcher needed to seek another school to attain further data. In doing so he refined his vision of the dimensions about how young people create their particular aspirations and then construct the present in their context of perspectives of the future. The subsequent aspects of the study aim to expose key factors at play in what Ball, Maguire, and Macrae (2000) have thoughtfully referred to as "landscapes of choice" and "horizons for action." Findings around the subjectivity and choice that have roots in a young person's habitus are the mainstay of the following three chapters.

6   Certain Uncertainties

> How can we register and hear such embryonic emergences of possible futurity? To some degree, we might detect them through deep and acutely observant ethnography; but such means still run into limits, when even those who livingly embody cultural threads of emergent potential lack a linguistic–conceptual matrix for giving them voice. (Zipin et al., 2015, p. 239)

How young people consider the possibility of attending university is pivotal to this study. Sentiments such as those promoted by Zipin et al. (2015) highlight the complexity of obtaining data that reveal factors affecting how an individual begins to position and then reposition self within a perspective of possibilities.

This chapter reports that the research at a second school, Calder College, at least in its initial working-out, followed the planned methodology. It commences with a reporting of the analysis of the introductory interviews with the teachers at Calder College. In these interviews the teachers discussed their perceptions of the students they had selected to participate in the research. This discussion is followed by the data analysis of the individual student interviews prior to their making a visit to the university. In these interviews, the students reported initial awareness of what they thought of their future prospects. On the basis of the interviews the researcher planned the university visit, according to the methodology presented in Chapter 4.

Unfortunately, and mirroring the experience at NWS, events at the school precluded the post-university visit interviews with each student. The chapter concludes, therefore, with a brief reporting of the university visit based on the researcher's journal notes and of the round table discussion the researcher held with all of the students, in preparation for the follow-up individual interviews. While these interviews could not be held, owing to the

ongoing competition for the students' time—prioritising of the official curriculum and other co-curricular activities, the experience at Calder College provided another bricolaged data-collection opportunity, that is also reported in Chapters 7 and 8, where a teacher of students at the same year level had organised her own visit to the university.

This chapter presents data that confirm the challenges outlined in the introductory quotation, whilst also hearing the voices that speak to the context of speculation and uncertainty. In conversations with young people and teachers, a spectrum is exposed, of the deliberations that remain rooted in the lifeworld of a young person.

6.1 Students and Their Aspirations: Calder College

6.1.1 Setting the Context at Calder College

That the teachers at Calder Secondary College nominated students for participation in the research in accordance with selection criteria resulted in most of the planned project procedure being followed, apart from the planned second and post-university visit interviews. In the initial conversations and interviews with the researcher, the students conveyed a cooperative demeanour and with an obvious commitment to success at school. However, they appeared to lack the confidence, which might lead to any self-acknowledgement as being high achieving.

Doing research in schools is bound to be complicated because of the complexity of the political environment. Hartas (2015) posits that the processes of research are not linear but rather tend to be iterative, in that the experiences for the researcher can alter the research questions. Such a consideration underscores the significance of establishing access for the research inquiry reported in this second location.

The accounts explored in this chapter are drawn from the researcher's experience of the unfolding context of not just the research but also the specific site of the present experiences of young people. The accounts given are submitted as evidence of the world of some people, where routines, accountabilities, and expectations collude to set the scene

for uncertainty. This chapter offers evidence of an educational landscape that in recent times has come to expect much of individuals yet offers narrow options to individual student about finding agency for future possibilities.

In contrast to North West Secondary (NWS), the initial contact with this second school, Calder College, immediately focused on how the research could and would be located in the school's emphasis on building student capacity. The principal of the College reviewed the possibilities and coordinated the first meeting with students around some of the existing initiatives on student development. A Student Development portfolio existed in the College's leadership team and was viewed as being the best fit for the research project's purpose.

The teacher responsible for enhancing student participation and leadership readily agreed to support the research endeavours and set about to make recommendations of students whom he believed would benefit from a project involving pathways and the university. The initial conversations were focused upon the selection of the students to be invited to participate. A clarification was made by the researcher that the expectation was that the students would be nominated on the basis that they be considered as having low aspirations in light of their potentials, as perceived by individual teachers. This point was then reiterated using the previously defined selection criteria developed by the researcher. The teacher revised his suggestions in light of the various elements presented in the criteria and then set about arranging a meeting for the nominated students and the researcher. It became evident at this meeting that many of those students selected were part of the student leadership group and that the research was presented as being part of the leadership opportunities facilitated by the school. While this premise was a stark contrast to the manner by which the previous school had nominated students, there remained a common expectation, that individuals would present some of their contextualised views of the future.

6.1.2 The Present: Intentions

Calder College had been established five years prior to the study's activities. The school has a profile, as represented by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority's Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage (ICSEA) scale (ACARA, 2011). This scale is argued to measure s student's educational advantage because their parent's level of education, educational achievement and their occupation. Using this data the school is identified as being constituted by nearly 75% of the student population being in the bottom or lower-middle quarters of the scale. Further it has a population with more than 50% from language backgrounds other than English. The significance of this detail is that the school largely comprised young people that are most likely to be members of families with limited experience of higher education.

The school set out to instil strong and positive connections between the students and the school community through its leadership portfolios that were still developing. This intent was represented by the ongoing support and engagement of a student leadership team that was expected to be more than the standard "student representative council." There was an expectation to incorporate teamwork and personal development into any collaboration and having students provide input and contribute to school developments.

6.1.3 From Subjects to Subjectivity: Teacher Perceptions of Students as Agents

The study's conceptual framework, focused on agency and reflexivity within educational structures, meant that the participating students are accorded the status of knowing subjects. Students come to educational activities—in fact all activities—with agency informed by their reflexive understanding of themselves: subjectivity which results from their intersubjective participation in formal and informal educational settings. Those settings include the school, but as this section shows, embrace all the domains of students' interest and activity, principally their homes but also in community organisations and at out-of-school work.

Since the 1970s I have argued that the sphere of the subjective is where teachers and students connect academic knowledge to their self-formation, a connection made in historical time, embedded in regional, national and diasporic cultures. In calling for autobiography in education, I have been asking teachers and students to reconstruct themselves through academic knowledge, knowledge self-reflexively studied and dialogically encountered. (Pinar 2012, p. 21)

Knowing students

Teachers are filled with insights not only of what a young person is capable of in the context of a particular field but also in identifying the contexts that can hamper and promote achievements. As teachers engage with the act of teaching, with developing contextual insights of the young people, their practice can become far more than delivery of the official curriculum. Instead, such educators act with the intent of building connections between lifeworlds and new horizons albeit as directed by some scripted syllabus. Teachers may choose to consider the student as a potential agent, one who is neither passive nor ignorant but who is the subject of experiences at a particular point in time. The reflections that teachers can call into their professional reflexivity are derived from their own personal experiences and standpoints, that is their subjectivity. Following Mead (1934), those experiences are essentially intersubjective sources of ideas and language about how family and community life open up possible future perspectives.

Challenged by the demands of calls for efficient knowledge transmission and validated credentials in an era of strong centralised accountability, teachers are likely candidates for unthinking behaviour that does not take into account the backgrounds, capabilities and interests of each young person they encounter. Yet there are explicit accounts in this chapter that provide tangible evidence of contextually and interpersonally aware subjectivities about students as subjects. Such accounts are in line with what Clandinin et al. (2006) raised in their explorations of the work of teachers. They exposed distinctions in the way which teachers undertook their respective roles as informed by subjective perceptions: "While seeing small allows us to see behaviors from the perspective of a system, it does

not allow us to see people in their integrity and particularity" (Clandinin et al. 2006, p. 163).

Seeking further insights of the contextual view of the young people at this school, a number of teachers were interviewed regarding their perceptions of individual students. The questioning was directed towards how these students engaged in the academic aspects of their school life.

The teachers were asked to comment on which individuals appeared to be viewing school in light of the immediate future, after completing their secondary education. It was apparent to the researcher that the teachers, participating in the interviews, were attuned to some aspects constituting the broader contexts of students' lives. But there was a strong belief that the school community could enhance the perceptions that students held of their post school possibilities. Such an indication would be in line with Hart's (2102) view that: "Developing a 'capability ethos' in schools and colleges is about developing a more holistic view of young people's lives and an openness about how they feel they can flourish" (p. 188).

The focus with the Calder College teachers was on how they viewed the prospects of each student participating in the research project. The following extracts provide an account of teachers' perceptions as evidence of how teachers contribute to the capability ethos of the college. These views are accounts of not only what teachers have witnessed but there also inferences based on observations, of what might be possible. Such conversations are around making connections with an individual's level of engagement in learning and how such engagement may become embodied in their future.

By making such connections these teachers are identifying the emergent aspirations (Zipin et al., 2015) that are contextualised by students' lifeworlds. Here the teachers construct informed insight into the uncertainties in the lives of the young people they build a connection with. This is therefore an account of the dialogical engagement that exists in schools such as Calder College. Through dialogue with students, with other

teachers about students, and with the parents of students, teachers generate an awareness of young people's lives. As a result teachers' subjectivities are mostly alive to the here and now in a student's conversations and action. In compiling an account of the young people that constitute one's class a teacher becomes a touchstone for those young people, who in turn come to think of those teachers as part of their developing contextual account of the position and potential of "school." This proposition is evident in a school such as Calder College as student-centred pedagogies and extra curricula endeavours are representations of the humanistic orientations of the overarching visions of the school's leadership and the wider community.

6.1.3.2 Positioned in and by the present.

Our relations with others, qua relations, involve interdependency and thus a balance of power, and when we are disadvantaged in such balances our liberty is restricted. (Crossley, 2006, p. 89)

In practice, teachers account for young people as they operate in the present. There is little space, possibly not even a perceived necessity, for making inferences to their personal past beyond that of yesterday or last term. Yet what is of primacy in these accounts is the interdependence of the teacher–student relationship as a developing appreciation of the young person's lifeworld. The contextual space that is a primary reference for teachers is about the interpretation and engagement with daily interactions. In recognition, this study seeks to highlight the dialogic interplays between teachers and young people in relation to teachers' decision-making processes (Crossley, 2006).

The following extracts are centred on more than hopes and good wishes. They are representations of a democratic view of education and aspiration, a view that sees individual young people at the centre of possibilities that are part of the creative act of learning.

First teacher: Isabelle, to me seems, I've taught her since year seven. She seems to have settled for some teachers and not for others. She was a little shotgun this one, but she's come a long way. Isabelle, she's extremely bright, very sporty. We always heard that

she didn't realise that she was, so if she puts her mind to it she can be whatever she wants to be. Her mom went back at a mature age and did a bit of study.

Third teacher: She's definitely demonstrated to me a strong desire to get into a tertiary setting. I've actually got her and a few other students in that class lined up to go and speak to a few physios at a footie club I work at. And she's interested in that sort of field outside of school.

So she's one that's really keen on getting that little bit of experience and a little bit of exposure to professional settings early in her life, which is really good to see.

The teachers in this interview provide tangible evidence of their role in enhancing the appreciation of individual young people, to effect connection to a potential future. It is reasonable to suggest that the teachers are motivated by informing a student about career pathways and a desire to use such developing insights to enhance the student's academic performance. Such motivation is informed by their subjective insights into each young person. In turn teacher subjectivity appears to be derived from the pieces of storyline that a teacher has access to. As each judgement is made there is evidence of the school as an intersubjective space (Kemmis et al., 2013), one that stimulates teachers' insights, whilst promoting possibility for the student.

Fourth teacher: Yeah, I think she's one that has potential to do really good things. It's just a matter of her understanding the requirements of getting to a tertiary course like physio. You need to go above and beyond sometimes what you might be prescribed, though I see her as one that's got a lot of potential in her.

Declaring such perceived potential is a marker of a teacher's view of not only the student but also of their role in making connections to what contributes to a void in a young person's life. The reference here of "going above and beyond" speaks back to recognition that the education system, as experienced, provides the context for expectations communicated as "rules of the game" (Bourdieu, 1990b). The notion that achievement and hard work (Mendick et al., 2015) brings deferred rewards remained a component of the account provided by teachers of the challenges they saw for some of their students. It is reasonable to advocate that such challenges are components of the burgeoning work of democratic educators (Biesta, 2015). The insights and expressions offered by these teachers are evidence of their view that both the present and imagined

futures of young people are constructed and understood beyond the objectified individual.

6.1.3.3 Bridging reality with possibility.

Thinking about the future is not an abstract. As Joas asserts:

> In self-reflection the actor does not turn back upon himself in a frozen present—as in a mirror—but reflects upon the future possibilities in the present conditions, which issue from the past. (Joas, 1985, p. 192)

Teachers are positioned, as a consequence of their professional standing, within an institutional arena. School as a systemic entity contributes to particular social encounters that, according to Feather (2000) are mediated by the institution to consequentially suffuse the individual into "situational particularities." Feather further posits that such situations are the product of both disparate biographies and situational trajectories and as such provide a view of the unevenness of intersubjectivity. Therefore there is cause to consider the consciousness teachers have of situated experience alongside the capacity of each student to transcend the circumstances of the situation. Situated experience is contingent on respective dispositions (habitus) that are disparate in how a person is receptive to an experience.

What follows is an account by teachers of how they observe that the students (such as Isabelle) are beginning to make connections to possible futures. The account is referenced to how students begin to invest in their perceived options.

> Third teacher: she didn't really have a clear idea of where she was going. She was actually in an alternative program, so she was missing days out of school, and that, I think, really lost her drive. She sort of didn't know . . . her future, she didn't really have a clear idea. But now by the sounds of it, she's starting to hone in on what her ideas are and where she wants to go, and that's, by the sounds of it, helping obviously.
>
> Second teacher: Yeah, I've just had Isabelle come into my class, biology classes, and I had Jay in that class. She's brought Jay up. I was a bit worried about which way it was going to go because they're really good friends, but she's encouraging Jay to finish more work, be more focused. And Jay shifted away with the group she was with to Isabelle. And it was at one stage Isabelle, Jay, and Adam at a table, working fantastic.

These observations are focused upon one young person yet speak to teachers contextualising the student. The interpretation and account of some transition in Isabelle's life, takes a highly individualised view of how she was positioned as a student. And while this supposition is in recognition of some positive change is supported by the second teacher's sentiments, the view is of the student as subject rather than an exploration of contextualised accounts of the change. This is contrasted however by the teacher's developing appreciation of the impact that others have upon the studious undertakings of an individual. The "productive" group dynamic has long been the desired goal of educators yet it has often been attained through no particular or explicit thought or reflexivity. This aspect does however raise the acknowledgement by the teacher that education is a social practice (Dewey, 2004).

The contribution that an individual teacher makes "in the present" is represented in the following statement. Here is an account of the silent advocacy a teacher enacts in supporting the learner to achieve short-term goals. Such advocacy calls for a pedagogical approach and philosophical standing that acknowledges and responds to the context of the learner. This is critical pedagogy (Giroux, 1988; Kincheloe, 2008; McLaren, 2015).

> Fourth teacher: Well, one of the things she does in my class, she—like, I allow her to sometimes work with just her headphones in. She just sort of gets in a zone and just works and does what she needs to do.

Teachers' perceptions about other students' sense of possibility also connected with current perceived reality. The sentiment of these statements is evidence of the contextual insights that teachers call upon. As such they are the embodiment of Hart's (2012) assertion that:

> The greater awareness adults have of what individual students are trying to achieve, the more ways they may identify which can help support them. Pedagogical practice that seeks to promote stronger partnerships between home and school may support this process. (2012, p. 189).

When questioned about the awareness that they have of some students' aspirations, the teachers spoke in detail about particular young people.

Once again the teachers' comments were focused on the potential they saw rather than the current shortfalls as presented in the social and academic spaces of their classrooms.

> Second teacher: Jay, she's really into her music and wants to try and get into that whether it be recording people or just within a music shop. At the moment, that's where her intentions are. Jay's got a very big family history, but . . . she's very needy in terms of mental health or whatnot, . . . and she tries to fit in. Rather than fitting in as a helper, she fits in as putting herself down at their level.
>
> First teacher: But when she's focused, she's pretty good. In class, with her maths, she can get very little done, but then when she comes up in the week to show me her book, she's gone home and finished all the work, which is, you know, fantastic to see.

Teachers recognise that Jay's presence in school is one of personal frailty; yet there is an acknowledgement that her social presence of trying to fit in is not consistent with what she is capable of. The recognition that Jay has an awareness and capacity to address the expectations of assessment is an account of a young person's conflict around social capital and personal habitus.

The conversational accounts readily moved from descriptive to interpretive, providing insights of the contextual knowledge the participating teachers held of individual young people (Ellis, 1998; González et al., 2005). Such knowledge was communicated through the subjectively loaded reasoning of what might be in store in the immediate future. The accounts of how the individual performs as a student is often referenced to the teacher's speculation of what potential impact this might have in and for the future. A number of the teachers made direct connections to the challenges that could confront the young person in the near future. How they communicated such concern and consideration was an indication of the teachers' experiences and insights of the world beyond the school perimeters.

> Fourth teacher: And Ben, absolutely beautiful, very talented, big, friendly teddy bear who may appear tough, but is just a little soft-hearted boy. His voice is absolutely amazing. We've been encouraging him to get it out there for a while now, but he lacks the confidence.

Third teacher: I suppose he lacks in that independent learning, if you like, and pushing him Ben, again, trying to fit in with his crowd is probably going to be a bit of a hindrance for him, but if he can get around that and if he can be the leader that I know he can be, then that leadership is what's going to get him a long way.

First teacher: Lovely singer. I don't know what he can do singing-wise (with regards to a career) He'll be a leader of something.

Like, he's a brilliant musician, but I don't think he'll . . . choose to go down that as a career. I think he'll go down, like, a youth worker or community service type person. I think he'll want to help young people because he . . . in that music class, he leads those boys. If Ben's not doing it, the boys don't do it.

First teacher: He's one that seems like when he speaks, people just listen. Yeah. He's almost like the spiritual leader of this school at times, you know, when he stands out there in assembly and pulls his guitar out and gets the microphone . . . but I don't see him going to TAFE or uni to study music.

Second teacher: I don't know if he sees himself as going to university. And I don't think that's maybe a . . . like a family thing.

Third teacher: Working with younger people, I can kind of see Ben eventually doing that kind of stuff.

Fourth teacher: He really is heading that way. Like, that's the way he's seen by a lot of students as well. You ask them, you know, "Who's a positive role model in the school?" And they'll say Ben a number of times.

The teacher's views of Ben give an account that contrasts with the statements regarding Jay. Each account of Ben gives evidence of his developing social connectedness yet signals that he experiences difficulty in addressing academic expectations to fully express his level of knowledge The teachers' insights, present Ben as having the social capital that supports his identity, yet his habitus is not matched to particular expectations of the education system.

The depth of insight from teachers in this conversation indicates that for students such as Ben there are both passive observers and active advocates (Thomas, Bland, & Duckworth, 2012) operating in the school on his behalf. These conversations draw a teacher's insights of an individual as they imagine what is possible in the future of one or all of these young people. Their contextual knowledge of the individual becomes knitted to

their professional insights of the education system. The accounts align with Schoon and Parsons' (2002) argument that a person develops in a particular historical context that has either direct or indirect impacts that are in turn mediated by additional proximal (social and material) contexts, i.e., the formation of habitus. This is evident in the teachers' knowledge of Jay and Ben. The emphasis in these accounts is that teachers brought to the discussion their personal subjectivities in order to see the possible best future fits for young people such as Jay and Ben. Respective lifeworlds were the primary informant for exploration of bridging the current reality to the considered possibility for each young person. Individual teachers did not dismiss the role of experience in the lives of their students, nor did they emphasise any apparent shortfall of individuals, in their accounts, but instead sought constructive expressions of possibilities.

As each teacher contributed an insight about a student it became evident that they were attempting to set out a blueprint for the student to follow. The teachers acknowledged the potential in such a pursuit. In some instances, such as the following account of Robert, the advocacy is passive in that there is little contribution from the teachers, save for the offered well wishes and admiration. The responses are measured in that there is an acknowledgement that Robert has enacted his social capital to assist engagement with tangible aspects related to the attainment of his aspirations.

> First teacher: So Robert, he's very driven. He—for him, he's a cadet. He works— so he does the cadets program in the Air Force there, and he's keen. He wants to be a pilot. That's his big dream. . . . I think he'd like to do that through the Army setting to get him to that goal, but he's always been a very driven student from . . . well, I've known him since year seven. . . . I think that his real strength is his drive. He's able to focus in, whether it's the homework or in the class, and he can really focus in on that and drive himself, whether it's, as less intellectual as some other students. You know, that's probably not his strength. His strength is his drive that's he's got.

While commenting on Robert's aspirations the teachers are aware of the challenges that he might confront, they also communicate that the nature of his intent may be beyond their personal and professional networks. Robert

is representative of young people who have sought out and enacted some means, other than the school, of bridging the present to a potential future.

Here is an instance of what Crossley (1996) considered: the place of imagination in constituting subjectivity that individualises us thereby "breaking the intersubjectivity fabric" (p. 68). Imagination is a means that an agent draws upon as a way of bridging the present context of their lives to less tangible possibilities. Rather than mere anticipation of what is desired, the imaginative agent is permitted to explore the wonderings of "what if." Young people, such as Robert, experience encounters create stimulus for broad, even imaginative views of what might be possible. Such imagining result from what Ingram and Abrahams (2015) argue occurs when one's habitus is forced outside of the structures in which it developed.

6.2   Implications for Promoting Agency

6.2.1   Introduction

A young person's experience is a significant contributor to HOW they engage in thinking about the future. Taking agency to mean that a person has a sense of say or control over the necessary means to achieve desired states, it stands that such a sense would be promoted or limited through a person's social space and capital. The experiences a person has have meaning because of contributions from significant others who assist in making connections between the personal present and the implications for the future. The dialogue that takes place in this intersubjective space enhances a person's review of their current capacities in light of emerging calls for the agency needed to realise aspirations.

The teachers in this discussion indicated that they were aware of many personal challenges that some students contend with as they sought to have agency for their life. This awareness is loaded by contextual insights that become sifted and sorted by a developing reflexivity on the part of the teacher as "observer." Such observations are not necessarily engaged in a direct action but rather contribute to developing clarity. The question of how others may engage such clarity to support, if not promote

an individual's grasp of what is possible requires an interest in examining the life of young people as experienced in the present.

In the case of Carmel, her capacities could assist her personal agency in a developing conceptualisation of the future, whilst recognising that she faced considerable challenges that would have to be overcome. Such judgements from teachers give credible witness to the extent and implications of how a young person might have a sense of agency in and over their lifeworld. The visibility of a person's capacities and capabilities would be only part of what is required if they were to attain personal goals. The social complexities at play can counter even those attributes that are valued by particular fields.

> First teacher: Carmel, she has a lot of issues, but I think she lets them affect her studies. She starts falling behind, gets upset that she's falling behind, but will do anything that she can to try and overcome that. So, I mean her history is going to hold her back, but if she continues to get the assistance that she requires, I think that she'll come out flying at the other end. She needs more of a structure where she won't be distracted by the people around her. She's a really good kid.

Teachers are building upon their developing insights about young people that construct a feasible pathway to the possibilities for the future. The contexts associated with young people, like Ben and Carmel, are instances of voiced reasoning by significant others, aimed at positioning the lifeworld of a young person as the basis for realising potential.

The insights offered by the teachers go some way to supporting the school to play a role in approaches that assist young people to gain a sense of agency through their first-hand insights into how such potential can actually be attained. This in turn calls for social structures to be made explicit as a means of speaking to the strategies that might promote the agency of young people.

6.2.2 Teachers as Agents of Agency

Achievement is contextualised by the teachers in their view that Carmel will succeed in life although with considerable challenges in her life

circumstances. The admiration that some of the teachers have for Carmel, her resilience, is palpable yet the need to enhance her efforts to respond to expectations in productive ways is detailed in concerns for her immediate future. In their role as transition supporters (Cuconato, du Bois-Reynold, & Lunabba, 2015), teachers are able to speak to applicable techniques. In their capacity to coach Carmel, the teachers refer to their pedagogical insights around how they can best support her. This appreciation moves beyond calling for the student to "try harder"; it is recognition by the teachers of their capacity to enhance and direct the young person. When educators seek to act in transformative ways there are particular points that actions become centred upon. It is common for teachers to focus on their students being successful in attaining a place at university. What are apparently less common are accounts of teachers working to enhance the agency that would support such attainment.

> Second teacher: She would always sort of complete all the classwork during class time, but often if there was work to do outside of class, assignments and things, she would . . . didn't always get those done, or certainly didn't get them done on time. But she was very much engaged in history and she talked to me a lot about wanting to do history as a career, something to do with history and continue tertiary studies in that area.
>
> Third teacher: Once we sort of got to know each other a bit more, she decided that she was going to sort of behave, she was actually really nice and did try harder. But yeah, she was just not interested in science, didn't see that she needed it, didn't need it for her future. And so, tough at the start, but then yeah, she actually ended up being really helpful and really nice by the end of the semester.

The teacher here is centred on how Carmel had become "nice" over the time they had spent together. Carmel is described by her personality and the fact that she was helpful, and together with the account of her disconnect from the subject of science suggest that Carmel didn't need science in her future. This is in contrast to how the second teacher spoke about her connection with the subject of history. The role of the history teacher was partially about building connections to how current studies might transfer into a career. In this instance the teacher is "utilised" as a source of insight into the field of history as a form of employment.

The following statement also speaks to how teachers perceive how they might support Carmel to build capacity. In this case the teacher anticipates the change of mindset needed for Carmel to attain the academic achievements she is thought capable of.

> Fourth teacher: She needs a little—a fair bit of, I suppose, coaching and teaching to build that confidence up to get through the work. She tends to have a lot on her plate as well outside of school, probably takes on a little bit too much of her part-time work and other family commitments as well, so that sort of can weigh down her time. But yeah, probably doesn't realise what she's actually capable of.

While teachers consider the potential of young people like Carmel there are also observations made that are locked into unilateral or bracketed views, informed by a particular insight into someone's cultural capital (Barone, 2006; Bourdieu, 2011).

> Third teacher: I would see her in five years' time in the workforce, maybe in and around sort of the sports industry or even childcare, something like that as well. She loves PT as well. But again, like, her allure to the dollar as opposed to the education to get better money potentially. Because she tends to gravitate towards the money.

This detailed account of Carmel's life, both present and potentially, is evidence of how teachers see their role in supporting young people beyond the teaching of subjects. There is acknowledgement of the known capacities and a declaration of the challenge that the teacher might share about their professional experience. The accounts are far from distant description of the apparent; they show detailed knowledge of and concern for personal circumstances outside of the remit of the school.

As agents for agency, teachers make connections with and for their students as they develop greater awareness of the context and capacity of individual young people. There are variances in the extent that such connections are utilised to encouraging students' capacity building and self-awareness. Teachers do set about to interpret the doxa of the education system and enhance an individual's habitus, beyond an aspirational habitus (Baker & Brown, 2008). The challenge remains for teachers to be able to differentiate the ways in which their students can be supported in their

plans and imaginings towards a future that includes study in higher education. To be an agent of change calls for interpretations of the context of a young person and how such contexts may facilitate or impede that person's agency in potential encounters within the education system as a social structure.

6.2.3 Navigating the Education System

Teachers are a product of the educational system that they help constitute. As such they are experienced in the expectations of the system on an individual. Teachers may not explicitly tell how they personally engaged with and successfully navigated the field of education but the insights offered indicate that they have knowledge of the implicit "rules of the game" (Bourdieu, 1977; Grenfell & James, 1998).

Teachers shared insights as to why some students not drawn to greater aspirations In contrast was their consideration of Jody and how the education system might permit her access to an undertaking in line with what some teachers had come to recognise as a developing aspiration.

> Fourth teacher: Jody, not sure if she's going to keep going with her schooling or not, but she was—I'm pretty sure she was a pro skateboarder. So she may still go down that path.
>
> She's doing really well with her music. Very keen, very engaged in all the topics that we cover.
>
> Music-wise, she's very connected to the subject and what we do there, which mean that she can really push the quality of her work. The only thing that I'd like to push a little bit more is—which I'm doing with the whole class—is the mixing of students and getting students working with different students that are not normally from their group. And so Jody's got her small, little group that she works with, and so it's about trying to break down those barriers.

The teachers were able to recognise how Jody was engaging in developmental opportunities. This led the discussion to a level of detail about teachers' knowledge of Jody's attributes and challenges as well as to their knowledge of the education system and would either promote or hinder her pathway.

Third teacher: Jody might go down the music road with TAFE. I don't think music at university. The other thing is it's—all those are audition-based, so she may need to go in the back door through, say, music management because she's quite excelling in that area. Don't know if her performance skills are at a level—

Another teacher: So she'd be a rock band manager?

Third teacher: Well, the behind the scenes type roles.

Well, not a roadie, but you've got the sound engineers and you've got the management side, event management and stuff like that. So she might . . . and doing a bit of song writing at the moment as well, so she might be able to . . . for the interview process, the TAFE's are now about that, the production point of view, and that's where the TAFEs are a lot stronger than the Unis on that technical side of things.

These exchanges between the teachers emphasise the significance of matching their knowledge of the young person to that of the pathway details. The blunt account of what might stand as the field of music is contrasted by a refined view of the possibilities for further education as a means of transitioning into how one might work in the music field.

6.2.4 Democratic Educators

In speaking to potential pathways, teachers take account of the attributes of structures useful in assessing the feasibility of aspirations (Hart 2012). This voicing of possibility should be seen as an articulation of the democratic educator (Apple, 2000; Biesta, 2015). Knowing the system and recognising how a young person could access and utilise particular systemic features could be followed up with the young person. The speaking of going in the "back door" is likely to translate into future conversations between teachers and Jody. These conversations would be acts of "weak ties" (Granovetter, 1973) that come into play in schools. The voice of middle class experience, embodied in teacher articulations, holds some promise for those seeking inroads into new social realms (Hart, 2012).

6.3 Habitus and Agency

The distinction of the classes as expressed through the work of Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) is the relationship between formal education and the

construction of one's habitus. The "system of schemes of thought, perception and action" (p. 40) can result in some limitations of thought and practice as an agent's dispositions and the expectations of the schools as a form of pedagogic authority.

How a young person engages with the formalities of education is the most apparent aspect that teachers use to describe and explain a particular student. It is, after all, the primary focus of much of the action of teaching. Teachers do consider the thoughts and actions of young people as a means of evaluating the nature and motivation of their education. The interactions that agents experience as members of a particular community play a role in how they view and respond to the world. Bourdieu (1998) posits that what is experienced as obvious by some agents is viewed as something of an "illusion" to those non-participants "in the game."

Likely to escape a teacher's contemporaneous view are the contexts that a young person calls upon to interpret and engage with new information and experiences. When the availability of opportunity is clear such insights are developed as relationships between teacher and student.

The discussion about Felicity, like that for Carmel, was illustrative in demonstrating knowledge of what had taken place in her recent past and how these were playing out in the present. The perspectives of certain teachers were largely speculative and provided an account of Felicity in her present.

First teacher: Felicity, look I don't think she lets anything faze her. So in terms of what she's got—her iron strength gets her through and is going to get her somewhere.

Felicity used to be our school captain. She can give severe attitude. With her it's more the familiarity with staff . . . who she gets along with she'll work for.

Third teacher: She's again a student similar to Heather in the way that she is pretty intelligent, can go about her work really well. She's a very strong part of the school community in an extra-curricular sense. She does a lot of sport and other sort of extra-curricular activities as well, but shows a strong desire to not only strengthen her academics but . . . to broaden her horizons a little bit more.

The recognition that Felicity's "iron strength" will get her through is evidence of how teachers come to see particular aspects of a young person's life as being enablers of expectations in the field of education. To reference a way of being, indicates that teachers do take account of individual attributes and dispositions (habitus) in the context of how it will stand for students in their future encounters and endeavours.

Ecclestone (2004) posits that one's habitus offers a means for representing how knowledge and action display the realisation of socialisation and agency in particular fields. The challenge remains for teachers to identify where a young person no longer tells that they have agency in a particular field, no matter how much "strength" they might to plan or expect to achieve a particular goal. Personal dispositions and capacities are enhanced when they are applied with a comprehensive "feel for the game." Hansen (2002) sees significance in agents developing the ability to learn from experience and retain something that contributes to the agent coping in difficult, later situations. Agency is therefore dependent upon a person having experience and insight into the rules of that game. For teachers to help their students to achieve this they must construct a space where the young person's habitus is neither abandoned or destabilised rather it is reconciled through enhanced reflexivity on the part of the agent (Ingram & Abrahams, 2015).

6.3.1 Performativity Without Purpose

Subscribing to the need to enhance what is currently present means that there is some accounting made of the person, in terms of the attributes s/he provides as the foundation for when opportunities present themselves. A point of significance, in this account of Felicity, is that while she has particular recognisable attributes it is also apparent that she experiences challenges in how best to apply such attributes.

Felicity's nervousness demonstrates the lack of coherence around the direction towards the future she sees. This lack of direction highlights why some young people become lost in the effort of being a student, without specific purpose or intent (Hart, 2012; Zipin et al., 2015). Being

aware of the need to study, to work hard and attain high grades is obviously not lost on students like Felicity. Yet there remain, according to the teachers, barriers to the realisation of her efforts. The doubt surrounding her capacity appears to offset the propensity that Felicity demonstrates. A disjunction between present and future is sufficient to create a loss of confidence and consequently a loss of agency.

> Fourth teacher: I worked with Felicity the first half of last year and then a few times when she was in middle school as well, and that trait of her becoming quite worried and stressed, by the sounds of it, it was probably a bit more detrimental to her learning, and she might have gotten it under more control now. She would sometimes just think she couldn't do something and would just really shut down from it. By the sounds of what you're sort of saying , she's able to push through that and probably understands what she needs to do at an individual level to get her understanding of concepts and that.

> Third teacher: I've got her in my maths class at the moment, and she's probably not as academically strong. And she understands that, but she works so hard to try to, you know, do the best she can. . . . I offer my whole class an extra session after school on Thursdays. She's the only one that shows up consistently. And I can see that the effort that she puts in, she will be successful later on as well, because she doesn't give up. And she does worry, but I think she's getting . . . a better grasp on that, from what it sounds like previously.

These are accounts given by individual teachers who have some detailed insights into Felicity, yet there are some aspects of her undertakings that remain largely unexamined. What keeps her wanting to apply her efforts to the work at hand? Is there any realisation by Felicity that all her time and application have a purpose or is her way of being the embodiment of that is what is expected of students? At the age of fifteen she and her peers have been, for some extended time, the subjects of ongoing exposure to the directives of school and wider community with regards to how one performs in formal education. The question here is what learning has actually occurred as a product of engaging in the act of being educated? Does Felicity represent the student that has been playing by the rules of the game for so long that the reasons why have been lost (McLaren, 2015)?

Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) call for educators be aware of an agents' "ensemble of social characteristics" if there is to be any clarity about the possibilities of educational destinations, whilst avoiding an overdependence on a particular aspect of that agent's biography. Seeking some deeper meaning draws the researcher to consider the sense of self among students like Felicity as they become increasingly aware as they move closer to an end in secondary education. As young people like Felicity approach the end of secondary education there is thinking and rethinking on what could be possible in the next phases of their lives. Part of the rethinking could include an evaluation of what aspects of the education process count as attributes for the future given that the doxa of the education system includes the dictum of working hard resulting in due rewards.

The implications for a young person operating in this paradigm include a degree of incoherence of the purpose of their efforts. This is to say that there are challenges for young people when they come to take account of what have they achieved in preparing for life in the future.

6.3.2 Habitus and Nervousness

Teachers view Felicity in a positive manner. By referring to her challenges, the teachers recognise that her present self-awareness does not align with possible future opportunities.

> First teacher: I think she would be one that with her enthusiasm, could be a perfect PT, just because she would be someone that is highly motivated to help others, and not saying you don't need to be academic to be a PT, but she might enjoy the more hands on aspects of the PT industry.

> Second teacher: As I said, I think she can be a bit flappable at the moment sometimes, but in five years' time, she might overcome that. She might enjoy doing a P.E. teaching course at the uni, so she's one that I could see in either of those sorts of settings.

The concern with Felicity worrying about the future is an indication that she is not fully informed and prepared for life beyond the school. Such uncertainties impact on Felicity and other students as they attempt to grasp

what is required of them as students. This may well be the immediate indicator of young people realising that their way of seeing and being in the world is not aligned with the powerful social structures such as those embodied in higher education.

> If a student (of any age) has a very limited or negative view of the future, encouraging that student to think about the utility value of a task may, at best, provide no increase in interest and, at worst, hurt his or her motivation for the task. (Husman & Lens, 1999, p. 123)

Teachers' reflections on readiness for higher education are based on their own experiences of university. Such speculation informs the discussion of Nadia's future was raised. As teachers spoke they began to piece together the possibilities for Nadia's future. This was something of a mapping exercise to account for her present capacities (Bok, 2010).

First teacher: She's a student that at every class will do the prescribed task and prescribed work, but will definitely need a lot of assistance with her work. She puts in effort into pretty much every activity we do, but she, in terms of grades, is on the lower scale. She struggles a bit with memory and those sort of basic recall activities, so she does need a lot of attention with regards to some of the basic comprehension tasks and then linking them to that more extended learning, I guess, as opposed to just the streamlined learning.

Third teacher: Nadia is one that I'm not sure, I don't quite know. I think she'd struggle too much for uni. I think she struggles too much. She won't cope

She might just go straight into the workforce. That's the thing; she hasn't really intimated any sort of future career path she wants to head down.

Second teacher: Childcare—looking after young children or something like that?

First teacher: Yeah, and I think that's a part of her family culture to just sort of have that childcare, nurturing sort of, you know? I don't like to stereotype or anything, but that's sort of . . . the families enjoy that sort of role as well. So it might be an interest of hers, whether she goes to a tertiary setting to do that or she goes into a family business or something like that, I'm not quite sure.

The nervousness of a young person could be accounted for, as it is in this discussion of Nadia, by recognising that the culture of the family is somehow at odds with much of what might constitute a career pathway.

While experiencing something as being enjoyable there is cause for nervousness about the future. Experiencing a challenge in "putting the dots together" is evidence that young people, like Nadia and Felicity, are currently unable to bridge the present to an imagined future, thereby becoming embodied in one's present is an uncertainty of the future. Ingram and Abrahams (2015) posit that such responses are indicative of the consequences of a person being "caught between the two influences of any two opposing fields" (p. 149). In such occurrences Ingram and Abrahams posit that there are possibilities for how one's habitus incorporates the structures of the field. Thus a person may "renegotiate their habitus in response to the structuring forces of the new field" (p. 150). Other consequences could, according to Ingram and Abrahams, include the new field being rejected, reconciled, or "oscillate between two dispositions and internalise conflict and division" (p. 151) and disrupting one's habitus.

6.3.3   When Habitus and the Doxa of the Field of Education Align

Amidst the apprehensions that the teachers had for individual students, as they considered possibilities for their futures and the likelihood of individuals attaining their respective aspirations, there was at least one student who gave cause for definitive accounts of achievement in the context of the education system.

First teacher: Adam is beautiful, well-mannered, tries extremely hard. He's just so committed to his study and just a genuine all around good guy.

Second teacher: He's a fantastic student. He does the work required in class, and he grasps it quite easily, and I can tell that when he—even when he's gone for a whole week, he caught up on the work, which is fantastic. So he's got the drive to succeed, which is fantastic to see, and he's starting to get the results as well to show that. He could improve, but he's got a fantastic drive and his discipline and work rate is pretty good.

Third teacher: He definitely has that drive to succeed. He's able to take on criticism or constructive criticism about his work, and he is always looking to improve. And he also—he's one student that, you know, definitely does see himself in a university setting or a tertiary setting. At this stage, he's looking at . . . you know, osteopathy is an interest of his, so he's got that drive, and he tends to also see big picture things as well, and has a really good understanding of the

world and his place in it and other people, and he's got fantastic intelligence that way.

The view that Adam has an understanding of the world, as part of his intelligence, is significant in that the teacher making this statement is able to account for an attribute that would often go undetected let alone celebrated. For a teacher to appreciate that aspect in a young person provides evidence that there are educators who not only celebrate "good" students but also recognise the facets that contribute to one being well positioned for the future. For the teachers taking the measure of Adam and his engagement with the school, there is also knowledge of the social context that constitutes his lifeworld.

First teacher: Adam will definitely be in the "healths." At the moment, he seems quite focused on "osteo." His mother's—he's getting quite influenced and she's quite into, you know, yoga and those sorts of things and health and wellness, and he's really taken that on board and sort of sees it as a real option.

Second teacher: So that's an interest of his right now, and he's into his own physical—or his own wellness as well, so he's . . .

Third teacher: I can see him heading into the health sciences area.

Having some insight into his aspirations permitted these teachers to consider the "match up" between what would be necessary and Adam's capacity as he presently enacts it. There is little concern that he would not have the capacity for a program in higher education. Here again is a visualisation articulated by teachers, based on comprehensive formative assessments of a student: comprehensive in that the views articulated are humanistic rather than particularly academic. The teachers' interpretations of Adam's possible future are in keeping with what Skrbis, Woodward, and Bean (2014) consider of young people who engage in a planning project as being part of their life course: "In most cases, people develop expectations and hopes for future mobility relatively early in life although these aspirations keep changing and shifting through the life course and they shift mostly for tangible demographic or structural reasons" (p. 5).

According to his teachers, Adam is viewed as being engaged in such a planning project and is able and willing to evaluate options, to enact reflexive deliberations (Fleetwood, 2008) and make life decisions.

6.3.4 Habitus and Sense of Self

Manton (2008) argues that social agents learn their rightful place in the social world in light of where they feel they will be most successful in light of their respective dispositions and resources. This in turn builds one's subjective expectations of "objective probabilities" and provides something of an attraction to social fields that match one's dispositions (i.e., habitus).

Acknowledging the significance of how a young person interprets and responds within their world is foundational to their developing selfhood. How a person holds a position in the world is one avenue to interpreting the person's capability and preparedness to move across space and time. The interactions with significant others are a contributing factor to developing a sense of self. The teachers of young people, including those participating in this study, constitute noteworthy points of interaction that appear as relationships established over time. Teachers attain an appreciation of a young person's capacity for agency in their understanding of how the young person has grown in seeing the potential of what is in their present.

The following account of the student identified as Heather reaffirms that teachers do not only discern the academic performance of an individual over an extended period of time but also communicate insights about cause for changes in how that individual engages with school.

First teacher: Heather's someone that, I would say she's had a bit of an up and down, if you like. She was, you know, really excelling in her middle years and then—you know, this often happens with some students—at year nine level had a little bit of a rough patch and then she—you know, she had some things there that were distracting her outside of school, and I feel that she's probably coming back on board now.

Second teacher: Probably lost her way a little bit in terms of her direction and knowing where she wanted to go, whereas when she was a bit younger, year nine, first part of year nine, she was really strong.

> She loved science; she wanted to be going into the biology and
> anatomy areas. She really had a strong interest in that.

In the discussion there are significant references to Heather, as not having a clear direction for the future holds. In speaking of losing her way, the teacher has queried if Heather is in a position where she had been looking forward in her life but now some aspect had become obscured, resulting in what Hirschi and Läge (2007) refer to as "low vocational identity." An account by another teacher provides further insight into Heather, seeking to clarify her view. There is reference to the putting together of some key information related to pathway planning.

> Second teacher: She can tend to get distracted a little bit easily, but on the whole, does the required work, shows a good understanding of, again, how the work now will relate to her further studies, whether it be at a tertiary setting or another form of setting.
>
> Third teacher: And she's one that has intimated towards me that, you know, she wants to go on to do university. She asked intelligent questions about enter scores and ATAR scores and study scores and things like that, so she's sort of trying to map those pieces now and put those together before she gets to the end of next year. So I think that's showing that she's got some form of drive to—whether it be in a biology field or something like that, do that as a tertiary study.

The observation that Heather is apparently attempting to put some pieces together indicates that she is aware that there are stepping-stones to be utilised. What is also apparent in the observations is that Heather experiences some appreciation that the content knowledge of a study can be a determining aspect in positioning her toward possibilities. How the individuals perceive themselves determines their current perspective of the world and their place in it. It can stand then that a young person can change their expectations of the immediate future as they access informants that offer not just information but also some affirmation of their current capacities in context of what might be.

6.4.1 Personal Attributes

Further into the discussion there were additional references to Heather's capacity and her propensity for "doing university." The personal attributes that are apparent to teachers are accounted for by reviewing some of her experiences and reflexivities (Laughland-Booÿ, Mayall, & Skrbiš, 2015).

First teacher: She's talking a lot about politics as a possible field to get into, and she's one of those students who would be good at that because she's one that, as you were saying that Adam sort of has that—those blinkers off, she's very understanding of what goes on externally to the bubble that you can be in sometimes at school. So I think she's a student that could do really well in that tertiary setting as well.

Second teacher: Those two are quite good friends, and they actually spent some time away in year nine on a leadership time away, a program for a term, where they actually weren't at the college for a whole term, and it was full-time down there.

Third teacher: Yeah, it was Leadership School. They hang out in the yard and you see them hanging out as well. So they have similar sort of links and interests, I think.

Second teacher: Yeah, and they might be, being such good friends that they would have those discussions about the world and things, and also their future aspirations to—would definitely push each other.

First teacher: I'm thinking for Heather, the odd arts course might be a sort of . . .

Second teacher: Yeah. Pretty generalist arts

From these comments, what are apparent are Heather's reflexivities, how she thinks and acts in the learning environment. There is also a constructive view of Heather's developing curiosity, within the teachers' accounts. It is constructive in its nature in that the teachers consider that her curiosity is significant in Heather's present day undertakings and that it will play a role in her future endeavours.

The idea that students like Heather might take several years to "get a picture" is a telling insight into the distinction between the developing attributes of a young person and the possibilities of how the education system will acknowledge and accommodate the curiosities of individuals like Heather. This, once more, raises the seminal question of how this is achieved. How much of the individual's way of seeing and acting in the

world impacts upon their chances of transitioning across educational settings?

6.4.2 Doxic Reflexivity

An account of the student Goren, tells of aspirational intentions that are not driven by the curiosity or desire to respond with such curiosities. The reporting of how Goren engages with his education is evidence of an individual having bonds to the family and all that comes with that family. While an ethos of achievement is apparent in the descriptions provided by the teachers, the intent to do well is not necessarily matched by his application to learning and the teachers' accounts give some insight into this disjunction in Goren's actual academic achievements.

> First teacher: I taught Goren last term science, but he comes across as a—sort of a know it all, but his test results doesn't show it. He's like, "Oh, yeah, I'm going to do all my sciences. I'm going to be a doctor." He didn't pass the test or he didn't pass things. He's already being tutored on this, but he wouldn't actually focus on what he was meant to be doing, so his test results do not reflect what his attitude would of what he was doing.

> Second teacher: And I think there's a lot of push from home and expectations at home, so there is that tutoring that's going on. Whether he's really engaged with that, I don't know. You know, like, it seems, you know, when he comes to the classroom, he might be a bit tired or worn out from the other work he might be doing at home, or that's the sort of impression I was getting.

It is evident that these interpretations are complemented by teacher thoughtfulness as to what Goren might actually be engaged with in his future. The insight is based on observations of the way he acts when the persona of being the high achieving student is dropped and he acts in accordance with his "actual" dispositions, rather than the expectations of others. This is an instance of what Zipin et al. (2015) posit as doxic aspirations, expressions that are constituted from the belief that attributes of an upwardly mobile person can be promoted through the merits of hard work. In accounts from interviews with Goren (documented and discussed later in this chapter) there are direct statements made that give an insight into "why" of his stated aspirations. Zipin et al. contend that:

impulses to pursue out-of-reach dreams of upward mobility are incited and reinforced by varied populist mediations—in films, news stories, the PowerPoint hortatory of prophets of entrepreneurialism, and more—that promote the ethic: "If you work hard enough you can attain your dream." (2015, p. 232)

In Goren's case, his impulse comes from the ambient and implied expectations of his family. The doxic nature of his aspirations is exposed when Goren subsequently drops into what his default (perhaps true) possibilities would actually be. Both his teachers and the researcher agreed that there were not merely gaps in Goren's stated views of the future and his current undertaking of "school work" but that he was working hard to live out a script that was written for him rather than by him. This form of performativity exists in schools, where there is a subscription to the expectations of what experiencing school is supposed to produce. Yet in the case of students such as Goren, there is disconnection between subscription to expectations and a personal commitment to this subscription. The accounts of Goren support the view that just going about the act of aspiring is insufficient.

> First teacher: In the future I think Goren will be in Technology, like in IT, maybe, because he's good with a lot of our music technology stuff, even though, like, with running PAs. All of sudden he just rocked up and he was plugging things into the right places and we're like, all right. You can come every time.
>
> Second teacher: Yeah, he loves cars. He should do engineering. I think he'd be brilliant at that. But I think the family pressure is a doctor. But he loves cars. He's going on about what car he's going to get, his dad's going to buy him and all of this, and I was like, "Stop talking about the cars. Talk about whatever you need to be doing." But I reckon he'd be great at engineering or something like that, but I don't know if the family would let him be in engineering. But I reckon he'll be at uni, just I don't know what he'll be doing.

The teachers' views of Goren are that he has a particular capacity and a connection to a field separate to that which he is aspiring to. If this were a correct account of his educational experience then it would be accurate to attribute some of doxic aspirations to the impact of the bonding social capital derived from the close-knit connections Goren has with his family.

This account of a single young person points to the notion of doxic reflexivity. This entails an individual having the propensity and capacity to recognise the parameters that they operate within, albeit self imposed, that impact on the manner of their way of being in the present. Being aware of this state could bring the individual to different conclusions and possibilities. For students like Goren the need to work harder for a specific purpose becomes so fixed that other possibilities and potential are not disclosed, even if significant others are clear about such possibilities. Such a fixated view of a plan for the future has the potential to be as limiting as not seeing connections between present and future.

The teachers offer a particular clarity in recognising the level of awareness they have not just of the academic capacity of young people but additionally the complexities at play that constitute the context of lives lived in the present. As these insights become embodied in the view that a teacher has of a particular young person, the interactions that occur are less likely to be haphazard but rather more opportunistic. The researcher suggests that, based on the accounts offered, that teachers' interactions with young people are often deliberately planned and enacted.

The limitations and promoters of intentions of and for young people's developing expectations of the future are thoughtfully expressed in the data from the teachers. They are, by their own admission, some of the significant others in the lives of their students, and as a consequence have been privileged to have a closer view of not only students' perspectives of the future but also are responsible for some of the construction of that perspective. The researcher considers this to be a privileged position that marks a shift in the role of education, schools, and educators—a role that is purposefully oriented to social pedagogic action and that sees the school as intersubjective space in which to build upon the lifeworld of young people.

Conclusion

As the phrase suggests, pedagogic action (Bourdieu, 2003; Ingram & Abrahams, 2015; Lin, 1999) is not passive but rather it is effective, with its

impact being made through intentional and directed means. In the case of the young people of Calder College several educators have detailed insights beyond the academic capacities of those who constitute their classes. What the interviews with the Calder College teachers raised is that even with such detailed insights into the students' lives beyond the classroom there remain few accounts of teachers' reflexivity in their personal encounters with the broader lives of these young people. What is interesting about the teachers' considerations of the students is that their extrapolations of their understanding about the students translates into what Zipin et al. (2015) have termed "doxic aspiration" possibilities.

With the exception of a single teacher, who sought to build some refinements to the insights into the work of the physiotherapist, the researcher is left with the impression that despite the capacity to encapsulate lifeworld embodiments for individuals there remains little evidence of bridging social capital in respective pedagogic actions. If one were to have the ambition of impacting the existing dispositions of particular young people then it would be prudent to commence with the introduction of experiences in new social fields. Unsurprisingly in a large and growing school, the interviews show how the teachers have not taken—or not been able to take—opportunities to have systematic conversations with the students about beyond-school futures. As a result, the students' habituated presentation at school, together with the teachers' hopes for the students to enter into mainstream careers have led the teachers to consider quite conventional or doxic pathways for the students in their post-school education and work.

The accounts given by teachers demonstrate the developing views that teachers have of the many facets within young people's lifeworlds. Despite these accounts recognising some of the psychosocial impacts that events have had, there remains scant evidence of any actions that seek to offer experiences in social spaces that would potentially enhance what the teachers currently see as the potential of each young person.

The researcher considers the understandings of the teachers as largely speculative and in that mode any action towards bridging lifeworlds to new social fields remains an unmet yet desirable act among democratic educators. The act of bridging calls for thoughtful planning of what is being bridged as well as the means by which this could be facilitated. But what this chapter has presented is that students, in their lives outside school, are agents who are engaged in social experiences that have prompted newly reflexive thinking. Their reflexively informed agency appears to weaken what are habitus-constrained aspirational horizons and habituated educational participation. In order to achieve such aspirations young people become located at the edge of the knowledge available through their social connections, such as family and friends. A social actor is confronted by this edge as burgeoning aspirations are tied to unfamiliar fields.

A third facet to be considered is how the young people might be supported to negotiate any required bridging and consequential experiences in new social fields. This consideration should have prominence in democratic actions, as the potential of experiences to cause painful confrontations is a real concern. Chapter 6 hints at the potential for experiences or "events" to locate students in interest-based intersubjective settings whose specific practices and discourses encourage students to create new aspirational subjectivities.

My response to the insights drawn from the data of this chapter and how pedagogic action can be enacted are examined in detail in Chapter 8. The seeking of a "third space" (Ingram & Abrahams, 2015) for young people, to not only have experiences but to be offered the support to examine what these experiences might mean for their potentiality, is a task for a democratic educator employing deliberate pedagogic action, and offered as bridging social capital. Conceptually this third space is neither school nor university, nor is it a blend of both but rather the purposefully established social space that hosts insights, knowledge and attributes that are drawn upon for discourse and action. While expertise and practice are called upon from social actors who would identify with systemic institutions

such as school or university their experience and capacities are sought for the work of, and in, the third space and not their respective institution.

Chapter 7 adds further insights of the contexts of school that offer potential for young people to construct and tell of their experiences and aspirations as positioned in the present. The research undertakings in this particular school were, in large part, very different to that of NWS. In telling of their aspirations the young people who inform much of what is presented in Chapter 7 tell of their sense of self as social actors and as contextualised by family, community and school experience.

7 Students' Self-Awareness as a Basis for Future Possibilities

> Agents shape their aspirations according to concrete indices of the accessible and the inaccessible, of what is and is not "for us," . . . In fact, a given agent's practical relation to the future, which governs his present practice, is defined in the relationship between, on the one hand, his habitus with its temporal structures and dispositions towards the future, constituted in the course of a particular relationship to a particular universe of possibilities, and on the other hand a certain state of the chances objectively offered to him by the social world. (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 64)

Bourdieu's thinking around the relationship of habitus and possibilities for the future is the primary impetus in this research endeavour. In seeking to offer young people the opportunity for experiences, in the context of their present view of the future, the researcher set out to attain data about events in the social world that transform young people's (as agents) perceptions of the inaccessible to the possible.

What follows are the insights of several student participants. In a setting for formal education, schools play host to the emerging personalities of young people as they navigate challenges and opportunities for learning within the social ontogeny (Eccles et al., 1993; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Mason, 1979).

7.1 Exploring Connections

As already discussed the researcher's encounter with Calder College was quite different to that experienced at NWS. At Calder, the attention to the aims and methodology of the research resulted in the teachers nominating students who met the study's selection criterion: that the teachers perceived that student participants, while being effective learners, lacked confidence in their academic achievement and access to higher education. Clearly, the data in Chapter 6 confirmed that the teachers had made

informed selections based on their knowledge of students who were experiencing some academic success at school, but who expressed uncertainty about what their futures might hold.

The Leading Teacher had agreed to liaise with the researcher and facilitated organisation of the interviews ensuring that they took place in a quiet room at the College. The students were released from class to participate during a single school period—about 50 minutes. Following the individual interviews, the researcher worked with the student group to plan the visit to the university Again the focus was to be an aspiration-widening and deepening event; one designed to stimulate questions and open up new and even unexpected possibilities for further study and careers. Chapter 7 provides insights into the experience of these students and concludes with an account of the preparation for the university visit, together with a description of the visit, and a subsequent meeting intended for de-briefing.

Unfortunately, the propitious start at Calder College resulted in a disappointing conclusion to the data collection, as the researcher was unable to conduct the post-university visit interviews. But, as will be seen in Chapter 8, the researcher was able to obtain related and informed insights from a group of similarly aged students who had made a university visit organised by a teacher at the school. While the researcher was unable to interview those students, he was able to conduct an extended conversation with the teacher who had detailed knowledge of the students' impressions of the visit and how it had informed their aspirational insights.

7.1.1 The Project

Assembling in the space at the first interaction with the Calder College students, the researcher was presented with students who were engaged with their school. They showed no apparent reluctance to undertake tasks presented to them as part of their personal development.

The group of students viewed the range of 50 images of people performing different tasks representational of particular occupations. Each

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student then ranked their three most preferred occupations as presented in the images, and their least desirable occupation. These selections became the premise for their individual interviews with the researcher. The school thoughtfully allocated time and space to the task of meeting with each student individually. Each had been allocated an appointment with the support of the Leading Teacher and each student presented at the allotted time for an interview.

This chapter draws on the statements were made by individual students and are presented as a speaking out of some of the perplexities in how individual students might view the future. The Calder College students also spent time as a group with the researcher discussing the possibilities of visiting a university campus and what would be expected of them. There was a range of questions developed around what the students could speculate about being at a university. Overall they were responsive to the opportunity to brainstorm thoughts and ideas that were subsequently formed into questions.

The NWS students had visited two campuses, on separate occasions, and often informed by the presentations made by university students and staff. This provided insights but positioned the students as a passive audience. The NWS students did ask questions and did engage with activities. However these observations prompted the researcher to consider that the Calder students could be placed in a supported yet proactive situation that supported them to be explicit seekers of information and insights of the university. In a reflexive, move the researcher facilitated the Calder College students to actively seek more detail about being a student at the university. They were called together to consider what questions they wanted answered. These questions were to become the focus of interviews they encountered on the campus. The Calder College students were provided with small hand held video recorders and in small groups they were given a time period by which they could interview students at the university and return to an identified area at the end of the allocated time.

From the time that the groups left the room there were moments of apprehensiveness shared between the students. The expectation to approach university students and staff was an observable challenge to the young people from Calder College. Being provided the choice of whom to interview and how to initiate the interaction was a representation of the distance that existed between the familiar and the unknown. Nevertheless the groups undertook the task and were observed in their interactions. All group members reviewed the recordings and these were called upon as a source of discussion around what questions they had in response to their experience. This led to the group attending an information-gathering event at a city university campus. Here the Calder College students could collect information and interview university staff and students.

7.1.2   The Student Interviews

The Calder students were interviewed prior to the organised university visits. Compared to the students at NWS, many were able to express understandings of future possibilities. They were able to articulate reasons for being interested in post-school options by referring to a range of interest-based experiences outside of school as well as confidence generated by perceived success at school.

When provided the space to explore what was informing their views about their future, the Calder College students offered up accounts of their developing awareness of their possible futures. As each young person considered how he or she currently perceived their possibilities, they revealed what their present life offered as perspective. Unlike the participating NWS students, the Calder College students readily engaged with the opportunity to explore connections between present and future possibilities. Viewed as an indication that they had already begun to make connections, the level of articulated insights speaks in part to the fact that they were being explicitly supported to explore career pathways.

What follows are representative students' statements as they make explicit their thinking on the connections between their present and possible futures. These are telling accounts of each young person's

developing awareness of experience, as a contributor to their aspirational agency (Hart 2012).

7.2   Aspirational Agency

Angela indicated that she highly rated being an interior designer in the future.

> Angela: I'm a creative person—I like to design things—and I want to be an interior designer and own my own boutique business.

In considering where she thought she might be in five years' time she was explicit about her intentions as she stated that:

> Angela: I want to be in a TAFE (Technical And Further Education) or uni course and a part time job that will help me build skills in my career.

A significant point was made with regard to her expectations in her view of what she did not want to be doing:

> Angela: I don't want to be doing a job like in fast food that I can only use minimal skills.

Such a statement underscores Angela's self-aware insight into her potential and the context of certain occupations that are subjectively viewed as a mismatch to her expectations of the future.

For Angela, school hasn't figured prominently in her thinking about post-school study. Asked about what she had called upon in constructing her imagined future, her reply conveys the importance of electronic media in her reflexively formed future self.

> Angela: I sit in rooms and I picture how I set things up—I like watching shows that feature interior design and I figured out that I could do that could be a career—I have about 101 different designs for my own room.

Angela provided an insight into her orientation to the future, informed by a developing self-awareness. Her sense of aspiring self is less about her immediate social setting than it is about the future world she wishes to inhabit.

> Angela: When I'm inspired or interested in the topic I try my hardest. Friends have mentioned that I am a perfectionist. I am creative I like to make things interesting to me rather than just the person sitting beside me or the teacher. I do procrastinate and then I do have those moments when I say I'm going to do my work I'd rather spend longer on something and get it right than two seconds on it and not be happy with it.

Angela offers evidence that her perceptions of herself are constructed by her use of references to others in the educational settings of her lifeworld. She communicates developing insights of the connections between her habitus (being a perfectionist and a procrastinator) and the implications of her choices in the present.

While other students were less definitive about the qualities they were seeking in work beyond school, the interests of all were stimulated by participation in settings outside school. Only one student, Ben, referred explicitly to his formal learning at school but even there, life beyond school gave meaning to his progress in the official curriculum, although an event at school had some impact.

Ben readily spoke of his connection to possibilities for the future. He is well known for his music skills by teachers and students. There is little surprise when he indicates that he would consider being a musician. He also speaks of the possibly of going into the defence force. Upon questioning him as to how he came to consider his future he stated that:

> Ben: I'm into my music—and then just yesterday we had these defence force people—and I'm like, this looks interesting.

Here is an example of a contemporaneous response to new insights and possibilities, an individual already seeking tangible means of constructing possibilities for the future. While Ben had not considered the defence force as an option for a career, it is apparent from his reaction that he was in a space where he was receptive to what might be on offer. This receptiveness is a significant marker of how the offerings by the social world have pronounced traction at critical times in life. When a young person is cognisant of the significance of career planning and future

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oriented decision-making, the presentation of detailed insights into possibilities comes to feel more like being one of good timing and not so much as a recruitment pitch.

Thinking about what his future might entail, Ben presented a brief but exact insight into his primary source of perception.

> Ben: In five years time I'm probably going to be serving a mission—it's my religion—I would love to do study in the future—music, the arts.

Ben spoke of his connection with his family and, while he did not elaborate on the place of religion in shaping his expectations of the future, he was adamant about awareness that relationships with his extended family played in building his appreciation of music.

> Ben: Growing up music was always there. I'd go to my cousin's house and we'd do singing.

This can be seen as a prime example of bonding social capital. Ben placed himself in a future based on his connection his community. This connection to family was an ever-present aspect of the Calder students' conversations. The families of these young people remained a primary reference to their seeing the world. A person's habitus is drawn from the daily interactions and shared experiences offer a developing perspective of the social world (see section 7.1, p. 171).

7.2.1 Aspiration and Agency

Using the present to inform her consideration of the future was an evident aspect of Isabelle's view of her choices. She was able to make connections to why she had selected particular occupations based on her perception of what she enjoyed doing in the present and had been selective in refining some of her broader views of what might be possible in the future.

> Isabelle: I want to go into the army when I'm older and do physiotherapy. My second preference was life saving because I generally like to help out. I imagine that in five years time that I will probably be at uni—studying physiotherapy—I've always been a sporty person and I knew that being a sports person wouldn't actually work so I went down the list of sport jobs and liked physiotherapy and I've stuck with that ever since.

Robert was one of the respondents who had definite intentions for the future: he had also begun to put in place some tangible actions. In addition to his clear statement of intent, he also indicated a need for alternative plans.

Robert: I want to be a pilot in my future—I am not sure if I want to be defence force or commercial—I like things that are thrill-seeking, that's why I am learning to fly at the moment—I find that exciting.

In five years time I hope to have my private pilots licence, which I'm doing now—and in the defence force maybe.

While there is, as Robert articulated, an informed plan in place at this time, it also was evident that this expectation had been drawn from rather minor, but significant, life experiences that had called to Robert's connection with possibilities for the future.

Robert: Well I think it started with me liking all the fun rides, the fast ones when mum and grandma said "No! No!" But I went on them anyway—the thrill seeking, being adventurous.

When the researcher asked Robert if he had anyone in his family that had flown planes, his response of—"no, not to my knowledge; it just came out," indicates that he had distilled a range of enjoyable experiences into a tangible focus on the future. Robert's future could be achieved by particular actions in the present. Robert's appears to lack finer detail around how his aspirations could be realised. Yet his considerations and actions so far are evidence of an agency that has resulted in tangible connections to the future. The ability to fly a plane is an attribute that Robert has realised as an essential aspect of his plan for the future. Robert's aspiration is about having a career where he gets to fly planes, rather than being in the defence force. Like Carmel, Robert sees the potential agency offered by an employer like the defence force. Getting paid to fly is not unlike having university studies paid for. The big picture views of students like Robert and Carmel eventually require forms of informed agency to be incorporated into their existing lifeworld. This is a pivotal aspect in an individual's life: the realisation prompting young people to shift focus from what they will do in the future, to how a preferred future can be achieved.

Heather was less than clear about the means to attain her intentions for the future. Her comments indicated her thoughts were more focused on the present, with the future being so uncertain that she found it difficult to provide much speculation. But like Gavin she expressed a desire to have an occupation that matched her present interests.

> Heather: I like music, I've been playing guitar for five years now—I've no idea what I would be doing in five years time—I like to be travelling I like to experience new things—I'd like to be a professional musician like in a band.

While less definitive than statements made by other students, Heather gives an account of how the notion of doing something you like remains a primary criterion for young people as they determine what might be on offer. If she could become good at playing guitar then that could lead to being in a band, which involves the likelihood of travel. Heather's desire to experience new things shows that she appreciates the impact of new experiences to enhancing her possibilities.

The role played by direct experience, as an informant, is evident in Taylor's telling of her expectations.

> Taylor: My first choice is lawyer then chef and then the other is teacher. Well the type of law I want to do is family law and that comes from my past because my family went through all that stuff. The courts weren't fair because my dad had contacts in the courts so—and I was seven and I have been in and out of court for so many years—so I can help people with the situation I went through—I think I would do a good job with that. I would like to be a Chef because I went into Master Chef and I really love cooking. I applied on line and they accepted but it was three to six months off school and I was in Year 7 so I need to do school work so. . .
>
> I selected teaching because—well it started off as a Maths teacher and then went on to a food/ cooking teacher because I think I'm really good at helping and I'm really good with kids.

As Taylor connects with the person she is and her experiences to date it is evident that she contends with a developing understanding of occupations she has built expectations about. When accounts of possible futures are made they are done through broad accounts of the careers as being

desirable. The reasons offered are personal yet the detail around what the careers involve and the pathways to attain those occupations are general to the point of being superficial. On this point many of the conversations contained an obtuse point of reference when it came to the discussion of why and how particular occupations might figure in a future life.

The young people of Calder College provide evidence of feeling their individual ways in the world as they reach out from each of their standpoints. For these young people the school is a place that offers something of a vantage point for one to see or feel the edge of a void (Badiou 2013). There is great variation in the interpretation and trepidation experienced by young people presented with opportunities beyond the present into an intangible future. If the future were to be constructed in terms of what each person had begun to see for the contemporaneous self then it is conceivable that the void's edge has moved and they can consider extending their reach.

7.2.2   Family and Friends

A person's social connections become apparent when they are used to effect. To achieve a desired state or goal there is seeking out and drawing on means in purposeful ways. A member of family or friendship group as a significant other might offer a young person detailed knowledge of potential achievements. Having connections provides a young person with a base for imagining possibilities. This could translate into confidence to engage with social structures to achieve a desired position.

Diverse responses in the interviews offer accounts of knowledge of the importance of being supported to achieve one's goals. The family figures as a primary source of agency for many of the young people interviewed. Goren also provided an account of how others in his life had informed his way of thinking towards the future. In some instances his statements were related to expectations rather than aspirations. The threads of his thinking in his account of his choice of occupations evidenced some of Goren's informants.

> Goren: Basically you see I have cousins that are lawyers or doctors plus my parents have always encouraged me to become a doctor so it basically became my dream to become a doctor or a dentist. If I don't make it, then I think I am capable of being a lawyer coz I'm good at arguing points through.

Goren moves from the motivators of his expectations to taking stock of his personal strengths that he views as matching an occupation that he has some developing insight into. He considers other occupations that might be on offer but qualifies why they are not candidates for his aspirations. Once again these comments indicate Goren's measure of himself as he speculates on how others may regard him undertaking particular occupations.

> Goren: Being a taxi driver or a carpenter there is not the respect that you get as a doctor—it's not the hard work but the respect factor—one of my dreams is to make my dad proud of me—my dad thinks it is high achievement or it's nothing.

Goren speaks in a script-like manner as he presents a timeline of anticipated events that contain the explicit elements that constitute what he has come to learn as the stepping-stones in certain career pathways.

> Goren: In five years time I will be finishing off a bachelors in medicine and after that then look for a dental course and then do my PhD.

He communicates that this is informed by his cousins and then adds a statement that provides evidence of his less than genuine ambition for himself rather than the way he perceives the expectations of others.

> Goren: My dad is one major influence—if it wasn't for him then—I like cars—then I might become a mechanic or an engineer. Since I been small I've been raised up to believe that doctors are one of the best jobs—it last longer and there is never a shortage of jobs.

Here is evidence of what Zipin et al. (2015) explore as habituated aspirations, of cases where an individual is fixed upon what they believe is expected of them by significant others in the family, informed also by doxic public perspectives on high status jobs. In such cases the agency of an individual stands to be restricted by a myopic view of career possibilities. One consequence of this may be the ever-present attrition rates in the first

year of higher education (Beer & Lawson, 2017), which are particularly high in Australia.

Jay was also able point to parental influence as partly informing her current expectations of the future. Jay drew on experience to refine her view of possibilities. The experience was not direct in that Jay was reflecting on her father's telling of what work was like. This is not dissimilar to Jay's experience of spending a week or two in a workplace. She had explored and responded to the notion of what her father did in his work.

> Jay: My top job choices are music and photographer—my least favourite would be IT technician because my dad does that work and he carries heavy servers and I do not want to do that. There's more to computer engineering than what it looks like.

Jay's views of her career options are expressed as a direct reference to the expectation that the nature of the work would suit who she was as a person. Her father's clarifications and her first-hand experiences were evident in her choice of qualifications.

> Jay: My dad always tells me that he decided he wanted to be a computer engineer when he was 11 years old and it started me thinking that I was behind or something and my dad when I was in grade 7 said that by the start of grade 8 I want you to tell me what you are going to do. I said that was a really big pressure and so I just said dad I want to do law.

Jay spoke of her conflicted views about making career choice and indicated that she was aware that she made certain choices based on how she currently viewed her world. Having indicated that law was once her career choice she expressed her thinking behind her reviewing such a decision.

> Jay: Law—specifically family law—I wouldn't be able to do that as I have background with family law and dad says that "if you do criminal law or family law, Jay, it's really tough." Coz with family like I've been through the court process with my mum, with my dad's stuff and then with my sister's stuff and like it really hurt for a while and that was something that was emotionally really hard. And criminal law—I don't think I could stand up for a criminal. Dad says "it's like they

come to you, Jay—you don't get a choice, it's not the other way around."

In making some choices about the future Jay describes the journey she has taken so far in attempting to piece together something that make senses to how her place in the future might be formed. Drawing on experiences of being a member of her family Jay has questioned not just what her career would be but additionally why she would or would not pursue a particular career.

Embarking on the questioning what the future might look like, it is evident from the insights provided by some of the young people interviewed that family is a primary source of experience. The consternations expressed in some responses to the question of career pathways indicated their developing sense of who they were in the present and that for some there were questions that could not be fully stated by mere reliance upon other members of the family.

7.2.3 Out of School Interests

Many of the students relate out-of-school experiences as possibilities for their futures. They present well-argued justifications for their choices. Approaching the future calls for one to look forward from a present that is itself often less tangible and certain. In the physical, emotional, and intellectual encounters of young people, their sense of self is played out through social performance. Life as experience outside the family and school comes into being as young people imagine their lives as making them particularly individual. Taking account of their present, young people like the ones interviewed, are able to relate to how that identity is constantly being formed (Lawler, 2015; Mead, 1934).

Carly had selected occupations that were linked to her current interests both in and out of school. She made the connection to possibilities for her future as evidence of what she enjoyed but also some connection with how she had begun to see herself.

Carly: I selected professional sportsperson then schoolteacher, a
               secondary sport teacher then paramedic—I love sport—health and

> sport are my favourite classes. I do a lot of sport outside of school
> and so the professional sport has kind of caught my eye. The
> paramedic's job was like the health subject. I like to be more
> involved and not stuck to an office. I like to be more hands on.

This emerging insight into her interests was connected to how Carly had made some tangible connections to her expectations of the future. She made a point of expressing that she had some awareness of how she might attain them, as she also communicated evidence of some of the "weak ties" (Granovetter, 1973) that would assist her.

> Carly: I'm close with a lot of the sport teachers at my school and they have
> inspired me to get more involved. In five year's time I would be at
> university—I've looked at some of the courses so I want to be doing
> the Bachelor of Applied Science and Physical Education.

Here is Carly's reference to a specific course of study linked to a qualification, not just for sport but also for a path into the teaching of physical education. Carly's account of her present insight is an example of some questioning about how young people address developing expectations.

The balancing out of how Jay viewed career prospects alongside her awareness of who she is, demonstrated what might be considered as maturity but could be more accurately viewed as reflexivity. Jay's most preferred choice of occupation was musician and she spoke of how that had conceptualised her potential future.

> Jay: Listening to music is probably the one thing I do most of with my
> time. And when I was in grade 6 I was having a really hard time and
> I didn't really have any friends so I thought I'm going to do
> something extra curricula. I started doing singing lessons and then I
> started taking up guitar lessons and drum lessons and I thought
> that's really something I really want to do.
>
> I see musicians performing and stuff and I see music as really
> important, as least it is to me, coz it's emotional and writing music is
> always really fun and it's something I always wanted to do.

Jay had, like some of the other young people in the interviews, not only imagined what she might be doing in the future but also had enacted some of the imaginings into her present. Taking music lessons for Jay

appears as testing her abilities but also that she had some say in the making of that future. Jay expressed her agential connection to the imagined future, as she spoke of the challenges that she might have to confront in her choice.

> Jay: I thought music is the one thing I want to do and said "Dad, I want to go into do music production and I want to study that and I want to study to be a musician and I want to do it the right way and not drop out of school and just try and make money playing music at random places." My dad said "If you've made a decision then you need to figure out how you are going to get there." So I said "I'm going to stay in school, in education and see what my school has to offer."

Nadia outlined a similar account of how she had formed her expectations. Having gained an awareness of her abilities around art and music, she was beginning to construct some of her expectations from what directly surrounded her in her lifeworld.

> Nadia: Since I was young I have been drawing, my brothers, my family they do art, [on] my dad's side and my mum's side they do art. My cousin just finished uni and he did graphic design. In five years time I imagine that I will be in uni—I think—in printing or graphic art. I'm learning piano here at school and I used to be in a band—like in church. My dad would say I'm the only one in my family that is talented—even my friends say I've got talent. I can do anything—anything to do with hands I can do. My dad always says "Don't worry about the future just be careful about it, take things slowly."

Like Jay, Nadia has the experience of parental input into her plans for the future. While apparently far less direct than that offered by Jay's father, the affirmation for Nadia by her father that she is talented adds to her confidence about future study. This confidence is likely to be enhanced and informed by the experiences of others, such as her cousin. In speaking of studying graphic art in the future, Nadia uses specific terminology to signify her developing insights of a world beyond the Art classroom of Calder College.

What has been reported here are tangible references to the explorations of young people as they become aware of shifts in their lifeworlds when making plans for the future. These shifts result from the

actions and thoughts that are tangible when young people engage with explorations of the possible against previous experience. In these interviews these explorations are neither clean nor easy. The enthusiasm for new experiences is often tempered by young people's knowledge that informs and refines expectations of the life they have begun to envisage. The out of school interests, such as music, air cadets and casual employment, are elements of a burgeoning view of their place in the world and with the interactions that offer cause to reflexively question established ways of thinking and acting. These considerations do not give cause to turn their back on the past but rather to revaluate their assessment of their respective present context. School could then figure as a means to a revised destination and therefore comes into being as agency and less of a process.

In many cases the family has been the single most important /source of advice, yet when it comes to specific insights about career pathways the young people interviewed indicated that it was up to them to gain this information from outside of the family. The school offered connections to the possibilities for the future in that a number of responses in interviews made references to the subjects that offered links to further study and particular fields of employment. Yet there were detailed accounts offered in discussions with young people to suggest that there were perceived shortfalls by what the school could offer given the detailed insights of one's burgeoning views of self in a context of possible futures.

While young people may not be explicitly aware in a contemporaneous sense, there comes a time when they seek out possible resources that facilitate their developing insights and expectations of the future. With this in mind it should not be surprising that many young people become opportunistic when presented with new social connections as potential informants around developing perceptions of one's future. One attraction of these new sources is that unlike family, and to some extent the school, there are fewer calls on a young person's commitment to these social structures. This is in keeping with what Burt (2004, 2009) puts forward as the concept of structural holes and the flexibility that weak

network ties can offer a person. On this point Field (2008) references Putnam (2000) in distinguishing bridging social capital as being "better for linkages to external assets and for information diffusion" and in the facilitation of "broader identities and reciprocity" (Putnam cited in Field 2008 p.36).

7.2.4   Habituated Aspirations

Within the interviews with these young people they articulated their thinking about the future. While there were gaps in their specific knowledge of how to enact their aspirations, there was evidence of their growing realisation that they would need to enhance what insights they had gleaned from family, friends, and school.

The present time for young people, such as Angela, is a real time representation of an individual's current view of personal competencies and capacities. Such awareness is embodied in one's propensity for certain types of occupations. Statements made in the present time offer insights in how the young agent might engage with work-oriented activities. The interview responses from Angela, Jay, and Gavin provided specific insights of their orientation toward the future, informed by a developing awareness of their self-identity.

Accounts given by students such as Felicity are even more direct in terms of how a young person like her imagines the challenge of going to university. And while she has some insight via her family, Felicity communicates hesitation about engaging with study at university. This is made explicit in her view that:

Felicity: It looks hard, my sister is doing it, and she has heaps of work.

Felicity is one of a number of respondents who raised the perceived nature of university, as being "hard." Yet there were variances in how they might contend with this perceived challenge.

While having some commonality in the catalyst for occupational expectations, there are variances in how individuals draw on the present to assist with envisioning a future. In speaking of imagined futures, the

present remains a grounding influence for each young person, a form of leverage upon themselves and the social structures that they have steadily become more aware of, for the potential to promote or limit their agency. As each person spoke of what they might "do" as a future occupation it was apparent that they considered the possibility of it being realised was informed by their view of their present self and social location. These accounts spoke to the challenges of one's social capital as cause for consternation, in realising that how possibilities are formed can be countered by an inability to grasp the means to bring them to realisation. The reflexivity associated with planning for the future is not clearly apparent in the deliberations around "how to be," whilst having contended with the primary dilemma of "what to be."

The explorations into what might be possible in the future remain a burgeoning element of young people living in the present. They seek not only information to fuel their imaginations but affirmation from significant others about the validity of their considerations. The social action of everyday life informs young people as they begin to piece together the components that they see as relevant to their planning.

From the interview data it is evident that as young people begin to distil their personal accounts of who they are and what they are currently capable of they seek to make connection to what might be possible in the future. It is apparent that they hold aspirations that are often thoughtful and contextualised by respective lifeworlds. "We can distinguish, I think, very clearly between certain types of experience, which we call subjective because we alone have access to them, and that experience which we call reflective" (Mead 1934, p. 166).

Self-awareness is a primary source of direction towards the future (Evens, Handelman, & Roberts, 2016; Porpora & Shumar, 2010), yet for many this remains a point on the horizon without a tangible view of what this might actually be. Here is a dilemma for young people. Becoming independent, moving from child to adult, entails additional sources of knowledge to support, confirm, and advise one's aspirations. Therefore new

dependencies are born through the opening up of possibilities for young people.

7.3   The Present: Finding a Way

How young people make the transition from school to work informs much of the questioning around aspirations and widening participation. Some advocates of increasing access to higher education contend that the institution needs to reduce existing prerequisite expectations in order to facilitate increased enrolments from individuals belonging to underrepresented groups (Archer et al., 2005; Gale & Parker, 2013; Vignoles & Murray, 2016). Insights from the young people interviewed in this research offer a far more complex insight into the question of access.

The individualisation of choice (Ball et al., 2013) frames how agents make decisions or construct expectations. While "choices" are proposed as social freedom it is questionable given how each person makes an informed choice. Where and how do family, gender, and class come into play in the decision-making process of young people, such as those interviewed?

This section examines how young people inform their thinking about their place in and their beginning perspectives of future possibilities. Angela's view—that she talked to people and "looked it up" on Google—was to be the first of a number of respondents that considered this to be their main source of information. Her statement that "I'll find my own way" is paradoxical given the massive amounts of information readily accessed and shared; yet individuals are often left to make sense of it in isolation.

7.3.1   Restricted Practice

Angela indicated that she would go to her mum for advice but she qualified how she had come to regard her parent as a source of knowledge.

> Angela: Depending on what it was—if it was to suit her strengths—I don't know what she would say—she surprises me with everything she says—most things unless it has to do with intellectual stuff—I go to my stepdad for that—but for creative and common sense stuff I go to her.

Carmel offered a similar response that indicated her questioning of the reliability of her family as a source of information.

> Carmel: If I need help with things I would ask my mum or one of my friends for help—I've got people that I can go to—my mum is my go to person she has an answer for everything whether it not right or it's right.

Carmel does not refer to her mum's answers as possibly being wrong but questionable. Young people, such as Carmel, seek support albeit in the absence of specific knowledge of fields that remain the locus of expectations. This was evident in Felicity's response that:

> Carmel: If I need help I will go to my friends but not really my family—I know my dad would like me to be a nurse because my sister is but not really much else.

When asked about how he went about getting help with things, Robert stated that he thought that his mum and dad probably stopped helping him with his homework in about grade 4, "especially with computers coz that's just a natural thing these days." Robert was asked about how he went about getting information about the future, careers, or challenges in life.

> Carmel: I talk to my parents a lot—if I go home I tell them I've got this project—my parents know everything but I don't need help with everything. My mum knows everything about that [him becoming a pilot] but it is as new to them as it is for me—I did find out about cadets and they said if you can get a job—which I did—and you can pay for half of it then we will pay the other half.

Robert articulated how the family was in a new field and together they were becoming familiar with the specific details of what was needed. The reference to raising money is evidence of the parental tangible support. It is a representation of the family working within the limitations of experience. The family shares Robert's endeavour but only to the extent of what they are currently capable of. In this case both Robert and his parents can raise the money required but any details pertaining to being a pilot are less tangible.

When asked about how he acquired information about becoming a pilot Robert was able to give an account of his encounters with others who had specialist knowledge and expertise in the field.

Robert: Well we have staff members, a lot of older people—probably about 60 and older they are very knowledgeable and they have interactions with us but basically it is led by people around 20 years of age—a couple of the staff members have worked with the Roulettes which is a big acrobatic flying, and people who have worked on planes and they have been in the defence force, fire-fighters and policemen—you find out all these different life stories.

These accounts give evidence that there are times when the support of one's family becomes limited for the detailed insights that young people are seeking refined knowledge of the contexts for their aspirations as they are enacted in social spaces yet to be directly experienced. The need for such insights is evidence of the growing awareness that young people have with structures that operate in particular fields. The anticipation of operating in these fields becomes a catalyst as young people become aware of the point where they can no longer rely on current experience and networks within their social space. It is through this circumstance that we can observe the relationship between field and habitus as a means of "conceptualising agency and change at the individual level" (Blackmore, 2010, p. 102).

7.3.2 Where is the School?

The young people of Calder College provide evidence of feeling their ways in the world as they reach out from where they are. For these young people the school is a place that offers something of a vantage point with opportunity to see or feel the "edge of a void." There is great variation in the interpretation and trepidation experienced by young people as they are presented with opportunities to reach out beyond the present into an intangible future. If the future were to be constructed in terms of what young people had begun to see as a possibility for their contemporaneous selves then it is conceivable that for them the void's edge has extended forward and they are able to extending their reach.

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Within the world of each young person interviewed sits a realm of the constructed world, that is the school. Promotion of careers, facilitation of work experience and communication of possibilities for individuals and cohorts is the usual business of future orientations offered by the school. Career teachers and pathways offices are the standout features that assist students to meld the immediate and long-term future. For young people coming from families with a limited understanding of higher education, the challenge for the school is to build a clearer view of what the future may hold. However so much of the operation of schools is designated towards performativity and accountability in the neoliberal sense; this results in school staff and students being directed to focus largely on the present.

The standard systemic approach in schools is to offer students experiences of careers, often limited to one or two weeks for students in Years 9 or 10. The necessity to locate each student in work experience can result in students developing an insight into the world of work in a more general manner. While this is valid there remains little additional opportunity for more extensive experiences of the career options that may be possible for a young. If seeds of some formative career interests are sown by and for a young person then there is little in the way of propagation from the settings where these young people occupy most of their time, in their formative years.

In contrast to the everyday expectations of teachers' work there come the exceptional acts by individuals that see the need to reach out and utilise their own particular networks and social capital to enhance the possibilities for the young people they work with. Such teachers take on the role of a conduit, to enhance information sharing through experiential knowledge. In taking action to open systemic doors and build bridges into other worlds, teachers can and do offer isolated acts driven by their own experiences of school and career choice. A teacher taking some students to watch and talk to a physiotherapist at their local football club is an example given in the researcher's interviews at the school.

The development of a project by one of the school's Leading Teachers with university students to mentor her students as part of a university experience is another, and is explored in detail in Chapter 8. Thus some teachers are representative of democratic work that centres on understanding how young people can become "socialised into a narrow, focussed set of goals and ambitions" (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997, p. 30). Hodkinson's (2008) conceptual construct of horizons for action is the premise that career decision-making bounded by what a person can see is limited by the position that they stand in. Therefore the limits to the horizons in view from that position are significant. Hodkinson posits that horizons for action are established through the interaction of the field and personal dispositions and therefore change as a consequence of a change in response to a person's position, one's disposition, or the field. It provides understanding that career decisions can and are influenced by others and by the forces in the field.

7.4 The Present: Current Speculations, Imagination, and Aspiration

Robert's account of finding out specific details leads to the question of what information did the young people in these interviews have about going to a university. This consideration comes from the need to question how individuals draw on the present to inform their orientations towards their respective imagined futures. The level of detail that young people had about universities was posed by the questions of what they imagined it would be like and how they imagined the university students to be. This called on each individual to bring into reference their experiences to date that might in some way be relevant informants for their expectations.

7.4.1 The University Imagined

Robert had begun to use some of the insights gained through his connections with cadets to explore some of the details related to higher education.

> Robert: I've been looking at RMIT for the aviation course—that's a bit hefty
>   with HECS fees and all—I've visited RMIT and been through

Melbourne University through school—I've been to RMIT flying branch down at Laverton. From what I've seen when I've been there it's a lot more—not relaxed but more general and everyone's equal type thing—unlike at school with uniforms and you have teachers and students. There you have the professors and students but it is a lot more friendly, and you roam around and you have your own learning space type thing.

Angela provided her vision of universities from what she not only imagined but also as an account of her expectations that might address some of the shortfall of her experience of school, particularly in the present time.

Angela: It's like a place to study and learn more and expand a certain topic that you're interested in. I haven't been at a university before—I imagine they will be similar but different to school—it would be more relaxed and you wouldn't have those people who mess up—and there are people there who are willing to help you—and do their own work—people who are passionate about what they want to do in life—they have a clear vision of what they want to be and want they want to do. I think they would be similar to me. I picture it being on a harder more detailed level. You would still have your teachers—the lecturers providing you with information—but I think there would be some major differences.

Angela articulated these imaginings in a hopeful manner. These imaginings are a common theme for many of the young people interviewed, particularly those who had limited or no first-hand experience of a university. This was the case for Ben's consideration of what challenges he would have to contend with and what that meant for his approach to school in the present.

Angela;   I've been to university but just to walk through—I imagine that they have heaps of lectures, constant study and it would be serious and the people that go there would be those people that really want to get something out of their study—that's like me, if you showed me a music course I would run to it. It would be different to school because it would not be as laid back as school.

Goren has built upon his current insights and interpretations of the university in order to project a specific expectation of his preparation in anticipation of the future.

> Goran: I have been to universities heaps of times because my cousins come from overseas just to look around—so I show them around, as I know my way around campuses. The people that go to university I would describe as hard working, they have this mindset that working hard is the path to success so that's what I try to keep in my head. School is just a minor thing compared to uni—I would enjoy university because I like challenges.

Gavin spoke of his expectation that the university would provide a flexibility that school was not able to provide and that this would call for people to be responsible for their learning. For Gavin and some of the other young people interviewed, such calls on individual responsibility were a welcomed attribute of the imagined undertaking that differed from that experienced in secondary school.

> Goren: I think university would be like a more relaxed than it is at school. So it's not compulsory for you to be at every class—but it is encouraged. I think because they (the people that go to university) are studying that one thing that they are going to set the rest of their life on. Then they are more focused—that they motivate themselves a lot more. I think that you would have a lot more freedom at university—it's being able to do that one thing that you are wanting to do but at school there are a lot of things and some you might not be interested in.

Isabelle's thoughts of what university might be like were informed from the movies that she had seen, which gave her some imagery of the large auditoriums and lectures driven by someone speaking out the front. More specifically and in line with the views of Heather and Gavin, Isabelle raised the nature of being a student at university in terms of having a determined purpose.

> Isabelle: I imagine the people that go to uni as being focused and driven to get to finish what they have started—at school you can get away with a few things but I don't think you would be able to do that at university.

As these young people put forward personal thoughts about what being at university would be like, there are accounts of how they draw on a developed imagery that Dewey (1920/2004a) favours as a means of conceptualising the self as less controlled "by the reins of the prosaic

world" (2004a, p. 60). With some unrestrained thinking these young people could engage in what counts as the deliberative attitude of human agency (Mead 1932). Through some initial experience these young people were offered the opportunity to locate their self in possibilities and then set about to explore how they might enact their personal agency towards those possibilities. This move to the imagined future offers space to become reflexive about temporal disturbance between present dispositions and envisioned calls on the self in the future. Seller and Gale (2011) see the interplay between imagination and aspiration as having a bearing upon student equity efforts. They emphasise the significance of resourcing opportunities for people to narrate their experiences as an endeavour to produce "new forms of sociality within and beyond university" (2011, p.130).

7.4.2 Self and the University

Ben: I know lots of friends who go to university and they always say "Oh Ben, when you go to university you going to have to pull up your socks"—Oh Man!—That's one of things I want to do—I want to do uni.

Ben highlights having connections to people who have direct experience of and insights into university can advance the expectations in preparation for the future. He communicates that while he will be challenged in the future it remains possible that he can prepare for such expectations in the present.

For Goren the perceived challenge was a means of constructing a counter to the alternative to further study and the options of a future without a university education and qualification.

Goren: I know that university is hard but it is another step to success— without university you would probably be working more harder—if I work hard now then I can get into university and if I can't get into university I don't get a good job then I won't be able to spend the rest of my life in happiness.

Goren's views of university are premised on a broad connection between going to university, getting a good job and being happy for the rest of his life. This naïve perspective seems paradoxical to Goren's social capital that

has him connected to people constituting his extended family, many of whom have direct experience of university. There is evidence of doxic aspirations (Zipin et al., 2015) as Goren's statements are his running out of a script that he has either been told or interpreted through the words and actions of his family. Comments made by some of his teachers indicate that Goren's sense of self is misaligned and his habitus is embodied in a manner that is indifferent to the script he thinks he should be reading from.

Taylor puts forward an opinion that was not very different from many of the others who were interviewed. For Taylor there are challenges that could be addressed successfully through hard work. She is also aware that conditions of gender, family, and class do play a contextualising factor in perceiving and shaping future challenges.

> Taylor: But at university you have to make sure that you are doing really good to get what you want. And if I go to university I will be the only girl in my generation to go. It will make me feel good that I did it because all my other cousins dropped out—they dropped out in like Year 9. If I try my hardest I will be good at it if I don't try at all it will be harder.

As young people look into a future and begin to construct an image of their self in particular contexts, there is an imagining of what is possible based on the sense one has of their self in the present. For many young people taking part in this study their imagining was posited on very broad views mostly been informed by indirect insights of the university. It is apparent that the sense of a place of higher education is a desired position and as such the university has become validated as a social structure. The accounts raised in this section suggest that narratives of self can be temporally contextualised, that in the present self begins to use future markers as a way of drawing up the tangible that in turn becomes a focus for being in the present. What are often absent in such narratives are the insights of field specific structures that facilitate or restrict aspirations being realised. There is an absence from these young people around their expectations of what such undertakings will involve. Instead there are the expressions around needing to work hard to get to university as if that alone would be the most significant achievement for young people. In

addressing the need to empower young people through active agency Bland (2012) sees pivotal the developing the ability to make informed decisions in addition to participating in and critiquing relevant discourse.

7.4.3   Aspiration: Uncertainty and Doubt

Robert had indicated that given the choices available that he might consider occupations in agriculture or mining. These appeared to be an expression of a wider view of the possible future and so he was asked to explain his choices.

> Robert: Well there wasn't much there that was specific to me but I thought I've been up at my uncle's farm and that's pretty fun there so I thought I don't mind the country life and hard labour is fine with me—I prefer the hands on work and being outdoors. With the underground mining—I like caving so just to throw that in there.

His grasp indicates a naïve connection with his sense of self, in the present, and his perception of how his current skill set would match up with occupations as he imagines them. He then makes a connection between what he imagines and any relevant aspects of his life experience to date.

> Robert: Mining is underground—caving is underground, I like caving I would probably like mining.

Felicity communicated considerable uncertainty about not only what occupation she expected to be engaged in, in the future, but also the connections she had with some of her possibilities. Her hesitation might be viewed as being vague and yet she provided some evidence of having thought about the likelihood of achieving her current aspirations.

> Felicity: I always wanted to be an actor but I don't know if I will get there or not—I've liked people like Jim Carrey and Adam Sandler and I thought I could do that; and they get paid for like acting. I don't play a musical instrument or sing but I would love to but I don't think I will get there though as I don't see me as being as good as other people. In five years' time I imagine that I wouldn't be doing none of those jobs—but maybe acting or nursing—well my sister is a nurse and people say to me you could be an actor so. . . . They reckon I could be one but I don't know.

To grasp the complexity of young people's developing sense of aspiration and agency, Furlong and Cartmel (2007) view biography as one means of understanding agency. It can contextualise how young people negotiate uncertainty as they interpret their experiences. The doubt that may be made apparent by accounts of young people, as they contend with conditions of the field of higher education, is indicative of Bourdieu and Passeron's (1979) argument that

> substantial variations in objective educational opportunity are expressed in countless ways in everyday perceptions and depending on the social milieu, give rise to an image of higher education as "impossible," "possible," or "natural" future, which in turn, plays a part in determining educational vocations. (p. 5)

7.5   The University Visits: Students' Impressions and Understandings

7.5.1   Impressions of Observations of Students' Reactions

Assembled in a classroom, the participating students from Calder College appeared eager to embark upon the journey to the university campus. The only distraction was the delay of departure, due to one of the students running late. Ironically this student lived directly across the road from the school and it later turned out that she was undecided about whether to participate in the excursion. Two other students had previously indicated that they would not be available due to a prior commitment.

In the lead up to the visit to the university the researcher had sought to make the experience more centred on the students' expectations and experiences. This had called for the group to come together and through the inquiries of the researcher there was a set of questions developed and articulated that would make for the focus of interviews to be had with university staff and students. Below are the questions that were derived from a brainstorming session with the students. These questions were some indication of the initial insights that these young people had of university.

- What are you studying? Why?

- Is it hard or not?
- How many hours do you spend studying?
- Do you get any breaks?
- Is uni what you expected?
- Do you still enjoy what you selected to study?
- How long ago did you decide what you wanted to study?
- What was your second preference?

These questions were indicative of the need for pragmatic points to be clarified and are evidence of how some of the young people were drawing upon their experience of education as a base for their inquiries (Leach & Zepke, 2005). The wording of the questions indicates that individuals were already exploring potential futures that involved higher education. The contrast between the want to find out how many breaks you get and the question of whether the university was what was expected, is telling in terms of the group's need to make responses tangible.

In seeking to gain some account of other people's experience the students had projected their emerging awareness of the complexities of the decision making to be called into being when embarking on considerations of post school possibilities. Equipped with a micro video recorder the students set out to explore the campus with the primary purpose of interviewing current university students or staff members. Whilst anxious about the task they sought to find some readily obliging individuals.

Standing at a distance the researcher observed one of the first encounters to take place. It was obvious that the young woman was readily engaged with the enquiries that the young people were making. The responses that she gave provided particular insights for the researcher and they later recounted that they were surprised by what they had gained from their very first interview. The university student came from the next suburb to the school students and was relating her journey to them about her undertakings. After her first year of study she had changed her university course. It was apparent that the students had been impacted by this thought and action. The university student had offered an account of

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someone who had agency in her expectations. This was particularly significant given the similarities between the young people and their own lives to that of the person being interviewed.

Another interview was undertaken with someone who was taking a course in further education and explained that as a recent arrival to Australia she was seeking to transition to additional studies in higher education. One of the other interviews that the students recounted and highlighted through the playing back of the video was with a university student who was approaching the end of her studies in early childhood and primary teaching. The interviewing students gathered up her enthusiasm and appreciation of what she had achieved. They recognised that she had to work at making these achievements happen as well her being responsible for her actions and enhancing her opportunities for the immediate future. The university student had provided detailed context to her responses to the questions that the students asked. Of particular note was her view that it had been beneficial for her to not go directly into university study. Having indicated that being a teacher was her lifelong goal the student being interviewed had spoken of the other experiences and studies that had enhanced her undertakings in attaining a teaching qualification. Speaking to the students she told them that she was twenty-one before she "got her act together." Such direct insights provided by university students would enhance existing expectations of what it was like to go to university. These statements allowed space for the school students to question what is the typical path to study at university, yet there would be other statements made in other interviews that spoke to the "control" that the university students had employed as part of their own undertakings.

This visit was not intended to promote the university or even particular courses of study, but rather to have the school students shape an actual encounter with the university. The use of the video interviews had been created to give purpose to the event of being on a campus. This intent came into fruition as the encounters with individual university students threw light upon the nature of being a student at university. The questions that the school students had constructed were less about how to

get to university: rather, they focused on the qualitative dimensions around why go to university? and what was it like once you get there? In the construction of such questions it is evident that young people do question the purpose of study at higher education and, in the case of the Calder College, students' wondering about what commitments that would be need to be made and managed. They were concerned to ascertain responses to their enquiries of the number of hours of study needed and how many breaks do you get at university. These are tangible concerns for these young people as they begin to evaluate how hard the future might be.

The reflections of the day spent at the university were to be embodied in the students' follow up session to prepare for an additional visit to another university campus. In light of the level of engagement and conversations following the initial interviewing experience, the Calder College students were asked to review what questions they might ask staff and students during the next university event. This brainstorming session was a means of noting any change in the dimensions of the students' questioning that could be attributed to the insights from the first experience.

The following are those questions that students developed in the collaboration session prior to the second university experience:

- What different subjects are available at CityUni?
- Why are there different campuses in different locations?
- What are the different facilities at CityUni?
- Why did you choose CityUni?
- For you what does CityUni stand for?
- Is it still worth studying a uni course?
- What made you lean towards your course?
- Do you still think your course is worth it?
- What is the cost difference between TAFE and uni?
- What are the different pathways available for your course?
- What do you expect from the course—what do others expect of you as a student in your course?

A number of the questions were redrafts of the previous questions but there was a noticeable development in the depth of some of the questions. The questions again were to be another point of focus for the students as they experienced the next campus.

7.5.2 Intentions in Response to Experience

At the next university visit after a presentation by the university recruitment personnel the Calder College students undertook a short exploration challenge that was part of the orientation taster, aimed at guiding them around some of the university's points of interest. This was a typical introduction exercise to permit young people to get a feel for the context of tertiary education. The introductory presentation was well scripted and the students appeared responsive to what the presenter had to say. When it came to the summing up, one or two students readily took the opportunity to raise some of the questions that they had developed in the brainstorming session with the researcher. However, from the researcher's observations, it was unclear as to the extent of the impact that this presentation and the information offered had upon individual students.

Following the formal introduction the students were asked to undertake interviews with people on campus as a means of determining some details in response to their questions. As in the case of the previous visit the questions and interviews were aimed at giving some purpose to interactions with other people who had their own particular experiences of university. The time allocated for the collection of insights came to an end and the students returned to meet the researcher and the Calder College "Pathways" teacher.

In subsequent conversations the students gave accounts of what they had found from their interviews. They had approached some individuals and had heard about how study was viewed as a facilitator for someone wanting to live and work in another country. Another university student had put forward the view that it is convenient to study at this university when you live in the city. Some specifics were also recounted, such as the entry requirements for certain courses and the fact that some

courses of study were viewed as being expensive. When asked what the interviewing students got out of such interviews, they expressed an understanding of the opportunities that courses of study can offer, such as travel.

Having been able to approach some people on campus, that were not necessarily students at the university, had resulted in some of the Calder College students becoming aware that many students live in the city. They were interested that there were specific buildings designated for student accommodation. The resulting discussion involved statements that it would be helpful to visit some of the student accommodation. The question of how expensive it was to live in the city was an aspect that was of interest to a number of the students. Some of the insights had included that some university students do in fact travel "from ages away." This was a reference to the distance of their suburb from this campus.

7.5.3   Speculations, Imagination, and Aspiration

As part of their interviews with other people at the university, the students had moved around some of the different facilities in the precinct. Having ventured into the cafeteria some students spoke of the relaxed feeling that they had become aware of. They acknowledged that there were many individuals and groups engaged in studious undertakings in addition to eating. This prompted the statement by one of the Calder College students that "study here looks different." This observation was followed up by articulations relating to the place being social and that there appeared to be a great deal of flexibility on offer for students. Particular exclamations were made about the facilities on offer. "They've got a gym!" was a declaration of how some of the young people had begun to uncover certain differences to what they had come to expect from a learning environment.

The researcher asked them if they could they imagine themselves being a student here, which drew both pragmatic and emotional responses. Some included the perceived challenge of having to select what to wear each day, as there would not be the pre-determined uniform that the Calder College students had become accustomed to. This dilemma was in part

representative of the imagining that had gone on as students made observations of others at the university.

There was a declaration made by two of the students that they could see themselves at the university because of the current "atmosphere" (Mead, 1934) that they had been party to as they encountered various aspects of the university. Heather made a statement that explicitly referenced this.

| Heather | I can visualise myself fitting here because of the atmosphere and this is a big change from my thinking yesterday because of being here—seeing and feeling—there is a balance between university and actual life. |

Other young people in the group spoke of having a feeling that it was a place where they would not be "feeling alone" and that it was not apparently stressful as no one was walking around all loaded up with books and not forced to be going somewhere. One particular insight that was voiced was that:

| Taylor | This place suits me—school is too structured for me while this is free—you're accountable to your own action. |

Surrounded by the objective presence of the university it is surprising that the Calder College students drew on such to preface their responses to the question of their imagining self being university students in such a setting. The researcher had sought to expose the young people participating in the study to what Bourdieu refers to as the "field of possibilities" (1984). Responses taken account of in this section are of note as the expressions in language marked developing connections being made between current dispositions and developing aspirations that seek some objective traction towards a possible future.

7.5.4   Finding a Way

Having been party to these insights the researcher posed the following questions for the young people to consider. These included:

> Researcher: Is there enough of a link between where you are now, in the
>   present, and in three years time—is there a link to your life at the
>   moment?
>
>   Are you feeling prepared in some respect to where you are as
>   individuals?
>
>   Does the school allow you to imagine being in places like this? Have your
>   experiences up until this stage done that?

To such questioning came the response that the Pathways Office was their "link." This might have been a reference for the benefit of the teacher who was present and was the coordinator of the Pathways Office but there was a general acknowledgement from the group that this school facility was the source of their connections to information and detailed understanding. A particular point raised in the discussion was that they were aware of their need for some help in being led into how independent you have to be at university.

Some of the responses referenced an ever-present awareness of the institutional requirements that would permit or prevent their expectations for the future. The ATAR score (Knipe, 2013) would be a signifier of their accomplishments and potential for university study and there was a comment that there was a growing awareness that they had to "pull your socks up" and "need to be on a path to where you want to be."

The researcher sought to determine the impact that this recent experience might have had for individuals in the group, in asking: "If you see more places like this (the university) would that give you more of a destination? In clarifying what the researcher was asking of the group, one of the participants offered the summation that it was about "how is this experience going to impact on us?" In response to this came some thoughtful accounts of the contemporaneous views that were being mulled over as part of the experience.

The general view was that it made the "goal" a bit clearer, with one thoughtful statement being:

> Isabelle: Otherwise it's just one day at a time.

7.5.5 The Reflexive Agent

The thoughts of the Calder College students around the impact of visiting university campuses were focused on having a view of what life might be like in the immediate future. This developing perspective saw reason in developing a plan around the pathways, in contrast to merely letting things just happen in the present circumstances. This was the specific evidence that the students were responding to this experience to show their respective reflexivity to the experiences they had throughout this day. Such reflexivity came as a compounding aspect of their current insights of the education system. The developing knowledge of what the school system asked and offered to individuals was clearly evident in their considered contributions to conversations around what could be possible.

From another perspective there was a view that such experiences were contextually informative as one young person raised the consideration that:

> Taylor: You might come here and say this isn't for me—then you don't put yourself into that box.

Here again is a thoughtful perspective around agency and the significance of making choices that are based on informed insights rather than mere impulse. This comment embraces the critical question of how an individual sets about making choices that are the best fit for them, whilst being responsive to the potential for life altering events. The speaking of putting oneself in a box does raise the dilemma of on what basis do young people consider that "this isn't for me." The dilemma concerns how we can ascertain if a young person is making a qualitative judgement of a particular course of study or that they are responding to the overall social structure within the university with the sentiment of this is "not for the likes of us" (Bourdieu, 1990; Reay et al., 2010).

One final comment captured a sense of the impact that the experience had for one of the young people as she put forward that:

> Carly: Just being here is like an extra drive.

This comment is not considered by the researcher to be an account of some new motivation that has been inspired by a single experience but rather a marker of her reflexive habitus (Decoteau, 2016). The nature of the encounters that the students had at the university were, in part, well beyond what they had anticipated. The close observation and inspection of the lives of others located in the institution of the university give some primary leverage to personal revision of how the world is viewed and the manner by which the individual seeks to engage with events within this world.

Conclusion

Mead (in Joas, 1997) posits that the event in the present goes to the construction of the past, as it brings forth a personal view of the past as one experiences the present. The event for a young person, such as the students of NWS and Calder College, can mean that they are brought to construct time and the very experience of time. What remains pertinent to the accounts of the young people taking part in this research are the theoretical insights of both Mead (1932) and Badiou (2013). What is apparent from the research data is that in order for an event to exist there needs to be both site and situation yet the situation might not be eventful in a contemporaneous manner but rather one's reflexivity enacts the event of the past by way of making meaning of the present. While potentially catalytic sites and situations may have been filled with other people, encounters had personal significance for each young person, as experience was deconstructed to make a meaning of one's past. As Mead (1934) posits:

> The flow of experience is not differentiated in a past and future over against an immediate now until reflection affects certain parts of the experience with these characters, with the perfection of adjustment on one hand, and with the shifting control on the other. The biologic individual lives in an undifferentiated now; the social reflective individual takes this up into a flow of experience within which stands a fixed past and a more or less uncertain future. (p. 351)

The encounters had at university campuses did draw out personal biographies of the young people so that they came to reflect upon other events in the past that constructed and directed their reflections and reflexivity to bring about some emergence for the self in the present, but soon becomes the past in its own right.

Within the intent of this research and of relevance to this particular chapter is the curiosity about what Archer (2003) sees as the internal conversations in the context of one's agency. The interest of the researcher relates to what young people with their particular social and cultural capital would draw into consideration as they came to reflect upon their past in light of events in the present. Seeking any insight into the inner thoughts of students is not easy for a researcher. One accessible means would be to create an opportunity for the individual to draw up their reflections and reflexivity in social conversations in forming their own career aspirations. This is the point given explicit attention in Chapters 9 and 10.

In the case of the young people from Calder College there were many articulations of their respective aspirations for the future. These ambitions were in the main countered by the limitations of experience. The insights into how an individual came to consider what career they may be doing in the future often referred to conversations and interactions in the past with significant others. In being asked to recount some of the influential factors that gave them some direction the young people were taken back to the past to experience time in the context of particular events. Having become attuned to these events some of the individuals interviewed were able to articulate the origins of their aspirations.

The study, having incorporated a number of experiences of university campuses, gave opportunity for the present to be projected forward. The researcher had few, if any, predetermined expectations of how the participants would actually respond to the encounters that might eventuate as they went about experiencing various facilities and people on campus. The interactions that took place generated refined insights as portrayed in the level of questioning that followed each experience. One

contrast that became apparent was the distinct "starting point" of individuals from the two schools. In the case of the NWS students there was a greater sense of the young people being picked up and parachuted into uncharted territory, as they came to comprehend the physical environment in order to begin to engage with any detailed questioning of what the experience called into view. The Calder College students had arrived at the university with a greater appreciation of their positioning with respect to the constructs of their past. They took in the present as a dedicated account of an aspect of what might be and sought to bridge the present with personal possibilities.

In taking up the opportunity to revise their view of what they knew about higher education they displayed the intent to explore what the future could be like for them. This intent was based on their existing appreciation of the possibilities that they saw for their future, a view that was enhanced by their awareness of the constructs of their past. In interviews and discussions the intent to play an active role in putting pieces together to attain not only a sense of direction but some conception of a destination was a marker that the Calder College students actively sourced their present as part of their response to emerging aspirations. Unlike the young people from NWS, the participants from Calder College had moved to a position where they were not experiencing the present as "one day at a time." It was apparent that, in general, the Calder College participants were drawing on the school as a point of reference and had seen the significance of pushing off from the systemic edge in order to bring their respective subjectivities into play.

Schools exist in complicated circumstances where priorities are made and moved by systemic forces beyond the control of most individuals within the school. Time and effort are directed to endeavours that are deemed essential and as a consequence even the strategic planning and initiatives must wait for opportunities within the systemic world of education.

Undertaking this study called for significant wait time in order to access the young people taking part. Their days and weeks became filled

with the crowded curriculum and the need to address accountability in the form of exams and preparation for their senior years at the school. The researcher's intention had been to explore the impact that the experiences of the university had upon their present thoughts and undertakings at the school. This was always anticipated to be a challenge not just in terms of the logistics of meeting with all of the individual participants but also in gaining the detailed and nuanced insights of particular reflexivities as they went about the task of being a student. Out of necessity the researcher was given cause to seek out the detailed insights of others with complementary experiences of a project aimed at orientation to higher education. The following chapter is therefore an account of the detailed insights attained from another Leading Teacher at Calder College as she accounts for the impact and reflexivity of her students that she had been able to observe and draw to light following their particular experiences of the university.

8 Making Reflexivity Apparent

In Chapters 5, 6, and 7 the participating school students portrayed how they were beginning to see the world. These previous three chapters concluded that many of the students—as human agents, exist in the present with little detail and informed views of the future. This data presents seminal accounts of the challenges for young people imagining possible futures. This is a challenge to be taken up by schools and other organisations that seek to address inequity of access to higher education.

The chapters provided evidence that there are significant shortfalls in the resources, which agents, and the schools in disadvantaged communities, can draw upon to assist students in constructing a present that could clarify or lead to a palpable future. This chapter presents an account of a teacher's reflections on a visit by her students to a local university. It shows a teacher who is aware that young people have agency, and the experience she planned led to the students having both an informed and questioning response to being placed in unfamiliar circumstances.

8.1 A Bricolaged Research Procedure

As detailed earlier, while there was interest in the study by the teachers at Calder College, pragmatic responses to daily demands meant that the level of participation by the students in the project was truncated. The hopes for a systematic inclusion of the students, whose understandings were reported in Chapter 7, dissolved as the students' teachers expressed concern about the students missing class. No less disappointing for this researcher was the response of some students who resisted the opportunity for an extra-curricular experience in school time. Fortunately, the nature of the researcher's participation at Calder College as a consistently present university colleague with a team of beginning teachers meant that he was able to connect with a teacher, Jean who had adopted a

strategy similar to the planned research procedure with her class group. The researcher had made a connection with one of the teachers in the Calder college leadership team. This connection was constructed through the project work undertaken by pre-service teachers and students in Jeans' class. Her commitment and intent to find ways to support her students to gain insights of the immediate futures was a focus of conversations and deliberations between her and the researcher. Jean had taken part in project work to support future students when she was herself a university student. Further Jean's class was at the Year 10 level with similar characteristics to the initial research group at Calder College. They were of the same chronological age; they lived in the same local area with comparable socio-economic demographics; and were also seeking to attain a clearer picture of life after secondary school. A significant characteristic of the teacher's "project" was the active presence of the beginning teachers in her classes at school. The university students were also important as informal guides for the students as they prepared for the university visit and in their debriefing on return to school.

This change in approach to the data collection required use of a research strategy that unfolded as the circumstances changed. The experiences reported by Jean were not the outcome of a contrived "experiment." The documentation of those experiences was thus the result of a bricolaged research procedure (Levi-Strauss 1996). They had an authentic quality a level of validity, which may not have been as strong had the researcher followed his initially planned method.

It was not possible for the researcher to engage on a daily basis with the students, who participated in interviews and subsequently visited the university campus. However, the interview with Jean led to a depth of insight emerging from the teacher's awareness of the students' reflections on their experience. Given the familiarity and trust in the relationship between students and teacher, her awareness would reveal notions of how the encounters had been "eventful." Whilst this teacher had facilitated the visit to the university it became evident in the conversation with the researcher that the teacher had found the experience to be eventful to her

self. Having anticipated what the experience might hold for the students, Jean also recounted her recognition of the involvement and reactions of certain students as enhancing how they perceived their selves in a context of now emerging possibilities.

The way in which Jean had planned how the university experience would unfold was similar to that intended by the researcher. It was apparent to the researcher that the teacher had been astute in her intentions, observations, and accounts of each student prior to, during, and following the university experience.

The activity devised by the teacher comprised her students participating in a visit to a local university campus. Existing university students were involved in the development and enactment of this experience. The university students were part of the researcher's teacher education class, based at Calder College. A number of the university students lived in the surrounding area and some shared similar schooling experiences to the Calder College students.

8.2   Experience as a Catalyst

In seeking to determine what motivated the teacher to support this activity, the researcher asked about the value she saw in the students going to the university. In part it was based on her involvement in the running of introductory programs at another university as an undergraduate.

> Jean: I wanted them to go to university for a day, I wanted them to experience the life of what possibly a university should look like, potentially studying Physical Education, a sport theme thing. I'd like them to have a lecture of some sort. Didn't quite work out the way we wanted. We thought it was going to be a lecture on sports coaching because that's what they were studying at the moment. The lecturer misinterpreted and went off on talking about the course, but it actually worked in the kids' advantage because a couple of those kids were, "Well, I didn't know that course existed." And it went from there.

The teacher contextualised her expectations through her knowledge of the students and her insights moved beyond areas of study, course

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programs, and career pathways. She spoke of what she knew of the lifeworld of her students and how that would unfold in "the big wild world."

> Jean: I wanted the kids to be able to see a university because most of our kids, they don't know—like, they've got no contact to universities. They—their families haven't been to university. For many of our kids, they're the first ones to go. So I wanted them to have that experience. I wanted them to see that there are some similarities between school and university and it's not that big of a shock and that you can do it. And also that it's not just in a classroom. They talked about the lecture, a tute, and prac.—big experiences for the kids. They've never seen that before.

What became evident for Jean was that the scale of the university as much as the people encountered there, communicated an unknown world to the students. Also observed by Pollio, Henley and Thompson (1997) the "experiencing" of an event is both relational and grounded in the natural world as much as culture and situation. Jean's focus on creating opportunities was also scaffolded in ways that enabled students to see similarities and commonalities. She took the time to create opportunities for students, and to articulate what they experienced. She offered ways in which they could understand and appreciate what the event could tell them of the wider world and their potential to be in it.

In talking of experience there is a need to recognise the intersection between the new and the previously known, the accepted and uncertain. The eventfulness of a new situation is marked by any subsequent change in how an agent views their world, no matter how small the change (Den Heyer 2009). Revising a view might well be referred to as "eye-opening" but is more likely to be mind opening, as agents begin to add to the possibilities of imaginings. A revised reality is promoted in personal interactions and changed environments offer fertile ground for agents to reappraise reality. Drawing on past experience to navigate unfamiliar terrain is contingent on the relational fit of those past experiences. Divergence of past and present creates a space where agents may consider the agency they utilise (Sztompka, 2014). They may well be "blown away" as subjects, just as they begin to view their world differently.

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For Jean the relational fit between what is offered to the students through the university experience creates a resonance—between what their students know and the new experience. To say that the experience is an "eye-opener" means that an agent's view is changed and enables a viewing of additional possibilities. We can refer to such phenomena as becoming aware of forks in the road. This awareness emerges from events, which are both personal and social, and ones that necessitate reflexivity needed to navigate perceived possibilities (Dyke, Johnston, & Fuller, 2012).

8.3   From Subjects to Subjectivities

In thinking about how she understood the students' perception of the university experience, Jean articulated her impressions based on the discussions in the classroom as well as the conversations with individual students. The examination of some apparent challenges and quandaries teacher had enabled her to be appreciative of the forms of bridging that the students needed to imagine futures, which may be beyond their present awareness.

> Jean: The questions my students had were—what are the courses? What courses are available to me was a big thing. They like sport and often a very mixed class. So I had to sort of sell it to those kids saying, "Now this is an experience of university. This is a snapshot of whatever degree you may choose or do, these are as common elements, that no matter what course that you potentially study, you have access to this early."

The teacher had made the explicit point to the students that this initial experience was about them seeing the university for what it might offer them.

> Jean: A couple of boys in particular are particularly interested with the music stream and we were doing the scavenger hunt. They took a particular interest in trotting over to the music thing just to have a look. So it was just that exposure to them in a very gentle way because universities can be intimidating when they're—you know, big buildings and it's a maze. And it was a gentle way of introducing it for the students.

The account tells of the students navigating the unfamiliar unknown. The unknown is evident as these student agents identify risks (Beck 1992) and then set out to limit the negative consequences that they associated with such risks. As Furlong and Cartmel (2007) argue to contextualise such risk perceptions are "the combined forces of personal responsibility and accountability, on the one hand, and vulnerability and lack of control on the other, lead to a heightened sense of risk and insecurity" (p. 9). When the students visited the university campus their initial responses were tentative, yet as agents they sought to make sense of what was unfolding, by drawing upon previous experience. Therefore eliciting the question that if

the cultural capital that an agent seeks to draw upon is found to be wanting, then how might they observe any markers that they can acknowledge as leading them towards their prospective futures?

The paradox of experiential learning (Kolb, 2014) surely is found in the need for agents to acknowledge and accept a void in their experience whilst they become aware of the need for some prior point of reference that can contextualise new phenomenon (Miettinen, 2000). The uncomfortable condition of being taken to a place not previously known must enact the almost oxymoronic term of "guided independence." Providing young people with the opportunity to register the edge of the "void" (Badiou, 2013) is a primary component of such social exploration. Conversely, exploration would count for little if the environment were overly familiar. The questioning generated by experience, particularly in the unfamiliar, is a product of the experience itself.

The researcher wondered how cognisant Jean had been of the students' experiences. The intent was to expose the extent of her insights into each student's understanding of the nature of the university. She was asked about how she positioned herself in the experiences of the day.

> Jean: It was very much sitting back and just seeing their interactions. We've worked really hard—I've worked really hard with those kids for five years, so—and we had lots of discussion in class about beyond VCE. That's a big discussion to focus on. So just—oh, it was the simple things. Upon arrival they were blown away just by the sheer size of the facility. That was very confounding for them. And they'd never seen—they'd never been in an environment like that. Little things like trying to find their way around, they thought that was very intimidating. So when the university students were saying, "Oh, this is fairly normal. When you first get here, you'll get lost." That was a little bit unsettling for them. Once they sort of figured out where they were, though, "Oh, this is okay."

The "normal" experience that the XYU students referred to draws out the assumptions about how an experience, such as the visit to the university, can be negotiated by agents who are by and large unfamiliar with the field (Inghilleri, 2003; Mezirow, 1996).

> Jean: The language was something unfamiliar. They knew what a lecture was. They said, "Oh, we've got a lecture here in school, Miss, so it's just like we do," So they could see the kids were trying to make links between the school, what they know currently, and where— what university looks like. So the idea of a tute was a little bit confounding for them. They didn't really understand that. And then a couple of my more switched on kids sort of said, "Oh, miss, this is our study group."

The teacher reported that at times she acted as a translator, she became the conduit between school and university. Building upon the prior knowledge that she was aware that the students had, Jean readily connected meaning to some of the terminology of the university, so as to add to the lexicon of her students. The experience of visiting the university enabled students to add new connections to their existing vocabulary and in doing so became a source of enhanced reflexivity. This represents the significance of building personal insights in small and often by slow means. The doxa (Eagleton & Bourdieu, 1992; Zipin et al., 2015) of the university is a barrier for individuals who are not members of the field, particularly when their habitus is not relevant to interpreting the playing out of the daily taken for granted actions. This was evidenced by Jean's interpretation of how the students engaged with one of the activities located in the iconic architectures of the university.

There is evidence here of what Habermas (1987) viewed as "communicative action" in that this was an account of the "actor-world" relationship when something, the use of language in this case, is drawn up in the objective world as a means of understanding the obligatory features of the "social world supposedly shared by all the members of a collective" (p. 120). Accessing the lexicon of the university is representative of the agent introducing new language as an enhancement to reflexivity, oriented toward a mutual understanding.

> Jean: They were really trying to make those links between school, and they also understand the lecture was talking about the fact that within a class they only have up to forty kids. And the kids are, "Oh, so it's not that different to school." And then he blew their minds when he said, "Well, actually, depending on what the subject you

> do, you may have four hundred in a classroom." And the kids are like, "Well, how does that work and you know, do you get lost?" and a couple had some really good questions, "Well, do you get lost in university? Like, you know, we're so used to having a teacher who looks after us. So who looks after us at university?"

In seeking to become familiar with new surroundings, a connection is sought between the encounter and the lifeworld (Seamon, 2015). For the students exploring the university campus they were calling into play their respective subjectivities as a means of navigating in the present but also projecting a view of an immediate future. The moments of being lost are followed closely by an acknowledged state of being found. At that time the agents may recognise that they are not passive—not merely subjects, as the demystification of the doxa of university unfolds (McKay & Devlin, 2014).

The awareness articulated in questions emerges from the agent's subjectivities. Questions, then, can themselves be viewed as agency. Asking "who do I go to if I need help?" is representative of the traveller in an airport seeking direction. Having asked and attained insights from those more experienced, the act of asking would be a move to demystification. Crossley (2006) building on Bourdieu and Mead's views about reflexive embodiment argues that there is credence in appreciating the context of individuals engaging in social conversations, highlighting that while we are creatures of habit we are also conversational agents. Our conversations, according to Crossley, can "disturb at least some of our sedimented repertoires of action, bringing them into view for us" (p. 90), as diverse communities are drawn into contact with one another.

This provides an insight into how a conversation, that contains the questioning by an agent, leads to clarification of the setting or situation that is more than merely obtaining an answer. In this context the demystification comes in the disturbance of an agent's subjectivities (Chandler, 2013; Ingram & Abrahams, 2015), rather than as the result of some forced or volunteered revelation communicated on the part of the social entity such as, in this instance, the university.

8.4   New Experience and Personal Internalisation

Jean was asked to provide some account of the means by which students were using the experience to make meaningful connections across fields (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Thomson, 2014). The researcher asked her if she could account for any occurrences where her students were indicating personal responses to particular encounters (Badiou, 2013).

> Jean: That's where the discussion came about, at the end of one lecture as we were all waiting for another activity to come on board and I was just having a chat with the university students, and the university students were talking about, you know, the importance of VCE and you know, there are other pathways, because that was a big discussion—you won't get there first time around, so doing a lot of discussion about pathways. And one of the kids said, "Well, if I don't hand in my work—." And then the university student says, "No, you don't get nagged, but you quickly learn that you're at risk of failure. And you're paying for this course." And I suppose money was—he's taught the language of money.

The encounter here is a signifier that an individual is engaged in a context that raises a challenge to pre-existing thinking. There is a refinement of knowledge as an agent questions what is at play and how they might subsequently engage or perceive their lifeworld (Habermas, 1987). What was observed and reflected upon is evidence of what Habermas (1987) saw as the cooperative process of interpretation. Here is evidence of an event containing the interpretive act that has participants relating "simultaneously to something in the objective, the social, and the subjective worlds, even when they thematically stress only one of the three components in their utterances" (p. 120). Taipale (2014) points out that this refinement of knowledge is also the result of intersubjectivity. Our worlds are perceived and known because of our communication with others. These intersubjective worlds occur in "the realm of linguistic expressibility. As we express our lived experiences in our gestures, words, and sentences, the intersubjective meaningfulness that we are thus communicating to others resides precisely in subjective realisation" (p. 104). The intersubjective world that Taipale (2014) takes account of is necessary for enhancing the insights presented by the teacher. The

experience, in the case of the students, became an "event" through conversation. The exchanges that took place were based on both common ground and the unfamiliar. It was the time and space provided by the university students, rather than the institutions of the university or the school, which created the propensity for the inexperienced young people to question the objective aspects of the university that were apparent to them.

> Jean: The pathway stuff definitely resonated with the kids. I was conflicted a little bit, being the teacher, because the university students in, you know, hindsight, they were talking about their experiences and said, "You know, VCE is not all the be all and end all." And they really emphasised that.

This teacher reports the conflict of needing her students to stay motivated and focus on achieving particular goals according to the school system. Having other, more senior students draw into question the accepted view of pathway navigation was clearly troubling. Jean was not disputing the alternative views that were presented by the university student but was more sensitive to the manner by which her students might interpret such ideas. She was able to draw out the details surrounding the university students' backgrounds, which she was party to, and apply them so that they reinforced rather than undermined the expectations that she and the school had for the students.

> Jean: So Daniel, a student teacher who I taught at (another) secondary, I got him in to SEDA and he openly spoke to kids. "All right, you know, school wasn't working for me. I went through this program and I went through this program, and now I'm here today." And that resonated with two of the boys in the class who are contemplating that exact decision at the moment. So it was just interesting for them to process and say, well, I've got these long-term goals. If I want to go—if I do want to get to where I want to, there are some steps along the way. And one of the XYU student teachers talked about their PPP project, their special application. And our kids don't even know about them but we haven't introduced them to those. But that's going to be a reality for a number of kids. But the kids are like, "What are these applications that you're talking about, Miss?" I said, "Well, there are—you've got your ENTER you're clearly in ATAR, that sort of information, but different universities have got special application schemes that you guys could get access to."

The observation that particular insights had resonated with some of the Calder College students give voice to the potential impact that having a understanding of the rules of the game has for the development personal trajectories even if only in one's imaginings. What resonates here is the feeling that some of the void had somehow been addressed through the experience of another. This results in a transformation of the unknown future into the known present.

Crossley (2006) draws on Mead's insights to construct a view of the internalisation that can be at play when agents engage in eventful experiences. Referring to the internal conversations that take place as silent or subvocal, Crossley offers a credible account of how agents speculate on how different "interlocutors" would contribute to the conversation, raising points and responding. By assuming the anticipated perspective of significant others, agents are assisted in playing out the possible perspectives of others, framing the imaginative rehearsal of possible actions.

Such insights are pertinent in providing an account of the manner by which the students engaged with the experiences they encountered on a personal level. There is evidence here of dialogical perturbations that came into play. The questions raised in the proceedings of the university experience were evidence of internal conversations that involved challenges to existing perspectives. Crossley provides account of such dialogical reflexivities:

> Our relations with others are dialogical and the culture into which we are socialized involves tools of argument, alongside prescribed norms and values—tools which we can appropriate and use to challenge those norms and ideals if, and to the extent that, we disagree with them. As a dialogical being, therefore, the reflexive agent is potentially innovative and may, in the context of either real dialogues with others or imagined dialogues with their internalized representatives sow the seeds of new cultural forms. (2006, p .89)

The social interactions taking place in the university space were key to such seeds being sown. There were fewer prescribed instructions and directions originating from the university students than what might be expected from tour guides promoting the university. Space was given for questioning. Such questioning was promoted by the university students sharing in school students' burgeoning awareness of the rules of the game and some of the means by which one might navigate this particular field (Bland, 2004; Bok, 2010).

What was laid out for the visiting school students was not so much a welcome mat, placed at the threshold of the institution. For some the event presented as a catalytic space for considering the future. In that space, students were able to reflect on a future possibility emerging from the event's connections with present and past experiences.

8.4.1 Destination Unknown

Jean had developed a thorough insight into the way that many of the students were engaged in the present but the university experience provided an opportunity to explore her awareness of their views of the future. The question to what extent did the students have plans that were aspirational in nature was put to her.

Jean: They've just got these ideas, so you know; Tim's a perfect example you know, he's an elite boxer, elite level boxer. He wants to do something with that that would lead to that in his career. No idea what that's going to involve though. So listening to the sport coaching guy when he was talking about the type of trainings, his ears pricked up because that's something he could do. So yeah, so he's a bit of a handful at the best of times but you could just see him listening, going, "Well, this is something that I'm potentially interested in." And now we're talking about coaching schemes and they were talking about biomechanics, because the lecturer made a little point of just trying to find out about the interests in the group, and one of the young boys in our group, he's very keen on biomechanics, so when they started talking about the biomechanics facilities and the state of the art sports science, his ears pricked up. He was all, "Yeah, I want to know more about that."

Wanting to know more about a course of study or a specialisation must surely be a marker that this student, as an agent, is engaging in explicit inquiry. They are active in seeking out the possibilities that exist, making connections between program offerings and current lifeworld experiences. An instance such as the presenter at the university deliberately drawing on potential connections is evidence that there remain challenges for some agents to navigate speculations of the future from a doxic position some distance away. Bringing young people up close, through personal contact, is not readily achievable despite the effort that usually is applied to the marketing of higher education institutions. The need to know more information, based on accounts provided by schools like Calder College, is not the driving force that many universities and marketers might assume (Slack et al., 2014).

8.4.1 Positioned in and by the Present

The perspectives of young people are often concerned with the present as it calls upon their capacities to engage with the immediacies of the life they have. This leaves little opportunity for them to actively seek out informants of future possibilities. Unlike universities, secondary schools like Calder College are well acquainted with this challenge.

> Jean: Now, we try to get them to the open days. They wouldn't go. They couldn't go. They've got sporting commitments and work, so there's a real, I suppose, pocket that we're not tapping into. These kids have got an interest into these—some of these areas. But how are we going to get them the information to potentially get them down that line?

The experience of going to the university campus highlighted for the teacher that there was value in the students taking up a presence in the place. Here the role of experience is in building agency through the reflexivity that is promoted by what might be termed "fish out of water" events (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; McNay, 2004). In this case there was a support for these young people as the teacher actively raised connections, reassured them and encouraged responses to particular apprehensions.

It is revealing that some of these young people, when placed in unfamiliar surroundings, such as the lecture theatre of a university, become aware that they have the capacity to "fit into" that environment (Bland, 2004; Devlin, 2013). It is evident in the accounts given by the teacher that she is responding to the moments when the students' knowledge and understandings begin to align with the experience, that is that they resonate. Of note here is that the young people were contextualising their experiences in the temporal sense that Mead (1934) saw as the present constructing events of one's past. The teacher was perceptive of those moments when there was awareness on the part of these social agents that they need to, and can, act to reduce the "doxic distance" as it presents to them.

Jean was asked if the students who attended the university showed any discernable efforts to reappraise their own way of engaging at school.

Jean: I don't know if that's because I'm pushing them in that direction because I want them to have that exposure, so, and I know just the little things I know from the day. We were talking about open days. They got a pamphlet, these are when the university's open day's on, and the kids were like, "Well, why should we go to the open days?" I said, "Well, if you didn't notice, all of the unis have their open days in a month-long period." I said, "You should be going to all of them." And the kids, they resonated with that. So there was a couple of kids actually did go on some of the open days. That's a success. If they hadn't have gone to this day with the university, they wouldn't have been—they would not have had a clue about that. A couple of kids are talking about, just from the university students being here, what program have they done in there, so now a couple of kids are looking at doing teaching in P.E. They're asking the questions of the university teachers, "Well, what exactly do you do? Is it worth it? Is it for me?"\

Conversations and imaginings in the present that relate to possible futures are markers of change: change in the subjectivity that is internalised by the agent (Archer, 2009; Ryan et al., 2014). Any review of what constitutes subjectivity is informed by insights of the habitus and cultural capital that has been distilled over time. What consequence might result from any alteration to how an agent begins to view how the future might be, for them,

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and as a result of an eventful activity to engage in the present in some alternative manner?

Taipale (2014) argues that a change in ways of seeing self in the world occurs when the agent comes into contact with an "alien" intersubjective context. In such occurrences, our very own objectivity, according to Taipale, is transformed as our awareness is expanded to see our lifeworld as one among many. Of significance for individual students having something of a transformative experience is Taipale's thesis that the subject does not lose individuality, as intersubjectivity comes in existence only through a nexus of personal subjectivities. He suggests, "All our possibilities (of perception, of thinking, etc.) still refer back to our own beginning—even if we have learned, inherited, and appropriated them from others" (p. 114).

The conversations that the school students were party to, whilst at the university and upon their return to their school classrooms, showed a move to a more refined view of the world. The refinements remain subjective in the manner by which an agent draws on habitus as a beginning reference point (Ingram & Abrahams, 2015). Internal dialogue is complicated as it involves certain struggles with what was assumed as the known, and the new present is viewed through a refined, rather than a replaced, lens. The habitus too is likely to be revised in responses to one's experience of the chances being offered by the social world (Bourdieu, 1990). The eventful encounter is one that would see a personal response to forces in a particular field resulting in what Hodkinson (1999) describes as a "self-initiated turning points." Presented with new information pertaining to a relatively unfamiliar field (higher education) young people may draw on personal reflexivity as part of a conjunctive response (Ingram & Abrahams, 2015). In such instances there is the likelihood of what Ingram and Abrahams posit as a reconciled habitus that is "generated from the process of internalising incommensurate structures" (2015, p. 151).

8.4.3 Initial Reflexivities

The initial experience and the immediate responses by the students were apparently favourable, as perceived by the teacher. In response to a question about some of the forthcoming challenges and opportunities that were on offer as the young people began to engage with new possibilities for the future (May, 2000) the teacher remarked

> Jean: Yes, they're open to university. They just don't know—costing is a big issue, so that was a discussion that I sort of had on the side. It wasn't a big group discussion. They talked about how is it funded and various things like that. They're open, they want to go to university, they just don't know the hows and the whys and that sort of thing.

It is clear in this instance that a lack of aspiration was not an inhibitor in the present undertakings that the young people had towards developing some views of the future (Gale & Parker, 2015). What then comes into question is how they could begin to re-construct present subjectivity in response to burgeoning expectations. In reviewing what had taken place in the time following the experience of the university, Jean was asked about any significant changes that were apparent as a response to this experience. She presents an insight into how an excursion of just a few hours could be eventful for those involved.

> Jean: From the university, the simple thing, they love study groups. They love the idea of a study group. That's worked in my favour because that's something that we're introducing to them anyway. I suppose I have a lot of discussions with the kids. My job is not only to teach you the content but also to give you the skills you need to be able to prepare for the end of next year and beyond.
>
> As a voluntary thing, they come here lunchtimes and after school, and there's only a small group of them and so there's five or six, and there's a bit of a rotation of kids who come through on any given time, but that's something they've taken away from that. From the—just from the little conversation, it was a two-minute conversation about what a tute is and obviously we had the class. . . . But now that they know it's a tute, that they occasionally drop the word, "Ah, it's a tute."

Enhanced perception, as a consequence of eventful experience, is a primary phase in revising thought and action directed towards future possibilities. The students begin to contextualise their actions in response to their review and revisions. It becomes something of an anticipation or expectation based on additional information. In the discussion above, the way in which the students take on the future idea of the "tute" is to relate it to their practical experience of a school study group. Being able to make that accommodation was a matter of the teacher and the students relating the conditions of university life with students' present activity. The teacher's guidance was critical in sensitising the students to new and revised perspectives.

8.5   Habitus Revised

How can developing insights of the future become a contributor to an agent challenging habitus (Wacquant, 2014)? In taking part in the university experience each student would reflexively consider perceived differences between the two institutions. Differences would include the way learning took place; in the way other people went about the learning process and in the relationships that exist between present and future (Skrbiš, Woodward, & Bean, 2014; Threadgold & Nilan, 2009). The question here is how might such awareness be translated into a representation of revised understanding that models what has been observed from a brief view of a potential future.

Here again Jean was a significant conduit for her students' revisions, as she explicitly facilitated constructs in line with student encounters. Her role is far from passive and yet permits the impetus of reflexivity to remain with each person as a form of agency (Bourdieu 1980).

Jean   They can see the benefit from it. My kids don't know how to study. That's a big discussion that we're having. What does study look like, what is active practice, what are all these types of things? So from those tutes, they're starting to develop, well, these are the content I know, but what are the questions they're going to start asking, they're just working a little bit more closely, developing that understanding. So my little pack who come to that little session are

now starting to see those improvements in their [SAC], which is interesting.

The level of engagement by her students raised awareness for the teacher as to what the school needed to do in order to support students' agency in considering possible futures. Representing what it means to become prepared for what is largely unknown would be significant challenges for some students. What remains unknown in the present of some of these students could be addressed through the school acting in practical ways. In a thoughtful reference, Jean saw the need to formalise not just her intent to support her students but also to respond to their developing calls for becoming better prepared for a future that had come into view as a consequence of the visit to the university campus (Thomas, 2005).

Jean: We've got a study hall in after school where the kids can come and study, and we're discussing, you know, what that looks like. I think there's—we're about up to forty kids on a regular basis who are coming to that, and my little pack are part of that group. So they've started—they know—I suppose the foundations are there and they're asking for these things. We just need to be able to figure out how to best provide them for it.

Habitus is both process and product in terms of social learning (King, 2005). How the students engaged with the new environment was determined on a personal level as agents drew on their respective experiences in constructing meaning. The interactions were expressed variously as confidence or insecurity. The unknown was sought out by some and sidestepped by others. The cultural capital of agents in unfamiliar spaces is understandably called upon and questioned in order to make sense of the new and the different. Based on Jean's descriptions of the particular students' reactions to the new experiences, and accompanying narratives from the university students, she was able to see particular encounters on the day that were eventful in that these encounters shone some light on the borders of the known and the new.

The words and expressions that are learned as part of an experience are examined, acquired, and put to the test when judged as

being of use. Such new expressions represent the destabilisation (Ingram & Abrahams, 2015) and revision of one's habitus. The judgement of when and how to apply such terminology is a sign that the agent has changed the way they not only view the world but engage with it. Such occurrences often become referred to as "expanding horizons."

8.5   Habitus and Agency

Such a tangible representation of being studious, of actively preparing for the future, no matter how immediate that might be, contributes to the evidence that these young people were constructing new social and cultural capital using their revised habitus as both "producer" and product (Maton, 2008). If agents have felt the "loss" of class and family from the recognised notions of social systems then there is cause to view the school as an island in the rising ocean of individualisation (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). As evidenced in Jean's accounts, the students have the understanding that they are only capable of being better prepared for what the future might hold if they are able to draw upon what the school can offer them.

> Jean: They like the security. They find the school is safe and they know my classroom is safe, and they know they're not being judged. And I suppose the tute—it gives them a confidence,—I suppose as a year level, as a group of kids, they peak and trough. But I suppose my way of working with them and saying, "You know what, these are your strengths, these are areas that we need to work on, and this is our way of doing it together." So these guys, as frustrating as they can be with their academics, there is a little bit more adult to them.

With the level of knowledge that the teacher has of her students, it is her insights of the impacts of the university experience that communicate the "value" that such an experience has to offer to such students. When the question was put to Jean, she made an explicit reference to the making of connections to an imagined future (Ball, Macrae, & Maguire, 2013). The approach taken for many young people to build their view of the world and then to locate themselves in that world is a time-referenced process. This process was a significant consideration in her own view of how her

students needed to have a range of eventful experiences in concert with their formal education (Threadgold & Nilan, 2009).

> Jean: I wanted these kids in a university because I know the value. And I know from my students in the past who have taken part in another university program in year twelve, the hindsight that I get every single time from year twelve students is, "I wish we had done this earlier."
>
> So the sooner I can get these kids in, I said, you know, [longer term] we had—I suppose the discussions we were having for a cohort, let's get the entire cohort to university during year nine and year ten, expose them at a younger age. Because by the time they're starting to get to year eleven, not that they've been making decisions, but they're sort of channelled because it doesn't necessarily show that bigger picture stuff.

An agent's habitus is an enabler in particular fields and while there is variance from one agent to another the habitus is not deterministic (Adams, 2006; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The nature of a particular field, however, has a deterministic quality in that there exist constituent elements of social structures that are accessed or navigated more successfully by some agents.

The problematic of social structures is that there are variances from one field to the next making agency context-dependent. Grenfell (2014) highlights the variances in one's habitus in relation to the field as being linked to dispositions being embodied and to developing a momentum that lags behind the "tides of change in the social world we inhabit" (p. 59). Here is a significance of reflexivity being an integral element of one's agency. Rather than the students experiencing a "field-habitus clash" as a consequence of their respective encounters at the university a more productive outcome to be sought was the production of a new "gaze" or relational mode of thought (Grenfell, 2014), that has as its product a transformation of the agents' view of the social world.

In seeking to identify specific instances of the impact that the university experience had upon individual agents, Jean referred to examples that made tangible the responses of these young people. Of

particular note is the manner by which the teacher is able to account for the prior intentions of these young people. Her insights constructed over time had permitted her to have access to how the students had gone about building expectations of the future (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007).

Jean: So Ella is looking at—she wants to join the police force. She knows it's her career path, and is locked into that. So she took away from this, "Well, I could do a TAFE program, I could do a level certificate in health, I could do it in the sports development stream that would benefit me in joining the police force later on. If I don't get into the police force straightaway, a program through the university could potentially be something that's a stepping stone for me." And that was something she'd never considered previously. She was adamant, "I'm going to go straight to the police force, and I'll work my way to get there."

That's just from the day. They were talking about career options and why you would do—there were a couple of courses that were discussed in general. She knows she's got this big picture of the police force, but has an understanding they don't necessarily take them straightaway. She knows her interest is health, she knows where her strengths are, but sort of realised, well, she didn't know about the TAFE courses.

What is made clear, through Jean's observations and accounts of specific conversations, is that there remains a gap in the knowledge of many of her students. Her account provides evidence of how agents such as these young people become aware that they are on the edge of the void and that they need ways of negotiating that unknown (Badiou, 2013). The questions they seek to have answered are tangible representations of some of the deliberations they are personally contending with.

Jean: They don't know other elements that are necessarily going around. And Zoran was another one who came to mind because he did his work experience at AFL, and they did a lot of work at XYU. Anyway, so he was just recalling all week, you know, "I went to the sports day and we did stuff with that." And he was—that's his element. That's his passion area. And so he was dying to find out more about the biomechanics and the exercise physiology stream and stuff like that. He had the language, but he just doesn't know about it. He knows the language. But where does it sit and "where do I go with it?" So he asked a question about exercise physiology. Goes,

"What's my career path?" And he got an answer, but he suddenly goes, "Miss, but I want to know what job I can get out of it." He goes, "If I want to do an exercise phys. course that's three years long, what—I know what my qualification is, but am I going to get a job?"

Understandably this initial experience at the university was limited in the manner by which Jean's students could develop their insights and connections between present and potential futures. In recognition of this, the teacher continued to engage with her students in the time following the excursion. She spoke of being interested in what aspects remained unclear as well as what new insights the students had. Her developing awareness of particular individuals, in her classroom, gave her cause to consider the manner by which she and the school could develop additional experiences as a means of enhancing students' possibilities beyond their existing horizons (Atkins, 2010; Hodkinson, 1998). This thought and subsequent actions would be representative of the making of a form of bridging social capital. The use of the networks that the school was capable of offering, as a form of resource for student agency, remains as a component of the work of schools that is largely not recognised (Niesche, 2015). The work of schools is counted by metrics that seek to measure only particular outputs and products. Calder College provided evidence that as an entity it valued the opportunities to add to the capacities of young people to envisage and navigate the possibilities that could be on offer.

Looking for a real insight into what it is like to be at university is the challenge that faces those agents hoping to facilitate some connection between actually being at a university as a visitor and being able to envisage being there in the future. This challenge comes as a contrast to the conversations and experiences that agents from more advantaged circumstances might have over a much longer period leading to a "naturally" acquired perspective for future possibilities.

Family remains a social structure that is a primary source of experience, especially for young people (Granovetter, 1983; Wyn, Lantz, & Harris, 2012). Modelling of the way the world works is an enduring

experience in which agents are embedded. The thoughts and actions of those that make up one's family are constantly laid out as part of the communicative action of the social unit. Experiences of others are shared in articulations that communicate the means of navigating social life. Given the social significance of the family there is further explanatory worth in considering the social class of the families of the young people taking part in the university experience (Archer, 2000; Archer, Hutchings, & Ross, 2005; Sellar & Gale, 2011; Zipin et al*.,* 2015). In general terms most families in the community that was served by Calder College are working or lower class. This in turn presents another dimension to the social structuring of the lives of the young people attending this school (Rubin et al., 2014).

Bourdieu and Passeron, in their insightful text *The Inheritors* (1979), give some specific observations about the circumstance that such structures put in place, in stating that:

> Economic obstacles are not sufficient to explain how "educational death rates" can differ so widely between one social class and another. Even if there were no other evidence and if we knew nothing of the numerous and often very indirect ways in which the school system steadily eliminates children originating from the least privileged backgrounds, proof of the magnitude of the cultural obstacles which these children have to overcome could be found in the fact that even at the level of higher education, one still finds differences in attitude and ability that significantly related to social origin, although the students whom they differentiate have all undergone fifteen or twenty years of the standardizing influence of schooling, and although the most underprivileged of them have only escaped elimination thanks to their greater adaptability or to a more favourable family environment. (p. 8)

The mystique for a young person of that which is yet to be physically experienced can be lifted through the "dining table doxa" resulting from a family's cultural capital (Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2015; Burke, 2012). The conversations that middle-class families have about aspirations and how intentions can play out are a mechanism of cultural capital at play. The

deliberations are informed through direct experience of the "game." The capacity of young people in such environments is largely a product of the family as a socialising structure (Bland, 2004; Grant, 2017), which takes form in the primary habitus of the young person. This must stand in contrast to those agents who are often referred to as "first in family" in working class families Such young people do not have in their primary habitus the relevant "dining table doxa" resulting from family members' direct experience in the institution. Thus, they are more likely to be at risk of attrition in their initial year of higher education. Enhancing the adaptability of student agents constitutes a primary focus of many initiatives around access to higher education (Gale et al., 2010).

Jean was concerned by this insight but also she was cognisant that her students might not even consider attending a university, in the first instance, because of the absence of pre-existing awareness. Her motivation was that the students be able to engage in the most realistic experience so that it might serve as the impetus for subsequent discussions in her interactions with them as a group and at a personal level. Here was the hope that the experience would in fact be eventful.

Jean: I want it to be a day in the life. A day in the life of a university student. I want them to taste it. I actually want them to see it. I want them in a lecture theatre. This is what a lecture theatre's going to look like. I want them to sit in a tute and have someone—not me at the college because I see them all day every day—someone different so they can see how someone else delivers it. They could sit in that classroom. That potentially could be them in there. The stories that the university students told about their various pathways getting there resonated with the kids because they were no different to them on finding out about stuff. I didn't get the results I need. I did this, I did that. They took—that was very meaningful for the students. That's really, really powerful stuff.

The exposure to questions that the students had not yet fully formed and the dialogues where perplexities were welcomed should be recognised as seminal in a young agent's propensity to utilise intersubjective spaces (Taipale, 2014). The notion of "fitting in" implies some form of adaptation, yet for some agents they are not fully aware of that which sets the

parameters of the space for them to fit into (Reay et al., 2010). It stands that there is significance here for both the paradox and the perplexity of reflexivity. Webb, Schirato, and Danaher, (2002) explore this in their review of the work of Bourdieu. They discuss how agents may overcome the limitations of operating in a particular field. The distinction they make concerns those agents who "abstract practices as a means of seeing them as ideas to be contemplated, rather than problems to be solved" (p. 50). Action or participation is thus a major contribution to building a secondary habitus that might allow generative encounters with tertiary education institutions—not just "abstract talk."

8.6   Bridging Reality with Possibility

The post encounter observations of the teacher provide some evidence that there were insights gained by even this small experience. Her account shows that there is validity in students having the opportunity to be actively engaged in a visit to the university campus. The outcomes are that students have more catalytic responses than those resulting from passive visits that might be had as part of "open days" or a guided walk through, as part of a large contingent. What is therefore sought is the experience of being a traveller rather than a tourist. The distinction to be made is of active personal involvement that is not merely permitted but encouraged.

> Jean: Look, they were buzzing because—one, because we did activities. They did a class so we sort of—it was very structured. I wanted them to do theory and learning, but also wanted them to have that practical, that applied learning, because that was a big thing. For these particular students, it's how they learn. So there was a lot of discussion about university, the facilities of university. They had no idea the cafeterias were on site. They didn't know these things and they didn't understand the timings. Little things they were talking about, a study timetable, the university students were saying, "Oh, no, you pick all your classes." So you know, you get in early and that blew the kids' minds. They're, "Miss, what do you mean?" I said, "Well you do. You get there and you pick the timetables, you want to have." Or if you want to work part-time, you work from nine to twelve and the kids are, "Huh, so I could work part-time and still going to uni."

The pragmatics of attending university became the most tangible consideration that the students recounted to the teacher. Aspects that appeared to present conflicts or obstacles were apparently, and not particularly surprisingly, at the forefront of the developing imaginings of some of the agents. As awareness grew of what was on offer in such a potential future, so too did the realities of life present imagined challenges that were drawn into competition with recently developed possibilities (Crozier et al., 2008). Once again Jean had developed insight about her students that included a considerate account of how they had come to experience life in terms of what their respective families had to contend with on a daily basis.

> Jean: Financial is a big issue. That's always a discussion with kids in general, their costing and things now, how much it costs. I said, I wanted them to experience a full day. Just little things like using the facilities that we had—we were using the basketball courts and explained to the kids, well, if you're not in a tute, you can actually come down and use these. That blew their mind. "Miss, we can use—what, the indoor stadium all by ourselves?"
>
> You are a member of this community. You can—these are what you have access to. I talked about my uni experiences and what I got from when I was at uni. They could see them being part of that, and that's—I suppose that's an exciting thing. They could see themselves being part of a uni experience. That was one of the big things I wanted to get across to them.

Furlong and Cartmel (2007) advance a reasonable argument that young people can find it challenging to construct stable social identities as a result of a rapidly changing world that is contextualised by an ever expanding range of social and cultural influences. Changes in education and the workforce are viewed as contributors to the disruption of young people's "normal biography" and are considered by Furlong and Carmel as contributors to the disassembling of identities. They posit:

> The de-centring of identities in late modernity means that young people, especially those from less advantaged socio-economic positions, must find ways of managing or rationalizing fragmented and incongruent identities. In this context, youth is about learning to live with uncertainty. (2007, p. 60)

Such reference to identity incongruence could be applied to the phenomena that appeared when the teacher began to appreciate how her students sought to reach a balance or clarity around the financial commitments (acquiring debt) caused by participation in higher education against the earning potential associated with attaining a career-related qualification.

Middle- and upper-class families might talk of investing in education and gaining in capital. Purposive thought such as this is presented as a calculated element of future planning. In contrast, those young people taking part in the university experience are likely to have not imagined the possibilities of deferred payment but remained confronted by the presentation of summative costs, representing an explicit obstacle to be encountered on a path of possibility. Such obstructions present the need for significant others to assist the inexperienced young people in working out how aspirations can emerge through a navigating from present understanding to future possibility.

8.7   Implications for Promoting Agency

The teacher's recollections showed an understanding that the university visit and associated discussions were a significant event for her students. Her recollections foreground the possibility of a cultural shift within the school community. Her thinking was that this single and brief experience needed to be part of an investment that was needed if the school was develop ways that would support students as they sought out the possibilities of the future. This informed her view of the likelihood of the students achieving their personal expectations (Devlin, 2013). In her telling, the teacher gives insight into the significance of having intersubjective experiences (Taipale, 2014) in prompting a shift in the students' collective awareness. These intersubjective experiences might well be with the very students attending the university on this eventful day.

> Jean: When they know they want to go to university [they've all] they've
>   the aspirations. I sort of went well, you know, you guys have been
>   students, and these guys have been your leaders. As you guys get

a little [bit older] and you go off to universities, we'd like you to come back and talk with our students about your experiences.

Jean also considered the potential impact of the experience upon individual students in the present. What of those agents who might be viewed as being reluctant students in class? Does their apparent disconnection from the activities of the school present an opportunity for the introduction of an alternative university experience leading these resisters to imagine futures in education (Corso et al., 2013)? She responded with her view of what this type of university experience might be. Rather than some sort of "one size fits all program," it might offer students a means of being positioned in positive ways in the present.

Jean: Look, it's hard, one because there's so many—universities are such a big place. So if we can tailor them, I suppose, year nine and year tens are a tricky year group at the best of times, so it's all about giving them exposure and giving them something to work towards. And that's what I don't think we necessarily do at schools. Trying to get kids into universities is near impossible. And when we can get them in there, it's just a walk through. That doesn't resonate with kids. So if we can get it to be a "hands on" or bit of a meaningful program, then all of a sudden the engagement comes in. They can see this being something for them. They might like—I'll use sport as my example. I'll tell them, "You might like sport, but sport can take you in all these different directions." That's exciting for a year nine, ten student because they can see, "that's something I didn't know about before."

Jean continued to ponder the means by which the experience of these few students could translate into subsequent university experiences leading to larger numbers of students having similar responses. She was aware that this initial experience was successful because it encouraged agents to reflect as part of that experience (Laughland-Booÿ et al., 2015).

The challenge that schools and teachers contend with is not instilling aspirations for the future. It is not merely about how to motivate each student to work harder and take life seriously. The challenge is that having contextualised much of the later years of schooling through reference to horizons beyond the current view of respective agents, the school and its

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teachers have to construct tangible bridges between the present and imagined futures (Briggs, Clark, & Hall, 2012). This challenge is well represented by Jean's account of her current experience of students becoming aware of a void in their world.

> Jean: For hours. Hours upon hours upon hours of where kids come into my office at the moment, "Help me with my pathways. Help me with this. I saw about this course or someone told me about this. What do I do with it?"

Conclusion

This chapter has presented an insight regarding what dimensions experience has to offer agents, in terms of defining and refining their possibilities for the future. Jean's account has made tangible the subjectivities that are at play for young people as they contend with competing calls on their identities. They also are becoming ever more aware that there is a future that many are unable to contemplate let alone feel prepared to navigate among the options on offer. What has been evidenced here in the account given by the teacher is that the reflexivity of agents can be facilitated and guided by schools and other agencies. The refining of questions and the students' consideration of responses to the questions all point to their deepening reflexivity. Of significance here is a validation that a single yet inclusive experience of university can result in long-lasting responses.

The striking feature of Jean's recollection is that she was not only a witness but in many instances became the guide and enabler for those young people seeking to engage with the perplexities that arose as part of the experience. What this chapter has sought is to expose that the observations of the teacher were her own experiences of those elements of the university experience that became eventful for the students. The accounts of Jean's expectations are evidence of what she had come to see as shortfalls in student insights. The participation of university students was a deliberate encouragement for her students to have conversations around the anticipated dilemmas that could initially be confounding. Such

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dilemmas were surmountable for the students as far as the teacher was concerned, based on her in-depth awareness of who they were as agents.

Exposing the challenges and fostering communicative action was a means of disrupting the doxic normality that the teacher recognised would be a restrictive element in the lives of each agent prior to attending the university campus. This teacher had taken on responsibility for creating the eventfulness of the experience and had further supported the consequential implications of each encounter that eventuated from the experience.

Upon return to the school, the teacher fostered an environment that gave licence to the agency of the young people in her class. The narratives proffered by the teacher referred to the challenges that students were overcoming through dialogue around their burgeoning insights and respective reflexivities. Finding scope to incorporate new and refined ways of thinking and talking were facilitated by the teacher and supported by the school at large. Here is a case of the present being reconstituted to incorporate an informed view of the future. It suggests that Jean had formed a view that saw the need for contemporaneous preparation, whether that is in refined practices such as study after the end of the school day or in the use of language to express what the student agent was engaging with, such as attending a "tute."

Jean's accounts give weight to the proposition advanced by Taipale (2014) that:

> To experience another is to experience a second normality, and in such encounters an intersubjective normality is established. . . . My awareness of what is intersubjectively normal is mediated by the awareness of what is normal for me—and hence necessarily something that more or less coincides with my primordial normality. . . . Encountering alien cultures and traditions gives rise to the revitalization of our familiar homeworld. (pp. 136–137)

The way the teacher supported the challenges confronting the students emerged from the relationships that developed around the trust and

reciprocity she had encouraged between herself and her students; and with the university students. These qualities would be unattainable for the researcher to achieve in the timeframe of the research. The challenges that were to confound the school students on the day of the university experiences and many days following became the catalyst for Jean to work with the students engaging with possibilities, consequences and reflexivities. The participation of university students was perhaps the most thoughtful means of providing a break from some of the social bonds at play in the habitus of agents. It would be reasonable to see the university students and their voiced experiences as being in line with Granovetter's (1973) "strength of weak ties." The challenge is to break away from what is "known." Inquiry into the unknown future has been supported in large part through the dialogical social interactions the students had during and around the university experience. The consequence of the disturbance to presence caused by the eventful experience was that each agent internalised a reconsideration of possibilities.

9 The Experience of Socially Positioned Agency

This chapter summarises what this study has aimed to expose about the nature and challenges associated with the agency of young people as they develop and enact a view of the future. The initial intent of this work was derived from the researcher's experience and curiosity about how the agency of the university works in collaboration with schools with an intention to enhance the aspirations and connections to career pathways for school students.

Over time the engagement with the young people involved in this study led to more closely examine the challenges of agency across the student experience. The theoretical conception of how social and cultural capitals come became evident when young people seek to develop their aspirations and attend to bridging what is known and that which is positioned beyond a person's lifeworld horizons. What follows is a brief summation of the educational context around current experiences within the field of schools and universities.

9.1 Ploughing the Rough Ground in the Field of Education

The field of education sits as social ecology where daily endeavours are constructed, instructed, and reinforced by institutions. In education, school personnel, primarily teachers, become the enactors of what is expected of the experiences within that field. Policy expectations are communicated through benchmarked measures that impact into varied settings and contexts, calling on the teaching profession to interpret and enact policy. And so it is apparent, to those with familiarity of the workings of schools, that there are often disjunctions between the calls made of the school and its teachers, and the actual ecology of the school.

Within this study teachers enact their roles in a variety of ways. There are those teachers who are highly responsive to what is needed for

the school to enact of education policy, while others act as interpreters, as a buffer, between the field and the young people in their classes. Least apparent are those teachers who advocate on behalf of their students as they consider what potential can be gained or lost capacity as a young person navigates the field of education. This study was immersed in the complicated contexts where young people seek answers to express their need for agency over their growing sense of their present and the possibilities of the future.

This study has investigated what university—school "bridging activities" offer school students as they question their present in light of future possibilities. The primary intent was to attain detailed personal accounts about how young people contribute to the construction of their horizons. Additionally, the study set out to enhance personal visions of the future, given the assumption that young people in disadvantaged communities have restricted career interests. From the onset of the study social class, as a conceptual entity offered ways of accounting for personal situations and deconstructing contexts that either promoted or restricted a person's sense of agency.

The proposition at the heart of this research is that each young person would benefit from the expansion of his or her existing horizons. This study has sought school students' questions about career options, through collaborative inquiry and conversations. The dialogue unfolded through each young person's existing and desired knowledge of higher education. It was an expectation that refined insights to means of supporting schools to enhance student horizons would emerge. This expectation has been realised in a substantial manner through the recognition and use of eventful encounters in the present, that become conceivable through reflexively informed agency.

Engaging in a detailed case study of a sample of Year 9 students from selected schools in Melbourne's west, the study sought to explore the current aspirations, perceived capabilities and influential factors by which young people view their world. The nominated group (Year 9 students) was

viewed as being suited to explore the young people's developing ideas and expectations, past experiences, as well as their responses to societal and familial expectations. At this year level many students are constructing their perspectives of pathways or alternatively are presenting as being disengaged from their school education.

As the students in this study transition from child to young adult they are offered opportunities to experience higher education. This study has captured their response to these experiences and through analysis has revealed their emerging perceptions that in turn impact on what they see as potential and achievable aspirations. Through their work, teachers develop intimate and detailed insights of their students' emerging capacities. However these capacities are both enhanced and curtailed by the daily experiences of education. This study sought to generate and interpret data related to:

1. Students' changing perceptions of their horizons throughout the course of the study; and
2. Teachers' perceptions of students and respective changes in their attitudes, application, and aspirations throughout the study.

9.2   Promoting Personal Agency Beyond the Prognosis of Social Position

This study is significant in that it provides insight into the manner by which universities may be more effective in their relationships with schools. Instrumental in this study is conceptualisation of how to build positive relationships with young people, to appreciate existing environments, and bridge voids between social structures and the life worlds. This study comes at a time of ever increasing calls for access to higher education for underrepresented groups. Such calls are made in a context made in part by the unqualified critique that there is a lack of aspiration on the part of young people in disadvantaged communities (often described as low socioeconomic status).

Universities are a potential source of educational capital but are positioned in an environment of polarised social and cultural capital. This study presents insights into the possibilities and methodologies suited to enhancing the horizons and agency of school students through the pedagogic work of the university, as part of their relationship with schools. There remained an expectation that this study would elicit conceptualisations of why and how a university, external to the school, may have an impact on student aspiration and engagement. This study has sought to contribute to the contemporary exploration of the question of how is it possible for a community of practice/learning to embrace opportunities that impact on the aspirations and agency of young people. The following describes in more detail the findings of this research. It reveals that there is need to enhance the propensity and capacity for agency, as part of the experiences young people have of school.

9.3   Findings

9.3.1   The Interplay of Habitus and Experience

A young person's subjectivities are the expressions of family and community experiences, the social position of that family, and the experiences that are navigated by dispositions that over time become natural for the young person. As new experiences are encountered a young person will call upon existing dispositions to make choices. When unable to see a way to navigate new fields a young person evaluates the available social and cultural capital for the means to engage with the existing lifeworld. The habitus is only successful if the field is suited to the person's way of being in the world (Baker & Brown, 2008).

In Chapter 5, Brunetti Boy offers evidence that there is a time when experience and familial ways of being cannot bridge into the realms of new or existing fields (Briggs, Clark, & Hall, 2012). The application of familial knowledge is transferable to different contexts but when a young person, such as Brunetti Boy, is found to be in want of answers to questions from encounters with events, because they are beyond the family, school, and direct community. Some young people such as Brunetti Boy "don't really

like asking people for help" so the figuring out of self is a confronting challenge, one reported by a number of this study's participants. An avoidance strategy is the consequence of a person's social position and dispositions that are necessitated by the limitations of social capital within particular fields.

By contrast a young person from a family with direct experience of higher education and career pathways would not be called upon to figure it out on their own. The family engages in conversations that over time become natural topics for each member of the family. The absence of dialogue around field specific topics results in a young person's internal conversations being unsurprisingly in obtuse forms such as Brunetti Boy's "I don't really know about university, just that I have to go there." Here is evidence that the need to "figure it out" signals voids in the lifeworld in the context of unfamiliar fields (Grenfell, 2009). The problematic here is that vagueness around a destination in higher education is accentuated by one's limited knowledge of the resources available to embark on a journey towards such a destination. In the accounts given by participants that speak to a heightened concern for risks associated with their personal decision-making. Raising the question of "what if you don't choose the right one and get the wrong career?" is closely followed up with "you can't ask for help." Once again we are presented with a single statement that accounts for the distance that is drawn between social capital and the field of higher education. This is especially so for young people whose lifeworld does not currently include field specific knowledge.

9.3.2 Decision-Making, Risk, and Reflexivity

The accounts in this study show how a lack of specific knowledge raises the sense of risk that takes hold in the imaginings of the future (Lehmann, 2004). A case in point is Brunetti Boy's acquired resistance to the thought of becoming a chef, in response to hearing of the long hours in the early years of an apprenticeship. Thus there are events presented where the experiences of young people result in internal conversations that

are loaded with anxiety about the lack of detailed knowledge with an awareness of an impending need for decision making.

As pathways are exposed in initial sources of information there is a dilemma as the person is confronted by what this study refers to as trajectorial forks in the road. One particular hypothesis that was initially troubling and subsequently exposed in the study was how decisions about post secondary education by some young people who, like Brunetti Boy in Chapter 5, strategise that a "non-decision" involves less risk. The consequences of such a strategy are represented in the emotional, intellectual, and physical disengagement with school, and underrepresented groups in higher education (James, 2000, 2001, 2012).

By contrast the young people of Calder College represented the active engagement with the choices that evolved to become apparent. They spoke of their developing sense of self in the present as they referenced events in their past that were drawn upon as informants and a means of validating one's contemporary decision/s (Mead, 1934; Miller, 1994; Porpora & Shumar, 2010). In Chapter 7, this is found in accounts by the likes of Taylor who articulates her intention to become a lawyer, specialising in family law, as informed by and in response to her family's encounter with the unfairness of the courts. Her thinking is encapsulated in her expectation that she would do a good job of helping people with the situation because of what she went through. Taylor's aspiration is representative of the future being constructed from a discriminating present. Other participants from Calder College gave evidence that thinking on choice attuned them to their capacities because of a growing awareness of what was needed for their choice/s. An awareness of the self's capabilities is an expression of how a young person draws on evolving skills and knowledge for the future, evident from the many accounts given by participants in this study.

9.3.3   Community Connections, Cultural Capital, and Personal Capacities

Being able to cook, play a range of musical instruments or fly a plane stand as examples from this study, of not merely recreational activities for these

young people. As they become aware of their personal connection to a particular activity, and associated (developing) proficiency, young people are prepared to express how they see these connections to their plans for life after school.

At this time in their life it is apparent just how significant the influence of family is when a young person is constructing their view of the future. Chapter 7 reported that family members are a primary source of insight into not just what might be possible but also the problematic of certain practices. Parents and siblings offer words of warning and wisdom from personal experience. And whilst this form of information is intended as support this study shows that it comes with a consequence of confounding the self. While the "don't do what I did" support given to Isabelle embeds a sense of needing to work hard at school, the needing to "earn a good future and picking a good career" remains so broad that there is a lack of direction about how it might be achieved. Likewise the supportive advice given to Goren results in him aiming for something that is unnatural to that which he identified within his competencies and genuine interest. The consequence is a confused sense of purpose and possibility in the present contrasted against the possibilities of the future as seen by significant others and not the self. Like Goren's apparent need to become a doctor or a lawyer, Felicity's imagining of being a nurse becomes overshadowed as she wonders if she is just following her "sister's ground." She admits to this as confusing and not knowing what she wants. This reaffirms that the bonds of social capital can run contra to the internal conversations that are part of the emerging and at times divergent pathways in a young person's sense of self (Ecclestone & Field, 2003).

9.3.4 Significant Others and Subjectivities

In Chapter 7, Jay's account of her father's advice comes from an informed position as he enhances her view of what it is like to work in the field of law. It is evident that access to explicit information had an impact on Jay's construction of her subjectivity as she express her decision to rethink her initial decision to include being a lawyer as part of her career planning.

Carly, like Jay reaffirms what I conceive as the "strength of specificity" drawing on the connections she has with "sport teachers" to undertake a bachelor course in kinesiology in order to plan for the attainment of a career. The phenomenon of the self becoming attuned to opportunistic connections informs the design and enactment of pathway planning and this study finds that these young people are receptive to trusted sources of information. Furthermore it is evident that this opportunistic approach for trusted sources takes young people on a search beyond existing social connections, such as family and friends. While it would be germane to see the place of the school as being a readily available source of trusted information, the insights of this study reveal that the systemic operations of school can overshadow the potential connections that school students could utilise.

Chapter 6 tells of Calder College teachers having comprehensive awareness of many of their students. This awareness informs the interactions that take place in the learning environment, unsurprisingly around the means and extent of student engagement in the experience of the curriculum. Teachers' accounts offer an understanding of the relationships as teachers' appreciate the young people's lifeworlds. What is telling from these accounts is that teachers compile and carry around a referential record of their students that is humanistic in nature and is contextualised to referencing personal achievements relative to the expectations of the education system.

9.3.5   Bridging Potential to Possibilities Through Enhanced Agency

The talk of student potential and achievement is referenced against subjective views of a young person yet while well meaning intentions are apparent, there are voids in teachers appreciations of the "horizons for action" that are part of the challenging work of democratic educators. In offering accounts of their knowledge of the "ensemble of social characteristics," the Calder College teachers are equipped to engage in collaborations with their students on the attainment of specific and trusted insights. This study finds that this is an unmet need and unrealised

potential of the relational and democratic work of teachers. Unlike the limited capacity of family and friends to do more than be supportive, teachers are in a position to take comprehensive accounts of a young person and enact reflexive collaborations. In doing this teachers would not only address the technical aspects of trajectory but would also address the a young person's nervousness when experiences are linked to a "mismatch" between their habitus and an institution's doxa, as highlighted in Chapter 6.

As a way of representing the achievement and the potential of pedagogic action, Chapter 8 offers an account of the experiences of one teacher who attempted to marry her detailed knowledge of the young people she had taught over a number of years to that of her understanding of access to and success in higher education. Her personal experience and knowledge informed her understandings of students' horizons for action, and that of their families and community. The teacher deliberately sought to expose the rules of the game that for many young people are unknown until the game is well in play. Through her intentions and efforts this teacher was able to construct a bridge between lifeworld and structures, using experience to recognise the importance of reflection and reflexivity on the part of her students. Once again the significance of trusted and detailed sources of information was pivotal in initiating thoughtful connections between the present and imagined futures with respect to the nature of being a university student. The teacher's intent was enhanced through the support of university students who added credible narratives to the experience. It is apparent from the teacher's accounts that the dialogue between Calder College and university students that made for the eventfulness.

9.3.6 Creating and Accessing Social Space for Communicative Action

The data of Chapter 8 evidences that communicative action (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2015) is a key element in a collaborative effort around empowering school students with detailed knowledge of the field of higher education. Constructing space for young people to ask questions such as

"so who looks after us at university?" is a significant achievement in an effort to build trusted sources of information. Accounts given by the teacher about exposing the university through the responses that the university students offered to the Calder College students shows the credibility of intersubjective space (Crossley, 1996, Kemmis et al., 2013). The product of such space is referenced by the teacher's observations that insights offered by the university students had resonated with her students. The relationship this teacher had with her students permitted her to observe their dialogical reflexivities as a part of the process for "sowing the seeds of new cultural forms." Such a relationship is beyond the intent and capacity of a university recruitment and marketing unit.

Returning to school and engaging in the consequential questions that the students had composed showed the opportunity that this teacher— arguably a democratic educator – could enact as collaborative inquiry and enhance her detailed insights of the students. As the data of Chapter 6 exposes, teachers have genuine concern for young people to attain the potential identified in the formative evaluations made by the teachers. The communicative action accounted for in Chapter 8 shows the value of a space for the construction and expression of questions that are, as the Calder College teacher has narrated, telling of a young person's expanding horizons. Chapter 8 highlights the significance of action or participation in building a "secondary habitus" (Webb et al., 2002) as a means of allowing for subsequent generative encounters with the field of higher education. The intent of the Calder College teacher was for the students to "taste it" to "see it." Yet without the space to "question it" the experience remains abstract and uneventful. For young people whose social and cultural capital would have them focus upon the financial challenge of attending university is a challenge addressed in Chapter 8. Hearing how a study schedule can be constructed to permit part-time employment is revealing. Such dialogue is communicative action as it brings to light particular "rules of the game" that are potentially liberating once ways around challenges remove perceived barriers to participation.

The articulations made by the Calder College teacher support the premise that intersubjective space that is found or created to utilise and enhance communicative action, is seminal in the work of democratic educators who compose ways to support young people in knowingly engaging with aspiration-oriented experiences. This study finds that such undertakings, in a sustained manner, are currently beyond the capacity of most teachers and schools. Consequently there remains great need and opportunity for university personnel to play a supportive and collaborative role in constructing intersubjective experiences (McKenzie, 2008) of higher education.

9.4   Discussion

This study has set out to explore how a young person's perspective on the present and the imagined future is constructed, promoted, and constrained. Through the young people's exchanges and relating particular experiences of being like a university student, I gained insights into how a young person's imaginings of the future is developed and constructed. The study also offers insights into how schools challenges young people's agency and sense of self as they navigate their place in the present.

The documented experiences convey how young people live in diverse contexts. Further, it is these same contexts that contribute to the views of the future in both promoting and inhibiting ways. Imagining the future is fuelled by experiences that coalesce in the present while making some sense of past events. The present is the point in the life of a person that calls on engagement with immediate encounters and in doing so creates eventful occasions. What a young person uses to construct an initial perspective is determined in no small part by their social capital. The insights articulated in the data chapters give evidence about the extent that school students, as social agents, are able to navigate and manipulate social structures in different ways.

This research considered that young people engage in the present and that the present has been constituted through past events, social structures and ongoing revised views of the future. By determining how a person constructs a perspective on the possible future, the personal accounts of the research participants have revealed the influence of the school and family relationships. These relationships have been threaded within young people's reflection and reflexivity as they considered their place in the present and the shaping of possibilities. School, family and eventful encounters in the wider community are presented as seminal to shaping the views of the world and offer detailed insights into the construction of the person's subjectivity, including dispositions that promote or restrict the exploration of possibilities.

What has been made evident in the preceding chapters is the nature and extent of internal conversations as a person contends with disturbing their habitus in response to events that disrupt dispositions when they are inadequate in responding to experiences. The receptive young person makes the experience eventful through the questioning that follows an encounter with an environment that is not fully understood by the constituents of the current self. The marker of one's reflexivity in such instances comes to light in spaces that permit and facilitate intersubjective expressions.

For internal conversations to cause disruption to habitus there needs to be both catalyst and impetus for the agent to become aware of, and access an intersubjective space to explore possibilities. The standard approach of institutions, such as universities, to develop and support aspirations for studying in higher education is to offer up information about the institution. Such offerings do play a part for those who already aspire and in many cases might go some way to filling voids and facilitating the process of gaining entry. While meeting a need, the university would be well informed in its efforts to engage a wider representation of the population, by considering how to create and enhance the intersubjective spaces, to build a space for the creation and nurturing of personal selfhood that is receptive and reflexive for those who are yet to see their way in.

The accounts offered by the participants in this study support a rethinking of the current university visit that is orchestrated by the university and negotiated by schools. While the tour of the university would address some of the questions for those people who are constructing pathways that include higher education, there remains little space for the formation of questions in response to the experience. This is an essential act in forming their views of the future. Such questions mark of the edge of a void—of their experience, knowledge, and expertise about the thinking of self and their current understanding of the world.

Schools can make for an environment that is suited to creating space for conversations and expressions of doubt, puzzlement, and imagination. The young people in schools are often known to at least a few teachers at a level that is personal and detailed. The teacher interviewed in Chapter 8 is a prime example of the knowledge that can be called upon to offer experiences and opportunities for young people as they develop ways to express their emerging selves based on new experience. This example is contrasted to the environment in which the student identified as Brunetti Boy struggles to find some foothold into the slim views of the future that he has begun to construct about life beyond the school.

The school is a space where there has been a tradition of significant others, where conversations with young people have led to revised and refined views of what might be. The young people of NWS including Brunetti Boy provide insights into how the work of schools impacts on young people. However, NWS had little space for young people's experiences to be explored. The consequences of this limited opportunity and intent is that teachers have little chance for sharing their own challenging personal journeys and insights with their students. The work of schools and teachers has become focused on a destination that for many young people is not achievable. This disconnect lies in between the needs of a young person and the demands of an official curriculum.

Universities could enhance their practices as a means of bridging the gap between the knowledge that teachers have of their students and

the need for experiences of higher education to be eventful, whilst providing the space to build connections between present and possible futures. The current one-size-fits-all approach to designing tours of the university appears to be less suited to those young people that have yet to consider what going to university might even be like, let alone picturing themselves as a student at university. If universities were truly interested in making an impact on the number of people from underrepresented groups studying in higher education, then based on this study there appears to be sufficient need for experiences that are constructed through architectures based on bridging social capital. Typically groups of Year 9, 10, 11, and 12 students are moved around the university campus and offered activities such as scavenger hunts. However these experiences have little relevance for those young people who have yet to begin viewing the future.

Any action underwritten by the view of "build it and they will come" is bound to fail to connect with underrepresented youth. Without insight into those young people, especially if they are from families and communities that fall outside of the view of the hegemonic university, the bridging experiences are unlikely to be contextualised pathways. Better to have a university and a school collaborate on the actual needs and pre-existing knowledge of young people as they navigate the education system. Better still that the schools take a systemic approach that is humanistic in nature, to gain insights of whom the young person is, their attributes, rather than their deficits, in order to support them build their views of what might be possible. The multiple and non-linear pathways that are currently possible for study in higher education are not on show to the widest possible audience. They are evident to the likes of Willis' (1977) "middle class" students who are more successful in playing by these rules and accessing the malleability of the university as a social structure. However other social groups have not experienced the same degree of success.

Schools and universities are institutions whose strategic plans articulate ambitions for the many people that cross their thresholds. These ambitions are related in the main to the development of knowledge and its application to enhance the life of a person as well as making tangible

contributions to the wider community. Schools in Australia have been at the centre of society and as such have been utilised as a tool for social change as much as for social stabilisation. Participation in school remains a primary and significant marker of personal accomplishment and potential for the future. Thus how personal achievements are accounted for have changed little over time, regardless of numerous modifications to the indices of measurement that have been developed and applied. If schools, as the enactment of an education system, were to be successful in producing graduates as productive members of society then this purpose would be complimented by thoughtful efforts to navigate social structures that enable achievement of such ambitions.

The purpose of schools has long since been about the measurement of young people as students. What comes to count as successful participation in the education system has remained deliberately narrow. Administrators' perceptions of their role and that of schools as social institutions inform the expectations of a bureaucratic education system. Schools are compliant to systemic expectations that are prescribed in policy and inscribed in the managerialist paradigm. The work of the teachers and support staff in any school are ultimately determined by national political and economic agendas that draw impetus from global competiveness.

Positioned within their communities, schools are a buffer between centrally determined policy and what makes sense in the localised context. School leadership and teachers are making decisions on a daily basis about achieving objectives and attaining benchmarks. The imperatives of the education system are unlikely to simply go away or accept being ignored; however there remain some options for flexibility and innovation around achieving ambitions for the young people that the school takes responsibility for. While the achievement agenda has become the "tail wagging the dog" in education (O'Neill, 2013), schools need to take a primary role in bridging young people's lifeworld present to the future possibilities, something that an education is assumed to facilitate. Schools have been caught up in the metrics of systemic expectations and reporting.

As a result, schools have lost those localised spaces that enabled reinterpretation of the curriculum for the benefit of students, to offer choice and options about attaining their personal and desired outcomes. These limitations have resulted in a curriculum, both official and hidden, obsessively focused on academic achievements in ways that only some young people can engage with (Llopart & Esteban-Guitart, 2018; Zipin et al., 2015).

In Australia this situation positions the school as a mechanism for sifting and sorting the population. This purpose stems from the expectations of universities that the schools provide applicants with very particular skills and attributes. How such attributes are measured has also changed little in recent decades. Teachers are in a position where their professional practice is about preparing for studies in higher education. Teachers are also graduates of the system that they now facilitate. Thus they have intimate knowledge of the metrics for success at school. With increasing student attrition rates and calls for enhanced representation of the wider population, the Australian education system has sought to reconsider the relationships that exist between universities and young people. Taking a deficit view of those who remain in relatively small percentages of representation at university, the governments of the day have enacted policy and supported research aimed at raising the aspirations of young people in certain social contexts.

What this study has highlighted is a need for a greater appreciation about how the lifeworld and associated aspirations of young people might be informed in order to map out the options and means by which those aspirations may be realised. From the accounts and findings reported in this study, social class remains a determining factor in having agency in certain fields. In the field of education the lack of agency for many young people is seminal to the challenges of participation in higher education.

Personal agency is enhanced in the establishment of space that is neither that of the school or the university but rather an intersubjective space that offers the opportunity to explore and ask questions as an act of

experience. These acts need to be encounters that are eventful at a personal level. These encounters should not be the sole responsibility of the university but rather come from a partnership that supports and encourages a curriculum of choice and decision-making. This study argues that there is a need for school and universities to renegotiate the work of schools and to find the space that can support the personal development of young people as they navigate the landscapes of choice. The partnership between school and university should be primarily built upon a developed appreciation of and insight into what horizons of action means. Further there is a need to examine what that understanding might look like to the young people who come to engage with the experience, with a reflexive habitus.

The activities currently offered by universities aim to engage young people with the possibility of study in higher education. They would be enhanced through the development of a curriculum that is informed by a social constructivist approach. Working in collaboration, schools and universities would do well to construct an intersubjective space that listens for and to the trajectorial ambitions that young people have. What is proposed as a social space for collaboration around supporting and including young people to express their autobiographically formed reflexivity. All those involved in bringing out young people's expressions of who they are would see their work in a space between school and university, recognising both institutions but focusing thoughts and actions specially on the bridging of lifeworld and social structure. This intersubjective space would allow young people to express what they know and don't know about their ambitions. The school personnel are integral, as evidenced by this study. They have detailed insights into the possible voids in each respective lifeworld of the young people that they have come to know. Any endeavour by the university around aspiration attainment and the enhancement of pathway planning needs both space and licence for school teachers to be unharnessed from the yoke of the narrow forms of performativity that currently dictate time and effort in schools. In such a space the insights and intent of democratic educators can be enacted. The

accounts of teachers provided in this study shows that despite the intent to enhance the opportunities for their students, teachers find little that can be done with their detailed insights of young people within the current workings of the educational system that they themselves are a product of. These teachers are the front line of advocacy for the agency of young people yet the crowded curriculum allows little more than superficial attempts to connect these young people to the broadest possible horizons. With such detailed and personal knowledge of who a young person is in the present, teachers are in a privileged position to draw upon their professional perceptions to engage in critical questioning, as communicative action towards exposing possibilities and deconstructing challenges, initially viewed as barriers. Integral to the success of this work is the input and responsiveness of those experienced in the ways of being in higher education. This would require the teachers to act as a conduit to between the encapsulated potential of young person's lifeworld to the actual means of navigating the field of higher education. This has been demonstrated in spaces of the experiences articulated in Chapter 8.

Pathway planning is for the most part with the careers teacher/advisor. These teachers have responsibility for the communication of processes and opportunities for students to learn about work and further study. The insights gained about career possibilities are usually provided in brochures, posters, and handbooks. Students commonly engage in work experience programs that involve a placement for one or two weeks as a one off opportunity. The careers teacher may promote university open days, and assist students with the interpretation of prerequisites and other institutional expectations. The large number of young people needing such advice makes it difficult to develop an in-depth appreciation of what study at university would be like in reality. This is particularly challenging work in the context of schools in this study, that are located in communities identified as low socioeconomic or working class. Young people in these contexts have substantial need for such interpretation, given that there are families in these communities that have limited insights into what it means to participate at a university. The potential of a space in between school

and university offers support for expressions of doubt and risk, whilst also a trusted and social space in which young people can express the construction of their lens of their positioning and possibilities.

Conclusion

This study promotes the need for collaborative partnerships to be formed between school and the university as a means of enhancing ways to inform young people about the nature and manner of studying at university. Such partnerships provide space for young people to explore questioning of their habitus and lifeworld, as well as the initial experiences that create truly eventful encounters. The insights from this study also offer cause for further research, since the extent of the impact of initial, eventful encounters is not fully understood. While the teacher's accounts outlined in Chapter 8 point to the depth of the questioning as well as burgeoning expressions around the insights gained from the experience of university, the long-term impact upon young people remains unaccounted for in a heuristic manner.

The establishment of space for young people to explore their experiences and become attuned to what this begins to mean for them requires thoughtful insights from teachers and career advisors as the agents of schools and universities. Such a space should not be about university recruitment or even academic achievement but about asking questions of those possibilities. Further research could expose the extent of the impact that these events have upon the habitus of young people. In doing so there could be a more informed insight into how experience provides the fulcrum to leverage a young person's internal conversations.

Of the limitations that this study faced, the ability to witness how a young person's internal conversations come to be enacted was most challenging. The need to establish and maintain a space that fostered intersubjective expression the researcher considered to be central to attaining a comprehensive appreciation of the complexities, as the young people engaged in visualising their self in particular fields and situations.

Research into the ways in which schools go about identifying and employing structural holes in order to create scope for young people to explore possibilities remains to be fully accounted for. Such work would call for close and constant collaboration with teachers. The intent would be to attain detailed accounts of their insights of particular lifeworlds and the eventfulness of experience, as enacted in the present and contextualised by refined imagined futures. Such an endeavour would call for intimate relationships, building upon trust and reciprocity to construct an accurate telling of the work of schools and teachers. In this way, research offers the opportunity to account for the impact of the education system has upon the lives of young people, as experienced through the thoughtful acts of democratic educators.

10 Conclusion

This chapter expresses the theoretical outcomes informed and inspired through the analysis of the data attained in this study. The experiences of young people count as primary concern when examining current and potential approaches to the accessibility to higher education. In such experiences are found the sociological concepts of structure and agency as the lifeworld is drawn upon to make sense of what might be possible in and beyond the space currently known by social actors. In presenting refined means of thinking of this phenomenon the initial sections of the chapter offer a set of theoretical constructs as an account of what aspects of the lifeworld were drawn upon when young people confront possibilities that call on their sense of and capacity for agency.

The second part of Chapter 10 then seeks to translate the proposition that students can generate personal aspirational autobiographies, which link their lifeworld experiences with possible educational and career futures. What is proposed is an initial sketch for a semi-structured "inquiry protocol" whose results might be used by students and their teachers to knowledgeably plan for and make the most of an evental interaction with a university career's activity.

10.1 Theoretical Products

10.1.1 The Paradox of Trust

Social capital is premised on reciprocity and trust. In times when social systems cannot always be trusted, the self in search of agency in the social space is not able to believe in systems' relationships and promises. Here then is the paradox of trust—where the self begins to look outside of established relationships in search of potential connections and pathways to possible destinations beyond present horizons.

When young people, such as Brunetti Boy and Freddie (Chapter 5), have lost trust in reliable relationships we see the beginning of loss. The loss is not just for the reputation of the relationship but a loss of what might be achieved had the relationship been reciprocal and trustworthy. The experiences of school for young people like Brunetti Boy offer limited agency for navigating one's life course. This too is paradoxical as greater attention is heaped upon the need for Brunetti Boy (in this instance) to take responsibility for the state of his life. In social spaces people are on their own engaging with the challenges of making the decisions that have long-term implications. For young people to engage with such decisions there is explicit need for access to detailed insights into the pertinent details of a comprehensive range of options. What this study has evidenced is the vulnerability within a young person's subjectivity. Perceiving and engaging with possibilities for the future is reliant on the extent that young people like Brunetti Boy and Freddie can actually trust in their sources of information. When this information is contained within the social systems embodied in schools and universities, a third shared space becomes pivotal to the trustworthiness that a young person has to inform their agency. Here then is the nub of the paradox of trust. Young people as social agents are socialised into believing that there are explicit entities within the public sphere that exist for the benefit of the young person. The realisation that this belief is not actually trustworthy leads to the questioning of the purposefulness of such entities and the loss of confidence in one's own judgement and what to trust.

The consequence of a loss of trust in the education system has not changed since Willis' (1977) detailed accounts of the explicit push back by young people to an education system that could not to be trusted to meet their needs. What made these students "particular" were their social class and the prognosis that went with that distinction. How a young person presents as a student is telling in how they experience their world. For Willis (1977) the experience of working class "lads" was in part something of a mistrust of schools as a social institution that did not offer them agency but was in fact so deaf to their lifeworld and associated needs that the

ongoing acts of resistance became a means of coping with a loss of trust in a system perversely promoted as a source of benefit.

This study exposed that in a different decade and on another continent to where Willis undertook his seminal work, there remain similarly explicit gaps between what young people bring into school and the expectations of an education system as it is embodied through the daily practices of the school. Limited interpretations of what it means to be a successful student have resulted in schools becoming the site of a narrow band of measured performativity. Thought, action, and experience that fall outside are an aggravation to the education system. The white noise emanating from the lifeworld of young people, who cross the threshold in to the school, signal misalignment between the field of education and the doxa to be found within those lifeworlds. For young people to experience a sense of agency in educational contexts realignments are necessary. This study has evidenced the impact of misaligned intentions and expectations, as a consequence of schools and teachers having little opportunity to build upon what young people bring to the learning experience. Part of the imperative of contemporary schooling is the accountability around literacy, numeracy, and completion of the final year of secondary education. Once again this becomes paradoxical, as not only are many students defined as deficient by narrow benchmarks but also within the imperatives for academic success, students experience conditions that create a greater sense of disconnection to their possible futures. The young people of NWS, who participated in this study, evidenced this disconnect as their sense of agency dissipated in an environment that was increasingly of limited benefit. A student's loss of reciprocity creates an unproductive relationship becoming one that cannot be trusted to deliver what young people have been led to believe was the purpose of education and schools.

10.1.2 Agency as an Expression of Subjectivity

Social class is a collective expression of dispositions and therefore the commonalties between social actors and the expressions of habitus, as it is called to action. The contexts for action are not just background to but also

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the producer of experiences that come into being for social actors. A person's experience of the social context is significant in constructing a person's view of the world. This study shows how a young person's social context impacts upon their developing interpretations of what is possible.

The Calder College students (see Chapters 6, 7 and 8) are social actors who experience their personal agency in a way that they call upon their personal dispositions to expose and engage with what constitutes their present. Agency is derived through one's sense of what is possible and according to the accounts of the young people in this study, comes from how they perceived the likelihood of visible possibilities after being engaged with certain experiences. The social space offered the informants a way to make judgements of themselves as people in the context of each experience. The interplay between self and experience is conditional upon what is called upon in the process of constructing possibilities and likely outcomes.

From this study, there is evidence of how a sense of agency is an expression of a young person constructing a perspective of the world and their position in that world. The young people participating in this study told of a growing need to engage with the world beyond the school as part of their expectations for the future. It is these accounts that give insight to the relationship of agency and subjectivity whilst speaking to the sense of uncertainty as it is experienced in the present. It is this relationship that underpins young people as social actors, engaging in the act of exploring options as they become apparent, and in thinking about how those options could be realised, as they are contemporaneously understood. To illustrate are the standpoints of Goren and Gavin (see Chapters 6 and 7). Goren's expressed aspirations are filled with intent and expectations yet place the school and the university as mere objective settings in his planning for the future. Goren's expressions of what that future might be are filled with little detailed understanding of what his current script would or could involve. A verbalised commitment to working hard at school, as all that is required to become a doctor is indicative of an aspiration that is devoid of detailed agency. Goren represents a subjectivity that is as unquestioning and

habitual in its scripted articulations. These have implications for agency when social actors are called upon to engage their selves with thought and action with intent to realising one's aspirations.

When an opportunity to engage with potential pathways is presented to young people the responsiveness of the self to that potentiality signals the agency that they are aware of and embody. Developing a sense of agency is derived from subjectivity that is responsive to unfolding information as it is made relevant to a young person's aspirations. Gavin's plasticity around his plans for the future is part of a developing subjectivity as he continues to interact with experiences that constitute his social space. Drawing upon his ever-expanding view of employment outside of school Gavin locates himself in differentiated positions acting to make judgements that call into being his self-awareness and his evolving aspirations. The assertion from this study is that young people draw upon their subjectivity as a key means of locating, informing and enacting advocacy for attaining desired states in the future. Those desired states are the product of a person's subjectivity derived from the interactions within an expanding social space.

10.1.3 Reflexive Exploration

Judgments of self are made when the person considers the past; their role in that past and what the present contributes to making sense of the past. This calls upon the capacity and propensity of social actors to engage with the perplexity of their personal accounts of the role they played in past events as a means of reflecting upon the eventfulness for the self. In constructing the past from the perspective of the present there is a point of potentiality that remains essential to people becoming reflexive. This study raises the significance of promoting the reflexive explorations of young people as a way of optimising the ways they could call upon the past to become better attuned to the attributes and complexities of options in their eventful encounters. Such capacity has been exposed in this study, as an underpinning factor for young people to identify both strong and weak ties, to explore new means of constructing potential destinations and pathways.

As young people begin to expose their aspirational possibilities they in turn are confronted by the need for insights about bringing those possibilities to fruition. The capacity to reflect on experience will go only part way to a young person disturbing their accounts of the past and in turn either confirming or confronting as they call those accounts into the present. Discriminating between the contributing and competing factors in past experience requires recognition that the self can draw upon positions taken in the past as a means of imagining and applying revised ways of engaging in the present social space. The close relationship that reflexivity has to subjectivity questions the role of self-awareness as a personal attribute in forming and attaining one's aspirations. When a young person confronts their inner perceptions as they commune with their social space, there are reflections that emerge in this engagement and in doing so create a "self transcending subjectivity" (Zahavi, 2008) of experience.

10.1.4 Eventful Encounters and Disrupted Habitus

Experience is partly constituted by how we engage in the present and the anticipation of encounters as they occur. Young people, such as those who informed this study, come to see their experiences as informing and constructing their view of the world. How they might choose to interact within the social world is reflexivity, the nexus of subjectivity and habitus. Walking around a university campus, making observations and interacting with university staff and students is a catalytic experience when the young person, new to the campus, observes, interacts and begins to explore the meaning of those encounters in terms of the eventfulness of the experience.

There is a distinction to be made between wearing a university garment as a souvenir and that of beginning to imagine what it would be like to be engaged in the practice of being a university student. From the time that a young person rethinks that contextualised position it becomes malleable because of a revised sense of agency. To imagine how one is positioned in various contexts, beyond that which is taken for granted, a young person moves out of an enclosed subjectivity to an embodied

agency. It is this embodied agency that disrupts habitus, a response to reflexivity. This disrupted habitus is not deterministic but rather foundational in the way a carpenter attains skill as they transition from apprentice to mastery. Transitions are part of the journey towards some anticipated but different state in a lifespan. Transitions require support, insights and input from significant others as long as social actors are both aware and receptive. For a young person to attain and enact a sense of agency there is significant cause for guidance and support as part of their developing awareness of the possibilities, consequential to one's experience.

10.1.5 Raising Reciprocity in Third Space

Acknowledging that one's habitus is subject to tensions and contradictions (Bourdieu, 2000) to the conditions of its very foundation there are implications for this on social actors. Eventful encounters are as much destabilising, as they are likely to be inspiring. For this reason young people need support as they experience tensions in a context of particular fields that remain distant or misaligned to the conditions of their habitus formation.

This study identifies the need for schools and universities to work together with, and for, young people to enhance their agency. For this objective to be realised there is need to construct a space for genuine participation that is neither school nor university but an intersubjective space. It is in such a space that it is possible to support young people to construct their multiple, possible futures through guided reflexivity. Creating the conditions for young people to trust their emerging aspirations is of paramount significance in any undertaking that seeks to enhance participation in higher education.

These conditions come into being through the deliberate and thoughtful actions of all agents—teachers and university personnel, with the capacity and intention to work alongside young people. This study has found that such a space would foster an explicit sense of reciprocity between the young people and the institutions coming together to promote agency for the young people through the insights of their potential. Here the

work is on moving beyond mere articulations of what young people conceive as a socially acceptable script, to reflect on the expectations of those markers of a young person's social space. Having the space and licence to express concerns, confoundments, and questions has proven to be an essential element in an intersubjective space. In this space each young person can inform their present undertakings, and review how they are preparing for a future is possible. What they envision is in greater detail and because it is constructed from, rather than constrained by, the present.

The insights provided by the participants in this study offer accounts of the consequences of mismatches between social capital and the field of education. The third intersubjective, space offers teachers and university personnel an enhanced awareness of voids in some young people's expectations of the future against their present undertakings. The data collected highlights the impact of an absence of experience and specific discourse, related to higher education. For participants in this study this resulted in a void, of which some initial encounters had exposed the edge of what was known and experienced.

Young people's reflexivity would remain little more than reflection if not for the means of realising those unfolding possibilities. Part of the insights offered by the young people of Calder College included their growing appreciation of how they might use the school to inform their subjective views of the future. They were able to express their developing understanding of the education system in terms of how they could work within that system to attain personal goals.

Being supported to move beyond what constitutes a young person's social space calls for constructive approaches that acknowledge the challenges of that person's social capital. The daily lives of young people, such as those at NWS, include rich experiences that are primary sources of knowledge and skills. Yet according to the NWS participants, these very sources fall short in providing the information they needed to orientate towards the social structures pertinent to their dispositions. This is evidenced through a young person's social class in not only raising their

aspirations but also how those aspirations can be realised. In a third intersubjective space, school teachers and university personnel bring together detailed insights of the institutions they are part of, but they also have opportunity and purpose in addressing the doxic distance between young people's lifeworld and the university.

The data attained through the interviews with teachers at Calder College indicate that there are few examples of teachers engaging with pedagogic action whose explicit intention is offering up bridging social capital to each young person. The insights that teachers offered about particular young people were detailed and personal, that went beyond mere academic strengths and challenges. However, there was an absence of accounts—a reciprocity deficit where teachers had facilitated experiences and insights about social structures as a way to address what they saw in the lifeworlds of their students. As articulated in Chapter 6, the act of social bridging calls for thoughtful planning in terms of what is being bridged as well as how this could be facilitated. Subsequent to such planning is also a need to consider how such experiences might disrupt young people's habituated educational practice and aspirations for the future. This absence offers a potential for schools to create and utilise intersubjective spaces to offer eventful encounters around the interests of young people. The learning from this study is-that working with young people in schools should include the explicit effort of building and celebrating their reflexive capacity. This draws out their inner conversations as an integral response to what they experience as eventful encounters.

Chapter 6 presents evidence of the knowledge and intent of democratic educators as they expressed their insights of the constituting factors of a young person's lifeworld. What was deficit in this evidence was the deliberate pedagogic action to bridge a young person's present social field to new ones. The researcher's observations and subsequent debriefing with the young people from Calder College offered evidence that engaging in the opportunity to develop and pursue one's subjectively-based inquiry in turn leads to personal qualitative judgements. Such judgements

question the impact that social structures may have in positioning a young person's view of the future.

The intersubjective nature of a third space offers a detailed appreciation of the potential for young people and of the university to support that potential. This intersubjectivity is contingent on the foundational habitus that is both disruptive and disrupted as part of a young person's experience. The consequences and potential of experience should sit at the centre of a third space that bridges lifeworld and the education system. The accounts of the young people at NWS and Calder College tell of the need for support to enhancing their "landscapes of choice" (Ball, Maguire, & Macrae, 2013). The experiences that young people have within their lifeworld contribute to their constructed view of the future and how they can position their selves subjectively in that future. An abbreviated view is associated with a lack of experience of particular social structures and the reality of burgeoning possibilities.

This study offers evidence of the need for social structures especially those related to the field of employment and education to incorporate "horizons for action" as a form of agency enhancement within intersubjective spaces (Ball et al., 2013) for young people. Responding to the need for enhanced aspiration, agency, and participation in higher education, a third intersubjective space needs to be both constructed and utilised by and between the school, the university, and young people. To do so would create a space of trust and reciprocity.

10.2   Implications for Practice

At this point there is a need to enhance the educational experiences of young people through the refinement of teaching practices became a case consistent with what Kammer (1998), posits as the "impetus for change as well as the method for assessing the effects of change" (p. 108). In drawing upon the insights offered by the accounts in this research could stand as one example of the burgeoning implications for practice in the field of education, especially with regards to school students, teachers and university personnel who would seek clarity of how one might attain agency

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over access to higher education. The development of a model that is or could be engaged with to bring a young person's lifeworld into genuine recognition as an agentic foundation appeared to be warranted.

10.2.1 A case for developing a protocol

The development of the semi-structured protocol within this research is informed by the experience of the researcher in schools, in the capacity of a teacher and in particular as a Leading Teacher for Curriculum. In a school that had experienced poor attendance at parent/teacher interviews, it was clear that there is a need to rethink how this lack of engagement might be ameliorated. The school served a community considered disadvantaged, with an above average population of people who were unemployed and with a non-English speaking background.

Drawing on a presentation given by educators from University Heights High School in the Bronx, New York City, the researcher recalled how the young people in that school had been given the opportunity to express their comprehension of intellectual concepts they had encountered throughout the school year. Their expressions of insight were facilitated and captured in what was referred to as round tables. A round table was facilitated for each person so that the student could articulate the knowledge and connections they made between the key concepts and pertinent aspects of their learning in any of the subjects they had engaged in. The educators saw this as giving time and space to the credible account of what it meant to be knowledgeable. So credible was this process that local colleges would offer places to any student who graduated from the school, using this educational device.

In contrast to this, time and space at the researcher's then school had not been used for young people to speak of what they knew and how they might move forward in their learning endeavours; rather it was a time for teachers to give a summative account of each student in their class. Those parents who attended would hear these accounts from multiple teachers over the course of the afternoon or evening. On reflection there were few opportunities for the students themselves to give any account of

themselves in context of learning expectations. The researcher, in his capacity of Leading Teacher and drawing upon insights from the University Heights school experience, put in place a new approach for giving account of student learning. Instead of parents and students making appointments to meet with all teachers across an afternoon or evening they would have a 20-minute interaction with just one teacher. Each teacher was given responsibility for just 10 students. Each student was asked to bring along two pieces of their work from any subject areas, one that they were pleased with and the other that they believed they could have done better. The interaction was also to be student centred and therefore the time would be occupied with them giving account of what was achieved and what would give cause for improvement.

In order to support this interaction the researcher found that the move from previous practice would require scaffolding to support teachers and students in their respective navigation of this encounter. And so it was that a number of questions were developed that would support the teachers' questioning of what was the actual learning experiences of each student. These questions were designed to guide the teachers for their inquiry through conversation with each student and their family members.

The revision and enactment of changed teacher practice around student engagement in *assessment as learning,* the challenge and the endeavour are both well accounted for by Kruger & Cherednichenko (2005) who argue that:

> Re-inscribing the practitioner, or more correctly collaborating teams of practitioners, as the source of socially just human agency in education is precisely the response needed in equity provision in schools driven by accountability systems and the ideology of effectiveness. (p328)

A most significant and deliberate consideration in the preparation for what came to be referred to, as the student-led conference was the sharing between teachers of the sample questions. There was time and space provided in the school day for students to work with others as a way of beginning to think about how they might respond to these questions. This

marked out a space in the curriculum for these young people and their teachers to use what this researcher now considers to be a protocol as an educational device.

The teachers engaged in this encounter were also offered possibilities to set goals as a consequence of the conference. Further to this they were provided with a number of strategies to assist each student in attaining the goals that they had constructed in collaboration with the teacher and family member/s. By the conclusion of each conference encounter a list of goals had been devised and agreed upon as well as the identification of some strategies that would or could be employed for the coming semester.

The lessons learned by the researcher from this experience is that teachers are able to better appreciate the context by which young people experience learning opportunities when they are guided in their interactions. In this case the guidance came in the form of what is thought of as a protocol for interaction. Such a protocol aims to bring out details that contextualise current experience with what becomes personal apparent potential for the future. Asking a teacher to have a conversation with a student is unlikely to expose such potential if there is an absence of prompts that signal underpinning conditions. A protocol in this context serves as less of a directive to the end product but rather a source of guidance for democratic dialogue, since it enables development of a shared perspective on personal development. Such a view was succinctly put by Allison's reflection upon the use of protocols at the University Heights school.

> … we are less committed to any particular protocol or process of assessments, for example, the Roundtables, than to the principles these processes exemplify: ongoing inquiry into what students need to know, be able to do, and value; making assessments as public as possible; involving authentic audiences in assessment decisions; including family members in the process; and keeping the focus on both the work itself and on students' self-assessment of that work. (Allison 1998 p.141)

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Knowing what to look for in an encounter with a young person is crucial to informing how that conversation might proceed. A conversation is preferable to an interview as there is the promise of greater flow when each party can feel that their engagement is one of reciprocity. In calling a young person into an interview on how they perceive the future, there is a greater chance of responses being made that are disassociated from the informants of family, community and eventful encounters. If emergent aspirations (Zipin et al. 2015) are to be articulated and built upon by school and university personnel, conversations informed by the semi-structured protocol (see Figure 1, pp. 282) promise constructive insight both by and for the parties in that conversation.

The development of the semi-structured protocol is posited as part of the resultant responses to this research. The experiences within this research and the resultant findings call for the enhancement of teacher contribution to the efforts of young people in constructing view of possible futures. A consequential aspect then is the need for direction that assists teachers and university personnel in exposing the contextualised positionings carried by young people. Exposing these personal insights must be accompanied by the exploration of the connections that can be made to the purpose of bridging one's present to the emerging views of the future. The detailed knowledge that many teachers that participated in this research had of their students lacked any specific purpose in terms of how that knowledge could be built upon. It is this aspect that the semi-structured protocol would address. This is in keeping with how Kuh (2016, p. 304) sees the protocol as inspiring a "unique social dialect" and "shapes a speaker's voice and the responses of others". The intent behind the creation of this protocol (see Figure 1) was to create space for more than mere dialogue but rather a "democratic inquiry with moral content" (Kruger & Cherednichenko, 2005, p. 329). What is anticipated in its application is a platform for reflexivity by teachers and university personnel. This protocol is offered in an acknowledgement of Kuh's (2016) assertion that reflective practice locates individual teacher growth in the sociocultural context of the

school community. The very essence of this semi-structured protocol comes from the view promoted by Kruger & Cherednichenko (2005) that:

> Socially3 just action in education concerns participation and learning success and the resultant personal and political agency, which contains structure-transforming potential. (p.328)

Through conversations, focused around the lifeworld of a young person, the potential of such interactions is to found in guidance to the point of all parties coming to ask "so what now – what are the implications for each of us in sharing in these personal insights?" The nature of the semi-structured protocol is such that it highlights the spaces for reflexive discourse.

10.2.2 Supporting agency to build success

Guided by the insights in this research a semi-structured protocol[2] is provided as a way to guide the dialogue and internal conversations that add context to a young person's awareness of self. This protocol is promoted as a means to give an autobiographical recognition to the relationship of a person's lifeworld, as it is contextualised up against unfamiliar fields, in the form of unfamiliar social systems and structures. There is no intention for a scripted and staged format run out for each and every young person seeking to study in higher education. Rather it is a guide to take account of what is known and what is yet to be experienced and therefore relatively unknown. For those seeking to support the agency of young people as they transition beyond secondary schooling the protocol would guide the question and enhancement of experiences and informing

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[2] A development emerging from the Coalition of Essential Schools in the United States, an inquiry protocol is a semi-structured practitioner research tool (McDonald, Mohr, Dichter and McDonald, 2013). Here, I am taking that teacher-focused approach and, in response to the practical directions of the data in this research, seeking to apply the Coalition's democratic intent to the proposition of an inquiry tool for use by school students.
McDonald, J. P., Mohr, N., Dichter, A., & McDonald, E. C. (Eds.) (2013). *The power of protocols: An educator's guide to better practice.* New York: NY, Teachers College Press.

the decision making process. The protocol calls for a commitment by teachers and university career advice staff to the establishment and enactment of a space that is inclusive, democratic, respectful, and responsive to all who seek to bridge potential to possibilities.

Finally, the protocol is offered as an artefact of this study and not as definitive and final expression of a call for agentic action for a young person's aspirations. It is however a resource for subsequent and consequential undertakings by this and other democratic educators The flow and staging of questions, depicted by the protocol, is designed to call into consideration those facets of one's lifeworld that would give insights and foothold to what could be possible in planning for the future. In its design there is intention for the protocol to expose the attributes that may otherwise go unrecognised. In application of the protocol a positioning of particular facets of a person's lifeworld is referenced in a way that should give cause for conversation between those in the 'third space'. This in turn is anticipated to give purpose for dialogue as a means of informing a progression to subsequent questioning of the positioning of a young person as a social agent. Accounts that might otherwise go unrecognised or unregarded in conversations with young people that are anticipated to be the very focus of the protocol and as such there is great anticipation that in application of this protocol a deeper account of personal potential becomes a likely consequence.
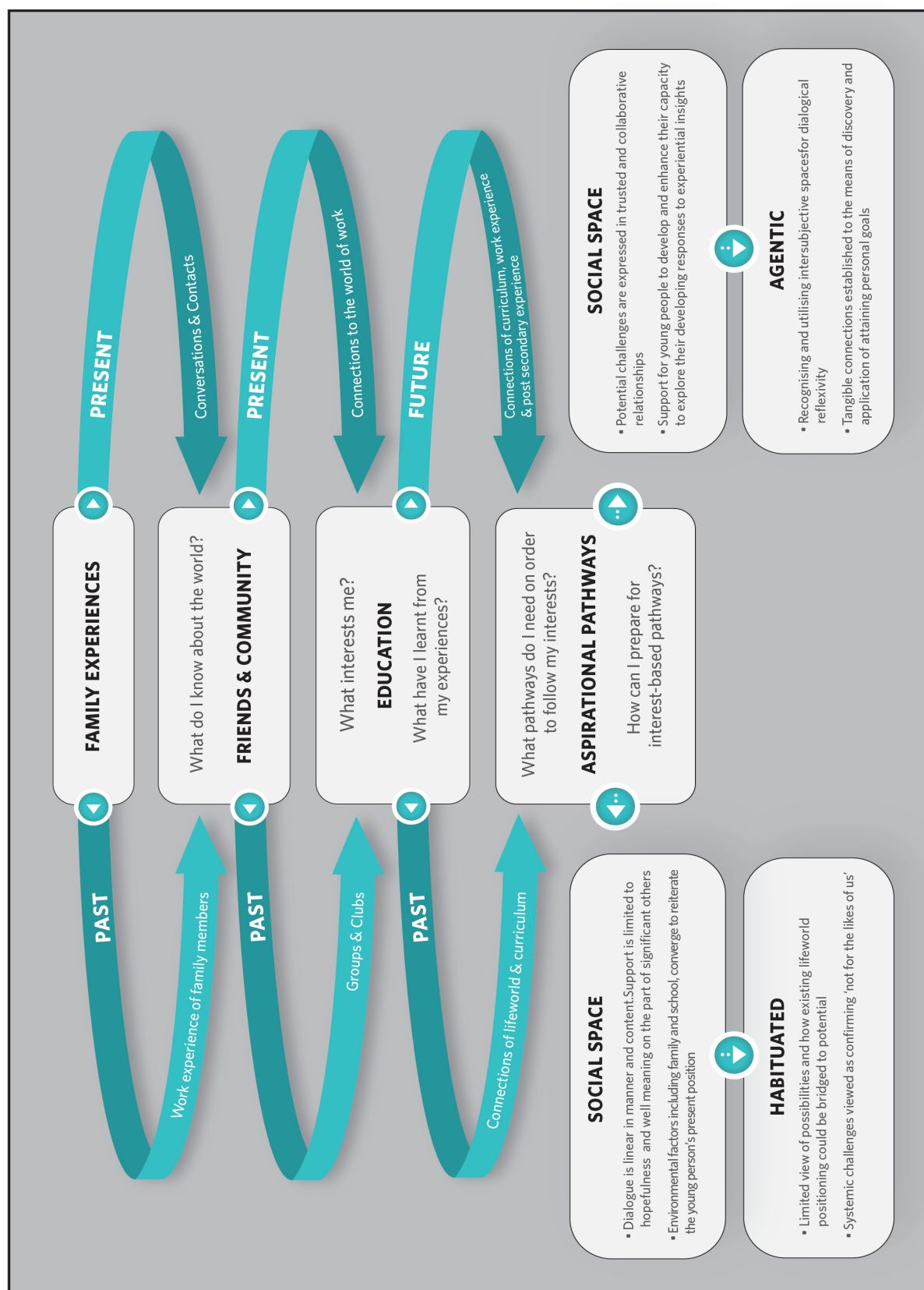
Figure 1   Semi-structured inquiry protocol

The figure contains the following labelled elements:

PRESENT — Conversations & Contacts
PRESENT — Connections to the world of work
FUTURE — Connections of curriculum, work experience & post secondary experience

FAMILY EXPERIENCES
What do I know about the world?

FRIENDS & COMMUNITY
What interests me?

EDUCATION
What have I learnt from my experiences?

ASPIRATIONAL PATHWAYS
What pathways do I need on order to follow my interests?
How can I prepare for interest-based pathways?

PAST — Work experience of family members
PAST — Groups & Clubs
PAST — Connections of lifeworld & curriculum

SOCIAL SPACE
- Potential challenges are expressed in trusted and collaborative relationships
- Support for young people to develop and enhance their capacity to explore their developing responses to experiential insights

AGENTIC
- Recognising and utilising intersubjective spacesfor dialogical reflexivity
- Tangible connections established to the means of discovery and application of attaining personal goals

SOCIAL SPACE
- Dialogue is linear in manner and content.Support is limited to hopefulness and well meaning on the part of significant others
- Environmental factors including family and school, converge to reiterate the young person's present position

HABITUATED
- Limited view of possibilities and how existing lifeworld positioning could be bridged to potential
- Systemic challenges viewed as confirming 'not for the likes of us'

Conclusion

This study has given account of how young people can be supported to develop aspirations that are constituted by an appreciation of how to draw upon institutional support. Advancing those aspirations into a reality, those who constitute schools and universities would be informed by the accounts given in this study as they mark the subjectivities that inform and influence a young person's sense of possibility. A person's lifeworld offers support and insights into achieving personal goals but it is apparent from the findings of this study that the school and the university might be better placed to support young people who have aspirations but who have yet to perceive higher education as an option for them.

"Choice biographies" is a phrase that presumes that young people perceive a wide range of options. The data exposed by this study indicates that it is only when the school and the university collaborate upon their respective understandings of the personal and institutional knowledge that young people can actually engage with navigating the trajectorial forks in the road. These "forks" are exposed within a social space constructed upon the foundation of one's lifeworld. Yet they are unbound from the informants of the past and constituted by the eventfulness of encounters in the experience of the present. The theoretical constructs presented in this chapter are the philosophical and reflexive products of this study of young people as social actors who are often aware that their lifeworld is juxtaposed to the social structures that are premised upon the need to nurture the human being.

The findings of this study offers a challenge to those of us that see our practice as contributing to democratic education. This challenge entails bringing the internal conversations of young people into spaces that are trusted and focussed upon building from one's lifeworld. This in turn calls for social agents to not only expose the 'rules of the game' but to question how the game may be interpreted and engaged with by potential players that might otherwise be subjugated to the place of spectator. The place and purpose of higher education remains a socially construct, promising

outcomes akin to economic and intellectual liberation. Yet there remains a restricted view as to how any experience of liberation might be enacted within the systemic undertakings in place around the practice of enhancing access to and success in higher education. The conversations called for as a consequence of this study and depicted in the semi structured inquiry protocol (Figure 1) would have the person placed at the centre of initial and subsequent endeavours towards genuine inclusivity.

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Appendix A

Description of research participants

North West Secondary – students

Pseudonym	Year level	Descriptor	First reference (page no.)
Brunetti Boy (BB)	9 (repeating)	Male	109
Freddie	9	Male	111
Grace	9	Female	129
Jody	9	Female	154

Calder Secondary College - students

Pseudonym	Year level	Descriptor	First reference (page no.)
Angela	9	Female	174
Ben	10	Male	175
Isabelle	9	Female	176
Robert	10	Male	177
Heather	9	Female	177
Taylor	10	Female	178
Goren	9	Male	179
Jay	10	Female	180
Carly	10	Female	182
Nadia	10	Female	183
Felicity	10	Female	186
Carmel	9	Female	188
Gavin	10	Male	193

Appendix B

Research as Intended

This research will seek to generate and interpret data related to:

1. student changing perceptions of their horizons throughout the course of the project
2. teacher perceptions of individual students and respective changes in individual attitudes, application and aspirations throughout the project
3. parent perceptions of student horizons throughout the course of the project

Project activity	Data to be collected	Research Action
Initial insights into individual students	Existing student aspirations (to reference the validity of teacher perceptions	Students undertake aspirations survey
	Student perceptions of personal horizons	Individual student interviews
	Parent insight into student horizons	Parent interviews
	Teacher perception of student aspiration, ability and application	Teacher interviews
Student involvement in tertiary education environment	Student perceptions of post compulsory education	Student participation in "collaborative inquiry" sessions
	Student response to tertiary education experiences	Student participation in tertiary education experiences
Post tertiary education experience	Student perceptions of post compulsory education	Individual student interviews
	Parent insight into changes in student horizons	Parent interviews
	Teacher perception of changes in student aspiration, ability and application	Teacher interviews
Longitudinal student response	Student considerations, in response to tertiary education experience	Students interviewed in the early stages of Year 11

Appendix C

Examples of Career Photographs