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Moving On? Experiences of Social Mobility in a Mixed-class North London Neighbourhood

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Work not Submitted Elsewhere for Examination

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature:.....

Abstract

This qualitative study investigates subjective experiences of social mobility amongst parents whose children attend the same London state primary school, at a historical moment when the Conservative-led Coalition government claims social mobility as the principal goal of its social policies. I argue that the government's understanding of social mobility is founded on a neoliberal discourse that holds individuals responsible for their own life trajectories. This individualist view aligns with individualization theory's emphasises on reflexive selves, understood as disembedded from class groups. By examining how participants' experiences are shaped by class processes I interrogate this dominant perspective, and consider alternative conceptions of social *mobilities* that expand the existing discourse.

I take a case-study approach that utilises a range of qualitative methods, enabling cross-class comparisons as well as examining parents' intersectional identities. I draw embodied and emotional geographies into the analysis, including everyday distinction-making and face-to-face interactions. I relate subjective experiences to class structures across a range of social fields, inter-weaving material and cultural analyses to examine the impacts of economic and political processes on lived experiences.

The thesis demonstrates how class processes significantly impact on social mobility experiences, and thus argues that the individualist social mobility discourse is flawed. However, whilst the individualist model denies the role of class structures, I argue that it constructs class identities by attaching stigma and status to individuals, who are held responsible for their own social trajectories. This narrative is implicated in processes of dominance and hegemony, and works to justify the current welfare cuts. I also argue, however, that by attending to participants' experiences and using a class analysis it is possible to reframe social mobility within an equality agenda based on the redistribution of resources. This study therefore makes a significant academic contribution because it expands the understanding of how class impacts on social mobility experiences, it explicitly addresses the individualist discourse of social mobility, and it suggests an alternative more equitable model.

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Abbreviations

APG	All-Party Parliamentary Group
CAGSA	Camden Green School Association
CLG	Communities and Local Government
DBIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
DfE	Department for Education
FTSE	(footise)100 companies
HE	Higher education
LA	Local Authority
LBC	London Borough of Camden
NHS	National Health Service
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFSTED	The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PR	Public relations
RTB	Right to Buy
SMCPC	Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission
TSA	Tenant Services Authority

Chapter 1: Introduction: What is Social Mobility?

1:1 Summary of the Research

1:1:1 Introduction

This qualitative study examines parents' experiences of social mobility in a North London locality in order to better understand what constitutes social mobility, both as a lived experience and a theoretical concept. The parents send their children to the same state primary school, and I explore their intra- and inter-generational experiences of social mobility across the social fields of education, occupation, housing and social mixing. I also make comparisons between participants who are at a similar point in their life trajectories. I propel my inquiry through three inter-related questions that examine what social mobility means and how it is experienced. Firstly, I examine how parents' class positions inter-relate with their social mobility experiences. Secondly, I analyse the relationship between participants' social mobility experiences and a dominant political individualist discourse of social mobility that downplays the role of class. Lastly, I explore how participants' own experiences and narratives of social achievements suggest an alternative expanded model of social mobilities (in the plural).

This investigation is of contemporary significance because the Conservative-led Coalition government has pronounced social mobility as the principal goal of its social policies, and puts forward a discourse and policy approach that embeds the concept of social mobility within an overall neoliberal politics. At the same time the experience of social mobility in the UK is much cited in political and media discourses as being in decline (Goldthorpe 2012:1). However, whilst numerous policies are being implemented in the name of social mobility, the concepts, causes and experiences of social mobility are insufficiently explored and understood, not just in political circles but also academically (Boliver and Byrne 2013). Goldthorpe (2012) argues that the political analysis of the decline of social mobility is misconceived, and thus so are the political solutions offered.

Therefore, this study will use biographical interviews, and observational and participative methods, to interrogate the experiences and meanings of social mobility. Whilst there is undoubtedly an important body of academic work on social mobility (for example, Bertaux and Thompson 1997a; Savage and Egerton 1997; Savage 2000; Goldthorpe et al.

1980; Evans 2010), I argue that both the lived experience and the concept of social mobility require further examination. Therefore this study aims to add important knowledge about social mobility at this crucial political moment when, in the absence of sufficient academic debate and influence, the neoliberal agenda threatens to corral the understanding of it.

I interrogate social mobility by contextualising subjective lived experiences within wider social, economic, political and discursive structures and processes. The research participants have their spatial and temporal circumstances in common as they share the school and its inner London catchment area at a particular life-moment when they have responsibility for young children. This study can compare their experiences of social mobility, and embed a theoretical investigation of social mobility within a situated empirical setting. Before elaborating on the intellectual and political context of the research, I will discuss my personal motivation for doing the research.

1:1:2 Personal Motivation

My motivation for exploring social mobility was impelled by my feeling that there was a disjuncture between what was publicly recognised as upward social mobility, and what was experienced at ground level as social mobilities in various plural forms. Moreover, despite the emphasis on *mobility*, it seemed that the class status levels, by which social mobility was measured, attached value to people in ways that their actual experiences of mobility did not. For example, it seemed that some middle-class people who had only reproduced their parents' advantages were accredited with more value than those who had made huge efforts, against great odds, to acquire lower level educations or jobs. Thus I wanted to look more closely at the relationship between social status and social mobility, and examine the status indicators by which mobility is measured, recognised and rewarded

Having become a parent relatively recently, and shouldering this responsibility with neither partner nor family nearby, I was particularly sensitive to the interweaving of the labours of parenting with efforts to pursue mobility projects, as well as with the more mundane task of putting food on the table. Yet childcare and domestic labour seemed to be absent from popular narratives of mobility and achievement. I also felt that the lack of recognition for the efforts and mobilities involved in parenting and 'getting by' fed into

people's self-value. I knew this was what I wanted to study because it was when I thought of these unrecognised labours, of the long hours put in to provide secure homes for children in the hope of giving them better future chances, that I felt most moved.

Given the disjuncture between recognised and experienced social mobilities, my primary question was quite simply, 'what is social mobility?' I wanted to explore what people themselves understood as social achievements. How did this accord with the status or recognition given to them by wider public social mobility discourses? What did people on the ground think of this, and what complex struggles and mobilities had they experienced? I wanted to expand a narrow conceptualisation of social mobility by opening it up to a diversity of subjective accounts.

I chose the parents whose children went to my daughter's primary school as my research subjects. Having moved to London more than twenty years earlier as a recent graduate, from a village in Northern England and a university in rural Scotland, I experienced an explosion in the diversity of people I met. However, it was only after I had my daughter in 2002, and particularly since she went to Camden Green School in 2007, that I felt I was living this diversity in the everyday, as I built relationships and loyalties with other parents that crossed class, ethnic and age divides. This deeper engagement with 'others' involved confronting and transforming prejudices that my previous more distanced cosmopolitan engagement with others had not demanded (Reay et al. 2008:245; Skeggs 2004:158). It was through the Camden Green parents that I had expanded my understanding of the struggles and achievements of other people's lives, and being part of the school had helped me to come to terms with my own struggles as a single parent, forced into finding new ways of being and belonging. Thus the parents at the school, and the school catchment area, seemed the appropriate setting for my research. There was also continuity with previous research work in which I had explored notions of belonging in the local neighbourhood (Humphry 2013). The parents' shared circumstances provided an intersectional spatial-historical moment in which I could study both within and between generations, by looking at lives that were shaped by the contemporary situation *and* personal histories over time – embedded in the local, but also shaped by places and spaces beyond (Massey 1994a; Thomson 2011).

My own spatial and temporal ‘beyond’ was the final bit of the personal jigsaw that motivated my topic, emerging from my self-conscious middle-class upbringing. Whilst the agricultural village I grew up in was short on ethnic diversity, it was big on class divisions. My family’s class history is complex, disjunctive and obscured, but a simplified version is that my parents (especially my mother) were upwardly mobile on the back of my father building a successful motorbike business. They were the monied, rather than the professional, middle class, with more economic than cultural capital. This position marked me and my sister out in the village. I was embarrassed by my father’s expensive car, and by the ‘snobbish’ class distinctions my mother made from the insecurity of her new-found class position. My middle-class status felt like a stigma. I do not tell this story in order to deny the advantages of my middle-class upbringing, but to explain my sensitivity to issues of class. It was when I moved to the neighbourhood where I had my daughter, and especially when I took her to Camden Green school, that this everyday class self-consciousness was re-ignited, and once again I felt caught up in the mutuality of the class gaze. Therefore it was discomfort, as well as commonalities, that drove me to the topic. My privileged class position had not felt comfortable for me as a child, and at the school this issue had returned to challenge me. Yet at the same time the school gave me the chance to re-make the living of class, and perhaps give myself and my daughter a more comfortable and less anxious class experience. Locating my research at the school offered the opportunity to engage more deeply with this challenge, and thus began the intellectual, emotional and social journey that was this research.

In the rest of the chapter I will elaborate on the intellectual rationale for the research. Firstly, I discuss the contributions this study aims to make to academic knowledge, situating it within existing literatures. Secondly, I discuss the historical and political context of the research, with reference to each of the social fields I examine, namely education, occupation, housing and social mixing. Both these parts provide information on the research setting. I then clarify the overall research aim to investigate what constitutes social mobility, and discuss the three research questions that focus on class, the individualist discourse and expanded notions of social mobility. Finally, in the conclusion, I outline the chapters of the thesis.

1:2 Contributions to Academic Knowledge

I have already touched on how this research aims to contribute to the understanding of social mobility, which I elaborate in this section. Firstly, I discuss how the research is located within existing literatures on social mobility, and how my particular approach will be to critique the dominant individualist social mobility discourse. Then I discuss how this study draws on various literatures to deploy a class analysis of social mobility. Thirdly, I discuss how I frame my exploration of an alternative notion of social mobilities, with reference to some relevant literatures that I draw on. Finally, I discuss how this study methodologically makes a contribution.

1:2:1 Examining Social Mobility and the Individualist Model

The quantitative approach to social mobility gained paradigmatic status from the 1950s, with a highly specialised approach developed by Goldthorpe and his Nuffield school colleagues from the 1970s (Goldthorpe et al. 1980; Erikson et al. 2005). This has arguably impeded the contribution of qualitative approaches to social mobility that have a particular role in illuminating the subjective, local, family and historical processes of social mobility (Bertaux and Thompson 1997b:5-11; Savage 1997:301-306; 2000:72). Therefore, whilst there is a growing body of qualitative research on social mobility (such as Bourdieu 1986; Bertaux and Thompson 1997a; Lawler 1999; Gillies 2005; Armstrong 2010; Butler and Hamnett 2011a), this approach is relatively under-represented in the academic literatures, and therefore this study will help redress the imbalance.

Moreover, existing qualitative social mobility research has tended to concentrate on particular aspects of social mobility and/or a specific demographic sample. For example, Armstrong (2010) focuses on mothering and occupation, Evans (2010) on young women and higher education, Butler and Hamnett (2011a) on ethnic minority middle classes' housing and educational mobilities, and Fraser et al. (2012) on social mobility in the context of social mixing. In contrast, this study has a much wider scope as it draws together experiences across the social fields of education, occupation, housing and social mixing, and examines a diverse group of mixed-class/gender/age/ethnicity parents. This enables a comparative analysis between participants in diverse social situations and identity positions. I examine the social mobility indicators pertinent to each social field investigated, and explore the inter-relating impact of these fields on each other. This

study, then, aims to produce a complex understanding of the lived experience of social mobilities, via which the theory of social mobility can also be interrogated.

The theory of social mobility is, arguably, under-explored, particularly as a central line of inquiry addressed through qualitative empirical research. I draw on some existing theoretical analyses of social mobility embedded in quantitative research (Savage and Egerton 1997; Li et al. 2008; Goldthorpe 2012), and some qualitative studies that draw out relevant theoretical insights, such as Elliott, 1997, for his concept of ‘social achievement’, and Bertaux and Thompson (1997b) for their emphases on family projects of social mobility. However, these particular qualitative researchers fall short of embedding their research within wider political discourses of social mobility.

This study, in contrast, specifically puts forward a theoretical exploration of the dominant individualist discourse of social mobility. This represents an academic *and* political critique because the political individualist perspective of social mobility is closely aligned to the academic theory of individualization (Giddens 1991; Beck 1999; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001). Individualization theory conceives of individuals as autonomous agents, oriented to reflexivity and mobility, and disembedded from traditional class structures. As such, the individual is able to construct his or her own biography. This echoes the individualist discourse that emphasises individual capacities to shape life trajectories according to personal merit, responsibility and choice, freed from the constraints of class background (Amable 2011)¹.

Theories of individualization and individualism have been examined by academics in relation to aspects of social mobility, such as employment identities and organizational practices (Savage 2000), social exclusion (Byrne 1999; Gillies 2005), parenting practices (Gillies 2007; Armstrong 2010), education (Evans 2010), education and housing (Butler and Hamnett 2011b) and social mixing (Paton 2012). Other critics have interrogated the individualist or individualization theory of social mobility at the theoretical level (for example, Goldthorpe 2012; Boliver and Byrne 2013). But none of these studies have addressed social mobility as explicitly and comprehensively, through empirical research across several social fields, as this study does.

¹ Individualization theory, and all the theories mentioned in this chapter, will be discussed in more depth in chapter two.

I contribute to a range of academic debates relevant to each social field examined. For example, I discuss widening participation in higher education (Plummer 2000; Archer et al. 2002; Evans 2010), feminist debates on domestic labour (McDowell 2009; James and Costa 1972), displacement from the city (Marcuse 1985; Slater 2009; Watt 2013), and social mixing/social capital theory (Gwyther 2009; Arbaci and Rae 2013). However, the primary academic contributions relate to three central lines of inquiry that run through all the chapters: interrogating individualist-individualizing notions of social mobility (as discussed here); examining how participants' social mobility experiences inter-relate with their class position (discussed next), and exploring how participants' experiences and narratives suggest an alternative expanded notion of social mobilities (discussed after that).

1:2:2 Developing the Class Theoretical Approach to Social Mobility

My second key contribution, then, is deploying and developing a class analysis of social mobility. Whilst class analysis may seem to be the obvious well-trodden approach to researching social mobility, and has remained a central concern of Goldthorpe and the Nuffield school (Goldthorpe et al. 1980; Goldthorpe 2012), I argue that in the context of the dominance of an individualist model of social mobility that downplays the role of class, class needs to be re-assessed as an explanatory framework. Given that the meritocratic notion of social mobility works to justify inequality (Amable 2011; Boliver and Byrne 2013), I consider how this fits with a concern for class equality. I examine whether and how social mobility is a concept useful for redressing class inequality and, in this context, I consider a welfare/redistribution approach to addressing low rates of social mobility, as an alternative to the individualist policy solutions currently offered. In these terms I critically interrogate Boliver and Byrne's (2013) claim that a concern for social mobility is incompatible with an interest in redressing class inequalities.

Global changes in economic structure have reconfigured class relations as people, finance, knowledge and goods have become increasingly mobile and fragmented. Therefore I operationalise and develop several existing class theories in my analysis in order to accommodate the new forms of diversified and complex class relations that fracture through individuals' experiences in multifarious complex ways. I draw on Savage's (2000) theory of class individualization because it can capture the ways that class processes works through individuals' experiences. Then, in order to analytically relate

participants' subjective experiences to the dominant individualist perspective on social mobility, I draw on Skeggs' (2004) framework, that theorises how dominant perspectives of value are deployed to construct class categories that are used to reproduce dominant class interests. Both Savage and Skeggs draw on Bourdieu, and I use his multifaceted framework as an analytic methodology throughout because it both incorporates and expands their ideas by connecting a range of subjective class practices to wider class systems, processes, and fields (1986; 1993[1983];1996). Whilst Bourdieu has been used widely across the social sciences, by drawing his approach together with those of Savage and Skeggs' I nuance and develop all three class approaches.

As some other critics have done (e.g. Reay 2004; Brown 2011), I draw theories of the emotions into my class analysis, including an emphasis on symbolic class distinction-making (Skeggs 1997; 2004; Sayer 2005; Tyler 2013). However, I also progress Gillies' (2007) less-developed emphasis on the impact of low levels of material resources on the emotions, by looking at how differing levels of material, social and cultural resources impact on the emotions and, inversely, how the emotions impact on access to resources. I also incorporate an intersectional theoretical approach, which Valentine (2007) argues is under-developed in empirical geographical research. I particularly consider how gender, ethnicity and parent-identities re-shape class relations. Thus, overall, I draw together a particular set of analytic perspectives into my theoretical class framework. I thereby develop class and social mobility theory via empirical analysis, as well as developing the understanding of how social mobility is lived and understood.

1:2:3 Expanding the Notion of Social Mobilities

My third key contribution is the examination of what participants themselves experience and value as social achievements and mobilities. Thus, as well as critiquing the dominant social mobility model, this research interrogates an alternative notion of social mobilities (in the plural). Several critics emphasise the importance of giving subordinated working-class voices more audibility in research accounts (Plummer 2000; Haylett 2003; Lareau 2003; Skeggs 2004; Gillies 2007; Armstrong 2010), but I examine subordinated perspectives across all classes, as I do not assume that middle-class perspectives are necessarily homogenous or hegemonic. Therefore I aim to draw out shared values that cut across classes.

Firstly, I draw on Brown's (2011) idea of investigating future goals and aspirations in more holistic ways, as a way of understanding how the emotional contexts and social relationships of people's lives impact on their broader ambitions and understandings of success (ibid. 2011:13-18). Elliott also emphasises the value of examining broader notions of what participants' consider to be "social achievement" (1997:201) in their lives. This relates to my interest in exploring the plural ways that people are socially mobile, and Raco (2009:443) recommends researching a plurality of aspirations as a way to forge an alternative politics that focuses on people's welfare needs.

I develop these ideas throughout my analysis as a way to understand people's experiences of social mobilities, but also to consider an alternative theoretical way of understanding social mobility. As such, this study explores plural goals, achievements and contexts in participants' lives, both within and without the conventional social mobility fields of education, occupation and housing. This works to expand and interrogate the conventional social mobility indicators and contest the individualist model of social mobility. Elliott (1997:206-207) also highlights his participants' struggles to evade downward mobility and simply maintain status, and similarly I include a consideration of 'getting by' as well as 'getting on' in my expanded notion of social mobilities. This contrasts with most other existing research that tends to look at either getting by' (Shildrick et al. 2012; Cox and Watt 2002) or 'getting on' (Lawler 1999; Butler and Hamnett 2011a). Moreover, I develop Elliott's notion to draw out how attention to 'getting by' contests the political individualist emphasis on upward social mobility (as noted by Roberts 2013; Boliver and Byrne 2013). Butler and Hamnett (2011a:35-36) note that New Labour's shift of focus from 'getting by' to 'getting on' reflects a conceptual shift from collective to individualist notions of social progress, but they do not follow this up with an empirical investigation into 'getting by', nor a theoretical investigation into alternatives to the individualist model. I, however, empirically examine experiences of plural mobilities in all directions, and then theoretically extrapolate how this might suggest a more equitable and collective notion of social mobility that attends to 'getting by' as well as 'getting on'.

Overall, then, my 'expanded' approach to examining social mobilities adds understanding of plural lived social mobilities in holistic contexts. It contests dominant individualist notions of social mobility and the narrow indicators utilised, adds downward and

horizontal mobilities into a political emphasis on *upward* mobility, and considers how participants' experiences and narratives may inform an alternative counter-hegemonic more equitable understanding of social mobility.

1:2:4 Methodological Contributions

The fourth key contribution I highlight is methodological, and under this umbrella I discuss the particular situatedness of the research setting, and then my inter-twined participative, visual and 'insider-outsider' approach.

The research setting provided a spatially and temporally situated case study. The research was conducted between the end of 2009 and the end of 2011, and thus captured a particular moment of social change as the Coalition Conservative-led government replaced a Labour government in May 2010. I thus engage with the impacts of the Coalition and longer-standing government policies. The research was located in the inner London catchment area for Camden Green Primary School in the London Borough of Camden, focusing on parents of mixed class, ethnicity, age and gender (Map 1.1).



Map 1.1: London Boroughs (Camden highlighted): source, London Council's Directory 2014, directory.londoncouncils.gov.uk

The catchment area (of approximately 1-2 miles from the school in any direction) is characterised by extreme income and housing inequalities, with sharp contrasts of high and low deprivation. Whilst the borough of Camden is the 74th most deprived of

England's 326 local authorities, and seventh worst for children living in poverty (37% of Camden's children live in poverty), it is ranked as the top UK local authority area where pupils are most likely to attend a good or outstanding state primary school (Hirsch and Beckhelling 2011:10; OFSTED 2012:31).

This study brings a particular angle compared to other studies that examine class processes and/or social mobility in London. I examine both working- and middle-class residents (Figs 1.1- 1.4), in contrast to Butler and Robson (2003a) and Butler and Hamnett's (2011a) research that focuses only on the middle class. Compared to Reay's (1998) cross-class research of two London state primary schools, Camden Green School was neither an over-subscribed nor a predominantly working-class school². Therefore the middle-class parents in this study were potentially of a different orientation to a 'sharp-elbowed' middle-class fraction, intent on using their resources to access the most state prestigious schools for their children, who are most often emphasised in academic research (noted by Reay et al. 2008:239, and Crozier et al. 2011:200). The Camden Green parents had more in common with the "socially inclusive" parents in a study by Reay and her colleagues, in which the researchers sought out middle-class parents who had deliberately sent their children to average (i.e. not sought after) urban state secondary schools (2008:240). This study aims to add knowledge to this less-trodden perspective.

² At the point of writing up the research Camden Green School became an over-subscribed school.



Figs 1:1 – 1.4: Participants, their homes and neighbourhood.

The Camden Green catchment area has a high density of social housing estates, and this has so far acted as a buffer against gentrification (Watt 2009b). There are also streets of Victorian houses, many of which are owner-occupied, but a significant number that are still council rented. There are some middle-class enclaves, as Butler and Robson (2003a) found in the gentrified London neighbourhoods they studied, but, overall, the Camden Green catchment area is characterised by extreme socio-economic polarities that are distributed as close proximities of poor and wealthy residents and diverse tenure types (LBC 2013). This again suggests a less exclusive middle-class fraction than is often studied (Fig 1.5).



Fig 1:5: Juxtaposition of tenure types in the research setting

Other methodological characteristics that distinguish this research from comparable London studies are my inter-twined participative, visual and ‘insider’ approaches. My daughter attended Camden Green School during the research period, which gave me a particular ‘insider-outsider’ position, impacting, for example, on my interactions with the research participants, the observation methods, and the amount and type of knowledge I already had when I started the research. On the back of being a parent at the school I also used myself as a research participant, engaging one of the other participants to interview me. This gave me some experience of both sides of the researcher-researched equation, and helped me to reflect on my position of power as a researcher.

Engaging one of the parents to interview me was one of the ways I sought to take a participatory research approach, i.e. by including the researched in the research process. I

hoped this would enhance my exploration of participants' views. To this end I also employed a photo-diary elicitation method with some parents, and devised art and film-making workshops with children at the school. Both methods were designed to enhance participants' capacities to contribute data on their own terms. Moreover, I worked with another parent to devise and run the children's workshops (Figs 1.6 & 1.7).



Figs 1.6: Family Stories Workshop



Fig 1.7: Example of Family Stories Artwork

The methodological contributions will be discussed more thoroughly in chapter three. However, the particularity of the research setting will also be elaborated next as part of a discussion of the historical and political context of the research.

1:3 Historical and Political Context

The current model of government, based on principles of the free market and individualism, is rooted in the Thatcherite ‘revolution’ of the 1980s and 1990s. Over time this model has marked a paradigmatic shift from public to private welfare provision, and a restructuring of the social, economic and political landscape of Britain. This neoliberal transformation, echoed across the globe, is characterised by an increasingly unequal and polarised share of resources, including income distribution and access to quality education and housing (McDowell 2003:6; Harvey 2005; Wilkinson and Pickett 2009; Dorling 2010). The current Coalition government is now responding to the 2008-9 recession with radical policies and cuts aimed at reducing the deficit, in what Hamnett argues is, “the most radical reshaping of welfare policy since 1945” (2013:1). These are working to disadvantage the poorest people in the UK, producing further polarisation (Hirsch and Beckhelling 2011:5). Thus I situate my analysis within this particular political and policy moment, drawing in both current and long-standing neoliberal policies where relevant, and considering potential longer-term impacts. I elaborate here on the policies relevant to social mobility generally, then to education, occupation, housing and social mixing specifically³.

1:3:1 Social Mobility

New Labour made social mobility an objective of public policy in 2001 (Aldridge 2001), and the current government has taken this political focus to a new level by claiming in its policy document, ‘Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers: A Strategy for Social Mobility’, that social mobility is, “the principal goal for our social policies” (Cabinet Office 2012:4). The Coalition government sustains New Labour’s individualist approach to social mobility, thus constructing a consensus that social mobility is a meritocratic route by which individuals can improve their life chances on the basis of their own efforts and abilities (Aldridge 2001; Cabinet Office 2009; 2011; 2012; APG 2013). Thus social mobility is understood as a classless ideal in which meritocracy can operate, with liberalised markets argued to facilitate a fluid and open society (as noted by Crompton 1998:209-10; Tyler 2013:153).

³ I address policies implemented in England, as this is where the research occurred, but note there are convergences and divergences across the UK, with devolution to the Scottish Parliament, The National Assembly of Wales and the Northern Ireland Assembly having elicited policy variations.

Since the Coalition government came to power, however, social mobility has been much cited as being in decline, while income and occupational class inequalities have increased (CZN Media 2012; Goldthorpe 2012). However, the government, whilst acknowledging a relationship between income inequality and social mobility, explicitly moves away from addressing income inequalities, arguing that, “the challenge in terms of social mobility is to understand the key components of a more mobile society which do not appear to be related to simple measures of income equality” (Cabinet Office 2011:22).

Rather than addressing income inequality and the problems associated with poverty, the government highlights the individual, parents and families as both problem and solution, pathologising particular working-class groups,

We have a group of people in our society who have become detached, unable to play a productive role in the workplace, in their families or in their communities. They are often trapped by addiction, debt, educational failure, family breakdown or welfare dependency (ibid. 2011:11)

Therefore, as critics have noted in relation to other policy foci (Haylett 2003; Gillies 2007; Arbaci and Rae 2012), the individualist approach replaces a structural economic explanation with a cultural one.

The underlying assumption is of a ‘classless society’ whereby structural problems of poverty and material disadvantage do not impact on people’s aspirations, life choices and chances, and as such people are positioned equally in relation to opportunities. All that is then required is for the opportunities to be equally available. Hence the emphasis on providing work programmes, apprenticeships, internships and access to higher education (Cabinet Office 2011:7). Provided these opportunities are available to everyone, it is then assumed that people compete for them in a fair contest, and, as such, the positions people achieve are just rewards for the talent and skills they deploy in the competition,

In a fair society what counts is not the school you went to or the jobs your parents did, but your ability and your ambition. In other words, fairness is about social mobility (ibid. 2011:11).

Whilst those at the top of the pile are justly rewarded for their talents and skills, those at the bottom are regarded as equally ‘deserving’ of their social position. Therefore the individualist social mobility discourse not only works to evade state responsibility for structural inequalities, but actually justifies inequalities (Crompton 1998:208-209).

As the individual is responsible for their social position, so are they culpable. In these culturalist terms the struggles and needs of people in disadvantaged economic positions are sidelined, as the state negates its responsibility to redress structural inequalities (Toynbee 2003:149; Shildrick et al. 2012:1-2). They are also stigmatised, as they are blamed for being too lazy, immoral or unmotivated to ‘get on’. This ‘libel’ is then reiterated in the popular media through tropes such as ‘feckless’ and ‘chav’ (Jones 2011; Shildrick et al. 2012:1-2; Tyler 2013:151-178). Whilst moral indictment of the poor is not a new political discourse (Rogaly and Taylor 2009a:77; Seabrook 2012), the current version is explicitly tied into the social mobility discourse, as individuals’ failure to access qualifications, work and upward mobility is cited as cause for the low social mobility rates. Thus the current government denies class structures as cause for low mobility rates, but at the same time hails class identity as the fall guy, symbolically constructing the “feckless poor” as a “figurative scapegoat” (Tyler 2013:8) to deflect attention from its own failure to redress structural class inequalities.

The key policy emphasis on providing equal opportunities as a way to access upward mobility also works to conflate a discussion of social mobility with upward mobility (Boliver and Byrne 2013:52), thus evading the problems faced with downward mobility. This study contests this approach by drawing both downward and horizontal mobility into the debate, including the active struggles of ‘getting by’ to those of ‘getting on’. The individualist emphases on equal opportunities, aspiration, the mobile autonomous individual, competition and ‘fairness’ works in specific ways through the policy fields of education, occupation, housing and social mixing, which I discuss next.

1:3:2 Education

The Cabinet Office's own report highlights the striking educational inequalities between working- and middle-class children. They note, for example, that only one fifth of young people from the poorest families achieve five GCSEs including English and Maths (grades A-C), compared with three quarters from the richest, and that from 16 years onwards young people's paths diverge sharply (Cabinet Office 2011:6). There has been some improvement in the attainment gap between rich and poor pupils aged 11-16, but overall the gaps have narrowed only slightly despite significant investment in education (ibid. 2011).

However, aligning with the previous section's discussion, whilst the government acknowledges both social and spatial inequality within the education system, rather than addressing the structural causes of poverty and class inequality, it puts forward a neoliberal focus on parental, individual and school choice (McDowell 2003:6).

Academics have interrogated education policy approaches with reference to neoliberal individualism, and examined how in various ways middle-class parents, with their higher levels of resources, operationalise strategies to access the choices on offer and perpetuate their advantages (Bourdieu and Passerson 2000[1977]); Jenkins 1992; Plummer 2000; Savage 2000; Butler and Robson 2003a). I engage with the debate on how 'parental choice' in the market for schools is shaped by class competition (Reay and Ball 1997; Crozier et al. 2008; Bridge 2006; Butler and Robson 2003b; Butler and Hamnett 2011b) and underpinned by unequal economic resources. I also look at how policies work to exacerbate the impact of economic inequalities on accessing education, for example looking at the removal of the Educational Maintenance Allowance in 2010 and the tripling of university student fees in 2012.

Current policy moves towards an academy and free school system (Academies Act 2010 and Education Act 2011) claim to offer greater choice in a "more autonomous and diverse school system" (DfE 2013:1). Academies are delivered by the private sector, outside of local authority control and with reduced central government intervention. Critics, however, argue that academies, despite their ideological underpinnings of choice and diversity, reinforce social divisions, and are less accountable, raising issues of governance, power and inequality (Leo et al. 2010; Gunter 2012; Bates 2013). Camden Green School is neither an academy nor currently going for academy status, but is an

example of a socially mixed state primary school that is now threatened with extinction as the government has enabled and endorsed the idea that all schools should eventually become academies (DfE 2010; 2013:297). Therefore analyses of the practices of Camden Green School, and those of the parents and children who mix there, give some insight into what stands to be lost through this policy that threatens to radically transform the way school education is experienced.

The trope of ‘aspiration’ is a key focus of the current and previous government’s education approaches, for example through the AimHigher scheme (2004-2011) and Raising Aspirations initiatives (Cabinet Office 2011; Thomas 2011). Yet whilst the focus on aspiration re-iterates the individual as both problem and solution to inequality, critics argue that, “Social class continues to be *the* single most important influence on educational achievement in Britain” (Plummer 2000:vii).

A key analysis of this research is how individualist discourses and policies are mobilised through a system of merit and credentialism that privileges academic learning. This system is claimed to be a route by which individuals can distinguish themselves based on their abilities and effort, rather than based on their class origins. As such the meritocratic ideal is claimed to be a just basis of resulting inequalities, again mobilised through the policy approach of equal opportunities. Several other policy approaches are drawn into this debate, including pressures on schools via academic assessment within a competitive market system, the privileging of particular universities and ‘hard’ academic subjects, and widening participation policies that aim to include more young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in Higher Education (Archer et al. 2002; Evans 2010; DBIS 2011; 2012).

1:3:3 Occupation

Unequal mobilities that are based on social class backgrounds persist, with just a ninth of those from low-income backgrounds reaching the top income quartile, compared to almost half of those from high-income backgrounds. Whilst only 7% of the population attend private schools, they account for more than half of those in top positions in most professions, including 54% of top journalists, 54% of FTSE chief executives, and 70% of high court judges (Cabinet Office 2011:9).

The legacy of neoliberal policies and deregulation of capital in Britain that catalyzed the decline in the manufacturing sector and increase in the service sector (McDowell 1997; McDowell 2009) led to increased socio-economic polarisation in cities, as the highest incomes rose, and the gap between the rich and poor increased (McDowell 2003:6). This has been further exacerbated following the 2008-2009 recession (Plunkett and Pessoa 2013), with middle-skilled jobs falling as a share of the total jobs, a 14% increase of Britons earning below the Living Wage, and the numbers of workers in part-time or temporary work doubling (Whittaker and Hurrell 2013). This increased casualisation of labour is associated with reduced income security and increased levels of material deprivation for families (Hirsch and Beckhelling 2011:14). This impacts particularly on women, who have also experienced a 16% rise of unemployment since the recession, despite the overall trend to feminisation of the workforce since the 1970s (McDowell 2009; Hirsch and Beckhelling 2011:13; Whittaker and Hurrell 2013).

However the government's response to the recession, rather than redressing these structural inequalities, or securing the welfare safety net, is to instill welfare cuts and pathologise people who increasingly require welfare support. The cuts thus disproportionately impact on low-paid and unemployed people. Moreover, as indicated earlier, the individualist discourse holds these low-income groups culpable for their own disadvantage, and as such pathologises them.

This moral discourse is deployed through the 'workfare' discourse, whereby "benefits are increasingly means tested, time limited or financially capped and contingent on recipients seeking work" (Hamnett 2013:1). This approach was introduced by New Labour and is perpetuated by the current government, using the moral discourse to justify punitive policies and benefit cuts (Haylett 2001; 2003; Jones 2011; Slater 2012; Tyler 2013). Welfare is no longer understood as a safety net for those disadvantaged and marginalised in a classed society, but rather as instrumental in disincentivising the individual to find work,

Too many struggle to get on in the labour market, held back by low qualifications or a welfare system that does not sufficiently incentivize work. (Cabinet Office 2011:7)

Welfare is thus understood as pathologising, class structures as irrelevant, and the poor divided along the long-standing fissure of ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’.

Moreover, the individualist discourse of social mobility is at times conflated with the ‘workfare’ discourse, i.e. simply with getting a job, such as several papers at the joint Government Equalities Office and ESRC social mobility conference, 2012, (e.g. Brewer 2012), and Coalition social mobility policy documents that focus on “work incentives” and the “blight of worklessness” (Cabinet Office 2011:7). The social mobility discourse is therefore part of the wider individualized discourse that arguably works to justify neoliberal policies of state retraction, welfare cuts and punitive policy measures (Haylett 2001; 2003; Wacquant 2008; Slater 2012; Tyler 2013). In these terms, social mobility as a concept becomes little more than a stick to beat the workless with.

The ‘welfare to work’ discourse is directed at individuals, families and parents, thus particularly relevant to this study. The government acknowledges that parents’ social class continues to have bearing on children’s chances. However, this is not discussed in terms of families’ structural disadvantages, but in terms of unproductive family cultures, inadequate parenting, and insufficient character and resilience (Cabinet Office 2011; APG 2012; 2013). In this moral discourse poor families are devalued and ‘libeled’, consigned to prejudiced representations as ‘benefit scroungers’ (Shildrick et al. 2012:1-2). The judgment on parenting is conceived in class relational terms, with working-class parents regarded as failing to measure up to middle-class parents (Gillies 2007; Jensen 2010). Yet despite a political rhetoric emphasising parenting as the bedrock of children’s life chances, this is contradicted both by the workfare policies that erode time parents spend with their children, and by the benefit cuts that put families into poverty and threaten their housing security.

Underpinning these paradoxes is the failure to recognise parents’ relational family situations, as the focus on individual aspiration and merit assumes autonomy (Gillies 2007; Armstrong 2010). As such, the government’s focus on family can be understood as merely a rhetorical device with which to stigmatise and penalise those struggling most to provide adequate resources and time for their children.

1:3:4 Housing

UK neoliberal housing policies, initiated by the Conservatives in the 1980s, entrenched by Labour in the 1990s and 2000s, and perpetuated by the current Coalition government, have worked to transfer much of Local Authority ownership and control of housing stock into the private and quasi-private sector (Watt 2001; 2009b; Alakeson and Cory 2013). Thatcher's Right to Buy policy (1980 Housing Act) was central to this, as it allowed council tenants to buy their properties with huge discounts, which has impacted over time to massively reduce council housing stock (Watt 2001:57-60). These policies led to a binaried housing market in the 1980s and 1990s, consisting largely of home-ownership and social housing. Gentrification in London was accelerated, and critics argue that this was accompanied by working-class displacement, although the extent and causes of these processes are hotly contested (Smith 1996; Hamnett 2003; Slater 2006; Smith 2008; Watt 2008a). Over time, however, the housing market has diversified, with New Labour accelerating quasi-private schemes, including housing association stock transfer, shared-ownership schemes and the private-public redevelopment of council housing estates (Watt 2009b).

Throughout this time neoliberal policies have promoted home-ownership. Most recently the Coalition re-launched the Right to Buy scheme in 2012, and launched the Help-to-Buy scheme in 2013. The latter scheme is described by Alakeson and Cory as, "the biggest intervention in the housing market in recent history" (2013:3), but because of the affordability criteria and high London prices, it is only accessible to high-earning households (Winch 2013).

The rapidly expanding private rental sector has also been accelerated by government policies, which have supported an increase in the buy-to-let market and the inflation of the private housing market. But even so-called 'affordable' private rental properties, priced at up to 80% of market rents, are unaffordable for low- and median-income families in Inner London (Alakeson and Cory 2013:3). Yet the reduced social housing stock has pushed people on council lists into the private rental sector, which unsurprisingly has increased housing benefit remittances. Yet there are no signs of rent controls, revision of tenancy contracts or regulation of landlord and letting agents (Wilson 2013). Instead the current government has implemented housing benefit cuts, thus obstructing access to private renting for lower income households.

At the same time, for those lucky enough to access scarce council housing, Coalition policies have eroded the tenure conditions, with the introduction of fixed short-term tenancies and restricted succession rights (The Localism Act, 2011). They have also introduced the 'bedroom tax', reducing benefits for those deemed to be under-occupying their council properties, forcing many tenants into debt and/or out of properties (Slater 2013; Ramesh 2013b).

These policies together represent a crisis in the inner London Borough of Camden where social housing has increasingly become the only affordable housing option for low- and even median-income households (Alakeson and Cory 2013; Collinson 2013:17). Camden Council still controls most of the social housing, but the housing stock has reduced dramatically. In 2013, 23 % of households rented from the council compared to 38.9% in 1981 (Watt 2001:126; LBC 2013:27). The soaring costs of private housing means that both renting and buying in this sector is unaffordable to all but the wealthiest households (Alakeson and Cory 2013:3). In March 2012 Camden had the third highest property prices of all the London boroughs, with London more than double the England average (ITV 2013; Shelter 2014). Intermediate shared ownership housing in the borough is also unaffordable for most key workers (Wilcox and Williams 2007).

As all the inner London housing sectors are becoming unaffordable and inaccessible for low- and median-income populations, displacement is occurring across the city, homelessness is rapidly increasing (Alakeson and Cory 2013; Ramesh 2013), and the class demography and spatial landscape of London is being radically restructured (Watt 2013). The implementation of the Coalition policies is staggered incrementally over time, obscuring to some extent the dramatic changes occurring to the housing landscape and class demographic in London and across the UK. This research nevertheless engages with some of the threatened outcomes, contributing to an understanding of how past and current policies impact on everyday lives and social mobility trajectories, with attention to the particular issues faced by families.

Current policies are premised on a long-standing discursive privileging of home-ownership in Britain, claimed to be the 'natural' goal of the aspirational. The current government explicitly privileges owner-occupation against council renting,

In the 80s, Right to Buy helped millions of people living in council housing achieve their aspiration of owning their own home. It gave something back to families who worked hard, paid their rent and played by the rules. It allowed them to do up their home, change their front door, improve their garden - without getting permission from the council. It gave people a sense of pride and ownership not just in their home, but in their street and neighbourhood, helping to build strong families and stable mixed communities (Cameron 2012).

This narrative by David Cameron links aspiration to home-ownership, explicitly drawing housing into the discourse of aspirational social mobility. He also draws housing into the moral discourse that constructs value-laden identities as he articulates home-ownership as just reward for hard-working, law-abiding, independent families, claiming it as the foundation of strong families, communities, streets and neighbourhoods. Meanwhile, the discursive privileging of home-ownership is accompanied by a devaluation of council housing, and also implicitly its tenants, re-iterating another long-standing pathologising discourse aimed at working-class people (Watt 2001; 2008b; Gidley and Rooke 2010).

Academic analysis from the 1980s and 1990s, however, played its own role in naturalising ideas about tenure-type, as the binaried housing market elicited debates about class formation along dichotomous socio-tenorial lines (Hamnett 1984; Sullivan 1987:32), that was in danger of essentialising and fetishising tenure-characteristics (Gurney 1999). To avoid and deconstruct this approach, my analysis focuses on housing qualities that cut across tenure, and on the social, economic and political processes that contingently construct and mediate access to tenure. This both rejects tenure fetishism, and responds to the currently more fragmented tenure landscape.

1:3:5 Social Mixing

Because the research setting is class-mixed, it is well-positioned to contribute to the academic and political debates on social mixing and mixed communities policies (e.g. Cheshire 2007; Davidson 2010; Bridge et al. 2012a; Arbaci and Rae 2013). The concept of social mixing is currently defined by a policy discourse that utilises it to justify regeneration programmes, including the redevelopment of social housing estates as mixed-tenure, mixed-class and mixed public/private enterprises, in London and across cities in the Global North (Gwyther 2009; Lees et al. 2012; Musterd and Andersson 2005).

This study examines the assumptions of this politicised social mixing discourse, which claims that lower-income people benefit from mixing residentially with higher-income neighbours because the latter provide social capital in the form of role models, elevated aspirations, and improved access to employment (Cheshire 2007; Gwyther 2009). Social mixing is thus claimed as beneficial for improving the social mobility of working-class residents, with the neighborhood deemed to be the site for area-based policy intervention on the basis that the neighbourhood has effects on social mobility over and above other factors influencing individuals' life chances (Musterd and Andersson 2005; van Ham et al. 2012; Arbaci and Rae 2013)⁴.

The assumptions of social mixing align with a neoliberal individualist discourse in that the problems of inequality are assumed to lie with the cultural attitudes, behaviours and affiliations of individuals, and the emphasis is on individuals accessing other individuals as a route to improving life chances. The individual is deemed responsible for their own social mobility by making the appropriate social ties that can generate social capital, rather than the state taking responsibility for alleviating poverty and providing resources and jobs. As such, social-mixing policies offer a cultural solution for what critics argue are economic and structural problems of poverty and inequality (Musterd and Andersson 2005; Cheshire 2007; Arbaci and Rae 2013).

⁴ See van Ham et al. 2012 for an overview of the 'neighbourhood effects' theory.

1:4 Research Aim and Questions

My key research aim, as indicated throughout this chapter, is to better understand what constitutes social mobility, both as a lived experience and theoretical concept. Given the contemporary political focus on social mobility, the individualist version forwarded, the mis-understandings relating to the decline of social mobility (Goldthorpe 2012), and the relatively small body of empirically-grounded theoretical investigation into social mobility, I consider this to be an appropriate and significant research aim. The three inter-connected key research questions are inter-twined and align with the three theoretical-empirical contributions discussed earlier (1:2:1, 1:2:2 and 1:2:3) as they focus on class, the individualist social mobility discourse, and an expanded notion of social mobilities. I clarify the three questions, in turn, next.

1:4:1 How does Class Inter-relate with Participants' Experiences of Social Mobility?

In order to explore what constitutes social mobility, my first research question interrogates how class processes inter-relate with participants' social mobility experiences. I address this question at different levels, from the subjective to the structural. Thus I interrogate, for example, how national policies, economic structures and the dominant discourse of social mobility shape everyday classed practices and social mobilities. I examine subjective experiences of class across the four social fields of education, occupation, housing and social mixing, each investigated, in turn, via four empirical chapters. At the same time I consider how these fields themselves are shaped by class interests and practices. This approach elucidates the understanding of social mobility by interrogating both subjective and 'objective' aspects of class (Bourdieu et al. 2006 [1999]).

Throughout the empirical chapters I interrogate inter-generational family processes of class reproduction in order to better understand the barriers and agents to upward, downward and horizontal mobilities (Figs 1.8, 1.9, 1.10). I examine how families' unequal levels of class resources are both shaped by class structures and shape subjective dispositions. This approach incorporates both individual and collective class processes (Savage 2000; Skeggs 2004).



Fig 1.8: Merchant Taylor's independent school (family photo)



Fig 1.9: Three generations



Fig 1.10: Grandfather (Family Stories)

I take a multi-faceted approach to class, asking how cultural, symbolic, emotional, social and economic aspects of class experience impact on social mobility trajectories (Bourdieu 1986; Reay 2004; Bottero 2004:984; Skeggs 2004). I consistently examine the role of economic and emotional resources throughout, consider cultural capital in terms of institutional qualifications and embodied practices, and focus on social capital in the

final empirical chapter on social mixing. Symbolic capital is central to the examination of the individualist social mobility discourse, which I discuss in the next section as it relates to my second research question. Throughout, I examine how the different kinds of capitals intertwine with each other in upward and downward spirals of dis/advantage. This multifaceted approach to class analysis provides a nuanced account of social mobilities that can capture the complexity of how class refracts through individual lives.

From a geographical point of view I focus my analysis at various spatial scales. A key research focus is the body, with a particular interest in embodied face-to-face interactions in everyday spaces, and how they are shaped by relative class positions and impact on social mobilities (Bourdieu 1986; 1996; McDowell 2009:37). I also connect embodied practices to national and global scales, such as policy contexts, and international labour relations and migration (Massey 1994a).

Thus, overall, this research question elucidates the central research aim of better understanding what constitutes social mobility by examining class subjectivities, practices, processes, interactions, intersections, reproductions, transitions, structures and discourses.

1:4:2 How do Participants' Experiences Relate to a Dominant Individualist Discourse of Social Mobility?

This second research question is concerned with participants' social mobility experiences in the context of the way that social mobility is represented by a dominant individualist discourse of social mobility. I use the term 'relate to' as shorthand for my intention to interrogate how participants' experiences variously converge with, diverge from, are impacted by, construct, reproduce, consent to, and contest a dominant individualist discourse of social mobility.

The first and second research questions are closely inter-related because taking account of the impact of class on participants' experiences contests the individualist-individualizing perspective that regards class as having a decreased and insignificant impact on individuals' life trajectories (Giddens 1991; Beck 1999; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001). Thus I examine how participants' class positions provides them with unequal capacities to formulate future goals, make choices, take risks, exploit

opportunities, be socially and spatially mobile and construct their own biographies. In short, I examine how class shapes unequal access to reflexive identities (Savage 2000; Skeggs 2004:20). As such, I question the central conceptual tenets of the individualist-individualizing social mobility discourse.

I also examine how the dominant individualist social mobility discourse works to reproduce existing class power relations. I examine how participants' reproduce the individualist mobility *moral* discourse that evaluates and constructs a hierarchical order of class categories (discussed in 1:3:1 and 1:5:1), for example through their everyday practices of distinction-making. I explore how the individualist moral discourse may be hegemonic due to participants' consent to it, investigating how participants internalise notions of culpability, merit and just reward, ascribing them to themselves or others. I also examine how participants' experiences converge or diverge from the representations and constructs of the individualist-individualizing discourse.

I also examine how these moral ascriptions and inscriptions impact on participants' social mobilities. I explore this in terms of emotional impacts, investigating how people's internalised representations shape their aspirations and expectations. Equally I consider material impacts by analysing how these dominant representations justify the withdrawal of welfare, which in turn impacts on access to an individualized identity.

I, further, consider how hierarchical evaluations associated with the individualist social mobility discourse are mobilised via sets of status indicators. I interrogate the particular ways that the individualist discourse assigns value and reproduces class relations via privileging academic credentials, ranking occupations, hierarchising housing tenure-types and valorising middle-class culture, considering each in turn through the four empirical chapters, and exploring whose interests these dominant perspectives serve (Savage 1997:303; Plummer 2000; Skeggs 2004).

Overall, this second research question contributes to the central research aim of better understanding social mobility because, as well as illuminating the theoretical underpinnings of the dominant individualist model of social mobility, it also questions whether it is adequate for describing participants' experiences and improving the fluidity

of their mobilities. This begs the question of what model, then, is adequate, which is addressed next by the third research question.

1:4:3 How do Participants Experiences and Narratives of Social Mobility Suggest an Alternative Model of Social Mobilities?

The third research question is aimed at finding out what participants experience and value as social achievements in their own lives, which I draw on to explore an alternative expanded notion of social mobilities (as discussed in 1:2:3). This question seeks to hear the less frequently heard subordinated voices and values (middle- *and* working-class) that are obscured by the dominant individualist mobility discourse (Bourdieu 1986; Skeggs 2004; Gillies 2007).

This approach opens up a narrow hierarchical understanding of social mobility to a diverse array of alternative subordinated accounts. I examine what participants' value in each of the social fields of education, occupation and housing, and how this may expand the current ranked social mobility status indicators. I do not reject outright the value attached to the conventional indicators of social success, but explore how plural ways of achieving success might co-exist (Elliott 1997; Raco 2009). As discussed, this includes considering experiences of 'getting by' as well as 'getting on', and also unpaid labour, such as parental and domestic work, especially pertinent to this study. As also discussed, I consider the holistic social and emotional factors that influence participants' trajectories (Elliott 1997; Brown 2011). With this expanded lens focused on the participants' experiences I also examine what form of social mixing they find beneficial for progressing their mobilities, thus exploring alternatives to the currently dominant social mixing area-based policies that valorise middle-class social capital in the residential site, but which critics argue are largely ineffective for improving working-class people's social mobilities (Cheshire 2007; Fraser et al. 2012; Arbaci and Rae 2013).

Then, as discussed, by listening for shared subordinated discourses across classes I explore how together they may suggest a 'counter-hegemonic' alternative to the dominant social mobility discourse, more compatible with redressing inequalities than the individualist model. As such, I interrogate whether the notion of plural mobilities suggests a more equitable social mobility model as it posits the idea of multiple, and potentially more equal, routes to success being recognised. I also listen for shared

narratives that attach value to inclusivity, empathy and care, rather than only examining self-interested and individualist practices. Whilst it is not within the scope of this study to provide coherent policy recommendations, nevertheless I explore how an expanded understanding of social mobilities may suggest alternative policy approaches more compatible with a concern for class inequality.

1:5 Conclusion: Summary of the Chapters

This chapter has highlighted how I plan to address the question, ‘what is social mobility?’ The introduction emphasised the significance and timeliness of the research, followed by a discussion of my personal motivation. Then, situating the research within the relevant literatures, I discussed how it contributes to academic knowledge. I discussed four specific contributions this study makes, namely (1) examining the political individualist model of social mobility, (2) developing class theory, (3) exploring an alternative expanded discourse of social mobilities, and (4) methodological contributions, including the particularity of the research setting, and the inter-related visual, participative and ‘insider-outsider’ methodological approaches. The next section focused on the historical and political context of the research, in which I discussed political policies and discourses for each social field investigated. Finally I clarified the central research aim, which is to interrogate what constitutes social mobility (experientially and theoretically), and how I would address this aim through three research questions that roughly correlate with the three theoretical contributions already discussed. To recap, the three questions will interrogate participants’ experiences, firstly, in relation to class, secondly, in relation to the individualist social mobility discourse and, thirdly, in relation to an alternative model of social mobilities. In the rest of this chapter I will now outline how these contributions, contexts, research aim and questions are synthesised through the thesis’ chapters.

In chapter two, ‘Ways into Social Mobility and Class: Framing the Analysis’, I situate the research theoretically within relevant literatures in more detail, elaborating on my own theoretical approach. I discuss theoretical approaches to social mobility, including the class approach of Goldthorpe and the Nuffield school and the individualization theory associated with Beck and Giddens. I then discuss my planned class theoretical approach, elaborating on the use of Savage’s (2000) idea of the individualization of class, Skeggs’

(2004) theory of cultural class-making in the interests of power, and Bourdieu's (1985; 1986; 1996) framework of habitus, capitals and field. I then consider the limitations of a Bourdieuvian approach and explain how I will nuance his framework by drawing in subordinated voices, and drawing on theories of embodiment, emotion and intersectionality.

In chapter three, 'Methodological Approach', I discuss how the theory translates into an operational methodology and elaborate on the methodological contributions this study makes. I present the ontological and epistemological rationale for the research, discussing why an interpretative case study approach, with the particular methods used, is appropriate. I discuss the research setting and participants in more detail. I also discuss my use of biographical in-depth interviewing, observational ethnographic methods, and elaborate on the visual, participative and 'insider-researcher' approach. I also discuss how I approach the analysis and the production of the final account. Throughout the chapter I interweave a discussion of a range of ethical issues, including reflexively considering my own positionality in the research.

Chapter four, 'Education', is the first of the four empirical chapters, and I investigate what constitutes social mobility by examining participants' educational experiences, their narratives of their children's education, intergenerational educational transmission, and inequalities between participants' experiences. I address the inter-related research questions one and two by interrogating individualist claims that education is a key site by which individuals' progress through merit (Saunders 1997), against class critics who argue that the education system is a key site through which the middle-class reproduce their privileges (Bourdieu and Passerson 2000[1977]; Savage 2000:89-91). I focus on the 'raising aspirations' debate because it is central to education policy approaches, exploring how class backgrounds shape participants' aspirations, the translation of aspiration into achievement, and participants' attitudes to investment and risk. In the context of widening participation in higher education, I examine how the privileging of academic learning is deployed and experienced as a form of cultural hegemony, and argue that increasingly sophisticated structural systems of academic credentialism are utilised by the middle class to reproduce their advantages. I address question three by examining what kind of education participants' excel in and value, arguing for more equitable credit to be

given for academic and vocational learning, and for more holistic learning, life-skills and practices of inclusion to be promoted and valued in the educational field.

In chapter five, 'Occupation', I investigate participants' occupational experiences, intergenerational class reproduction and mobilities, work-life mobilities (Savage 2000:92-94), and embodied interactive experiences in the workplace (McDowell 2009). I address questions one and two by developing the investigation into how class shapes attitudes to risk, capacities to engage with opportunities, and access to reflexive individualized identities. I examine how participants' experience the pathologising 'workfare' and 'worklessness' discourse, and argue that discourses conferring value to different occupational positions attach to classed bodies in ways that exacerbate inequalities (Bourdieu 1977; Skeggs 2004). I problematise the discursive binary of mobility and stasis, and the application of this notion to classed identities. I contest individualized notions of autonomy against participants' relational experiences. I then address question three by considering the labours and mobilities involved in 'getting by', and re-evaluate low-status labours such as parenting and manual jobs. I progress the argument that a discursive focus on upward mobility works to evade state responsibility for redressing the disadvantages associated with downward social mobilities, and develop the argument of the previous chapter that plural mobilities and achievements be valued more equally.

In chapter six, 'Housing and Displacement', I pursue the investigation of inter-generational transitions and making comparisons between participants, examining embodied experience and lived class relations. Further addressing the inter-relationship of questions one and two, I focus on the structural impact of individualist policies on the housing market, and thereby on access to affordable secure housing. I pay particular attention to experiences of living in insecure housing, including experiences of homelessness, eviction and threatened displacement. By looking at the impact of displacement on access to education, occupation and social networks, I draw out inter-relationships between the four social mobility fields investigated. I continue an emphasis on materiality and the emotions, and develop the interrogation into experiences of stasis and mobility. Addressing questions two and three, I interrogate what housing qualities participants' value, which contests the dominant social mobility discourse that privileges home-ownership. I argue that housing is constructed by the individualist social mobility

discourse as a positional good (Allen 2008), but would be better conceptualised as a basic need, evaluated in terms of valued qualities rather than tenure-type.

Chapter seven, ‘Social Mixing’, focuses attention on everyday experiences of social mixing. This interrogates the claims of the social mixing policy discourse that the social mobility opportunities of working-class residents are improved by mixing with middle-class residents. I address question one by analysing how class power relations work through everyday interactive spaces, and also question two as this contests social mixing policy assumptions. I develop question three’s focus on alternative ways of thinking about social mobility via an investigation of in which places, through which processes, and via what forms of social capital participants’ social mobilities have been improved. I widen the conceptual parameters of the social mixing discourse by investigating intra- as well as inter-class mixing, by looking beyond the residential site, and by considering strong as well as loose social ties. I develop the idea of a counter-hegemonic social mobility discourse oriented to redressing inequality by arguing for using a resource-centred notion of social capital in conjunction with area-based policies based on collective redistributive principles.

In the concluding chapter eight I synthesise and discuss the findings from all four empirical chapters in relation to the central research aim and three research questions. I also further discuss some key contributions this study makes to academic knowledge. I then consider the limitations of the research and make suggestions for further research. I finally conclude the thesis with some personal reflections on the journey I took in doing this research.

In this chapter I have given an overview of how I draw on the literatures to frame my analysis, and in the next chapter I discuss my theoretical framework in more detail. I elaborate on how my theoretical framework will address my central research aim and the three research questions.

Chapter Two: Framing the Analysis

2:1 Introduction

In this chapter I lay out the theoretical orientation of this study that investigates experiences of social mobility amongst mixed-class parents in an inner London locality, further detailing the relevant literatures within which this study sits, drawing out the relevant debates, and explaining how they are useful for my analysis. To address the research aim of examining what constitutes social mobility, in terms of both experience and theory, I orient my investigation through three research questions. To recap, question one examines how class inter-relates with participants' experiences of social mobility, question two asks how participants' experiences relate to a dominant individualist discourse of social mobility, and question three interrogates how participants' experiences and narratives of social achievement suggest an alternative model of social mobilities. I organise this chapter to elaborate on this central aim and three research questions.

In the next (second) section I return to the social mobility literatures outlined in the previous chapter, discussing relevant insights from Goldthorpe and his colleagues' quantitative approach, and then qualitative approaches in more detail, elaborating on how this research is situated in relation to them. For the rest of the chapter I discuss the theory more specifically in relation to the three research questions. So in the third section I discuss individualization theory, and its political application as an individualist discourse of social mobility (relating to question two). I then have two sections addressing class theory (relating to question one). In the third section I situate the study broadly within class theory, followed by a discussion of how I draw on Savage's (2000) thesis that class takes "individualized forms", and on Skeggs' (2004) theory that classed bodies are mobilised as symbolic resources for the purposes of reproducing class power. In the fifth section I then turn to Bourdieu (2002[1977]; 2000 [1977b]; 1986; 1990; 1996; 2006[1999]) to describe how his multifaceted class framework can accommodate, develop and operationalise Savage and Skeggs' approaches. In the sixth section I then broaden the Bourdieuvian focus to discuss how I plan to draw in the subordinated perspectives of the participants. I elaborate on my approach of examining holistic and plural social mobilities (drawing on Elliott 1997, Raco 2009 and Brown 2011), and discuss how I theoretically approach question three that seeks to investigate how

participants' experiences and narratives of social achievement suggest an alternative counter-hegemonic notion of social mobility. I elaborate on my use of the theories of embodiment, emotion and intersectionality in this context, but also reflect on how these theories will enrich my analytic response to all three research questions.

2:2 Social Mobility Theory

Social mobility is the term used by researchers to describe the movement within a lifecourse (intra-generational) and between familial generations (inter-generational) within stratified occupational categories (Rose and Pevalin 2001). I also draw on Thomson's (2011) approach of analysing horizontally across people of the same generations, although I use this concept loosely, applying it across parents who share a similar point in their life trajectories, and with a particular interest in comparing their unequal experiences.

I will now elaborate on Goldthorpe and the Nuffield school's quantitative approach to social mobility (introduced in 1:2:1), drawing out its significance for my research. Then I discuss how qualitative approaches expanded this theoretical lens to include subjectivity and culture.

2:2:1 Goldthorpe and the Nuffield School: Putting Class into the Analysis

Goldthorpe and the Nuffield School's influential quantitative approach to social mobility pioneered a shift in the 1980s, from measuring mobility according to graded hierarchical rank, to measuring it according to class status (Goldthorpe et al. 1980). They categorised occupations into a number of classes according to the different social relationships of the workers, such as categories of owners, managers and employees, and takes into account levels and security of earnings, and conditions and benefits of employment (Savage 1997:303; Rose, et al. 2005; Goldthorpe 2012). This shift thus grounded social mobility analysis in a relational class schema.

Moreover, Goldthorpe and his colleagues developed an approach for measuring relative, as well as absolute, social mobility. Whilst absolute mobility measures the total number of people moving occupational class position, relative mobility measures the relative

chances of people from different class origins achieving particular occupational positions (Goldthorpe et al. 1980). Thus relative mobility rates indicate the openness of societies, with low rates indicating that inequalities are rooted in class structures (Savage 1997; Crompton 1998:212-213; Rose and Pevalin 2001).

The distinction between absolute and relative social mobility is crucial for understanding the commonly repeated view that social mobility in the UK is currently in decline (Blanden et al. 2005; Cabinet Office 2011; Goldthorpe 2012; Boliver and Byrne 2013). I will discuss what this decline means because it provides insight into different understandings of social mobility, and why variant interpretations have significant impacts. It also helps explain my research approach.

The view that the ‘Golden Age’ of post-war upward mobility in the UK has slowed down since the 1970s is implicitly associated with the idea that society is now less class-fluid than it was previously. On this basis the individualist meritocratic approach to social mobility proposes equal opportunities as a way to return to this ideal of an open society in which individuals can break free from the constraints of class structures by grasping the opportunities made available by policy (Goldthorpe 2012; see 1:3:1 here).

The notion of a ‘Golden Age’ of class fluidity, however, is misconceived. What actually propelled the post-war upward mobility was a radical transformation of the UK labour market, whereby people from working-class backgrounds shifted upwards as they were needed to fill new management and professional vacancies demanded by the newly established welfare state and the emerging post-industrial service economy. However, increasing numbers of people from middle-class backgrounds were also drawn into these vacancies (Boliver and Byrne 2013; Goldthorpe 2012). As such, the *absolute* numbers of people from working-class origin who entered middle-class jobs increased, but their *relative* chances of gaining a middle-class job compared to someone from a middle-class background remained roughly constant. Therefore people from working-class backgrounds were just as relatively disadvantaged as they had been previously (Goldthorpe 2012: 19)⁵.

⁵ Goldthorpe (2012) notes some improvement in relative mobility for women due to the feminisation of the labour market. This demands closer investigation, but is not within the scope of this study.

However, this rate of structural demand-led absolute mobility has now slowed down, as there are simply far fewer new middle-class jobs. Relative social mobility rates, on the other hand, were always more or less static, and have thus remained consistently low since the inter-war period. This suggests a persisting rigidity of class structures (Aldridge 2001; Goldthorpe 2012:11). Whilst not undermining the significance of absolute mobility rates for individuals, as they impact on their chances of acquiring high level jobs (Roberts 2013), my overall point is that the current political and popular understanding of the causes and solutions for social mobility is flawed, indicating the need for social mobility to be investigated and better understood, as addressed by the central aim of this research.

Goldthorpe's argument has several implications for this study. Firstly, the persistence of low relative social mobility rates for nearly one hundred years indicates the need to examine entrenched structures of class inequality. I address this with my first research question. Secondly, the solution of equal opportunities is implicated as ineffective because the consistently low relative mobility rates indicate that the numerous and radical educational policies since the war, through which this policy approach has largely been mobilised, have had little impact on improving class fluidity (Goldthorpe 2012:15-19). This suggests that the individualist solution to social mobility needs to be interrogated within the context of a class analysis (hence the inter-relation of questions one and two). The slowing down of absolute mobility rates is also significant for this study because it indicates increased class competition. When there was a structural expansion of middle-class jobs, working-class people could be upwardly mobile without threatening the existing middle-class, because they were simply filling new vacancies, which anyway also offered the middle class improved chances of reproducing their positions. However, as the growth of new middle-class jobs has slowed, the upward mobility of a person from working-class origin is likely to be accompanied by the downward mobility of someone from middle-class origin. As such, social mobility is now more or less a zero-sum game, contrary to the claims of politicians who, against all evidence, argue that a higher skilled workforce will by default conjure higher skilled jobs (ibid 2012:10-17; Boliver and Byrne 2012:51). In this situation the fight for the top jobs becomes much more class-competitive, with the middle class in a position of increased insecurity and, as such, likely to be oriented to constructing new strategies for reproducing their advantages and warding off the working-class threat (Goldthorpe 2012:18-19; Boliver and Byrne 2013).

This, again, suggests the appropriateness of a class analysis (question one), but also the need to re-think the concepts, problems, challenges and solutions of social mobility, which is addressed by the overall research aim. If a more open class-fluid society is genuinely sought, the current zero-sum situation emphasises the need for addressing the downward mobility that inevitably accompanies upward mobility, and for focusing attention on the status and conditions of the lower tier occupation, which upward mobility will not erase. Question three helps to address this as it listens to participants' experiences and narrative of social achievement in order to explore alternative notions of social mobility, including attention to downward as well as upward mobility, and to 'getting by' as well as 'getting on'.

Goldthorpe's approach, however, is a quantitative analysis, with no attention to complex subjective experiences and class processes. So, before moving on to address the theoretical orientation of each research question in more detail, I first give attention to qualitative approaches to researching social mobility that emerged from the cultural turn.

2:2:2 The Cultural Turn and Qualitative Analysis

The 'cultural turn' in the social sciences gained paradigmatic significance in the 1980s and 1990s. It was associated with a theoretical and methodological shift from wider structural analyses to subjectivity, investigated by qualitative approaches. This was aligned to a shift of focus from class inequality to identity difference, directing attention to identities other than class, such as gender, ethnicity and sexuality. Many scholars claimed that class formation was breaking up in the context of late capitalist globalisation and western de-industrialisation, in which identities were fracturing and people becoming increasingly spatially mobile. In these terms, class analysis was proclaimed to be no longer a useful approach to understanding social life (Pahl 1989; Beck 1999; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001; Giddens 1991). In the following section I will argue that this shift in theoretical approach to understanding identity has influenced the way social mobility is currently framed in political discourse. But, firstly, I briefly review class-based qualitative approaches to social mobility.

Despite the withdrawal of class analysis through the 1990s, the cultural turn has been hugely important for re-vitalising class analysis more recently. This has impacted on understandings of social mobility, as it has incorporated the notions of culture and

subjectivity (e.g. Lawler 1999; Rogaly and Taylor 2009b). There has been mounting attention to inter-generational class reproduction, evidenced in the influential work of Bourdieu, with reference to cultures of the body, education, place and spatial mobility (Skeggs 1997; Reay 1998; Butler 2003; Kelly and Lusi 2006; Watt 2009a). Bertaux and Thompson's (1997a) edited collection of qualitative social mobility research was hugely important for its focus on subjective, cultural and spatial experiences. They also stressed the importance of the emotional and moral bonds of family for inter-generational mobility, thus challenging the quantitative focus on *individuals'* mobility (Bertaux and Thompson 1997b:7). However, as discussed in chapter one, this was a rare qualitative contribution to addressing social mobility head-on, and whilst they acknowledged class contexts, they did not centralise class as an analytic approach, nor embed their research within wider political discourses of social mobility. This does not mean that there are no empirical studies addressing subjective experiences of social mobility in terms of class (such as Elliott 1997; Evans 2010; Butler and Hamnett 2011a) but, as argued in 1:2:1, social mobility is under-researched and under-theorised, so this study develops existing approaches through its explicit and comprehensive exploration of the concepts and experiences of social mobility, and through the particular foci of its three research questions, which I discuss for the rest of this chapter. Next I therefore discuss social mobility in the context of individualization theory and the individualist political discourse, which relates to research question two.

2:3 Individualization Theory and the Individualist Social Mobility Discourse

As mentioned in the previous chapter, social mobility is a key political concept and policy theme that the current Conservative-led Coalition government has carried forward from New Labour, modeled via a neoliberal discourse that has no primary reference to a class framework, and instead emphasises individual responsibility (Aldridge 2001; 2009; Cabinet Office 2011; 2012; APG 2012; 2013). This political approach has been shaped by theories associated with individualization, which emphasise the modern subject as positioned to choose their life trajectories in flexible, autonomous ways (Giddens 1991; Beck et al. 1994; Giddens 1997; Beck 1999; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001)⁶. In this section I discuss, firstly, academic theories of individualization and, secondly, how this translates into a political individualist approach to social mobility.

2:3:1 Theories of Individualization

Giddens (1991; 1997) argues that the defining feature of the current social world is the production of the reflexive self, which is constructed in relation to processes of ‘late modernity’. In this process individuals are dis-embedded from embodied face-to-face relationships, including from traditional social class and family groups, and then they re-embed themselves in chosen social attachments and individualized biographies.

The notion of radically altered social relationships is associated with a radically altered relationship between time and space, captured by Harvey’s concept of “time-space compression” (1989:284). He argued that in the context of globalisation the technologies of communication, economics and travel have accelerated and elided the physical distances of time and space. There was an influential paradigmatic shift within geography and across the social sciences towards understanding social relations in terms of mobility (Massey 1994b; Agnew 2001; May and Thrift 2001:6). Urry argued that we live in a post-societal culture in which mobility, rather than structures or positions, is the determining frame for social relations (2000:17, in Skeggs 2004:48).

⁶ There are some theoretical differences in the approaches of Beck and Giddens (Atkinson 2007). However, when I refer to ‘individualization’ I encompass both their work, which they acknowledge are commensurable (Beck et al. 1994).

The concept of ‘individualization’ thus seeks to understand the connection between self-identities and their untethering from known social group forms and certain knowledge. Mobility is associated with unstable events that are allied with unstable global capitalism, and individuals are argued to perceive themselves as at risk, having to work reflexively to manage these risks and make their selves from a diversity of possibilities (Giddens 1991:3; Beck 1999). Self-identity, then, is characterised by choice and change, autonomy and mobility, in a flexible society that is characterised by flows, networks and mobilities. Individualization theory thus posits a socially *and* spatially mobile identity, which can, arguably, become conflated by generalised metaphors of mobility (e.g. see critique of Urry 2000, in Skeggs 2004:48).

Some critics argue that this generalised association of mobility with identity has been divisively deployed along class lines, with a variety of discourses converging to construct middle-class identity as forward-looking, agentic and mobile, against working-class identities that are perceived as backward-looking and static (Haylett 2001; Skeggs 2004:48-50; Paton 2012; Taylor 2012). One such discourse is a progressive critique of communitarian politics, that rejects its emphasis on homogeneity, family, nation and place as oppressive and exclusionary (Young 1990). However, this critique can then be interpreted to privilege mobility over stasis, such that a desire for rootedness in place is construed as regressive and reactionary (Massey 1991;1994b:5). Another way that the mobility/stasis hierarchy is constructed along class lines is that working-class people are associated with strong local social ties, and also with stigmatised places such as council housing estates. As such they are constructed as being tied into fixity and backwardness (see critique in Taylor 2012). Haylett (2001), for example, demonstrates how UK policy discourse represents the white working-class as backward, old-fashioned and unable to embrace modern multi-cultural Britain.

Individualization theory itself, through its denial of the structural impact of class on people’s life situations, feeds into this divisive and hierarchical construction of mobile/static class identities. Critics point out that middle-class people, due to their higher levels of resources, have improved access to mobility and the characteristics of an individualized identity (Savage 2000; Taylor 2012). Moreover, some critics argue that there is a class power relationship involved, as privileged groups not only have greater control over their own (spatial and social) mobilities, but also over those of other more

disadvantaged people (Massey 1991; 1994b; Skeggs 2004). However, because individualization theory does not explicitly acknowledge these relations of class power and dis/advantage, the experiences of fixity and mobility are regarded as caused by the personal characteristics of static or mobile identities. As such, “class is being spoken without naming it, via theories of mobility” (Skeggs 2004:46-47).

My study interrogates the theory of individualization on several fronts. Foremost I will contest the separation of the idea of a reflexive autonomous, mobile voluntarist identity from an analysis of class structures, relegating class analysis to a bit-part at best (Giddens 1991:7) and a ‘zombie category’ at worst (Beck 2003). I also trouble a metaphorically-driven theoretical attachment to ‘mobility’ by questioning the privileging of movement over stability, as well the conflation of spatial and social mobility. Thus the research is concerned with recovering a more balanced, detailed and nuanced understanding of how mobility and stasis are both lived in the everyday and structurally shaped. I examine the association of social and spatial mobility with middle-class identities, against working-class identities that are construed as static. I also investigate experiences of mobility and stasis. I contest individualization theory’s claim that social relationships are dis-embedded “from the hold of specific locales” (Giddens 1991:2), and consider counter-claims that place and place-based affiliations have continuing significance for both working- and middle-class people (McDowell 1999:29-30; Massey 1994a; 1994b).

2:3:2 Individualization Theory and Political Individualism

I elaborate here on the discussion of individualism and social mobility policy approaches in chapter one (1:3). Giddens worked closely with New Labour on their economic and social policy approaches, translating the academic theory of individualization into a social democratic political agenda via his concept of the Third Way (1994; 1998). The Third Way view, rooted in individualization theory, reformulates eighteenth century economic market liberalism as an ethic of reciprocity of rights and responsibilities between the individual and the state (Palley 2005:20; Amable 2011:24). The rights of citizenship are principally claimed through participation in the labour market, with the individual deemed responsible for their own survival in a competitive, changeable and risky capitalist marketplace. As such, individuals takes on the risks of capitalism, whilst the class relations that underpin these risks obscured, evading blame.

I argue that it is no accident that the current Coalition government has foregrounded social mobility as *the* central theme of their social policy agenda, because the figure of the self-responsible upwardly mobile individual fits perfectly with the neoliberal emphasis on personal responsibility (Cabinet Office 2011; 2012). As critics have noted, there is scant mention in policy-speak of *downward* mobility (Roberts 2013; Goldthorpe 2012; Boliver and Byrne 2013). This upwardly mobile figure also aligns with the autonomous mobile figure of individualization theory. Equally, both individualization theory and political individualism undermine the role of class.

Yet whilst political individualism denies class as a structural cause of dis/advantage, it constructs class identity categories, as people in subordinate class positions are blamed and stigmatised for their necessary recourse to welfare support. As discussed in chapter one (section three), both political and media discourse construct poor people who require welfare support as benefit scroungers, socially excluded, lazy, irresponsible, and shaped by a culture of dependency (Gillies 2007:5; Rogaly and Taylor 2009a:126; Jones 2011; Slater 2012; Tyler 2013). Thus particular working-class groups are narrated as self-responsible for the own positions of poverty. And as they are culpable, the implication is that they deserve their outcomes.

The ‘welfare to work’ discourse, with a legacy from Thatcher’s New Right through to Labour’s Third Way, re-introduced the Victorian concept of the un/deserving poor via a neo-liberal welfare regime that distinguishes between ‘hard-working families’ and those dependent on benefits who are perceived as failing to help themselves (Skeggs 1997:1; Hirsch and Miller 2004; Gillies 2007:5-6, Rogaly and Taylor 2009a). This represents a political shift from state assistance towards moral regulation, which has been reconfigured by the Coalition government through the tropes of ‘strivers’ and ‘skivers’ (Higginson 2012; Coote and Lyall 2013) that fit with their emphasis on social mobility, as well as with the notion of the individualized self. The ‘striving’ characteristics of aspiration and effort aligns with the idea of a reflexive autonomous self oriented towards mobility, against which the ‘skivers’ are characterised as ‘workshy’, irresponsible and dependent. Given that the vast majority of those claiming benefits are actually engaged in low-paid employment (Coote and Lyall 2013:1), this would seem to support Slater’s (2012) argument that the government is deliberately producing a discourse of ignorance in order to justify their neoliberal strategies of state withdrawal.

Aspiration is key trope in the individualist social mobility discourse, with low social mobility rates blamed on the low aspirations of individuals, parents and families from working-class backgrounds (David Cameron, quoted in BBC 2013)⁷. Savage (2000:75) notes that the discourse of meritocracy has shifted from emphasising natural ability to motivation. Working-class parents and families are a particular target of blame, with the idea expressed that children who are parented well will have a better chance of upward social mobility (Home Office 2003b, in Gillies 2007:6). This discourse excludes any mention of unequal material or economic resources and “the implication is that a quality upbringing is all that is needed to ensure equal opportunity” (Gillies 2007:7). As such, the structural problems of poverty are given a cultural explanation. Moreover, the cultural policy solutions proffered are deployed along class lines, such as educative ‘support’ that is aimed at working-class parents and modelled on middle-class parenting practices (Gillies 2007; Jensen 2010) (see 1:3:3).

The divisive characterisation of class identities is drawn into a moral political discourse of fairness. Central to this discourse is the notion of meritocracy, as it asserts that labour market positions are just reward for individual merit, as opposed to the ascription of unfair inherited advantages (Skeggs 2004:46). As such, meritocracy is characterised as representing as a challenge to class elitism. It also legitimates structures of occupational inequality (Crompton 1998:208), which are articulated as the fair outcome of individuals’ hard work and talent. This view, for example, is expressed in a newspaper article by Conservative minister Dominic Raab (2013). Amable (2011:25-26) argues that the government’s moral narrative of fairness is deliberately deployed as a discursive strategy to delegitimise collective redistributionist politics (echoing Slater’s [2012] argument above). In the terms of neoliberalism, the only responsibility of the government is to ensure fair competition by providing equal opportunities. As such, “(h)aving “levelled the playing field”, the state is not legitimised to redistribute in order to equalise the effective situations of individual (ibid. 2011:25-26).

My research thus explores the research of participants’ experiences in relation to an individualist social mobility discourse in several ways. I examine how people construct their relational identities according to, or in contestation with, the dominant social

⁷ See Raco (2009) who traces the political discourse of ‘aspiration’ used in the reform of the welfare state, from Gordon Brown’s New Labour.

mobility discourse, and therefore how subjective processes work to produce or contest political processes of cultural hegemony. I also examine how class positions and resources impact on access to aspirational, mobile and autonomous identities. I consider these issues in the context of educational, occupational and housing statuses. As such, I extend existing critiques of the individualist discourse and individualization theory by interrogating how the discourse interacts with lived experiences. Crucially, this involves examining participants' experiences in terms of class, which I discuss next (relating to the first research question).

2:4 Class Theory

I require a theoretical model of class that will allow me to examine relational subjective experiences within a material and discursive structural context. From a vast array of approaches to class analysis (Crompton 1998), I discuss those that I will use to frame my research, drawing primarily from Savage, Skeggs and Bourdieu. However, first I will briefly contextualise these approaches.

2:4:1 Theoretical Context for Class Analysis

Whilst Urry and the new mobility theorists sought to overthrow the paradigm of class analysis with their emphasis on metaphors of movement and mobility (Skeggs 2004:48), my study of mobility seeks to draw class analysis back into the debate.

Marx was important for framing class as collective, relational, exploitative and conflictual social relations (Crompton 1998). As such class is understood as characterised by relations of power. Whilst I will not here attempt to do justice to Marx's theory, and I do not draw on it directly for my analysis, I nevertheless retain his emphasis on class relations understood as relational, conflictual, exploitative and power-ridden. I also retain his emphasis on the materiality of class relations, grounded in employment relations, resources and economics. Moreover Marx's influence, and that of the Frankfurt School Critical Marxists who foregrounded culture as a conduit for ideological meaning (Delanty 1997:71), can be felt through the work of Skeggs and Bourdieu in that they deploy a relational conflictual understanding of class, and situate subjectivity within wider class structures and processes.

Bourdieu and Skeggs were part of the group of scholars who reinvigorated class analysis in response to the cultural turn. Examples cited in this study include: Bourdieu 1986; Skeggs 1997; Reay 2004; Savage 2000; Watt 2003; Haylett 2003; McDowell 2003; Sayer 2005; Gillies 2007 and Allen 2008. These critics expanded Marx' focus on employment and economic relations to incorporate everyday social relations, culture, status, identity and subjectivity. They variously sought to draw structure into the debate, although often from the bottom up, rather than from the top down. They are part of what Bottero calls "an expanded and transformed class theory" (2004:984) entailing a wider and deeper concept of class. They take a plural approach associated with an investigation into diverse interests and identities that variously draw together the material and cultural, the subjective and structural, the economic and social (Crompton 1998; Bottero 2004:986). The many approaches are by no means congruent, with different understandings of class as individualised or collective, conflictual or implicit, and with varying emphases on the cultural, psychic and material (Reay 2011:2). However, they all incorporate identities and embodiment, and focus on dynamic and complex class processes that are produced by everyday experience (Reay 2011).

It is therefore this body of theory and research that my theoretical approach emerges from, and to which I dialogue with, as I respond to Taylor's call for geographers to give "greater attentiveness towards class as multiple and various, rather than condensed as essentialist and fixed in time and place" (2012:545-6). I develop the class theories of Savage, Skeggs and Bourdieu in the context of a geographic analysis that attends to embodied geographies, place, locality and experiences of spatial mobilities. Whilst the cultural turn has revitalised class analysis in exciting and productive ways, it has sometimes stressed culture at the expense of attending to the material and economic conditions of class. However, I integrate both the cultural and material into my analysis (Gillies 2007). In the rest of this section I discuss how I will draw on Savage and Skeggs to reformulate and interrogate individualization theory and the political individualist discourse through a class analysis.

2:4:2 Individualization Theory Through a Class Lens

I draw on Savage's (2000) class critique and re-interpretation of individualization theory. Savage argues that Beck and Giddens misconceive that the relationship between the individualized self and class identity is polarised, when in fact it is one of complex interweaving (2000:101). He argues that individualization is a class process of defining oneself and making choices in relation to classed others. Class, therefore, is not a consciousness in the classic Marxist sense of people being cognisant of being members of a class group, but exists at the level of individual subjectivity, with class processes working through individuals, who assess their social positions against the benchmark of class (Savage et al. 2001). Savage argues that individualization does not entail the death of class, but rather a shift in how class operates,

while collective class identities are indeed weak, people continue to define their own individual identities in ways which inevitably involve relational comparisons with members of various social classes (2000:xiii)

As such, class cultures are reformed around individualized axes as modes of differentiation, rather than as types of collectivity (ibid. 2000:115). Many critics have theorised the construction of class identities via everyday practices of making relational distinctions against 'other' individuals and groups (Bourdieu 1986; Young 1990; Skeggs 1997; Watt 2001; Sayer 2005), but Savage's point is that this is a process of individualization, which is a flexible, contingent and situated process.

Elaborating this argument, Savage (2000) discusses how particular kinds of middle-class employment relations shape the production of reflexive individualized identities in the context of the post-industrial economy. He argues that the idea and practice of career and social mobility is no longer progressed via movement between identifiable blue and white-collar class groups within bureaucratic hierarchical organisations, but through a series of job ladder occupational transitions. These are embedded in organisational practices, such as merit and performance-related pay, that demand autonomy and self-development. Therefore, in the context of industrialisation, which was characterised by shared demographic and labour positions, class identity could be understood as collective. But in the context of the expanded middle-class white-collar service jobs, which were increasingly spatially and socially fractured, and increasingly insecure and risky,

individualized negotiation is required, producing a biographical production of the self. (ibid. 2000:130-139; Savage in Skeggs 2004:52).

However, Savage notes that whilst the middle-class self is in a position to control their biography, the working-class self negotiates the risks and choices involved within a much more constrained set of possibilities. None of these actors can escape structural forces and they make their choices within different sets of parameters, involving different risks (2000:108). So whilst people may not explicitly confer a class identity on themselves, they use classed reference points to situate themselves in order to assess risks and make choices in their competition with others for resources (ibid. 2000; Savage in Skeggs 2004:52). As such, Savage argues that cultural class is not important as a self-conscious sense of self and belonging, but *structural* class is important because it shapes how people reflect on their situations and make choices, within a self-conscious evaluation of their structural position against that of others.

As Savage points out, individualization theorists fail to embed their theories in empirical research, using arguments of a broad scope and scale designed to convince rhetorically. (2000:115). However, this leaves the individuals that are the focus of individualization theories decontextualised from the situated experiences of their lives,

The individuals of Beck and Giddens' social theory are lonely. They see the reflexive individual as the product of global and system-wide social conditions, rather than linked in to more proximate social relations around the firm, family, neighbourhood, social network and social class (ibid. 2000:105).

My research, however, re-embeds individuals back in their situated contexts in order to explore Savage's theory that class structurally positions people in ways that inform their individualized choices and trajectories. Thus I use Savage's theory, in the post-industrial context of diverse and fragmented class positions, to investigate how class works through individuals' self-understandings and experiences in relational ways. I consider how class shapes, constrains and facilitates individualized experiences, such as access to choice and ways of dealing with risk. I also look at how self-identity is culturally constructed through relational classed distinction-making processes, as well as how people assess their positions and choices in relation to the identity and resources others.

2:4:3 Individualization as a Discursive Class Resource

Skeggs develops the discursive aspect of Savage's analysis. She argues that in the terms of Savage's argument the autonomous reflexive self, rather than being a universal experience, becomes a discourse used to perpetuate class power (Skeggs 2004:53). Because the idea of the 'reflexive self' is more accessible to the middle class via their higher levels of resources, and resonates with the middle-class workplace experience, the idea that the individualized self is universal is untenable. As such, she argues, the reflexive self is a discursive device used to *make* class, deliberately used in a symbolic struggle to embed middle-class privilege (ibid. 2004:53). Identities and bodies are central to the process of making class, and thus bodies are conceived, not just as acting in everyday space to reproduce class distinctions (as Savage emphasises), but as cultural resources to perpetuate class advantages via the inscription of differential symbolic value onto working- and middle-class bodies.

In the terms of the individualist social mobility discourse, the discursive trope of the 'striver' (the individualized voluntaristic self) is held to be a subject position equally open to everyone, if only the individual is sufficiently aspirational and self-mobilising. In which case those in subordinate, disadvantaged positions have only themselves to blame, with those most vulnerable and at risk narrated as 'skivers'. In Skeggs' terms, this discourse is then deployed in the interests of sustaining middle-class power, justifying the withdrawal of state welfare support for those in already disadvantaged positions. Therefore the symbolic discourse works to exacerbate material disadvantages. Moreover, Skeggs argues that the inscription of differential value onto classed bodies and identities limits or facilitates social movement, such as progression in the labour market.

Thus I connect Savage's emphasis on everyday class distinction-making to Skeggs' argument that class distinctions are used by dominant cultural discourses to reinforce power. I explore how personal characteristics discursively associated with the individualized self attach to particular bodies, and how participants ascribe and internalise inscriptions of value, such as status positions conferred by the social mobility indicators or values inscribed onto bodily cultures. I then examine how these experiences and processes impact on social mobilities.

One of Skeggs' key notions is "perspective", which she defines as "a narrow section of particular interests that are imposed upon others and are represented as a wider view, when in fact they are the exact opposite" (2004:6). She regards perspectives as a dominant forms of knowledge and value imposed on others in the interests of reproducing class domination, and she is interested in how "theories of risk, reflexivity and individualization work to legitimate a perspective of powerful interest groups" (2004:7). Skeggs' frame is therefore appropriate for my interrogation of the individualist social mobility discourse in relation to participants' class experiences. She (2004:45-46) draws on Gramsci's (1999[1971]) theory of cultural hegemony, which I emphasise in my analysis by investigating participants' experiences of consent to the individualist-individualizing discourse. The idea of cultural hegemony is that a politically deployed discourse becomes so entrenched as to be understood as common sense (the wider view), internalised and reproduced through subordinate as well as the dominant discourses. This ensures class and power relations are sustained and entrenched, but also hidden due to the widespread consent involved. This study focuses on processes of consent at the level of everyday experience by examining how the various concepts of the individualist social mobility discourse are internalised by the research participants. Thus whilst Savage (2000:xi) rejects the notion that class is still collective, Skeggs' notions of perspectives and hegemony suggests an explicit collective project to reproduce class power. Moreover, the flipside of looking at the workings of hegemony is to examine the devalued perspectives that are thus obscured, as Skeggs notes, and this helps frame my third research question that examines what participants themselves experience and value as significant social achievements and mobilities in their lives.

Therefore, to summarise this section, both Savage and Skeggs' theories help me frame my investigation into better understanding social mobility, orienting an analysis of the lived subjectivity of class within 'objective' organisational and structural contexts (addressing question one). Using Skeggs, however, enables me to connect Savage's focus on the individual and organizations to a wider discursive political analysis. Whilst Savage helps me address the individualist social mobility discourse through his notion that class itself is an individualized process, Skeggs' orients an analysis of everyday experiences within the context of the individualist-individualizing social mobility discourse, considering processes of hegemony that work to reproduce collective class power (connecting question one to question two). Finally, in keeping with my third research

question, Skeggs' frame points to the importance of investigating subordinated counter-hegemonic experiences and narratives of social mobilities, which may expand, complicate or disrupt the dominant individualist social mobility discourse. Whilst Savage and Skeggs' theories provide a useful overall framework for thinking about the experience and concept of social mobility (my central research aim), I operationalise their ideas via Bourdieu's flexible theoretical-methodological model, because it provides user-friendly heuristic concepts into which their theories can easily be integrated and developed.

2:5 Using Bourdieu

Bourdieu conceives of social relations of domination and subordination as being made and remade dynamically through everyday practices, yet at the same time generated from historically constituted stratas, processes and structures. Analysis of participants' experiences is therefore not restricted to understanding the individual, the particular and the everyday, but elucidates their inter-connection with a wider class politics. Clearly Bourdieu provides an appropriate model for addressing the first research question that examines class, but can also address question two, interrogating the dominant individualist discourse, as will be elucidated. As the primary analytic model for my theoretical framework, I now discuss in some detail his key concepts of practices, habitus, capitals, field and symbolic violence.

2:5:1 Practices and the Habitus

Bourdieu envisions the body and its practices as central to the reproduction of hierarchical social relations. The body is inscribed by class processes, manifested in its learned and habitual way of moving, gesturing and taking up space (what Bourdieu calls 'hexis'). This is not simply the product of personal idiosyncrasy, but is also produced through the relational, hierarchical social position the body is situated in. Class distinctions can operate through hexis as, "social distinctions and practices are embedded in the most automatic gestures or the apparently most insignificant techniques of the body – ways of walking or blowing one's nose, ways of eating and talking" (Bourdieu 1986:466). This suggests a way of synthesising Savage's emphasis on distinction-making, and Skeggs' focus on the body. This approach can also incorporate my interest in

examining face-to-face embodied interactions (McDowell 2009). The hexis and the body's dispositions are explained through the concept of the habitus, which generates its practices (Jenkins 1992:69-77).

The habitus denotes the internalised dispositions and competences that the individual has absorbed and learned, often unconsciously and at the level of the body, through its position in a socially stratified environment of values and assets. These are inscribed into long-lasting orientations of the body and mind, "not easily obliterated by conscious thought or action" (McDowell 1999:41). Whilst the habitus is dynamic and open to change, it has a tendency towards durability, as individuals are predisposed to transpose their habitual dispositions and practices across a range of social spaces (Jenkins 1992:70-82).

The habitus is the outcome of a collective history in that it is constituted by shared dispositions and shared positions in classificatory categories. The habitus is always relationally produced, and it reproduces relational positions of power and inequality because individuals feel comfortable with the natural-feeling parameters of possibility they grew up with, and therefore either do not expect what does not appear to be available to them (ibid. 1992:80), or feel 'naturally' entitled to what does appear to be available. As such, the habitus generates dispositions compatible with the social position of the individual. I can therefore explore class relationally through the subjective practices of the individual, as emphasised by Savage, as collective experiences, as Skeggs' emphasises, and as inter-generational reproductive experiences, central to the concept of social mobility.

2:5:2 Capitals as Processes

The way that the habitus disposes the body to behave as a result of its relative social position is tied up with the volume and nature of resources the individual has access to. Bourdieu distinguishes four types of class resources, which he refers to as 'capitals' to indicate their latent capacity to be 'capitalised upon' in self-interested and strategic ways to generate benefits or further capitals. The four capitals are economic capital (financial and material resources), social capital (social networks), cultural capital (I focus on embodied and institutional cultural resources), and symbolic capital, which legitimates the value of the other capitals (Bourdieu 1986; Jenkins 1992). As dynamic processes,

capitals may be exchanged, lost, multiplied and translated into different forms of value (Kelly and Lusis 2006). Thus the concept of capitals facilitates an investigation into the multiple, inter-relating and changeable ways that class inequalities are reproduced and social mobilities are progressed.

The overall aim of individuals deploying their capitals is to maintain or improve their power and social position relative to other actors (Jenkins 1992). Capitals have no power until they are put into process to gain advantages. Capitals may be useable in one social situation but not another, depending on how they are symbolically valued in that particular social field. Therefore I now discuss Bourdieu's concepts of field, symbolic capital and symbolic violence.

2:5:3 Fields and Symbolic Violence

Bourdieu understands the 'objective' social world as consisting of inter-relating social fields. A field is a structured social space constituted by individuals and social groups located in hierarchical relations, who compete for resources in relations of struggle and power (Wacquant 1989:37-41; Jenkins 1992:84-86). Thus fields produce, and are produced by, the embodied sense the habitus has of its relative social position, which shapes the position it takes up during social interactions in the field.

The rules and structures of fields are shaped by the habitus that takes up the dominant position in the field, which has the power to confer value on the resources. So for example, the value ascribed to a high-paid, high-status job is only conferred because the dominant habitus is in a powerful enough position to legitimate it. This relates to Skeggs' idea of 'perspective'. The dominant habitus is 'at home' with the field's rules and structures and reproduces its position, not just through their levels of resources, but also because of their 'feel for the game' in such fields. For example, Lareau (2003) argues that the 'feel for the game' advantages the middle class in institutional settings because they have learned from childhood how to be confident and take up entitled positions of dominance in such social spaces. This approach can explore the hegemony of social fields *and* everyday places, which is useful for my research of embodied interactive relationships (Valentine 2007; McDowell 2009).

Bourdieu's notion of 'symbolic violence' is congruent with the analysis of hegemony. It refers to the imposition of systems of symbolism and meaning upon groups in such a way that they are experienced as legitimate (Bourdieu and Passeron 2000[1977]). This provides a means of analysing how dominant groups' perspectives, values and inscriptions associated with the individualist social mobility discourse become the hegemonic 'wider view' through processes of consent (Skeggs 2004:6), thus addressing research question two. Bourdieu argues that 'pedagogic action' is a primary mode of symbolic violence whereby arbitrary forms of cultural learning are deployed through schools, the family and social members (Jenkins 1992:105-106), and I utilise this concept in my analysis of the educational field.

Bourdieu argues that consent to the dominant perspective is produced as individuals' subjective feelings about their 'natural' position in a particular field concurs with the objective power structures in the field. This produces the collective social process of 'doxa' (Bourdieu 2002[1977]), denoting the learned, unconscious common-sense beliefs and values that are taken-for-granted in a society. Doxa shapes individuals' social mobilities by framing what they understand as 'for them', and also what they understand as social mobility per se. As Bourdieu argues,

What is internalized, in my view, are principles of vision and division in the world which, being in agreement with the objective structures of the world, create a sort of infra-conscious fit with the structures within which agents evolve. So that *domination operates through belief, through a doxic relation to structures* (in interview with Wacquant 1993:34, his italics)

'Doxa' and 'symbolic violence', then, provide ways of understanding the working of a dominant discourse by analysis of subjective experience. Thus whilst my study does not analyse discursive, economic, political structures directly, it explores the relationship between subjectivity and structure through the lens of lived experience.

Fields are relatively autonomous, although they can overlap and interact with other fields, and they are all structured by the overarching dominant field of power (politics). This fits with my analysis of social mobility across the social fields of education, occupation, housing and social mixing, which are drawn together by the over-arching neoliberal

discourse of individualism that underpins the political understanding of social mobility. Moreover, whilst it is the social logic rather than the spatial logic that defines a field, there is a geographic element to fields as they are reproduced by the practices of bodies, they operate through places, and can involve spatial mobilities, as has been emphasised by Bourdieu and some Bourdieuvian approaches (Bourdieu 1986:126-129; Skeggs 1997; Savage et al. 2005; Kelly and Lusi 2006; Datta 2009).

2:6 Nuancing and Extending the Class Frame

I will not, however, draw on Bourdieu's theory uncritically, and in this section I discuss theories that can address some of the limitations of his model. Whilst Bourdieu's model can address everyday experiences in relation to class and the processes of dominance deployed through the individualist social mobility discourse, it is less oriented to capturing the voices, values and nuanced experiences of those in subordinated social positions, or indeed the complexities and ambiguities of those in dominant positions. However, this is an important aspect of my third research question that ask how participants' experiences and narratives of social achievement suggest an alternative model of social mobilities to that of the dominant individualist model. I therefore discuss next how I plan to address this question. I then discuss how I will draw on the theories of embodiment, the emotions and intersectionality, also as ways to extend Bourdieu's framework and enhance my examination of participants' experiences, which is helpful for addressing all three research questions.

2:6:1 Participants' Perspectives

Attending to subordinated narratives and experiences is particularly important in the context of the arguments put forwards by Skeggs and Bourdieu that the processes of cultural hegemony and symbolic violence work to obscure and silence subordinate cultural perspectives and values, constructing them as 'unthinkable' and counter to common sense (Jenkins 1992:105).

However, Bourdieu's emphasis on the power and resources of the dominant class is liable to represent those with lower levels of resources and power as lacking, and thus fails to recognise the positive values and assets that attach to aspects of working-class culture

(Jenkins 1992:148; Savage 2000:102; Lareau 2003; Butler and Watt 2007:175; Armstrong 2010:237-8). Critics warn that this approach can feed into a cultural deficit model (Pianta and Walsh 1996:41-42), whereby working-class people are perceived, for example, as lacking aspiration, a work ethic, the capacity to make the right choices and the appropriate orientation to mobility. Hence a focus only on the workings of power is in danger of reproducing the pathologising construction of working-class identity produced by the individualist model of social mobility. Haylett argues that in the absence of information about what is valuable in working-class culture, the material problems that beset working-class lives become discursively conflated with their cultures and identities, which are then also talked about as problems, regarded as "not capable of giving or teaching anything of worth to dominant centres of value" (2003:57). Haylett argues that the concerns of class analysis with polarisation, exploitation and regulation tend to reduce class to a condition in need of alleviation, and argues for the importance of "recognising working-class identities and cultures that exist in positive ways in spite of economic inequality" (2003:56-57). Thus academia is itself, even in its attempts to critique inequality, in danger of being part of the legitimisation of middle-class perspectives through pedagogic action.

Thus attention to subordinated values provides both resistance and alternatives to symbolic strategies for cultural dominance and exclusion (Savage 2000:102). The emphasis on drawing subordinated perspectives into academic knowledge is well-established in feminist research (Bondi 2005), but much less developed in regard to working-class perspectives and experiences (but see Plummer 2000; Haylett 2003; Lareau 2003; Sayer 2005; Gillies 2007; Rogaly and Taylor 2009b; Armstrong 2010). Given my argument that the individualist social mobility discourse undermines working-class efforts and mobilities (1:2:3 & 1:4:3), drawing in working-class voices is important for this study. However, my approach also draws in subordinated middle-class perspectives, as I do not assume that all middle-class perspectives homogenously align with a dominant discourse. Bourdieu, arguably, tends to represent class groups as homogenous and dichotomous through his emphasis on collective class practices, but I aim to interrogate the nuances of subordinated and alternative perspectives across classes.

Bourdieu also, arguably, downplays the agency of subordinated perspectives, because he emphasises the habitus as acquiescently mirroring its position in the field and thus

reproducing its social class position. As such, doxa assumes a largely unquestioning convergence with the symbolically legitimated interests of power, which sidelines the possibility for resistance and change (Skeggs 1997:81; Lawler 1999; Sayer 2005). However, as research has indicated (Skeggs 1997), and Sayer argues, people are not “discursively constituted” but rather “discursively influenced” (2005:33), and thus may question, re-interpret or challenge the common sense beliefs of a dominant value-system. Hegemony is always open to resistance and, as Raco argues, the normalisation and mainstreaming of aspirational politics reflect, “a narrow form of class-infused consciousness... (that) opens up potentially fruitful lines for further research on the narrative and practices that could underpin an alternative politics of aspiration and bring into focus very different ways of understanding” (2009:443).

In this context, then, I examine what participants regard as social achievements in their lives (question three). As discussed in chapter one (1:2:3 and 1:4:3), I draw on Elliott’s (1997) notion of *social achievement*, Brown’s (2011) emphasis on the *holistic* contexts to social mobility aspirations, and Raco’s (2009) emphasis on a plurality of aspirations. To briefly revisit these concepts, Brown (2011:13-18) recommends taking into account the emotional and social contexts in which people develop future goals, whilst Elliott’s notion of investigating people’s own notions of social achievement includes those within and outside of the conventional social mobility fields. Thus, like Brown, he considers notions of aspiration and mobility in broad holistic terms, and also emphasises the importance of social relationships, especially notions of family mobilities (as have other commentators, such as Bertaux and Thompson, 1997b, and Franz 2003). Elliott also noted people’s positive evaluations of avoiding downward mobility, and this aligns with my intention to consider downward and horizontal mobilities, as well as upward mobilities, i.e. ‘getting by’ as well as ‘getting on’.

Raco makes a theoretical critique of the discourse of aspiration as used by a neoliberal politics to justify welfare reform, and proposes as an antidote the investigation of plural aspirations and values, suggesting that this may open up the political debate to an alternative redistributionist politics more oriented to people’s welfare requirements (2009:443). This aligns with my intention to interrogate participants’ *plural* mobilities, in which I open up the narrow, conventional social mobility indicators to consider participants’ positive evaluations of multiple values, routes and notions of social mobility

and achievement, both within and outside of the education, occupation and housing fields. This includes, for example, considering non-academic forms of learning, low-status and domestic labour, and diverse tenure types. Thus I highlight achievements that are unrecognised by the narrow status indicators of the individualist social mobility model (and indeed unrecognised by many academics as well). Therefore, overall, I take an open and expanded approach to exploring participants' experiences and narratives of social mobilities.

Raco's argument also accords with my intention to examine how participants experiences and narratives of social achievement may suggest an alternative discourse of social mobility to the individualist model. I make a distinction between participants' *subordinated* discourses of social mobility and my own construction of a *counter-hegemonic* social mobility discourse. Subordinated discourses are everyday perspectives that do not fit with, and are largely obscured by, prevailing dominant concepts and values. They may or may not be explicit articulations of resistance⁸. However, in my analysis I listen to participants' subordinated perspectives to explicitly and intentionally explore how they may cohere into an alternative (counter-hegemonic) discourse of social mobility that resists the dominant model. In this context, I consider whether a reformulated expanded notion of social mobilities can suggest a model more appropriate for addressing class inequalities along the welfare/redistributionist lines that Raco suggest, drawing on notions of a more equal evaluation of plural mobilities, taking into account how class positions shape participants' mobilities, and considering the holistic contexts of their lives.

2:6:2 Embodied Geographies

I now turn to the theory of embodiment as a helpful way to extend Bourdieu's frame. Despite the dynamism of Bourdieu's model that emphasises the mobility of capitals, the body's practices are arguably conceived as overly mechanistic given they are generated by an over-deterministic habitus that is acquiescent to its 'objective' social position. Thus Bourdieu's model is unable to fully capture the flexibility of the body as it moves through

⁸'Subaltern' is another term for the perspectives of those that are not widely heard or distributed, eliciting methodological debate regarding interpretation and authority (Skeggs 2004:127-131). I use the term 'subordinated' to align with my overall Bourdieuvian approach that refers to class dominance and subordination. This echoes Scott's (1990:xii) use of the term "subordinate discourse" to analyse everyday narratives in his class analysis of a Malay village.

shifting social and geographic spaces, nor its possibilities for resistance. The theory of performativity (Butler 1990), however, emerging from the theoretical shift to embodiment, offers a way to draw in the mutability of the body, thus adding a more sensitive open approach to understanding the body's interactions and relationships with its socio-spatial environment⁹.

Performativity conceives identity as ontologically fluid and provisional, always in the process of becoming. Yet at the same time performativity embeds durable habits and dispositions (as Bourdieu suggests) as identity is constructed and maintained over time through repetitious everyday bodily actions (Butler 1990:185; Bell 1999). Performativity can be understood as engendering both inscription and agency (McDowell 1999:51-53), as its fluidity makes it both impressionable to external discourses and hegemonic practices, yet able to engender subversive agent performances (Butler 1990:163-180). Thus performative theory provides a way of understanding the social parameters and relations against which bodies operate in the everyday, the discursive strategies that shape bodies and operationalise power, yet at the same time the possibilities of agency. This shapes an inquiry into subjective negotiations with power-laden environments, and fits well with all three research questions, which examine how participants' experiences inter-act with class structures and the dominant social mobility discourse, yet also how they suggest contesting, expanded alternatives.

McDowell (1999:34) argues that the most immediate place to detect the operations of power is the body, and Valentine (2007) notes the significance of analysing the body for understanding the power relations of place and space. Both emphasise the body's flexibility and sensitivity to changeable social and social fields, as it shifts its position, presentation and identity when it moves through changing socio-spatial environments and interacts with different people and places. Analysing the relationship between the body and place is crucial to understanding lived experience in everyday spaces - at the subjective level, but by no means narrowing the analytic scope as structural power relations of a variety of geographical scales intersect at the site of the body (McDowell 1999; Massey 1994b). To examine participants' experiences, I draw on McDowell's term

⁹ There is a vast literature on embodiment. Feminist scholarship was particularly influential, but theories also include contemporary French poststructuralists on the sexed and disciplined body. See McDowell 1999:36-38 for key examples. I only discuss those relevant to my research.

‘interactive’ (2009:37) that refers to embodied face-to-face social engagements between people that occur in co-presence. Like McDowell, I examine social interactions in the workplace, but also in a variety of other places, in order to understand how wider social and spatial power relations intersect.

Neil Smith elaborates this theme by emphasising how the boundaries between bodies interact with wider social divisions of power, “The place of the body marks the boundary between the self and other in a social as much as a physical sense... forms of social differences are constructed around the identity of the body.... as the putative bases for social oppression and ‘cultural imperialism’” (1993:102, in McDowell 1999:40). Thus encounters between bodies are key sites for the construction of difference and relations of subordination and domination, such as produced through distinction-making practices and discursive representations of classed bodies, as emphasised by Bourdieu, Savage and Skeggs.

Young elaborates on the operation of power on the basis of hierarchical bodily distinctions of social worth (what she calls ‘scaling bodies’), arguing that inferiority is produced by defining the subordinate group in terms of their body, against dominant groups who are represented in terms of their rational disembodied position, founded on a historical hierarchical split between body and mind (1990:142, in McDowell 1999:48). This also ties in with Skeggs’ notion of inscribed bodies used for the purposes of hegemony, and is specifically relevant to my investigations in the education field that privileges academic over vocational learning, and in the occupational field that privileges ‘brain’ over ‘brawn’ work. All these approaches extend and nuance this study’s exploration of how everyday distinction-making processes inter-relate with discursive distinctions produced by the dominant social mobility discourse.

2:6:3 Emotion

A focus on the emotions can “inject some life into” the body (Probyn 2004:225), ensuring my theoretical investigation of social mobility is tethered to participants’ lived experiences. Bourdieu’s concept of the ‘semi-conscious’ habitus is associated with childhood development, implying an emotional context, but this is arguably under-developed in his work, which has a tendency to reduce emotions to the prime motivator of self-interest. Bertaux and Thompson (1997b:20) argue that Bourdieu fails to account

for the emotional, nurturing and moral bonds of family involved in intergenerational social mobility transmission and socialisation processes. Therefore I draw on theories of emotion, and particularly the new emotional politics of class, that foreground subjective feelings, yet recognise their relationship with wider structures, thus “revealing how class both produces and is produced through emotion” (Gillies 2007:34)¹⁰.

The emotional theoretical approach aligns with the fluid relational approach argued for thus far, with the emotions understood, not as autonomous to the independent subject, but as produced in relation to other individuals, groups, places and fields (Bondi 2005; Davidson et al. 2005). As Christie argues, subjective emotional processes are, “indicative of a wider emotional economy of social class” (2009:131), and thus can be related to wider social, spatial and structural processes (Reay and Ball 1997). As such, the emphasis on relational emotional identity provides a way to interrogate the assumption of autonomy by individualization theory, which claims individuals are disembedded from family and class groups (Giddens 1991; Beck et al. 1994; Beck 1999; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001). In this context I draw on critics who examine “relational” dispositions (Gillies 2007:70) and “dependencies” (Armstrong 2010:236), which they argue shape class identities and access to an individualized identity in the context of caring for others. I also draw the idea of an ethics of care for others into my exploration of an alternative social mobility discourse that better accommodates an interest in redressing inequalities.

Some theorists take a specifically Bourdieuvian approach to the emotions, and I draw on Reay’s (1998; 2004; 2005a) idea of emotional capital, considering how emotions may be regarded as class resources that can accrue benefits, and interact with other capitals. Reay (1998:86; 2004:66) also highlights the additional emotional labour involved for working-class mothers when helping their children at school because they do not start with the same levels of confidence or knowledge that the middle-class mothers have. I extend this insight to examine labours incurred by those in subordinate positions across various fields because they lack a ‘feel for the game’, which is helpful for my interrogation into unrecognised labours and mobilities.

¹⁰ The emotions have been drawn into social theory and research relatively recently. See Davidson et al. (2005) and Smith et al. (2009) for a fuller discussion.

Critics have found upward mobility can involve dislocating and painful emotions (Lawler 1999; Christie 2009; Rogaly and Taylor 2009a), which can be interpreted as the difficulty of the habitus in adapting to its new position in an unfamiliar field. I extend this analytic approach by examining the emotions involved in downward and horizontal, as well as upward, mobilities, and disjunctions in the educational, but also other, social fields. Examining the relationship between habitus and field in emotional terms also enriches the understanding of the barriers and agents to entering particular social spaces and places.

There is also a growing body of class literature that examines the importance of emotions, such as guilt, shame, resentment, envy, deference, pride, disgust, fear and anxiety, for making relational distinctions, boundaries and exclusions between groups, through which group privileges and disadvantages are transmitted (Skeggs 1997; 2004; Lawler 2005; Gillies 2007). This has been examined with different emphases in relation to social mobility (Lawler 1999; Christie 2009), education (Sayer 2005; Crozier et al. 2008; Skeggs 2009), moral sentiments and value systems (Sayer 2005; Gillies 2007; Skeggs 2009), the psycho-social (Reay 2005; Gillies 2007), and place (Butler 2003; Davidson 2008; Watt 2009a). This mapping of the emotional and moral landscape of class relations and inequalities elaborates Savage (2000) and Bourdieu's (1986) emphasis on distinction-making, and enriches the connections I seek to make between subjective experiences of ascription and inscription and dominant discursive systems that construct social mobility in hierarchised and evaluative ways (as emphasised by Skeggs 2004). For example, emotional experiences on the ground can be examined in terms of their inter-relation with the moral ideological construct of 'strivers' and 'skivers', or the social mobility status indicators.

However, whilst there is a growing body of work on distinction-making, there has been much less attention paid to the impact of class structures on the emotions. As Gillies (2007:32) argues, the consequences of material inequality are experienced emotionally, and I pay considerable attention to the relationship between material and emotional experiences. Overall, an emotional approach provides a more 'human' account, and deepens the understanding of how individualized class processes work through the subjectivities (Savage 2000). It also opens up the analysis for investigating more broadly what participants' value, and exploring the holistic contexts of their lives.

2:6:4 Intersectionality

Bourdieu has been critiqued for insufficiently focusing on other axes of inequality such as gender and ethnicity¹¹, yet some critics argue that, “to try to understand either separately is tantamount to misunderstanding both entirely” (Younge 2005:19 in Gillies 1007:29). However, Bourdieu’s model is easily adapted to include other axes of inequality (Adkins 2004), and so I draw on an intersectional theoretical approach (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1983; Yuval-Davis 2006; Valentine 2007)¹². This enables richer and more complete accounts of participants’ experiences.

Intersectionality theory tries to understand how inequality is lived in its particularity as concrete social relations enmeshed with each other, rather than conceptualising multiple identity as the adding of inequalities associated with one kind of identity to that of another, in a kind of incremental layering (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1982:62-63). This approach enables investigation into how the experience of one category alters the experience of another as they “abrade, inflame, amplify, twist, negate, dampen and complicate each other” (McKenna 1978:42, in Valentine 2007:13). Thus intersectionality aligns with my theoretical approaches of embodiment, performativity and the emotions in formulating identity as fluid, unstable and changeable. Also, an intersectional approach can examine subjective agencies and investments in identity positions, and simultaneously incorporate the structural effects of discrimination and discourse (Valentine 2007:14).

Several class theorists have taken an explicit or implicit intersectional approach, for example variously drawing in the intersections of gender, ethnicity, parenting, sexuality and local identities (Skeggs 1997; McDowell 2003; Nayak 2003; Gillies 2007; Taylor 2009; Jensen 2010; Mellor 2010). So whilst class is the primary structural inequality I am looking at, and I am not claiming to analyse other social identities systematically, I nevertheless acknowledge the simultaneous experiences of multiple identities (Valentine 2007:13), and draw them into my analysis when particularly relevant.

¹¹ Although Bourdieu addressed gender in *Masculine Domination* (2001).

¹² Intersectionality theory emerged in the 1990s from critical race and feminist theorists, and has since been understood in a variety of different ways. See Valentine (2007) for an overview.

The intersection of class and gender is relevant for my research, which also intersects with occupational identities - particularly in relation to domestic and childcare labour that is disproportionately done by women, with mothers being the most likely parent to care for children, and to disrupt their working patterns and bear a financial penalty in order to do so (Gillies 2007:9; Thomson et al. 2011a:4). As discussed in chapter one (1:3:3 and 2:3:2), parents are also central objects of the politicised neoliberal individualizing discourse and policy approach (Gillies 2007; Jensen 2010). Therefore I examine parent/mother intersections, distinguishing between single and dual parent households.

I also consider intersections of ethnicity, relevant to a study conducted in an ethnically diverse setting. There is, arguably, a danger of conflating working-class with white identity in popular, political and even academic discourse (Rogaly and Qureshi 2013; Rogaly and Taylor 2014), and critics have noted the ethnic implications of a racially coded 'chav' identity (Gillies 2007:30; Tyler 2008, 2013; Gidley and Rooke 2010). Studies addressing class identity often focus on white working-class people (Skeggs 1997; Gillies 2007; Allen 2008; Armstrong 2010), and whilst this is appropriate to their particular geographical localities, it excludes the understanding of multicultural class identities evident in cities such as London (although see Wills 2008a). As hooks argues, "Women of all races, black people of both genders are fast filling up the ranks of the poor and disenfranchised. It is in our interests to face the issue of class, to become more conscious, to know better so that we can know how to struggle for economic justice" (2000:8, in Gillies 2007:x).

Despite numerous examples of feminist geographers writing about the relationships between diverse identity categories, Valentine (2007) argues that there has been little attention in geography specifically to the theory of intersectionality, "despite its obvious spatial connotations" (2007:13). She demonstrates how aspects of intersectional identities are foregrounded and reconstituted as they move through different places, which reveals particular and shifting power relations and the hegemonies of places. Specific places are produced and maintained by dominant groups who occupy them, such that hegemonic cultures, distinctions and exclusions are constructed. McDowell stresses how the construction of places facilitates the formation of collective groups, "The organisation of space, in the sense of devising, channelling and controlling social interactions, and the

construction of places, in the sense of known and definable areas, is a key way in which groups and collectivities create a shared, particular and distinctive identity” (1997:2). I thus examine the power relations in specific places, and, following Massey’s (1994a) theorisation of place, contextualise the relations and discourses within wider socio-spatial power relations.

2:7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have laid out my over-arching theoretical approach. Firstly, I examined theories associated with social mobility, class and individualization, illuminating theoretical ways I planned to interrogate what constitutes social mobility (my central research aim). I argued for class analysis to be returned to the understanding and interrogation of social mobility, discussing how this approach challenges a currently dominant conceptualisation of social mobility that is embedded in academic individualization theory, and operationalised through an individualist political discourse. I elaborated on how this inter-twined individualist-individualizing model downplays the role of class structures through the ideals of meritocracy and the self-mobilising, reflexive and autonomous self, yet at the same time constructs hierarchical class identities with policy impacts that exacerbate existing class inequalities. This discussion illuminated how a class analytic approach could address the inter-weaving of my first and second research questions by examining how class impacts on participants’ experiences of social mobility, which then contests a dominant individualist social mobility discourse.

Having established class analysis as my key theoretical approach, I then detailed, firstly, how I will draw from Savage (2001) and Skeggs (2004) to frame my approach and, secondly, how I will use Bourdieu to extend and operationalise their ideas. Savage’s (2000) thesis of the individualization of class suggested a focus on how class processes and structures work through subjective experiences, in the context of post-industrialisation and its fracturing of class identities. I then discussed how the use of Skeggs could extend Savage’s approach by drawing out the connections between subjective practices and discursive structures, and between individual and collective class processes. Skeggs’ frame suggests a way to examine how the individualist social mobility discourse itself constructs distinctions between classed bodies, which are deployed as

cultural resources in order to legitimate middle-class perspectives and reproduce class power relations.

I then discussed how Bourdieu's analytic tools of habitus, capitals, field, symbolic violence and doxa can facilitate a sophisticated class analysis incorporating Savage and Skeggs' ideas. His multi-faceted model enables an analysis of social, cultural, economic and symbolic class practices and structures, and provides a way to understand how subjectivity is shaped by, and shapes, collective class power relations. Whilst the study does not claim to systematically measure class structures, it does aim to explore participants' subjective experiences in this context.

From considering how to interrogate the individualist social mobility discourse via a class analysis, I then moved on to discuss how I planned to interrogate what participants' consider to be social achievements in their lives, and how this may suggest an alternative discourse of social mobilities (my third question). I suggested an expanded approach to interrogating and understanding social mobility, by examining the holistic contexts in which participants progress their social mobilities, and also plural notions of social mobilities. I then discussed my intention to consider how these subordinated discourses (across classes) may together suggest a more equitable counter-hegemonic social mobility discourse based on a redistributive politics.

Finally, I discussed how my investigation of all three research questions will be enriched by drawing in the theories of embodiment, emotion and intersectionality. In different ways these approaches enhance an exploration of lived experience and subjective agency, and refine the analysis of structural discourse, wider power relations and processes of hegemony that work dynamically through space and place. In the next chapter, then, I discuss how I plan to operationalise this theoretical framework through my methodological approach, which is focused on eliciting participants' subjective experiences and narratives as a way to better understand what constitutes social mobility.

Chapter Three: Methodological Approach

3:1 Introduction

3:1:1 Chapter Plan

The central research aim to better understand the experience and concept of social mobility is addressed through three research questions that examine class, the individualist social mobility discourses and alternative notions of social mobilities. All three questions address these issues by interrogating participants' experiences and narratives. Thus in this chapter my methodological discussion is primarily focused on how I plan to capture, analyse and represent the participants' experiences, and my role in, and ethical approach to, doing so.

The research uses a case study approach to investigate the experiences of parents whose children go to the same state primary school in inner London (to which I have given the pseudonym 'Camden Green School'). As a researcher I was situated as an 'insider-outsider' in that my daughter went to this school, and thus I shared with the research participants the experience of being a parent there and living in the catchment area. In this section I give a brief overview of this position, which permeated all aspects of the research process. I then go on, in the second section, to discuss my overall methodological approach, the choice of using a case-study approach, and I summarise the methods this included. In the third section I discuss the research setting and participants. In the following two sections I focus in detail on the methods used for generating data. Then, in section six I discuss the methods used for the analysis and representation of the data. Many of the methodological issues raised in relation to one method apply across the others but, to avoid repetition, for each method I have focused on the issues I regard as most pertinent to the method under discussion. Finally I summarise and further reflect on my approach in the conclusion.

3:1:2 Insider-Outsider

I use the term ‘insider-outsider’ researcher to acknowledge both commonalities and differences with the research participants, with shifting, nuanced and blurred boundaries between my positionality and that of the researched (Merriam et al. 2001:405; Carling et al. 2013). Nevertheless, I was aware that being so close to the research could render me myopic to the taken-for-granted norms of the social field I was studying, running the risk of distorting my analysis. Moreover, my closeness and loyalty to the participants could impair my ability to make critical analyses of their lives. My most prevalent anxiety, however, was that my comfortable everyday social world would be irrevocably transformed. If I made myself visible as a researcher I would lose the semi-anonymity of being one parent amongst many, and I would be exchanging tentative friendships for the unequal relationships of the researcher and the researched. I feared the imbalance of power, the uneven give and take, and the false promise of friendship that in-depth interviews can elicit. Previously as an interviewer I had largely been able to ‘run away’ and avoid having to live the consequences of interview-intimacy and researcher-ethics in my everyday life. However, I decided that my concerns were outweighed by the singular advantage of already having knowledge of, and access to, my daughter’s school. My job, after all, was to produce knowledge, and, for all the pitfalls, I felt strongly that my privileged position as someone who already had a deep embedded understanding of the setting, and was emotionally positioned to be sensitive to the participants, was of great value. Distortions, after all, are unavoidable whatever the research setting. As my position was an inseparable part of my methodological approach, I thread an on-going reflection of my insider-outsider role throughout this chapter.

3:2 The Methodology

Here I will discuss my general ontological, epistemological and methodological approach, and utilisation of a case-study. I will discuss the inter-subjective knowledge produced, and the role of reflexivity and participation, before outlining the qualitative methods used, and the timescale.

3:2:1 Ontological and Epistemological Overview

I take an interpretative ontological and epistemological approach to the research. As such I regard social life as meaningfully constructed, which thus requires interpretation. I take a qualitative approach in order to best access participants' experiences, and my research aim is to increase understanding of the object of study, "not in the hope of proving anything, but rather in the hope of learning something" (Eysenck 1976:9 in Flyvberg 2004:392).

Theoretically I emphasised the importance of investigating subjectivity in terms of relational experience, and a phenomenological philosophy provides a way of forwarding an interpretative methodological approach that fits with this idea. Phenomenology's epistemology is rooted in an ontological notion of 'being-in-the-world' (Heidegger 1978 [1962]), which stresses the inseparability of the subjective self and the external world as individuals access meaningful social reality in inter-relational processes with the world. This means that knowledge emerges from participants' common sense meanings that arise in relation to their 'lifeworlds' (Husserl (1970[1936]).; Schutz 2003 [1954]). I am critical of the phenomenological notion of 'essential/ transcendent meaning' (Husserl (1970[1936]), and claims to value-free objectivity (Kirova and Emme 2006:52; Schutz 2003 [1954]). However, its relational interpretive approach and focus on embodied experience, fits with my own theoretical approach.

Phenomenology, however, limits its analysis to individuals' self-referential lifeworlds, and thus fails to locate social understanding in wider social and structural concerns. Similar critiques have been made of feminist approaches that construct knowledge from participants' perspectives (Bondi 2005). However, my theoretical approach relates participants' subjective social understandings to wider contexts of class, inequality and power, such as structured social fields, dominant or hegemonic discourses and policy

contexts. The case-study approach also allows for a range of methods and ways of investigating the object of study, which I discuss next.

3:2:2 The Case-study Approach

For the purposes of researching subjective experiences, my primary research was a qualitative mixed-methods approach. Flyvberg (2004) and Crompton (1998:122-123) note that case studies have been critiqued for privileging the arbitrary perspective of the researcher, but all research is subjective, including the selections and interpretations involved in quantitative research. The rigour of the qualitative case lies in its particular capacity to come close to complex life situations. As Geertz argues, “a good interpretation of anything – a poem, a person, a history... takes us into the heart of that of which it is the interpretation” (1993:18).

An advantage of a qualitative approach is that it can explicitly situate the researcher as a participant in the generation of data, which acknowledges the research process as inter-subjective and thus prompts an open and critical evaluation of the researcher’s role in the research. As such the knowledge produced is understood as mutual knowledge, co-generated by observer and participants (Flyvberg 2004:399). Therefore I use reflexivity and participatory methods as key methodological approaches for generating valid data and interpretations.

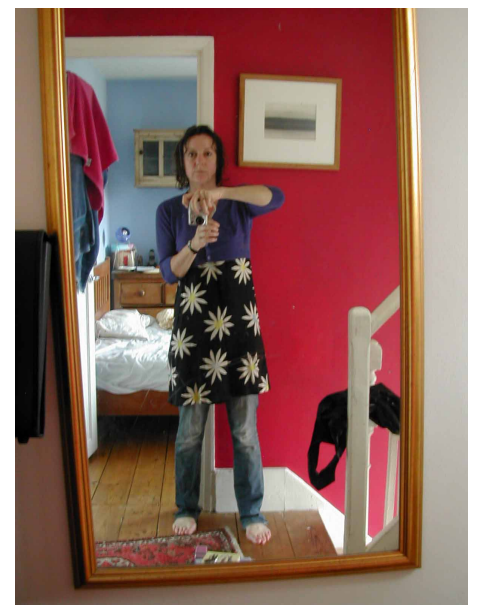


Fig 3.1: Myself in the mirror: symbol of reflexivity

As with the participants, my experiences and interpretations come from a partial subjective perspective, embedded in a particular shifting habitus, which inevitably impinges on my understanding and representation of the data. I therefore interrogated my positionality and asymmetrical position of power (Bourdieu et al. 1999:609), to better understand these effects (Fig 3.1). The participatory approach aimed to enhance the participants’ input into the co-generated data, fitting with my theoretical orientation to eliciting participants’ perspectives. The detailed inclusion of these reflexive and inter-subjective approaches worked well with my intention to focus on emotional experience.

The case-study approach is also suited to a contextual approach (Flyvberg 2004), accommodating my purposes of locating subjectivities within wider social contexts. Crompton (1998: 122-123) specifically recommends the case study as a way to approach class analysis through an in-depth holistic contextual analysis that can incorporate collective and individual class processes. Thus I situated my in-depth primary data within secondary data that informed on relevant historical and political contexts (e.g. 1:3). This approach serves to retain a critical edge and defend against parochial localism (Massey 1991).

3:2:3 Summary of the Primary Methods and Timescale

Dec 2009- Oct 2011	In-depth interviews 32 parents Interview headmaster.	Ethnographic photography	Photo- Diary elicitation 10 parents
Feb – July 2010	‘Family Stories’ art & film-making workshops with Camden Green school children. Art exhibition		
March 2010 - Oct 2011	Participant- observation & writing research diary.		

Table 3.1 Timetable of Fieldwork: 1 year 11 months

A case study incorporates a variety of methods aimed at understanding the research object from different angles, and my primary methods were in-depth interviews, participant observation, visual methods, and some audio methods, contextualised in a wider context as described above. I elaborate on these methods later in the chapter, but here draw out the methodological logic for using them.

My key method was in-depth ‘life-event’ interviews with 32 parents because this enabled me to gather detailed data about life-biographies, as well as incorporating information about participants’ children and parents. Therefore this biographical approach enabled me

to look at life trajectories, inter-generational social mobilities and class reproductive processes that operate dynamically over time. This follows the model of other empirical studies looking at subjective experiences of social and class mobility through life biography narratives (Elliott 1997; Lawler 1999; Plummer 2000; Thomson and Taylor 2005; Rogaly and Taylor 2009b). The narrative approach contributes to a ground-up perspective that is important for eliciting subordinated perspectives and agencies that are muted by dominant discourses, which addresses the theoretical approach of this study and assists in retaining a critical perspective in localised case-studies (Plummer 2000:xv; Watt 2008b; Paton 2012:263).

My theoretical emphasis on the body and its practices suggests that class as a process needed to be observed at ground level, so I used some ethnographic observational methods (which was anyway somewhat inevitable given that my daughter attended the school). This was primarily participant observation, but I also used ethnographic photography and participative photo-diary-elicitation. The audio-visual presentation of the research added in further embodied and emotional texture to the research account.

Therefore, by using these complementary methods over the period of nearly two years (Table 3.1), I was able to generate a rich and complex data-set, and a spatially and temporally dynamic representation of participants' inter-relating lives (Thomson and Taylor 2005:328).

3:3 Research Setting and Participants

3:3:1 Research Location and Demography

Three localities constitute the key local catchment area of Camden Green School. The two primary neighbourhoods are Gospel Oak to the South and West of the school (in the Gospel Oak ward), and Dartmouth Park to the North (mostly in the Highgate ward). To the East of the school is North Kentish Town (in the Kentish Town ward), making up a lesser proportion of the school catchment (Map 3.1). By looking at parents in a catchment area, I am not studying a bounded geographical territory, but looking at social and spatial flows of relationships, movements and communications, constructed by the parents' routes and networks, intersecting through the school. Thus place is conceived

dynamically as “constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus” (Massey 1994b:7). McDowell (1999:5) argues this approach is appropriate for cities like London that are made up of flows and movement, rather than stability and rootedness. Moreover, this approach enables me to look at how wider social and spatial structures and flows intersect at the smaller scales of the body, place and localities, in keeping with my theoretical aims to draw in wider social and spatial contexts.



Map 3.1: Wards in the Borough of Camden: source, Camden.gov.uk/crown copyright

All three locales have demographically diversified in the last 50 years (Watt 2001:113), transformed in “an era of profound social change” (Tindall 1977:210). Gospel Oak and Kentish Town were predominantly white British working-class areas, with a long-standing Irish working-class population that rapidly expanded after the Second World War (Watt 2001:114). Since the 1960s these areas have diversified, with large Somali and Bengali communities in Gospel Oak, and Greek Cypriot, Bengali, Somali, Albanian and Kosovan migrants in Kentish Town (Tindall 1977:216; Watt 2001:113; LBC 2007a). In 2011 the Highgate ward had a higher proportion of white British residents (61%) compared to Gospel Oak (50%) and Kentish Town wards (53%), and lower proportions of ethnic minority groups (LBC 2013).

Camden, as a borough, was always more mixed-class than the East End of London, and during the past four decades there has been gentrification by middle-class groups in all three research localities, accompanied by out-movement of working-class people (Tindall 1977:209-10; Watt 2001:115). As discussed in chapter one (1:3:4), there is now a high demand for housing in the Borough of Camden, with an extreme shortage of social housing, the third highest house prices of all the London boroughs (Shelter 2014), costly private rents and overcrowding. All the localities are socio-economically polarised, with mixed tenure and diverse architecture, including Victorian terraces and twentieth century, purpose-built blocks of council flats. Whilst some council estate properties are spacious, with green spaces and award-winning designs, there has been a trend towards under-investment (Watt 2001:121-123). Some estate properties have been purchased due to their inner London location and lower value compared to street properties. All the catchment localities share proximity to Hampstead Heath.



Fig 3.2: Dartmouth Park

However, each catchment-locality has different proportions of types of housing, tenure and residents, and a distinctive character of its own. Dartmouth Park was developed in the 19th century, with an emphasis on spacious houses for wealthy people, and is a

conservation area (Fig 3.2). It is home to Ed Milliband, Ken Loach and Julian Barnes, which gives a flavour of its liberal-left-leaning middle-class demography. Gospel Oak and Kentish Town, on the other hand, have strong working-class histories. (Tindall 1977).



Fig 3.3: Gospel Oak

Gospel Oak is one of the poorest and most densely populated wards in Camden (Fig 3.3). Flats constitute 82% of the housing, and houses 18%¹³. This compares to 69% and 31% respectively in the Highgate ward (Dartmouth Park), with Kentish Town somewhere in-between (LBC 2013). During the 1960s and 1970s large areas of Gospel Oak were redeveloped to provide local authority housing estates, which have thus far acted as a buffer against gentrification (Fig 3.4). However, during the fieldwork period six estates in Gospel Oak were in the early stages of a private-public redevelopment venture, or, as some critics refer to it, a “state-led gentrification” process (Watt 2009b:229). Currently 46% of the Gospel Oak households rent social housing and 32% are owner-occupiers, which is an inversion of the Dartmouth Park figures of 34% socially rented and 47% owned. The Kentish Town ward is, again, somewhere in-between (LBC 2013).

¹³ Statistics are rounded up to the nearest number, and based on the 2011 census.



Fig 3.4: Estate 1, Painting by Matt Small, a parent from the school.

All three localities are characterised spatially by sharp juxtapositions of wealth and poverty, giving a particular shape to my investigation. Gospel Oak is the most socio-economically polarised of all Camden's wards (LBC 2008; LBC and NHS Camden 2011). To the south of Gospel Oak, the council estates are bordered by Queens Crescent, a low-price retail street, and to the North by Oak Village, an enclave of a few streets of largely owner-occupied Victorian housing, and regularly cited by local people as being 'posh'. As one participant says, "It's the rich, poor divide really" (Louise, inter-class)¹⁴ (Fig 3.5).

¹⁴ See Appendix 3.1 for participants' class typologies, and 3:3:2 in this chapter for an explanation.



Figure 3.5: View estate of Oak Village from council (Gospel Oak)

In contrast to Queen Crescent, Dartmouth Park's consumer centre has been transformed by gentrification over the past decade. However, Kentish Town Road, by far the biggest retail street, despite its significant residential gentrification (Tindall 1977:225), evidences limited aesthetic and consumer gentrification compared to other North London local centres such as Islington (Butler 2003), possibly due to being a polluted and noisy main transport thoroughfare (Figs 3.6, 3.7 & 3.8).



*Fig 3.6: Queens Crescent
(Gospel Oak)*



Fig 3.7: Dartmouth Park



Fig 3.8: Kentish Town Road

The local state primary schools roughly represented their immediate residential demographics. Therefore in Dartmouth Park there are some primary schools surrounded almost solely by owner-occupied housing, and have predominantly middle-class populations, high league table results and are oversubscribed. In contrast, the two state primary schools in South Gospel Oak are surrounded by council housing estates and have

almost exclusively working-class populations, and lower league table positions¹⁵ (DfE 2012). Camden Green Primary School is a double entry school (60 pupils per year) and the largest primary school in the borough of Camden (Camden Green School 2012). Its pupil population is mixed-ethnicity, and whilst predominantly working-class, there is also a significant and growing middle-class presence, and recently the school became oversubscribed (OFSTED 2011). All the participants commented on its socially mixed character, for example, Mark (inter-class) said,

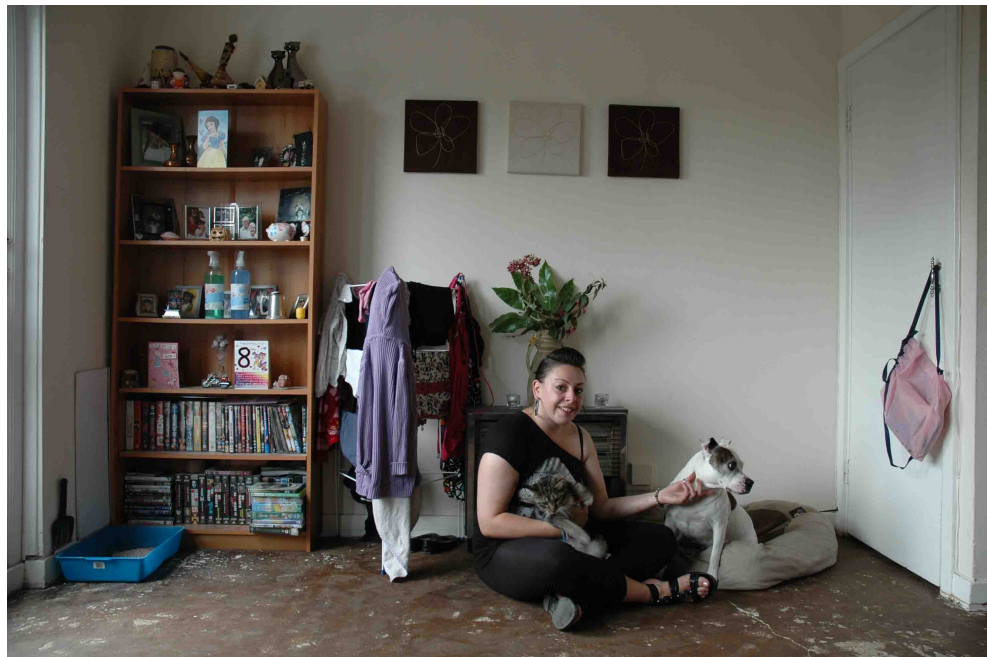
you look at the school and... it does really represent for me the idea of Camden, which is there's all these different people from every different, you have got your rich and poor... you got your different religious make up and... your ethnicities and that's all represented in that school.

3:3:2 Participants

By focusing on parents, I was able to address family as well as individual mobility (Bertaux and Bertaux-Wiame 1997; Bertaux and Thompson 1997; Franz 2003). I interviewed a roughly equal number of working and middle-class parents, which suited my purposes of making comparisons and examining inequality across classes (Figs 3.9-3.11). However, participants' identities were not constructed in simple duality as they had complex or mixed-up class identities, with different volumes and types of capital, diverse income, occupation and educational levels, and lived in a diversity of housing types and tenures¹⁶. They were upward, downward and horizontally mobile, and many of the middle-class parents I interviewed were not 'established', being the first generation to access a university education or middle-class occupations. As such, participants sometimes "hovered on the borders of class like a flame in constant movement" (Bourdieu 1986:4). Even during the period of the research, participants lost, gained and changed jobs, homes, locality, qualifications, schools, income, partners and babies (see Appendix 3.1 for descriptions of the participants).

¹⁵ I infer significant associations between housing tenure, class identity and school results, not causal relations.

¹⁶ 'Participants' generally refers to the interviewees, although it sometimes includes observed parents.



Figs 3.9 - 3.11: Parents from the school.

Participants' own self-identification of their class identities indicated the complexity of class position, especially as a lived experience. Mark (inter-class, upwardly mobile) for example said,

Apparently I'm middle class now just because of income. But that sounds like I'm abandoning my working-class roots. I'd say I'm middle class. That sounds weird. I'll say I'm working class. No I'm not working class. Oh just call me middle class, I haven't been middle class for a while. I think it's only income based rather than attitude based.

Mark's narrative indicates the complex combination of loyalty to roots, reflexive choosing, external categorisation and emotional disjuncture that can be involved. Critics have noted people's reluctance or distorted interpretations when assigning themselves into class categories (Skeggs 1997, Savage 2000; Sayer 2005; Mellor 2010:78). This is indicated by Maggie, in this study, who by all objective indicators was working-class, but self-assigned herself as middle-class¹⁷. Louise (working-class, downwardly mobile) alternatively denied class, in the context of her self-awareness of external categorisation, "I'm classless. Society would have me as the underclass and other people would have me as the middle class". The reflexive positioning of selves in relation to an external class barometer supports Savage's (2000) argument that class is individualized, fractured through multiple complex subjective self-identities, even when it is denied.

However, whilst understanding the mixed-up nature of class identity is important for my analysis that questions the binaried construction of class identities, for the purposes of making a meaningful class analysis I imposed a class taxonomy on the participants. I made this judgment according to the six indicators of education, occupation, housing, economic circumstances, class origins and self-identity (Appendix 3.2), and unless otherwise stated, I use this categorisation system. These were mostly 'objective', in so far as assessments of class identity regarding income, educational and occupational statuses were subject to my interpretation, with housing particularly crudely divided into social rented (working-class) and home-owned (middle-class). Overall, however, these indicators roughly represent my theoretical approach of understanding class as complex, and both subjective and objective. Overall I assigned 15 participants as working-class, 13 as middle-class and 4 as inter-class, based on a numerical average of the indicators.

¹⁷ I use 'objective' to indicate social constructions produced at a structural level, rather than as an epistemological claim to factual truth. See Appendix 3.2 for my class categorisation of Maggie.

In line with my theoretical approach, I also looked at the intersection of class with other identities such as ethnicity and gender, as discussed in the previous chapter. I include a single father as a participant, which contrasts with other empirical studies on parenting and class reproduction that look predominantly at mothers' experiences (Reay 1998; 2004; Gillies 2007; Armstrong 2010). Whilst including a single father is an exceptional case, in that only a very small proportion of men in Camden are single parents (LBC 2013), I felt this to be significant in terms of adding new information to existing debates.

In the next section I discuss the first of my methods, in-depth interviewing, in detail, firstly talking about the setting up of the interview, and then the problems and strategies of the interview process.

3:4 In-depth Interviews

3:4:1 Setting Up

The setting up of an interview involved selecting interviewees and interview locations, and negotiating informed consent. Bourdieu (1999:609) argues that even this process, being in the hands of the investigator, creates asymmetry.

I selected 32 interviewees (21 mothers, 11 fathers), through a process of selective sampling that aimed to illustrate a diversity of identities pertinent to the school's demography, and that served the conceptual interests of the research topic (Miller 2000:77). This included looking for participants with a range of class, ethnic, age and gender identities. I selected parents I knew, approached people in the playground who appeared to fill a gap, and used school contacts to locate specific missing types. Any discrepancies between appearance and reality in the second playground selections were useful for challenging my assumptions and complicating the research. I included some "critical cases" which were chosen to challenge received ideas (Flyvberg 2004:393-397), such as the selection of a single father and someone whose limited English required an interpreter. Rather than seeking to generalise from such cases, I instead aim to contribute to a, "collective process of knowledge accumulation" (ibid 2004:394).

Regarding the negotiation of the interview terms, the interviewee decided where they wanted to be interviewed, but I often suggested their home, in order to observe them in an ethnographic location (Nare 2008), potentially take photographs, and put them at their ease (Fig 3.12). The setting was therefore mostly informal, and I aimed for an informal interview style. However, because I was already on friendly terms with some of the interviewees, I was conscious that the interviewees may be lulled into a false sense of security, divulging information appropriate for a private friendly conversation, but that may later be regretted given the public usage. So as a reminder of the professional nature of the interaction I sandwiched each interview with formality by reading through an 'Introduction to the interview' at the start, including topics covered, usage of data and the interviewee's rights (Appendix 3.3), and reading through a consent form at the end (Appendix 3.4). I also digitally-recorded interviews, which lent formality.

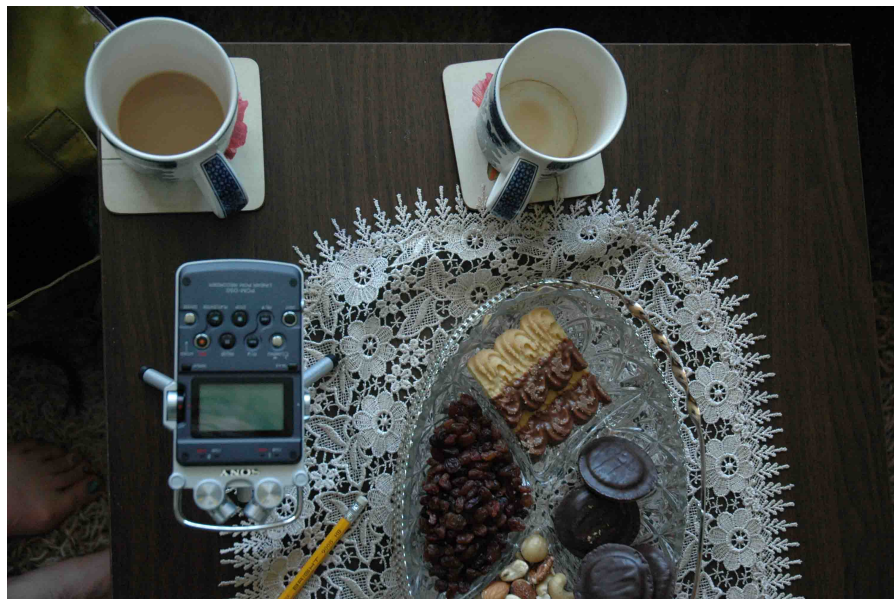


Fig 3.12: Interview in participant's home.

These formal negotiations also aimed to elicit informed consent. To this end I gave the interviewees an information sheet when I first approached them (Appendix 3.5), encouraged them to ask questions, and offered them a written or audio copy of the interview transcript. These formal interventions were thus intended to make explicit and help counter the asymmetrical interview exchange.

Despite these measures, however, a few interviewees said that they had not realised how long, emotional or personal the interviews would be. I realised that I had underplayed these aspects so as not to frighten off potential interviewees. I remedied this by adjusting future information sheets and talking these aspects through in more detail with later interviewees. Some dilemmas, however, were irreconcilable. In the interests of not putting concepts into the interviewees' heads, I did not explain from the outset that I was looking at social mobility in terms of class, and whilst this was a significant omission in terms of withholding information, I could not fulfill the demands of both research interests.

3:4:2 The Interview: Methodology, Challenges and Strategies

My interviews were in-depth and semi-structured, commonly between 3-6 hours, conducted over two sessions. They were modelled on a life-event method that was rooted in an oral history biographical approach (Whitehead 2009), and aimed to elicit narratives around relevant themes, such as education and work experiences (see Appendix 3.6 for interview questions).

Aligning with the inter-subjective epistemology discussed earlier, I regarded the interviews as interactive social relationships that co-generated the data. As such, the data does not exist independently of the interview situation, but is generated in a particular form by the particular social situation, which would be different to data generated on a different day, in a different mood or with a different interviewer. This does not mean that the data is invalid, or has no basis in participants' experience, but acknowledges the contingent situated nature of the information generated (Haraway 1988). Nor was the subjective data too particular to be of general interest, as it could reveal structural impacts on people's lives.

Despite my aim for this method to draw out participants' voices, Gillies argues that, "Any attempt to give research participants a 'voice' ... reflects the researcher's interpretation, which is inevitably grounded in their own subjective and material reality" (2007:15). As such, the knowledge produced is not a representation, but an interpretation, that emerges via the researcher's framework.

However, this does not mean that strategies cannot be devised to reduce the researcher's intervention, and to reflexively understand the intervention better. As Bourdieu et al. argue, "all kinds of distortions are embedded in the very structure of the research relationship... *that have to be understood and mastered*" (1999:608, my italics).

As mentioned, reflexivity is integral to understanding the knowledge produced in inter-subjective research, and I used several reflexive tools: I wrote a research diary to help me elicit and record on-going self-reflections (Reason and Bradbury 2001); I recorded and transcribed my own contribution to the interviews; I asked interviewees for feedback on the interview experience, and then one of the participants interviewed me in my capacity as a parent at the school, which helped me understand the interviewees' perspective. The private space of the diary was a productive place to reflect on my connection to the research and thus develop an emotionally sensitive sense of self in relation to the research contexts and participants (Reason and Bradbury 2001:8; Pavlovich et al. 2009:52). Via these reflexive processes I was then able to consider some of the research challenges, devise strategies, and better understand my positionality, which I discuss next.

A key issue was researcher intervention. Byrne warns that, "People who cannot resist the temptation to contradict or push an informant with their own ideas, will take away information which is either useless or positively misleading" (2009:1). Bourdieu argues that such an intrusion is "symbolic violence" (1999:609). I drew on Anderson and Jack (1991) to help counter these tendencies. They emphasise the importance of listening openly and, relevant to my insider-outsider position, advise this particularly in situations where the researcher thinks they already know what is being said.

I therefore employed open interview questions aimed at minimising my intervention, and encouraging the interviewees to talk about what was important to them. I also followed Ladkin's (2005:120-121) advice, to work towards a receptive mode in order to enhance the ability to listen. Rather than sticking rigidly to my ordered questions, for example, I allowed interviewees to veer off given topics, on the basis that it would both help me understand how they make sense of their worlds, and foster their confidence that their stories were valuable. I learned the importance of creating spaces where I did not rush to fill gaps, change the subject or intervene, as feeling listened to and self-confidence facilitated the participants to be both articulate and perceptive. This was especially

important for my third research question that aimed to draw subordinated and, arguably, less confident voices into a public debate. This style of interviewing accounted for the often lengthy interviews, but embedded in the sometimes unwieldy data, was much that was rich, revealing and insightful.

Anderson and Jack (1991) also emphasise that listening for and encouraging expressions of emotions facilitates the understanding of participants' perspectives. Thus I often followed questions up with, "how did you feel about that?". However, feedback revealed that interviewees had often experienced the interview in ways I had not realised, and whilst many enjoyed the experience, others said that recalling their lives was painful. So in probing the emotions I had to tread a fine ethical line between encouraging people to voice their stories, and pushing them beyond comfortable boundaries.

By analysing the transcript for my own part in the interviews, I saw that I sometimes asked closed questions, particularly when the interview triggered a connection with my own experiences or theoretical interests. However, on the whole the interviewees seemed able to counter my interventions with their own interpretations, agentially participating in the dialogue. As Collins argues, "an interviewer's questions and comments are necessarily leading while adding that the interviewee can always subvert such leading" (1998:9). However, when the transcripts showed that participants had taken on my language or ideas too readily, I did not use the data.

As a counterpoint to the view that the interviewer should not intervene I, however, sometimes deliberately offered my interventions to the participants. Given that I would ultimately be in control of the analysis and representation, I felt that 'testing out' some of my interpretations would elaborate on the informed part of consent as the participants could become cognisant of some of the ways I was interpreting their data. Moreover, this strategy lay my interpretations open to challenge as the participants had the chance to disagree and dialogue with me. I thought of this strategy as form of on-the-spot-feedback, and tended to employ it towards the end of the interview to lessen its influence on participants' narratives.

3:4:3 Positionality

Researchers are typically called upon to reflect on their relationships with the researched in terms of inequalities structured by the positionalities of gender, class and ethnicity (Byrne 2009). But whilst my positionality undoubtedly affected the research data, I found no simple way of understanding or acting on the reflexive information.

The application of categorical labels in mechanistic ways was unhelpful. I could lay out my categories – British national, white, female, single-parent, home-owner, degree-educated - but how was this to be interpreted? There were certainly instances of relational positioning affecting the interview, but subtler positionalities also came into play, such as shared experiences and geographies, as other critics emphasise (Puwar 1997:10.2; Carling et al. 2013), and also emotional relationalities such as self-confidence and sexual chemistry. A researcher is not a set of positions, but a complicated subjective person interacting in particular, emotional ways with other such people. Each interaction is nuanced by personal histories and influenced by in-the-moment ‘chemistry’. Positionality is thus interactional and dynamic, shifting with each encounter (Merriam et al. 2001:411), but also from moment to moment. Moreover, it is often enacted through unconscious, unreflexive responses that are difficult to identify or eradicate.

Sennett and Cobb (1973) found that some of their interviewees’ responses were revelatory of self-positioning in relation to authority. I noticed that the two people who challenged me about the research before agreeing to participate were male and middle-class, indicating that they had the knowledge and confidence to assert their own authority. From the perspective of interviewees who feel vulnerable or subordinate, however, my Bengali interpreter indicated the response might be evasion,

Sometimes the community, like the ones who aren’t educated and come new like that and don’t know nothing, and then suddenly someone wants to interview them, in their mind they think, is it my personal things they want to know?... maybe they can’t trust... they ask me this question, shall I say it in a truth or shall I not?

This kind of response is often invisible, and generally I found it difficult to detect what the interviewees assumed about me and how this shaped their narratives. My position as

an authoritative researcher, moreover, was complicated by my insider-outsider status, whereby sharing parenthood, the school and locality offered a more equal footing.

The most persistent positional interaction that I detected, by looking at the transcripts, was my relentless emphasis on these kinds of commonalities, which covered an idiosyncratic range including shared illnesses, insecurities, age, single-parenthood, death of a parent, personality type of parents, love of cats and smoking habits. This could be read as a conscious research strategy to foster empathy, but is better explained as deriving from a habitual insecurity that people will find me different to them and thus judge and reject me. Add to this the things I did *not* reveal about myself incase it put participants off me, and my performed position arguably verged on deception. This was particularly evident in relation to the issue of class. As discussed in chapter one (1:1:3), when growing up, my middle-class status often generated in me feelings of difference and exclusion. The effect in the interviews was that I habitually re-enacted a playing down of my status, accent and privilege, in attempts to be liked and accepted. Thus deciphering the impact of my class position was complicated due to me under-performing my middle-class identity. One participant was visibly shocked when I told her my childhood had been privileged.

Therefore it was my attempts to share positions, rather than our differences, that most clearly impacted on the interview interaction. As some feminists have noted, commonalities, as well as differences, can structure power relations, (Gillies 2007:15; Mellor 2010:81). My shared parent status with the participants, for example, potentially fostered less reserve on their part and masked inherent researcher-researched power relations. Indeed one interviewee withdrew a large part of her interview material when later, outside of the interview, I referred to her 'housing situation', at which point she began to feel uncomfortable that her recent emotional life experiences were being analysed in sociological terms.

The interview interaction is therefore shaped by complex shifting emotions, which are difficult to identify, and even harder to control. Add in the multiplicity of relational, intersectional and shifting positionalities on both sides and coherent reflexivity is further complicated. Reflexive insights, then, are hard to grasp as I had to speculate what each person imagined me to be, what this meant to them, and how this affected their narrative.

Byrne (2009) argues that reflexivity, so often discussed in terms of its effect on the quality of the data produced, serves the interests of the researcher rather than the well-being of the respondent. But my reflexive findings reversed this notion, as I felt only a little wiser as to the impact of my position on the data, but hopeful that I emerged more sensitive to the vulnerabilities of the participants. For example, I questioned and made judgments as to whether what someone revealed privately might be later regretted in a public context, and sometimes omitted using sensitive information on these grounds. As Skeggs reminds us, there's nothing intrinsically ethical about reflexivity (2002:360, in Byrne 2006:41), and the crucial challenge is how to turn reflexive insights into a meaningful practice of ethical responsibility.

3:5 Participant and Participatory Observation

I address the observation part of the fieldwork in two parts. Firstly, I discuss how I produced data via participant observation methods, and focus on my insider-outsider position, then the ethnographic photographic approach. Secondly, I discuss the participatory approach to data-collection, focusing on the photo-diary-elicitation method and then the use of art and film workshops.

3:5:1 Participant Observation as an Insider-outsider Researcher

For participant observation I used formal and informal observations, interviews and chats, research diary reflections and ethnographic photography (Appendix 3.7). Atkinson and Hammersley state that, "all social research is a form of participant observation, because we cannot study the social world without being part of it" (1994:249). Nevertheless, there are degrees to which the researcher is part of the research, and I was deeply embedded (Fig 3.13). Because my insider-outsider position was central to my participant observation, I will discuss in some detail how this integrated with my practice.



Fig 3.13: Me and my daughter in the Gospel Oak neighbourhood where we lived

Although it is impossible to give an exhaustive account, I will outline some of my situatedness in the research setting. I have lived and worked in the local area for around 20 years. My daughter has attended two local state primary schools, and in the final stages of the research she transferred to a local state secondary school. I have worked in the research locality as a freelance photographer and an FE lecturer, run community photography, art and reminiscence projects, and conducted a local photographic research project on neighbourhood and belonging (Humphry 2013). I have also volunteered for the school, employed local people, been involved with local campaigns and protest groups, used numerous services and made many local contacts and friendships.

Therefore I was observing and accumulating knowledge about the locality, school, parents and children years before the formal research start date, and beyond its formal end. This meant that the exact spatial and temporal parameters of the participant observation were fuzzy, and my formally planned and written-up observations were accompanied by much unrecorded and assumed knowledge.

Bogdewic notes (1999:48) that participation observation, whereby the researcher is looking at the object of study from within, blurs the line between everyday life and research, and this was pertinent to my insider-outsider position. Whilst my 'insider' position impacted on the use of all the methods, it was as participant-observer that I was most camouflaged. Having been a parent at the school for several years already, there was no reason for anyone to presume I was enacting the role of a researcher, bar the occasions when I explicitly indicated this. When I was engaged, for example, in casual chats or hanging around the playground, it was for the most part impossible for others, or even myself, to distinguish between my role as friend and researcher. Thus my resident-researcher identities were intersectional, with each identity re-shaping the other as I moved through a variety of socio- spatial contexts (Valentine 2007).

Such embeddedness in the research locality produced a slowly-accumulated in-depth contextual knowledge. The downside, however, was that this embedded knowledge was so much part of my own habitus that it may have ingrained itself into a set of invisible and unquestioned assumptions. As such, there was the danger that I had internalised the doxic common-sense of hegemonic discourses, and thus may reproduce dominant discourses of power via my interpretations (Bourdieu 2002[1977]). I worked against this through the reflexive research diary, but the critical literatures were particularly helpful for assisting me to continually challenge my assumptions.

Similarly, my sharing of places, experiences and identities with the participants increased empathy and understanding, but at the same time ran the danger of me assuming knowledge of the participants. However, as noted at the beginning of the chapter, and elaborated in the discussion of positionality (3:4:3), there were both similarities and the differences between my position and that of the researched. Commonalities are always inevitably limited and, at risk of stating the obvious, you are not them, and however much is shared the participants will always also be 'other'. Thus when generating and interpreting the data I had to carefully and critically negotiate the lines between empathy and 'othering', as well as between assuming and understanding.

The camouflage-effect of being an 'insider' researcher held some ethical challenges. The advantage was that I could observe participants with little evident impact on the situation, being read as a parent or local, rather than a researcher. This is not to say that I had no

impact on the research, because I sometimes instigated conversations oriented to my research interests, it was just that much of the time this was not explicitly stated or necessarily evident. My camouflaging, therefore, was arguably unethical as I gathered data when people did not even know I was doing so, and used information that was narrated to me as parent, friend or local resident.

To counter this I deployed some strategies for transparency. I attempted to make myself visible by formally requesting permission from the school to research the parents. I explained my research interests to many members of staff, and informed many parents, including publishing my research interests several times in the parent-newsletter and requesting permission for the use of the observations and photography. When drawing on conversations where my researcher interests may not have been evident, I decided that if identities were anonymised it was ethical. As with anonymised interview participants, I was careful to change names of them and any one mentioned, and took measures to ensure they could not be identified in other ways, for example through their occupations or residential locations. The issue of anonymity and confidentiality was complicated, however, by my use of photographic methods, which I discuss next.

3:5:2 The Photographic Methodology: Ethnographic Photography



Fig 3.14: Me taking photographs

Firstly, I discuss my overall photographic methodological approach and then my use of ethnographic photography (Fig 3.14). I used photography as the primary visual method

because it provides both a light-borne trace and an interpretation of the visual layer of experience, which is central to social experience itself (Berger and Mohr 1989[1982]:93; Jay 1993). My interest and experience were rooted in previous work as a photographer, and researcher using photographic methods (Gidley et al. 2005; Gidley et al. 2008; Humphry 2013).

Phenomenologists acknowledge visual perception as a key mediator of the way individuals experientially construct meaning in relation to their social environments (Heidegger, Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, in Jay 1993:265-270; Ferguson 2006:115-117). As taking photographs of our environments is an active meaning-making process, this aligns well with a phenomenological approach (Kirova 2008), and suggests photography as a well-suited method for interpreting everyday experiences. Therefore, aligning with the general ontological and epistemological approach of the research, I regard photography as having an interpretative relationship to the social world, rather than transparently representing reality.

The photographic method is also helpful for elucidating the geographic embodied aspect of experience, which is emphasised as a key theoretical approach in the previous chapter (2:6:2). Taking photographs is necessarily an embodied spatial experience, so this enabled data to be collected at a point emotionally and physically close to everyday experience. As such, photographs can also add in a 'human-ness' to dry written accounts by capturing something of the aesthetic, sensual, material and emotional textures of lived experience.

I therefore used ethnographic photography as an element of the participant observation. The images illustrate many textual points made in the thesis, but also add in context, colour, emotion, vitality, meaning and visual symbolism to the data and its presentation. Moreover, the act of taking photographs oriented me to look more closely at the social world I was investigating. For example, during the interviews it gave me time to look around carefully, undistracted by the sociality of the interview process. This process then often elicited further conversation. Later I could reflect again as I looked at the actual photographs.

I now move from discussing the *participant* observation method to discussing the

participatory observation method, in which I also used visual methods (particularly photography) to enhance the co-generation of the data, and my access to participants' experiences and perspectives.

3:5.3 The Photo-diary-elicitation Method

Just as taking photographs was an active practice of meaning-making that I used to help make sense of what I was researching, so too it assisted participants in interpreting their everyday experiences. Photo-diary methods have become more popular over the past decade (Latham 2004; Mizen 2005; Gidley et al. 2005; Packard 2008; Datta 2009; Thomson et al. 2011b; Kennelly and Watt 2012), and they often entail research participants photographing their lives and then returning to verbally interpret the images to the researcher. Ten of the interviewees engaged in this method (six women and four men of diverse ethnic and class identities), and they thus produced two layers of participant-led interpretations as they made photographic observations and then verbal interpretations.

As taking photographs is an embodied experience, the camera could move with the participants through space and capture everyday locales, routes and socialities (Latham 2004:120), and some of the 'microbe-like' everyday practices that de Certeau (1998[1984]) argues are so small and taken-for-granted as to be difficult for the researcher to grasp. This method also enabled data to be collected in places that I myself could not observe, such as everyday leisure and work geographies. The method elicited different but complementary data to the life-event interviews, as photographs taken directly in response to lived experience produce different kinds of information to that recollected when the interviewee is spatially and temporally distant from the event they are recounting. Thus whilst the former captures the routine detail of experience as it occurs, the latter narrates key dramatic experiences selected from broad swathes of time.

The images were taken over different time periods, and variously showed a walk to work, a 'day in the life of', holiday images and still lives from home. Some participants added in existing photographs and videos, including early records of the local area that added a subjective historical context (Fig 3.15 & 3.16). Thus the method elicited much unexpected data, not always directly connected to the research themes, but always adding a fuller picture of the participants lives on which I would base my analyses, expanding

the narrative resources that the participants drew on and offering me new ways for to think through the empirical (Latham 2004:129).

Fig 3.15: Participant's mum, dad and friend in Gospel Oak



Fig 3.16: Participant with mum and friends in Gospel Oak

However, whilst the photo-elicitation method drew a vivid element of participants' experiences into the research, I would question the degree to which the method promotes a collaborative and 'empowering' effect, as some critics suggest (e.g.

Hurworth 2003, in Packard 2008:64)¹⁸. Whilst the participants took the images and explained them to me, I gave them some directions as to what to take, and they undoubtedly made inclusions/exclusions according to what they thought I wanted to see. Moreover, I had the final say in the selection and interpretation of their images. Thus, as Packard (2008:75) argues, the method cannot erase the power divide between the researcher and the researched, and the limitations of the method need to be acknowledged. Nevertheless, in this research I would argue that the photo-diary-elicitation method *enhanced* the balance of the inter-subjective data, as I only loosely directed participants to photograph their everyday lives, and the variety of ways they interpreted the task was witness to their agency and interpretative input.

3:5:4 Art Workshops and Film-making

Another participatory element of the data generation were the art workshops I ran at Camden Green School on the theme of 'Family Stories', working with a class of children, from which I made four short films. The films and the artworks were then displayed as part of a public school exhibition. The children created individual artworks based on their families, using a range of art materials (Figs 3.17-3.19). The children were then interviewed about the meaning of these artworks, and photographed, to create animated films¹⁹.

This was a scoping project, aimed at introducing myself to the school as a researcher, further familiarising myself with the research setting, accessing some background knowledge on inter-generational familial transmission, and giving something back to the children, parents and school. The participatory element was the production of the artworks by the children, followed up by interpretative interview. I also worked with another parent to devise and run the project, and with several members of staff (see Appendix 3.8 for the proposal).

¹⁸ See Packard (2008) for an overview of the photo-elicitation method, including a debate on the ethics of researcher-researched power relations.

¹⁹ Available on Vimeo, <http://vimeo.com/36560250> and <http://vimeo.com/31955399>, password on request from debbiehumpty@btinternet.com



Figs 3.17- 3.19: Artworks from Family Stories

The method developed trust and access, and also added understanding of families at the school, giving me an insight into inter-generational and within-generational processes. I also became experientially aware of the school's 'superdiversity' (Vertovec 2007). Nearly all the children had non-British connections, with a range of multiple heritage combinations, but often in ways that had not been visible in the school playground nor evident in the statistical data, such as through grandparents and step-families, second/third generation white international migrants and those in small numbers. This gave me a better understanding of the school's demography and influenced my

interview selection process as, for example, I deliberately sought out a parent from a numerically-small ethnic group as a critical case that could illustrate the experiences of a parent who did not have access to a ready-made group. This was a departure from the many studies that represent dominant groups. I also got an early insight into intersectional identities, situated as the children were in different types of families (such as extended, diasporic and living with *two* single-parents), and became attuned to the emotions running through families (such as separation, longing, loss, belonging, love and anger). This lent a further sensitivity to my selection and interpretation processes.

All these methods described above added to the data as a “bricolage of text, talk and photography” (Latham 2004:126), providing many ways of examining and representing the research subject, appropriate to a multi-perspectival case-study approach. The task of interpreting, editing and using all this complex data, however, was challenging, as I discuss next.

3:6 Analysis and Representation

3:6:1 Overview of the Analytic Approach

The analysis of the data began during fieldwork as I analysed about quarter of the interviews before proceeding to the rest, in order to help me refine the theoretical frame. Thus here, and in less explicit ways throughout the fieldwork, I employed an inductive-deductive dialectic, with the data influencing my thinking, and my thinking influencing the way I generated and analysed the data. Experience and text interacted as, “(t)he analysis of social life cannot be divorced from how we write about it” (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995:253). Throughout I engaged with relevant literatures, which continually helped me re-think what I wanted to do. In turn, my ground-level findings drove me to look at particular literatures.

The various writing and presentation tasks I did throughout, from conference papers to thesis drafts, similarly were both shaped by and shaped the data and its analysis. As such, theory, data, analyses, and writing/representation can be thought of as the four weakly-chronological, overlapping, interactive, dialectic processes that produced the final

research account. Having already discussed my theoretical approach and data generation, I will now discuss in turn the two (overlapping) processes of analysis and representation

3:6:2 Interview and Observational Analysis

My analytic process was to immerse myself in the interview data, doing my own transcriptions, and undergoing several read-throughs, using coding to identify themes, and writing up notes. I did manual coding to keep selected texts within the meaningful context of the participants' narratives in these early stages. After the first batch of analysis I was able to narrow my themes down, and increasingly I approached the transcripts more deductively with more focussed themes. However, I remained open to how new data presented new understandings or counter evidence that would nuance, challenge or change my interpretations and research focus. Thus I retained a deductive and inductive interplay. I used reflexive, interpretive and narrative modes of analysis, which overlapped and interacted with each other, as the previous discussion on reflexivity indicated, so I will now discuss the interpretative and then narrative approach.

Whilst I paid close attention to participant's narratives in making my interpretative analyses, I played with 'distances' in that I used secondary data and the literatures in order to situate the subjective accounts in wider social discourses and structures. I discussed the historical and political research context at length in chapter one, and have situated participants' experiences within the particular research setting. Then, as indicated in the previous chapter, the Bourdieuvian approach provides conceptual tools that help me analyse the inter-connection between subjective experiences and the wider social processes. I also related *across* the interview data-set, identifying repetition of stories, recurring themes and contrasting experiences of similar life-moments, enabling patterns to be detected and comparisons to be made, which lent the personal stories a wider context.

I used a narrative analysis to refine my understanding of the relationship between subjective understandings and dominant and hegemonic discourses. I followed Anderson and Jack who advise listening for interviewees' "muted" perspectives" (1991:11) that do not fit, or are not publicly acceptable, in the context of prevailing concepts and values. This was partly to draw out subordinated perspectives, but also to better understand what the dominant discourses were, how people positioned themselves against them, and their

practices of contestation and consent. I draw on Thomson (2011), who suggests tracing the relationship between participants' narratives and those in public cultural resources, in order to better understand the available parameters within which people speak, whose private stories may or may not be recognised in wider public discourse, and thus to identify the workings of privilege and wider structural contexts. These analytic approaches work to address with my first research question that seeks to understand classed relations of power, my second research question that seeks to examine participants' narratives in the context of the dominant individualist social mobility discourse, and my third research question that seeks to listen for subordinated perspectives.

Anderson and Jack argue (1991) that the muted meanings struggle against the dominant discourses in internal dialogues that are characterised by contradictions and the moral language of self-judgment as people grapple with expressing their own views against dominant norms. Thus I looked for contradictory narratives and self-judgments to identify where the interviewees felt constrained or conflicted in expressing views against 'common sense' doxa. I also followed Anderson and Jack's advice to listen for emotional and moral language, which was helpful for understanding the everyday distinction-making processes that underlie individualized class differentiations and feeds into these wider discourses (Savage 2000; Sayer 2005; Skeggs 2009).

Regarding the participant observations, the formal observations were from the outset framed by me writing them up, an interpretative process that begun the analysis. This also was an inductive-deductive process as I responded to what I had observed, then questioned and troubled the data I had observed as I wrote them up. It is harder to identify the analytic process I used for the unwritten informal observations that emerged from my deep involvement in the research setting. But I was aware of both gradual and sudden revelations of understanding as I engaged in the everyday practices of being a parent, resident, student and researcher. These understandings infused my analysis in subtle ways that were difficult to pinpoint because they were not visible as written text. However, not being visible is not the same things as not being present, and the unrecorded 'insider' knowledge impacted on my analysis throughout.

3:6:3 Representation, Responsibility and Reflexivity

As already mentioned, despite my attempts at a participative research approach, the necessary task of interpreting the data and making a textual representation of the research endowed me with the final control and authority. This was unavoidable, both because I had to make mass amounts of complex data coherent and because the academic institutional framework demanded a sole-authored thesis. Therefore I would argue that this is the most crucial asymmetry built into the researcher-researched relationship.

Oakley argues (1981, in Collins 1998:3) that it is the process of the participant giving their story during the interview process that creates power asymmetry, but giving can be a form of power as it demands obligation and reciprocity (Mauss 1990[1950]). Instead I argue that the power asymmetry lies in the transformation of the gift into an interpreted account and, in parallel, its transference from private to public space. The researcher mediates these processes so along with the giving of the story, there is also the giving of trust, as the interviewee trusts that their story will be translated without unwelcome distortion or exploitation. As Bourdieu et al. argues, “above all we have to protect (participants)... from the dangers of misrepresentation” (2006[1999]:1). But this is easily said and almost impossible to do because, as Byrne (2006:38) points out, participants are likely to want their stories to be represented in congruence with their own perspectives, and any alternative account may cause distress. So whilst my research explicitly sought participants’ views, it also necessarily subjected them to “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu et al. 2006[1999]:609) as they were framed by my analyses in the final account.

Being interviewed myself as part of the research brought home to me the power involved in analysis and representation. It was naive to imagine that having myself interviewed constructed some equity between myself and the researched, as I was the only interviewee who had control over how their data was used. The experience, however, was valuable in that this was brought home to me in an experiential way.

My theoretical approach that involved an analysis of inequality and power arguably increased the possibility of producing interpretations that would be distressing to the participants, as they would be unlikely to want to be represented as either victims or perpetrators. Bourdieu’s emphasis on class self-interest, practiced through the subjective habitus, was also in danger of inflicting its own narrative of individual culpability. My

anxiety about this, however, was helpful, because it spurred me think through my theoretical position and analytic approach. I gradually clarified to myself that what I wanted to do was examine how individuals' practices were shaped by class structures, and hence I developed my theoretical and methodological approach of relating subjective experiences to structural inequalities. If a finger was to be pointed, it would be at the systems, policies and discourse of institutional and government structures that shaped the unequal parameters within which individuals enacted their practices. Thus I would examine individuals' practices *without* individualising blame, which also accorded with my critique of a neoliberal discourse that does just that.

Another way in which I aimed to soften the effects of symbolic violence was by using the bricolage of texts in the accounts I gave of the research. Thus in the thesis I used the photographs as well as quotations, and in presentations I drew on the audio-texts from the interviews and films. The aim was to go some way towards offering a complex and multi-perspectival representation that might moderate "the single, central, dominant, in a word, quasidivine, point of view" (Bourdieu et al. 2006[1999]:3). The images were always were contextualised in, and thus inter-relational with, the text. However, the photographs are also open to the reader's interpretation as raw data (akin to quotations), who can construct their own interpretation, potentially contesting that assumed by the author. Images are arguably a less defined, named and nailed-down kind of knowledge than written analysis, able to trigger the viewer's imagination and more open to audience interpretation (Berger and Mohr 1989[1982]:85-92; Edwards 1999:59-60). This, then, extends the idea discussed earlier of an inter-subjective knowledge constructed by the researcher and participants, to include the audience (Tyler 1986).

The audio-clips used in conference presentations offered another form of raw data that was experientially available to the audience, and literally allowed participants' voices to be heard²⁰. The clips shared something of the participants' original performances, restored articulacy to the speakers, and returned some of the emotion, tone and authority that is lost in the transformation and reduction of interview transcription (Bordieu et al. 2006[1999]:2).

²⁰ See <http://www.debbiehumphry.com/housing-insecurity.html> for 2 audio-clips and 1 film clip.

3:6:4 Ethics, Confidentiality and Anonymity

Consent forms were just one stage in an ongoing evaluation of whether I had offered my participants sufficient protection in terms of confidentiality and anonymity. Eleven of the 32 interviewees gave consent for their names to be used, and 9 to be identified in their photographs. Similarly the school gave permission to be identified, as did the parents of the children participating in the 'Family Stories' project. However I later chose to pseudonymise all the interview-participants to offer some protection to participants who may later be distressed or made vulnerable by my interpretations, and some extra protection for those who had wanted to remain anonymous. I also changed the school's name. Whilst the description of the research setting suggests the school's location, obscuring the name meant it would be harder to verify, and would not be picked up by typing the school's name into a search engine.

The use of photographs was challenging in terms of anonymity. I removed any images of participants who had asked for anonymity. For those who had given me permission, I used some images of them and their homes. However, I did not put names directly under them, except where I felt they it was important for the analysis. Mostly I mixed up interview-participant images with ethnographic images of other parents at the school, and photo-diary with the ethnographic ones, to further obscure who the interviewees had been (hence the sources are vague for the 'List of Figures', p.10-11). I negotiated what participants were happy for me to photograph. For example, sometimes I was allowed me to photograph their home but not their face, or their street but not their home. Also digital photography allowed subjects to see what I was photographing at the time of taking.

Whilst that is a defensive argument, I also propose a positive argument in that the protection offered through anonymity must be balanced against a person's right to be seen, "the conception of the victimised and passive respondent (must) be tempered... by the opportunity to bear witness" (Holliday 2004:62). This is in keeping with my theoretical aim to make people who are not usually heard (subordinated voices) audible. Similarly, I would argue against the notion that the collection of visual data is necessarily a one-way 'taking' process, because images, metaphorically, give the opportunity to talk back (Humphry 2013). As Back says of his photographic research project in Brick Lane, "It is a mistake... to see the lens as only looking one way. The figures in these portraits... stare back at us." (Back 2004:137) (Figs 3.20 & 3.21).



Figs 3.20 & 3.21: 'Talking back'.

Being cognisant of the power imbalance my research would be unable to correct, I engaged in a policy of 'giving back' (Pink 2001:44) where possible. For example I helped participants variously by getting them information on courses and schools, helping with a job application, proof-reading and giving photography tuition. Packard (2008) argues that the teacher-taught relationship exacerbates the researcher-researched power imbalance, but I felt this was outweighed by the participants choosing that they wanted tuition, and the potential it held for enhancing their skills and creativity (Photovoice 2003). Because the gift can always be a form of power by fostering obligation, I made a point of emphasising that I was not 'doing them a favour' but, on the contrary, wanted in a small way to repay my debt for the time and stories that they had given me, without which I could not do my research or get my qualification.

3:7 Conclusion

The case-study's use of a multi-method interpretative approach was able to draw together both subjective and objective ways of knowing the social world (Jenkins 1992:51), incorporating various dimensions of class analysis such as class identity, position, status and structures. It provided a rich complex dataset that worked productively in tension together, producing a fruitful interplay of inductive and deductive analysis.

The photographs may be thought of by some as superfluous and ethically dubious, but I stand by my argument that the additional information they added was an important element of the research, just as the visual is a key element of social life. Moreover, Skeggs (1997) notes that it is difficult to retain the participants' warmth in abstracted cerebral research accounts, but the photographs help add this back in, making it easier to empathise with the real lives that class and inequality impacts on. This is particularly important in light of the pathologising construction of working-class identity that the dominant individualist social mobility discourse is producing.

The case-study method also constituted a process enabling the generation and interpretation of data over time (Flyvberg 2004:390), involving on-going conceptual and ethical monitoring through responding to substantive findings and feedback. Thus it constituted a methodological approach of reflection and change, such as improving self-understanding and sensitivity to participants, and refining questions, practices and processes.

The translation of reflexivity into an ethical practice elicited an on-going series of judgments that aimed to find a balance between my requirements as a researcher and my responsibility to the participants. This was not always easy as the two were sometimes in conflict, such as my imperative to interpret and write their stories, set against the responsibility not to do harm through symbolic violence. Compromise was inevitable, and threatened to derail my confidence in the project. Armstrong (2010), however, reminds us not to be silenced because researching classed lives is of value, and suggests simply that we recognise the limitations of our control over how our work is used and interpreted by others. I thus tried to make thoughtful compromises, such as withholding interesting but sensitive data when I felt the analysis could stand its ground without it.

Being an insider-outsider researcher served as a good ethical litmus test, because at no point could I switch off to the impact of my research on the participants, who I continued seeing, and in some cases had developed strong relationships with.

One key aspect of the methodological approach was my experiential learning. For example, the introductory workshop illuminated my understanding of the school's demography in ways I could not have anticipated. Subjecting myself to the interview experience, whilst failing to give me the equality I had aimed for, nevertheless gave me an experiential (phenomenological) understanding of the researcher's interpretative and representative power.

Moreover, being interviewed enabled me to experience at close-range the subjective interpretation involved in the narration of a life, bringing me close-up to the question of the validity of such data. Because I was cognisant of my history and its complexities, I could clearly see in the transcripts of my interview the ways I had unconsciously selected, interpreted and narrated it in order to give a particular version of my life. The degree of construction left me hesitant to use the data, which felt so constructed and 'untrue'. What was useful, however, was that I experienced the theory of constructed knowledge, interpretive epistemology and situated knowledge. It seemed that it was only my ontological and myopic distance from the other research participants that had allowed me to produce confident authoritative interpretations. My floundering confidence in the value of the knowledge I was producing threatened to undermine entirely my belief in the validity of the representation I was writing. The experience was destabilising and humbling. I found that I needed to question and think again about the too-easily-reasoned justification for the validity of subjective interpretations. I concluded that interpreted narratives do have a basis in the teller's experience, that a close-up perspective does offer a way to understand complex life situations, and that subjective interpretations are appropriate for understanding lived experience. Coupled with the analytic approach that seeks out contradictory narratives, I felt there was much richness to be found in trying to understand the stories people want to tell. As Armstrong suggests, part of research is accepting its limitations, but proceeding anyway.

The reflective approach threw up far more self-scrutinies and dilemmas than I have been able to detail here, but I hope to have given some indication of the value of the

experience, as well as the theory, of situated knowledge. None of my methodological approaches were failures because I learned through experience, and learned the value of experiential learning. However, as Ladkin warns, it is important to “balance solipsism with curiosity and attention to the other” (2005:119), and this is what I aim to do in the following empirical chapters.

Chapter 4: Education

4:1 Introduction

The central aim of this study is to better understand what constitutes social mobility, and because educational qualifications play a key intermediary role in occupational mobility (Savage 2000:88; Roberts 2013) this is where I begin my analysis. In this chapter I therefore examine how participants' educational experiences are shaped by class processes, relating to question one. I also interrogate how participants' educational experiences align with, diverge from or suggest a contestation to the dominant individualist social mobility discourse, relating to question two. I discuss the privileging of academic learning in this context. I also draw on participants' experiences and narratives to examine what they consider to be of value in the educational field, exploring how this may suggest an alternative social mobility discourse, addressing question three. As discussed throughout, my theoretical approach is to examine participants' subjective experiences within the context of wider social processes and structures, including discourses and policies that shape the UK educational system (see 1:3:2).

A meritocratic approach to social mobility regards education as a key site through which individuals can distinguish themselves and be rewarded through their abilities and hard work (Saunders 1995;1997). Academic accreditation is the institutional mechanism through which the self draws on its autonomous talent and intelligence to reflexively shape a biographical trajectory and claim value, relative to, and in competition with, others. Proponents of this meritocratic model of social mobility present it as a moral discourse that challenges class ascription and elitism, replacing it with individual achievement as a more legitimate route to status and reward (Skeggs 2004:46; Goldthorpe 2007[1997]:663-682). Education is the primary field for the deployment of equal opportunity policies, aimed at facilitating individuals to self-mobilise on the basis of their own merits. As such, the impact of class structures are downplayed in the face of individual agency, and class inequality is legitimised rather than redressed.

However, against this theorisation, academic class critique emphasises the key role of education as the new arena of legitimised power and cultural site through which the middle classes reproduce their occupational and economic advantages (Jenkins 1992:103-

109; Savage 2000; Bourdieu and Passeron 2000 [1977b]). Evidence indicates that the numerous educational policies aimed at increasing working-class people's participation in education, from the 1944 Butler Education Act to New Labour's 2006-2010 widening participation initiative (opening up secondary and tertiary education respectively), have had only a slight overall impact on improving educational and occupational class positions. This is not to say that academic qualifications do not have an impact on an individual's chance for upward social mobility, as they are the most significant influence on accessing jobs at the top end of the labour market (ESRC 2012a; Savage 2000). Rather it is to argue that academic qualifications have little *relative* impact on the chances of people from working-class origin as a *group* improving their occupational class position (Goldthorpe 2012; see 2:2:1 here).

Many critics have noted that continuing class inequality in England is apparent both in educational attainment and its translation into securing middle class jobs (Roberts 1993; Erikson et al. 2005; Callender 2008; Roberts 2013). Educational achievement amongst students from different socio-economic backgrounds has remained remarkably static since the early 20th century (Shavit and Blossfeld 1993). Despite some improvement in the attainment gap between rich and poor pupils in recent decades, overall the gaps have narrowed only slightly despite significant investment (Cabinet Office 2011). There is persistent lower participation of people from disadvantaged backgrounds in HE, and especially at the most selective universities (SMCPC 2013), which "(t)he most disadvantaged young people are seven times less likely than the most advantaged to attend" (DBIS 2011:6). Therefore, the discourse and policy approach of equal opportunities is flawed (Goldthorpe 1996; 2012).

Critics argue that the middle class are currently vulnerable to downward mobility, in the context of low absolute mobility rates (Goldthorpe 2012; see 2:2:1 here) and an erosion of occupational routes via family businesses inheritance (Savage 2000:89-91), and that in response they have organised the education system in such a way that their children can systematically do better, ensuring the reproduction of access to high-status high-paid occupations. Critics have examined various strategies for class reproduction via the educational field. For example, they highlight how an individualist policy approach of 'parental choice', within a competitive market system, works to privilege the middle-class (Reay and Ball 1997; Tomlinson 2001; Butler 2003; Butler and Robson 2003c;

Bridge 2006; Butler and Hamnett 2011a), and also how the input of parents into their children's education reproduces class advantages (Reay 1998; Lareau 2003). This study cannot comprehensively engage with all the debates on the connection between education and class, but will draw several into its analysis.

Therefore the following empirical analysis examines how class processes impact on participants' social mobility experiences in the educational field, considered in the context of a dominant individualist discourse of social mobility. As discussed in chapter two, I operationalise my theoretical approach via Bourdieu's analytic framework, adding in attention to the emotions, the body and intersectional identities. Firstly, I will examine intergenerational reproduction and mobility through the individualist trope of 'aspiration', looking at the experiences of the subjective habitus, and the cultural, social and economic class resources that constitute it. In the next section I will focus on the role of the emotions in educational mobility processes. Following this, I widen the discussion to focus, in section three on how structural economic inequality shapes the habitus and, in section four, on the inter-relation of participants' experiences with symbolic structures of inequality, interrogating how dominant individualist-individualizing notions of educational mobility are embedded in a classed hegemonic discourse that privileges academic learning. In section six I explore participants' own values and notions of success associated with the educational field, and how they might work to construct a more equitable counter-hegemonic model of social mobility. Thus far I have concentrated on research question 1 and 2, and their inter-connections, but in this section I consider alternative, subordinated discourses, thus addressing question three.

4:2 Inter-generational Reproduction and Mobility: the Habitus

4:2:1 Overview of Participants

The participants were roughly split between those who did and did not experience inter-generational educational mobility, thus I examined both reproduction and shifts in the transmission of educational status. Whilst participants' educational levels and trajectories were varied and uneven, there was an overall polar split for the vast majority of interviewees between those who left school at sixteen and those who progressed from A levels straight onto degrees. The former were all from working-class backgrounds, and the latter mostly from middle-class backgrounds, which aligns with wider findings that individuals' paths begin to diverge sharply after the age of 16 (Cabinet Office 2011:20). However, four participants who left school without A levels later gained degrees as mature students, whilst around a fifth did vocational qualifications. Yet only one participant from a working-class background gained a post-graduate qualification, compared to five from middle-class backgrounds. Overall these findings support other studies' findings of a significant impact of social class background on educational progression and reproduction (Reay 1998; Plummer 2000; Bourdieu and Passeron 2000[1977b]; Tomlinson 2001; Butler and Robson 2003b; Butler and Hamnett 2011a). (Appendix 4.1).

In this section I focus on class habitus, and how it is shaped by class capitals. I pay attention to the 'poverty of aspiration' debate (Gordon Brown 2007:4, in Raco 2009:436), because it has particular relevance to education. I consider Savage's (2000) theory that individualization incorporates class processes that work through subjectivities.

4:2:2 Low Aspirations?

I will address the 'raising aspirations' discourse that emerged from New Labour and is continued under the current Conservative-led coalition government, because the educational field was regarded as the key site for the translation of aspiration into achievement (Cabinet Office 2009; Raco 2009:441; Brown 2011; Holloway et al. 2011; Butler and Hamnett 2011b). 'Aspiration' is a central discourse and policy orientation of the government's focus on social mobility, which aims to facilitate individuals to acquire aspirational identities (Cabinet Office 2009). The discourse promotes the idea that individuals' aspirations are central to shaping educational trajectories, and is particularly

used with reference to Higher Education. Thus ‘aspiration’ emphasises individual social mobility rather than collective social progress, and aligns with the neoliberal shift from welfare provision and redistribution to individual responsibility (Raco 2009; Butler and Hamnett 2011a). The implicit assumption is that once aspirations are raised then access to upward social mobility can unproblematically follow. However, Butler and Hamnett argue that the political discursive use of ‘aspiration’ is,

a good example of what some Marxists once termed ‘false ideology’. Too often to aspire is to have hopes and plans, only for them to be cut off by the structural realities of capitalist society before they reach fulfillment (2011a:92).

However, they do not deploy an empirically based class critique, as I do here via analysis of participants’ educational experiences.

The idea that working-class parents are insufficiently aspirational, interested or caring about their children’s education was voiced by several local middle-class parents in my study, indicating the prevalence of this discourse. However, echoing Reay’s (1998) findings, all the working-class participants interviewed, and many of their own working-class parents, wanted their children to do well academically, which problematises the dominant view.

Some participants from working-class backgrounds, however, did report their parents not pressing them to progress educationally, influencing their choices to leave school early. For example, Helen (working-class) said, “I was never asked, it was never an option if I could do A Levels... you didn’t go to university or get A Levels, that just wasn’t even talked about”. This also suggests, as Bourdieu argues, that the habitus reproduces positions of inequality because individuals feel comfortable with the natural-feeling parameters of possibility they grew up with, so they do not expect what does not appear to be available to them (Jenkins 1992:80).

Similarly Selina (working-class), of Bangladeshi origin, was encouraged to marry young rather than pursue her education, and Kamil’s parents (also Bangladeshi) condoned his truanting as a way to avoid racist bullying. However, these narratives make it clear that aspirations are shaped against other cares and interests (work, safety and marriage),

nuanced by class, ethnicity and gender. Thus aspirations and processes of reproduction need to be analysed in wider cultural, social, economic and emotional contexts (Brown 2011; Holloway et al. 2011), which I examine next by examining how the habitus is shaped by unequal levels of social, cultural and economic resources.

4:2:3 Capitals Constructing the Habitus

The interviews suggest that even where there are aspirations, they do not necessarily translate into experience because, as Brown (2011) argues, people operate within the pragmatic parameters of what appears to be possible for them. Echoing other research (Bourdieu 1986; Pimlott-Wilson 2011), I found that inter-generational reproduction of the habitus has an impact. In Lubna's family, for example, only two of seven siblings went to university, on the whole reproducing their parents' experiences despite them aspiring for all their children to go. This contrasts, for example, with Lily and Harry (both middle-class), who, along with *all* their siblings and step-siblings, followed their parents' model by going to university. Lubna emphasised that she herself was motivated to finish her degree specifically so she could provide a model for her own children.

The social mobility of Stef's mother provides an illuminating narrative of familial reproduction and transition that articulates the way that practices and capitals construct the habitus. Stef (working-class) was brought up in a working-class family and left school at 17, dropping out of A levels. She compared her experience to that of her sister (Jenny), who was ten years younger. By the time Jenny went to secondary school (and Stef had left), their mother had gained a degree and was working in a well-paid job,

Our upbringings were completely different. I think fundamentally my personality had already been set by the time my mum was earning money to put my sister in a different kind of category ... There was never any question, she'd go to university. Where even though I went to Camden Girls²¹, believe it or not most people didn't go to university, 'cause I didn't mix with middle-class children. I didn't have the money to go ski-ing at Easter. Where my sister was allowed to go with her friends ski-ing because my mum could afford to pay for her to go. Whereas I was never part of that group because I just couldn't fit in...

²¹ This is a sought-after local school associated with academic success

and I think that probably shapes your future to a point. That she's now a web designer and I'm on Jobseekers (laughs)... She totally believed that she was going to go to university, whereas I never thought it was anything I was likely to ever do.

This tells of a complex of factors separating the siblings' experiences, with differing levels of economic capital impelling separation into different social class groups, and shaping different cultural and social expectations. Stef thus articulates how processes of the habitus, such as distinction-making, self-positioning, self-expectations and choice, are bound up with an array of inter-relating class resources (economic, social and cultural). This aligns with Savage's (2000) argument that class is individualized, impacting on choices and trajectories via subjective relational self-understandings.

Stef also described how Jenny's travel opportunities led to the acquisition of further cultural and social capitals that then impacted on Jenny's access to the cultural capital of a university education,

the experience meant that she was able to talk, and you know she had an interest and she'd done stuff, and I think when you wanna achieve things being clever isn't always necessarily enough... And because she'd taken some great photos in China she met her friend's dad who's a photographer and he asked her to design his website for him... and when she went for the interview for uni she said this is, I've designed a website and that gave her an unconditional offer.

This narrative highlights the key role that cultural capital plays in advantaging middle class access to education, as soft skills, lifestyle characteristics, social networks and peer group socialisation are put to work to reproduce middle-class privilege (Bourdieu 1986; Savage 2000:138; Skeggs 2004; McDowell 2009; Goldthorpe 2012) (Fig 4.1). This articulates the lie of a meritocratic discourse that asserts credentials stand alone as a measure of merit.



Figure 4.1 Middle-class cultural capital matters

Stef further described Jenny's influence on Stef's children, which elaborates on Savage's thesis by indicating how subjective dispositions are tied into inter-generational habitual and normalised embodied practices,

My sister's been a huge influence. Because she lived with me. So I think the fact that she was just going to do that (go to university), my kids think that that's what you do as well, and obviously it's been a big topic of conversation. We had to choose universities, I had to go with her to the interviews so my kids have kind of seen that process. And that's what you do... you go to university.

Cultural capital is thus an embodied form of knowledge, imparted via a familiar experiential model. Similarly Stef was herself eventually influenced to do a degree in Childhood Studies as her habitus shifted when her mother did a degree as a mature student,

I remember when mum would read her essays out and I understood what she was talking about and now she's a children family social worker, so hearing conversations about what she does and having my own children and now I'm

doing a degree in childhood, so I think it is all connected. Yeah I think definitely having my mum having done it made me think it's probably possible to do.

Stef's habitus and aspirations shifted as her experiences changed, and what she imagined as possible for herself changed. Aspiration, then, is embedded in the experiences of the habitus, with its differing types and levels of capitals. As Stef said, "I do have aspirations to be something different... but it's taken me time, I didn't have that shown to me when I was younger". This strongly indicates that experiences, rather than attitudes, need to be changed to improve educational mobility, and that redressing unequal levels of class resources would be a more beneficial policy focus than simply berating individuals to 'aim higher' (Evans 2010). The emphasis here, then, is on how class shapes aspirations, rather than (as the individualist discourse would have it) the other way round.

Overall I have therefore argued that subjective experiences of education are shaped by class positions and resources, thus undermining individualist/individualized notions that a meritocratic education system improves the chances of class fluidity, facilitated by equal opportunities policies. I have developed Savage's thesis on the individualization of class by elaborating how it works in lived, embodied and spatial ways. I will develop this argument in the following section by focusing on the emotional aspect of subjectivity (Bondi 2005; Walsh 2009).

4:3 Emotions, Class and Educational Experience

Whilst the examination of the emotions involved in moral distinction-making between groups has been a central focus of class analysis (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989; Skeggs 1997; 2009; Sayer 2005), I will elaborate on the less developed debate about the way emotions are bound up with the material and cultural conditions of living class positions, with particular reference here to the inter-relation with educational experiences (Gillies 2007; Brown 2011).

4:3:1 Self-Confidence and the Habitus

The emphasis in Stef's narrative on self-belief indicates the key role of self-confidence as a significant aspect of the habitus that impacts on educational trajectories. As Vanessa (working-class), who grew up with a violent alcoholic father, said, "If I would've grown up full of confidence and less, less fearful I would've believed in myself more and I would've achieved". Several critics note the relationship between self-confidence and class (Reay 1998; Plummer 2000), and Helen (working-class), a teaching assistant at another local primary school, ran confidence-building workshops and commented on a class bias,

All those kids are working-class that's for sure... Two were from a Bengali background, the rest were British... even though one of the boys was really quite mouthy and stuff, he really was very scared of being introduced to work. Whereas others just wouldn't say a word, so theirs was confidence socially.

Reay (1998) demonstrated an inter-generational effect in her research, with working-class parents' lack of confidence in the school environment constraining the help they felt able to give their children with schoolwork.

I found powerful associations between emotional difficulties (low levels of emotional capital) and low levels of educational achievement, with a disproportionate impact on working-class participants. Of the fourteen who reported family mental and physical ill-health, alcoholism and violence during their school years, ten were from working-class background. Twelve participants reported being unhappy and under-achieving at school, ten of whom were from working-class backgrounds, and who all left school before taking

A levels. This reflects existing research that shows working-class families' fewer material resources resulted in lower levels of wellbeing and poorer educational achievement compared to middle-class families (Plummer 2000:103-134; Wilkinson and Pickett 2009:110-112; Walkerdine and Lucey 1989).

Selina, a second-generation working-class Bengali, articulated the emotional pressures and impact on her education of living in a household with low levels of cultural, social, economic and emotional resources. At age 12 her father left and she became responsible for caring and translating for her mother, dealing with benefit claims, bills, lawyers and social workers. She said,

S: I really wanted to study and because the family things were stressy and stressing my mum out and all that, I just had to, I thought that can come after, let me support my mum...

D: was it difficult to concentrate on school?

S: yeah it was very difficult 'cause some nights I couldn't go to sleep... I remember I went twice to emergency hospital, I used to have pain on my chest and all that, and one doctor said like panic attack I had. I was anaemic once 'cause I was getting stressed with all this, you know with mum's and father's situation, and not eating very well.

Unsurprisingly Selina left school with only two grade-C GCSE's. Clearly her particular class-position, shaped as it was by the intersection of gender and being a second-generation migrant, disabled her from competing at school in a fair competition. As such, her exam results did not reflect merit but a disadvantaged habitus.

Research indicates that economic capital has a powerful impact on wellbeing (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009:110-112), and Chris (middle-class, from working-class origins) explicitly associated indicators of poverty, including income, housing and health (The Poverty Site 2012), with his "really unhappy" childhood and poor educational performance,

My mum and dad were quite poor. There was a couple of times when I was a kid when they were homeless... I found it difficult, school and education,

because of the thing of moving around all the time, it really unsettled me... I could have done a lot better, but I didn't really have the focus at the time.

Participants cited various strategies for dealing with low confidence and unhappy home and school experiences, including truancy, withdrawal and disruptive behaviour, all of which further eroded their achievement levels (Reay 1998:57; Plummer 2000:73).

4:3:2 Moving Class

There were also narratives of emotional struggle by participants who had moved class position and, as such, had shifted away from their familiar habituses into unfamiliar fields where they were not confident. For example, as other critics have noted, this kind of discomfort was felt by working-class participants moving into higher education (Walkerline and Lucey 1989; Lawler 1999; Plummer 2000; Kuhn 2002[1995]; Christie 2009). Helen (working-class, from working-class origins) said she felt scared when she chose to go to university as a mature student, "You know, realising that you make choices, but they are scary. Why are they scary for some and not for others?". This experience contrasted with the experiences of all the participants from middle-class origin who went to university, of which Lily's narrative was typical, "I just went with the flow you know, I did my A levels and then I think it was just expected that you would go to university". The expectation of progressing to university was therefore embedded in the habituses of these participants from middle-class origins, such that they barely even made a choice, and they narrated their emotional transitions as smooth. Moreover, this turns on its head the notion that the socially mobile are active, autonomous choosers of their own biographies (Giddens 1991:5).

These findings draw a parallel with Reay (1998:56) argument that working-class parents have to *labour* to transform their habitus' in order to help their children at school, in a way that middle-class parents simply reproducing their habituses do not. Take Grace, for example, who was the first in her family to go to university,

I decided at Junior school I was moving away from what my elder sisters done. I wanted to go to what was considered a good quite well-to-do school... My dad didn't know anything about sort of choosing schools and I literally marched him through the whole process... he had to come to the interview with me, and I

think my dad was more terrified than I was... Even then I didn't wanna be a housewife or anything like that. I'd had enough ... When it came to go to college there was a bit of a fall out in my family 'cause my older sisters ... they were absolutely furious because, you know, they were jealous, they didn't have that opportunity when they were young ... I think they thought I was way above myself. Who the hell do you think you are? You should be going out to get a job to earn money like we did... they just said, you're not going. We've arranged an interview at the bank and we think you should go and work ... It was absolutely terrifying. I remember being absolutely horrified, and that's definitely not happening to me.

Grace articulates the terror that she and her father felt as they engaged in the unknown process of trying to get her into a prestigious state secondary school, and highlights the embodied spatial experience of attending an interview on unfamiliar territory. This indicates how the working-class habitus can be emotionally subordinately positioned in a hegemonic middle-class field for which they lack a 'feel for the game' (Lareau 2003; Reay 2004:8). Further, it highlights the cultural pressure to do (gendered) domestic work, the economic pressure to bring a wage into the home, and the emotional pressure to conform to the constraints her sisters experienced (Plummer 2000). Overall Grace's narrative indicates the effort, labour and struggle involved in shifting class position and operating in a middle-class field (Reay 1998).

Thus, overall, adding in an emotional lens to a Bourdieuvian analysis has exposed the ways that class processes and differing levels of emotional capital (Reay 1997; 2005a; 2004) work through and become deeply embedded into subjective ways of feeling, as Savage (2000) suggests. However, I extend his theory because whilst he emphasises the reflexive processes of individuals making choices and behaving in the context of a self-awareness of their relative class position, I would argue that emotions are so deeply embedded that individuals often make choices and behave in unconsciously class-positioned ways. In other words, class processes work through individual subjectivities, but not always self-consciously or reflexively so.

The findings also indicate that low levels of emotional capital in the habitus impact on capacities, self-belief, behaviour, labours, achievements, class positions and social

trajectories. Along with the earlier narratives, they also indicate ways that the existence, shape and realisation of aspirations are embedded in structural inequalities that shape access to differing levels of class resources (social, cultural, economic and emotional). In the next two sections, I will draw out the way the habitus is connected to wider class structures, systems and fields, firstly focusing on material economic inequality and, secondly, focusing on cultural symbolic inequality.

4:4 Economic Inequality and the Educational Field

In this section I examine how structural economic inequality shapes class practices of, and orientations to, investment in education. I then draw out ways that national policy interacts with differing levels of economic capital to produce unequal pressures and parameters of ‘choice’. This extends the critique of an individualist-individualization discourse of social mobility that denies class as a significant structuring factor.

4:4:1 Purchasing Cultural Capital

At its most fundamental level, economic capital purchases the cultural capital of education directly. Several middle-class participants received an independent education or bought it for their children, which offers an array of interweaving capitals, such as the networking skills of social capital (Allatt 1993), improved chances of academic achievement (Paton 2013) and increased access to selective universities (SMCPC 2013).

Eva went to private school, and articulated how this provided the inscription of privilege onto the body,

What I do think private schools give are the soft skills... It's a way of carrying yourself, it's a way of interacting with people and it's a certain self-confidence that I think independently-educated children do have over a lot of state... It is almost a sense of entitlement actually but I think it can serve them well. And I don't know, I mean for me it was always a feeling of it didn't matter what I chose to do, if I put my mind to something I could do it, and all my peers were the same. It was just this self-assuredness that we would go out into the world and yes, we could do what we say.

This is the embodied aspect of the habitus that Bourdieu calls ‘hexis’, produced by the social position in which bodies are situated (Jenkins 1992; Bourdieu 2002[1977]; see 2:5:1 here). Purchasing an independent education then fosters the embodied self-confidence required to turn aspirations into self-assured expectation and entitlement²². Or put another way, it buys privileged access to an individualized mobile-oriented identity.

This chimes with Lareau’s findings that middle-class families’ processes of ‘concerted cultivation’, such as purchasing extra-curricula classes, fosters in middle-class children “a robust sense of entitlement” (2003:2) that manifests as an enduring self-confidence in formal authoritative institutional settings enabling the ‘natural’ take-up of dominant position in an array of future institutional fields (2003:276).

Some parents at Camden Green School paid for private tutoring, although not predominantly the middle class as other research has emphasised (Reay 1998; Butler and Robson 2003a). For example, Magan (inter-class), a Somali co-ordinator of a Somali community association, said that working-class Somalis, having endured a generation of systemic failure and exclusion in the UK education system, now spend “lots of money” on private tuition. Other participants invested in soft skills, sometimes with class dis/advantage specifically in mind. For example, Stef (working-class) said,

My kids listen to classical music and they play classical music, but there’s a lot of working-class kids that wouldn’t have the first clue. And I don’t think it’s important to listen to classical music but just it’s more, it opens up you know your vocabulary and you know the people that you’re gonna mix with.

These narratives can be understood, however, not as class advantages, but as an unwanted financial pressure on some of the poorest parents as they pick up where the state has left off in having to redress their own inequalities.

²² Brown (2011) notes the difference between aspirations/dreams and expectations/pragmatic plans.

4:4:2 Classed Orientations to Risk and Investment

The argument that the middle-class are oriented to investment in education as a strategy for reproduction (Bourdieu 1996; Ball 2003; Butler 2003) can be interpreted as a particular variation of the individualist aspiration debate, in which working- and middle-class identities are constructed relationally as ir/responsible, making wrong/right choices and thoughtless/reflexive. In these terms working-class people are indicted for failing to have the desire, insight or self-control to invest in education. Such a sentiment is echoed in Harry's narrative (middle-class),

somebody once described to me the definition of middle-classes is it's the class that aspires... that we invest in change, because education's an investment... My uncle wasn't allowed to do the 11-plus because he was going to earn money at 14. My grandparents couldn't see that education was going to make it better. Whereas I think I can see the value of investing in myself, my children and my family ... it's not like you kind of go, ok, I've done a day's work and now I've got a 100 pounds and I'll go to the pub, you know it's like it's very delayed gratification.

Harry's narrative thus constructs class distinctions (Savage 2000) that echo a dominant discourse of blaming the reckless, 'feckless' individual for consuming unwisely (Gillies 2007; Jones 2011; Walters 2012), against the wiser choices of the voluntaristic future-oriented biographical self.

However, as evidenced in Grace and Helen's narratives earlier, and noted by other academics (Plummer 2000; Willis 2000 [1978]; McDowell 2003), the choice of education is set against the economic necessity to earn money, which shapes class orientations. For example, Kamil and Brendan, whose parents were Bangladeshi and Irish economic migrants respectively, both left school at 16 in the context of a high value placed on work and earning, embedded in their families' experiences. Thus structural economic inequality is implicated in participants' subjective choices and practices. Harry, on the other hand, was financially enabled by his parents to access higher education.

In stark contrast to the stereotype of working-class people as impulsive, lacking insight and driven by instant gratification, I found that the working-class participants had given

much thought to the cost-effectiveness of education, making reflexive choices with respect to their low economic resources, which positioned them with cautious attitudes to risk. For example, Kamil (middle-class, upwardly mobile), who had left school and worked since he was sixteen, discussed his decision to leave his job at British Telecom to take up a trainee youth-worker post that included funding to do a degree,

The choice that I made was, is a qualification important? With British Telecom I had the possibility of being promoted and maybe going to different levels, but... 6 years it hadn't happened. No promotion. And no qualification options either... And then when the opportunity came up I had to evaluate, 'cause this job had no pension with it either, whereas British Telecom had pension and so on. So I then thought about it and I thought, oh ok, I'll go for it, I'll take the risk, and get the qualification. If I get the qualification and that will help me.

Thus I argue that entry into HE is a more difficult, risky and costly 'choice' for working-class students who carefully calculate their relative chances within the context of their lower levels of economic capital and the competitive educational and labour market (Savage 2000; Goldthorpe 2007[1997]:674).

An individualized identity is associated with increased vulnerability in an unstable global world, in which the self must construct its biography from a bewildering array of possibilities (Giddens 1991:3; Beck 1999). However, Kamil's narrative suggests not only that the risk is greater for working-class people, but also that this is likely to result in a more reflexive orientation, in contrast to the 'reckless, feckless' stereotype.

4:4:3 Policies and Systems

Orientations to economic risk also interact with structural policies. Critics argue that the fear of debt deters poorer students from continuing with their educations (Callender and Jackson 2005), and I found it was predominantly working-class participants who expressed anxiety about the debts their children would incur with the recently tripled student tuition fees. Stef (working-class) interpreted this policy as a deliberate political move to construct class inequality,

when they first said about the tuition fees thing, I kind of said maybe I'm wrong to encourage them into a life of debt... then I thought no, sod it, that's what they want. They don't want working class single-parent family kids going to university and I just thought, sod it, they will.

Nevertheless, I found that the lower-income participants and children who did study were subject to greater economic pressures to work, which studies have found impacts negatively and disproportionality on the poorest students (Callender 2008). This is exacerbated through structural policies that erode financial support for studying. For example, both Rebecca (middle-class) and Stef were doing Open University degrees as mature students (Fig 4.2). But whilst Rebecca's husband's high income meant that she did not have to work, the conditions of Stef's benefits changed half way through her degree, such that she had to get a job. Stef told me that this resulted in her grades dropping from As to Cs. Thus individualist policies that retract financial state support, purportedly to incentivise work (Cabinet Office 2011:7), can work against efforts to be upwardly mobile.

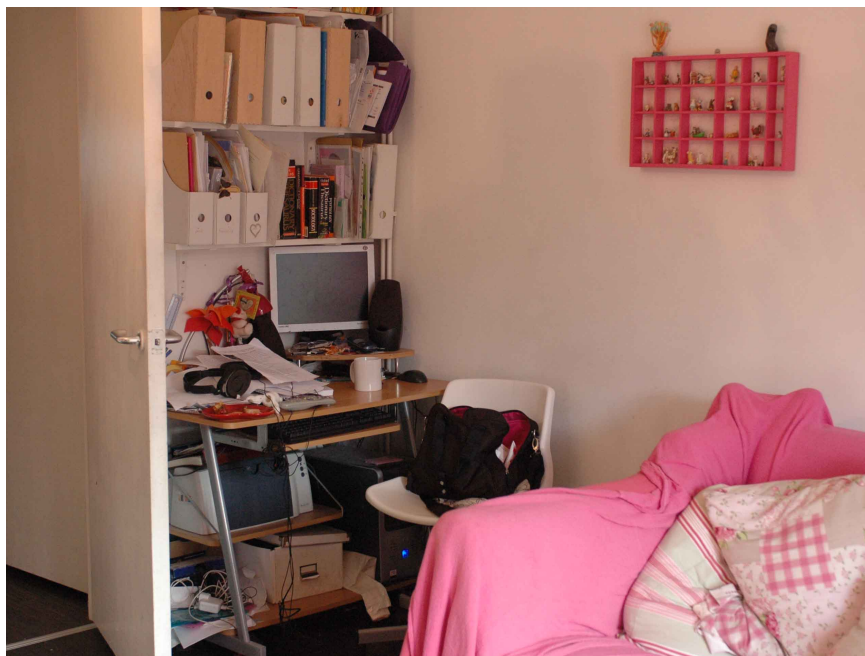


Figure 4.2: Studying for an Open University degree at home.

All the participants doing first degrees as mature students were from working-class backgrounds, emphasising the importance of policies that fund and facilitate continuing education throughout life. But, echoing Watt's findings (2001), working-class participants returning to education as mature students often reported challenging and lengthy struggles to further their educations. Pressures are exacerbated for people with families, intersecting with gender, as mothers particularly reported that having children interrupted or deterred their educational progress. Despite the government claiming to support social mobility through lifelong learning policies, there appeared to be insufficient institutional back-up. Funding has been cut for Access courses that facilitate entry to university for mature students, and mature student university applications in 2012 dropped at nearly double the rate as those for younger students (Swain 2012). Participants reported both inadequate funding and inadequate information about continuing education. This latter finding is borne out in wider studies that, additionally, emphasise the importance of providing such knowledge to working-class people because they have less access to it within their families than middle-class people so (ibid. 2012). Thus participants' practices occurred in relation to government policies that failed to address, and even exacerbated, existing economic and class inequalities. Thus, as Goldthorpe (2012:19) argues, equal opportunities policies are insufficient on their own without class redistribution and welfare policies.

In this section I have developed the discussion on the habitus and capitals by drawing out the way that structural economic inequality impacts on the acquisition of educational cultural capital in an array of direct and indirect ways, and underpins entitled or cautious orientations to risk and investment in the competitive field of education. I have further argued that these unequal economic and cultural positions are exacerbated by policies driven by an individualist discourse, based on the premise of a classless voluntaristic individual, that have shifted the direction of policy from redistribution to personal responsibility. Yet individuals are clearly not positioned equally with regard to their choices, access and performance in education, and the research participants did not regard this situation as 'classless'. However, I argue that the inter-connection and multiplication of class capitals, combined with subjective understandings of relational classed selves acting in competition with each other, positioned within structural systems and policies that further dis/advantage particular groups, constructs the economic positions of individuals as relative class positions. Thus, like Savage (2000), I argue that rather than

individuals' economic resources positioning them on a gradient, they construct relative class positions, not just in terms of individualized understandings of self-identity against others, but also in structural terms as social groups.

In the next section I continue relating the subjective experience of the habitus to wider class processes and structures, but with a shift of focus to the analysis of symbolic capital and cultural discourse.

4:5 Symbolic Class Structure and Cultural Hegemony

In this section I interrogate the individualist assumption that educational merit has replaced the ascription of class origins as a route to social position, and argue rather that the system of educational merit is tied into processes of symbolic ascription and cultural hegemony that perpetuate class dominance. I develop Savage's notion that class is an individualized process by looking at how subjective self-positioning is enacted in relation to wider symbolic structures. I do this by drawing on Bourdieu's concepts of pedagogic action and doxa (Bourdieu and Passerson 2000[1977b]), and Skeggs' (2004) notion that class identities are discursively constructed and used as cultural symbolic resources to reproduce class dominance.

4:5:1 Privileging the Academic System of Accreditation

Educational achievement is assessed according to the measurement of qualifications, therefore the type of qualifications offered, and the value ascribed to them, shapes what is understood as educational excellence and mobility. These measures apply to both individuals and schools. They shape how intelligence and social mobility are defined, and impart graded levels of cultural capital and status on their recipients. Despite an acknowledgement in research and policy of the importance of vocational skills (Page 2006:48; The Cabinet Office 2009:22), the UK has a history of valuing academic over vocational learning (Plummer 2000). The highest levels of accreditation are given to academic qualifications, against vocational learning that has been further devalued by recent government policies (Vasager 2012). Thus academic learning is the key way in which merit, skills and talent are valorised and is therefore central to the individualist discourse of meritocracy (Fig 4.3). This suggests a class pedagogic action is at work as

working-class children are more inclined to choose vocational subjects (Colley et al. 2003).



Figure 4.3: Academic learning shapes the curriculum

Pedagogic action and its correlative, symbolic violence, are processes whereby arbitrary ideological systems of value gain hegemony through their construction as taken-for-granted beliefs (doxa), which then work to hide the power relations being thus deployed (Bourdieu and Passeron 2000[1977]). The education system is a key field through which pedagogic action is deployed. I will therefore interrogate whether the dominant academic discourse aligned to meritocracy is a pedagogic action aimed at legitimising middle-class hegemony. To this end, in the rest of this section, I will investigate classed ascriptions of value and intelligence, the hierarchy of educational subjects, school assessment processes and exclusions, and the shifting contours of class reproduction within the education field.

4:5:2 Intelligence: Ascription and Internalisation

Working-class identity is arguably ascribed with lower value and intelligence than middle-class identity, impacting on working-class people's subjective sense of worth (Plummer 2000:46). Helen (working-class) works as a classroom assistant at Morgans, another local primary school, which has an almost exclusively working-class population. Earlier in the chapter Helen described leaving school at 16 in response to the expectations embedded in her childhood habitus, and the following narratives indicate how she developed this idea to consider the relationship between subjectivity and the wider social context of class ascription,

I just think it's terrible what happens because you speak the way you do and people pass judgment. Or where you live... you just don't cut the grain because of your being working-class... It happens in Morgans, loads of kids that are really bright, they just don't think they've got it, and they have.

A lot of working class kids don't feel empowered, they don't feel that they are as clever ... some of it is family life but it's much more than being family, it's about the way that society looks on you. Do you know what I mean? They don't think that they are worthy. They just, you know, poo poo it, I can't do that can I? You talk to another like equivalent middle class, they are taught very different ethics. Very different, you know, that they have got a voice and what they are saying is important.

The narratives describe how working-class identities and bodies are ascribed and inscribed with low value via assessments of intelligence, accent and place - in fact via simply *being* working-class. Working-class identities/bodies thus become the cultural resource, the symbolic currency, through which dominance is perpetuated, as Skeggs (2004) argues. This process is hegemonic because these dominant values and symbols are internalised into the habitus, and thus consented to by subordinated working-class people themselves. These narratives are the antithesis of Eva's earlier narrative on the embodied self-confidence and entitlement fostered by the private school sector. The process of internalising one's ascribed class identity is what Bourdieu calls *doxa*, in which internal feelings make an "infra-conscious fit" with external social divisions because of the 'natural-feeling' familiarity of one's position in this structure (Wacquant 1993:34). Thus

hierarchical value associated with assessments of intelligence become internalised subjectively so that class, as Savage (2000) argues, becomes an individualized process felt within the self relative to classed others.

Hierarchical value is then further embedded because once credits are conferred this sets up its own hierarchical symbolic process of conferring value onto identities, which plays out along class lines because of the persistent class differentials in educational achievement (Erikson et al. 2005; Plummer 2000:25). The institutionalization of academic credentialism, as a system ascribing individual merit, means that failure becomes individualised (Plummer 2000:33). Participants' regularly used academic qualification levels to assess their own and others' relative intelligence and character. Several participants who failed at school narrated themselves as "stupid", thus internalising and consenting to the dominant symbolic discourse that confers lesser intelligence on working-class people. However, the fact that four working-class participants left school with poor GCSE grades, yet later went on to gain degrees, clearly indicates that credentials do not necessarily correlate with intelligence but, rather, strongly suggest that other class structures and processes are at play (Plummer 2000; Sullivan 2001), as has been argued in the previous sections of this chapter. However, participants' narratives indicate that consent by subordinated people to ascriptions of laziness and stupidity are internalised as doxa. As such, they prop up the discourse of meritocracy that proposes achievement as just reward for hard work and talent, and failure as indicative of its lack. This works to hide the economic, cultural, social and symbolic structures at play, and thus perpetuates the legitimacy of the discourse of meritocracy, so central to the individualist discourse of social mobility.

The process of how the individualisation of blame obscures structural failures and exacerbates class inequalities is articulated by Magan, in relation to the particular intersectional class-ethnic identity of working-class Somalis. He describes children who arrived in the UK with no education due to the war, being put straight into secondary education, and failing to achieve. Yet despite insufficient support from the UK education system, the Somali children were indicted as mentally subnormal. Thus the individualising of blame worked to embed the subordinate positions of those already structurally disadvantaged by inscribing them with pathologised identities. At the same time, the state responsibility for redressing these failures and inequalities is hidden.

Therefore, as Skeggs (2004:53) argues, the middle classes deploy their concepts of differentially valued (and classed) identities and bodies through the institutional systems of the education field, which then shapes processes of inscription, evaluation and exchange according to middle-class perspectives and interests, constructing a continual re-making of the possibilities and limitations of how class is understood and lived.

4:5:3 Classed Hierarchy of Subjects?

The particular pedagogic ethos (Bourdieu and Passerson 2000[1977]) at work is the constitution of subjects hierarchically, with higher status and greater intelligence associated with so-called 'hard' academic subjects such as maths, science and languages, as endorsed by the Russell group universities and recent government discourse (Paton 2013).

Harry (middle-class) articulated a sophisticated understanding of which subjects are most advantageous. He was pressured by his father (an academic) to do science A levels, and, a parent himself now, Harry was torn between wanting his children to follow their interests and guiding them into 'hard' subjects,

I can see myself giving the same subtle pressure to my own children, which is, do these things. It's like that sort of middle-class parent knowing something, that piece of knowledge that potentially gives an advantage to your own children. And I can see myself pushing my own children in that same way, which is, so when I say I want them to be themselves, I want them to be individuals and I want them to have their own desires, actually that probably is true but to a certain extent within a framework of middle-class ideals.

Harry's narrative articulates the use of knowledge about subject-hierarchies as a cultural capital to reproduce advantage. Thus he has privileged access to what Bourdieu calls 'the rules of the game' (Bourdieu 1990:168; Plummer 2000). Compare this to Stef (working-class) who was not even informed that she would need three A levels to get into university, as Plummer also found with her working-class interviewees (2000:168).

Stef (working-class) discusses her choice of sociology and politics for A levels in a narrative that suggests that the ascription of class identity includes an association with lesser-valued subjects,

I've not a clue why I picked those subjects because looking at me back then I didn't think that I was the person that would have picked them subjects. I mean my friend at the time picked textiles and something else... I don't know why I picked politics, 'cause it wasn't something that somebody like me picked.

Thus a hierarchy of subjects has arguably been deployed in a pedagogic action to effect class division and domination.

Plummer (2000:22-29) argues that the narrow academic focus of the UK educational system has a linguistic and cultural bias that favours the middle-class,

We now have a national curriculum which counts as knowledge and dictates how knowledge is organised. It has little bearing on any present-day 'common culture' and remains very much at 'odds with the way knowledge is organised, used and passed on in working-class people's lives' (Ashendon, et al, 1987, in Plummer 2000:35)

Karen (inter-class), a secondary school teacher from a working-class background, articulated a class mismatch when she said,

We've got child poverty here. How can we have a curriculum that is trying to dull children out as if we're robots when there are some children who are young carers... you've got to look at, you know, what you're doing. This is an education system built for a select few, it's not built for a majority.

This suggests that 'merit', based on such a subject-bias, is class-biased. Plummer (2000:35) argues that the institutionalisation of academic knowledge renders the contentious question of what counts as valid knowledge as both unproblematic and unquestionable. What she is talking about, then, is a process of hegemony and symbolic violence, whereby the institutionalisation of a system of credits, that claims to reward

individual merit, hides the class bias. Therefore, in line with Bourdieu's argument, the institutionalisation and accelerated competition for credentials is the result of pedagogic action aimed at furthering class dominance and hegemony (Bourdieu and Passerson 2000[1977]; Jenkins 1992:103-109).

Grace, from an Irish working-class background, described how such a system positioned not just her father, but a whole ethno-class group, as inferior,

Seeing someone like my father coming along, really bright bloke, really educated, coming over but with no education, not really being able to do anything... you know Ireland's sort of into literature and poetry and music and great fun. But not formally educated and therefore when they came here, excluded ... the kind of English dominance of Ireland and their assumption that Irish people were stupid.

Thus her father is ascribed a relative educational status within an inter-national field of power, evaluated and differentiated according to a particular educational pedagogic ethos (Bourdieu and Passerson 2000[1977]).

4:5:4 Representation and Exclusion

Evaluation of academic achievement is embedded into systems that assess and represent schools (OFSTED and league tables), arguably overshadowing other representations of value, and eliciting parental and school practices that further embed these values.

Rebecca moved her child with special needs to Camden Green School from a sought-after local state school with high league table and OFSTED ratings because of the exclusion they had experienced. Although Rebecca is middle-class, the particular 'special needs' identity of her son worked to exclude both of them. She described the initial pull of a school with such a glowing OFSTED report,

I thought 'I must find the best school I possibly can and read all the OFSTED reports'. And on paper, and for many children, the school is outstanding. It has a very discrete catchment. People go to church for years and make sure, you know, I'm not quite sure how we got a place but we did... outstanding, outstanding for

everything.... So that's, that's why when I got a place I thought 'Oh I'm a marvellous mother, I've just you know, we're on the route to the next prime minister' (*laughs*)

However, Rebecca went on to say,

It turned out to be very different. They simply didn't have the breadth of experience, which allowed them to take a very immature, very under-confident and aggressive child. And it just got worse and worse.

She described having to take her son to school at a different time and to a different place from the other children, sitting separately at school events. The school failed to provide the support staff that her son was legally entitled to, and threatened to have him excluded. She said, "they just, the culture was, you know, we are a good school, we know what we're doing and this child is a problem". This suggests that academic privileging can work against an ethos of inclusivity, and even foster deliberate exclusionary strategies. In contrast Rebecca said of Camden Green School,

The school were absolutely clear that it was their job to find ways of keeping him in school for the full working week.... (the headmaster) has a very strong clear belief that everybody, properly every child matters, and he goes to enormous lengths to make sure that that happens²³.

they work so hard to take children that other schools won't... So I'm so disappointed that more people don't know about how great it is. I wish I'd known... Had I got a place at the beginning maybe I would have sent him there, but I would have done it with trepidation I think because the formal documents that you see about the school aren't as glowing as they should be.

This supports Millar's (1991) argument that parental choice would benefit from the educational field being represented in more nuanced ways. It is encouraging that some schools resist a narrow focus on competitive academic achievement, and offer an ethos of

²³ This phrase refers to the 2003 Labour government initiative for England and Wales to support children's safety, health and wellbeing, leading to the Children Act 2004 (Barker 2009).

inclusivity and equality. But clearly state education is embedded in assessments systems that, by putting a high value on academic achievement, perpetuate hierarchal representations of narrow academic value, as well as practices of exclusion – of both children and alternative values. Thus the practices of schools and parents become tied into and can perpetuate symbolic systems of dominance based on academic success.

As Rebecca's son shifted from one school to another, his disability became more, and then less, significant as part of his identity, which reveals something of the hegemonic discourse operating through these institutions, as Valentine (2007) argues. In these terms the first school is thus arguably characterised by a middle-class hegemony that works to exclude disabled identities that erode its academic status and dominant cultural (thus symbolic) capital. In contrast, Camden Green School appears to be shaped by a dominant equality discourse, which actively works against the differentiating and marking of disabled bodies.

4:5:5 Hegemony and the Shifting Contours of Class

With increasing credentialism and professionalisation of jobs over the past few decades, the discursive value on academic achievement is arguably becoming increasingly hegemonic. The view is supported by the fact that all the parents in my study were educationally aspirational for their children, more so than their own parents and previous generations who hadn't needed qualifications to get work (Willis 2000[1978]; Hewitt and Wells 2005).

Social mobility has an inherent contradiction in that it implies that with hard work and talent everyone can succeed, but this does not acknowledge that the educational system is based on hierarchical competition with winner and losers (Guardian 2012). Moreover, upward educational mobility does not necessarily increase the chances of accessing a better job because widening participation means that many more people with degrees compete with each other in the labour market, differentiated by their subjects, grades, universities and cultural capitals (Roberts 2013). Towards the end of the research Stef gained her degree but said she felt that she now needed an MA to improve on her current occupational position as a classroom assistant, "there's so many people with degrees now, its not enough". Her experience reflects wider research that indicates many graduates are

working in low-level jobs below their skill-levels (Allen 2013), in what Ken Roberts (2013) describes as ‘going up the down escalator’.

If access to differentiated positions within the labour market is increasingly influenced by the possession of qualifications, this does not so much indicate advancing meritocracy, but rather rising credentialism, in which qualifications are arguably used to maintain rather than reduce class inequalities and low relative social mobility rates (Goldthorpe 2007[1997]:668). As several critics have noted, a resource only becomes a class capital if it can be activated for advantage (Lareau 2003; Sayer 2005).

In Bourdieu’s terms, as the subordinate class accesses the cultural resources of academic qualifications, the dominant class shifts the rules of the game to confer increased value on resources that they have privileged access to (elite universities, embodied entitlement, self-confidence, cultural capital), which constructs a structural re-alignment of class relations and processes of power. Sara’s (middle-class) narrative indicates her struggle to understand what constitutes class identity as the structural goalposts shift,

I think when we were growing up... a university education made you sort of middle class, but now a university education doesn’t make you middle class ‘cause so many poor people go to university.

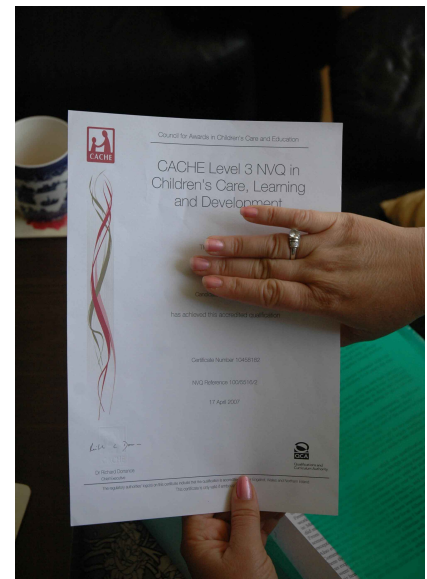
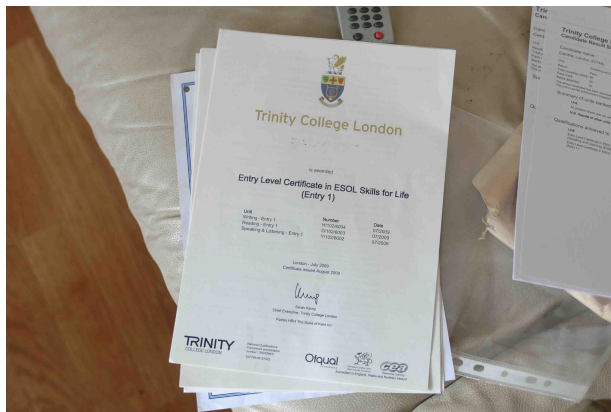
Arguably going up the down escalator, then, represents the new contours of class relations, with people increasingly tied into a hegemonic system of academic credentialism that offers the illusion of upward mobility that serves to hide the reproduction of class dominance. However, hegemony is never total, and therefore in the next section I will examine how participants’ narratives and experiences suggest alternative understandings of what is valuable in the educational field, and what constitutes educational success and mobility.

4:6 Resisting Hegemony and Constructing Alternatives

As discussed in chapter two, a Bourdieuvian frame runs the danger of obscuring subordinated discourses and constructing working-class identities and cultures as lacking positive values and assets (Jenkins 1992; Pianta and Walsh 1996; Haylett 2003). In this section I therefore examine how participants' experiences and narratives of education suggest an alternative expanded model of educational value and mobilities, as discussed earlier in the thesis, drawing on Elliott (1997), Raco (2009) and Brown's (2011) theories. Therefore I address research question three, and contribute to the overall aim of this study to better understand what constitutes social mobility. However, as discussed, I aim to examine not just working-class experiences and narratives in this context, but subordinated perspectives *across* classes that variously resist, complicate and expand dominant notions of what constitutes social mobility (inter-relating with the second research question).

Firstly, I draw attention to participants' contradictory narratives that indicate the difficulty of resisting the dominant discourse of educational/social mobility, yet also suggest the desire for alternative notions of success. Then I consider achievement in wider holistic terms, taking into account people's emotional, moral and personal aspirations, values and experiences. Following that I consider the notion of plural mobilities, by exploring multiple evaluations of achievement that people attach to learning experiences. In this context I discuss the existing academic-vocational 'divide' in education to consider the pitfalls and possibilities of a plural approach. I then draw this section's discussion together by exploring whether these subordinated perspectives suggest, overall, a way of thinking about social mobility that is better suited to addressing the inequalities that I have highlighted previously in this thesis, and if they suggest a counter-hegemonic alternative to the current individualist model.

4:6:1 Struggling to Resist: Listening for Muted Voices



Figs 4.4 & 4.5: Seham and Flutera proudly showed me their certificates

Many participants articulated the importance of academic qualifications for accessing work, status and self-esteem (Figs 4.4 & 4.5), and the academic discourse is difficult to resist exactly because people are tied into the increasing requirement of credentials for getting work. Anderson and Jack (199:11) highlight the importance of attending to contradictory narratives because they can reveal both the shape of a dominant discourse and the subordinate “muted” discourses that struggle to find voice against them. This was indicated earlier in Harry’s narrative, where he felt torn between wanting his children to choose their own individual path, and pushing them into ‘hard’ subjects that would advantage them. Similar sentiments were articulated by several of the participants, and expressed the difficulty of constructing a counter-narrative when the risk is disadvantaging your children.

Resistance is also difficult because, at the risk of stating the obvious, the nature of a hegemonic discourse is that it is so dominant. As Cecil (middle-class) said,

the pursuit for academic brilliance is something which I think is really hard for parents to avoid. To an extent you know I think it’s really easy to feel guilty if you’re not part of that rat race of, uhuhuhuh (*imitating rapid breathing*), got to get him into the best school, let’s look at the OFSTED report, uhuhuh, are they

achieving? And I think it's absolutely beserk, but I can feel myself, someone's, an invisible person's pulling me a little bit in that direction as well.... You know, I would like him to be successful in whatever he chooses to do... but I think you can't really avoid the thing about, you know, academia, just recognising it's important that he's able to have some sort of credentials behind his name.

This narrative is ambivalent as it expresses a tension between valuing and challenging the dominant emphasis on academic achievement. Similarly Plummer found (2000:xii) tensions in her participants' narratives of education, whereby they critiqued the system but at the same time depended on it for their self-worth. Yet, as Raco (2009:11) argues, the very narrowness of mainstream individualist ways of understanding aspiration (and thus success) suggest there are many other ways of understanding success that are ripe for research and exploration, and this is what I investigate next.

4:6:2 Holistic Aspirations: Emotional and Moral Values



Fig 4.6: Personal relationships are important

We have already seen how participants' academic aspirations were shaped against other concerns such as work and marriage, and Brown (2011) argues for a holistic approach that aims to understand contexts to, and pluralities of, aspirations. Brown (2011:13-18) found that emotional security, happiness and personal relationships were important to the young people he researched, shaping their dispositions and choices (echoing Evans' research, 2010). The participants in this study also put a high value on happiness. (Fig 4.6). Sara (middle-class), for example, said,

I want them to be happy. And I want them to exceed in what they do and, and do what they wanna do, and not just do things because it's what they should do... of course I'd love my kids to go to university, but you know what, if they don't it's not the be all and the end all, there's other ways... I don't particularly want them to be crackheads and stuff like that. So you know I want them to respect themselves and respect others... that's probably the main value.

Coupled with the earlier discussion on the key role of the emotions, participants' narratives suggest that a more holistic understanding of aspirations, that accounts for the value placed on happiness and personal relationships, could inform more appropriate policy interventions aimed at supporting people's educational experiences (Brown 2011:7). This is not to replace or conflate the measurement of unequal class resources or unequal educational outcomes with the 'softer' measure of happiness, as current government approaches to measuring poverty have been critiqued for doing (Allen et al. 2013; Bradshaw et al. 2013), but to consider the inter-relation and impact of emotional contexts and capital on educational experiences.

Sara's narrative also emphasises the moral values of respect for the self and others, echoed in many of the participants' narratives (Reay et al. 2008; Sayer 2005; 2011). The majority of participants cited Camden Green School's ethos of equality and inclusivity as important to them, as indicated in Rebecca's narrative earlier (Fig 4.7).



Figure 4.7: Camden Green school's ethos of equality and inclusivity was valued

They were pleased that their children would mix with 'others', not simply because of the cultural capital their children could acquire to help them navigation an unequal and global society, as Reay et al. mostly found in their research of "socially inclusive"

(2008:240) middle-class parents with children at comprehensive state schools, but also so their children could engage in an ethos of care and respect for others. For example, Grace (middle-class) said, “I want Nicky to be able to mix with all things, be able to talk to anybody confidently, with respect. And I think you’ll probably get that from school”. Her narrative thus suggests that self-interested practices (as emphasised by Bourdieu), such as the acquisition of social confidence, can work in tandem with respectful relations and engagement with others (the latter of which will be discussed in more detail in chapter seven).

4:6:2 Widening and Equalising the Curriculum



Figure 4.8: Each child has individual talents and interests

Many participants stressed the importance of their children’s individuality being fostered (Fig 4.8). Karen (inter-class), said that the local state secondary school where she works tried to do this,

I just like that these young people seem to be independent thinkers and not spoon fed... It’s like you talk about identity, there’s all these identities that you were meant to be but you kind of weren’t.

To meet multiple talents, needs and interests, participants suggested expanding the curriculum as well as attending to life skills. Sara, for example, credits her NVQ

distinction grade in childcare on the life skills acquired through her work experience, and Karen advocated learning in a variety of 'life' spaces and contexts,

There could be other kinds of environments that the children and young people can be involved in... maybe something in a library situation, outside in the community... or I'd say, right, your lesson today is going to be with this financial adviser, and you're going to be there with them today, sorting out things like bank accounts, making you understand about the importance of when you're meant to meet deadlines to make payments for things. ... and, you know, going to have a cinema experience and going into a back conference room to discuss this film we've just seen. I sort of think that education needs to have the most radical of changes so that it prepares young people for life.

This suggests the value of relating the curriculum to the 'real world' (Page 2006:41-49), and participants also emphasised the study of social systems and procedures, creative practical and vocational skills, and parenting classes (Fig 4.9).

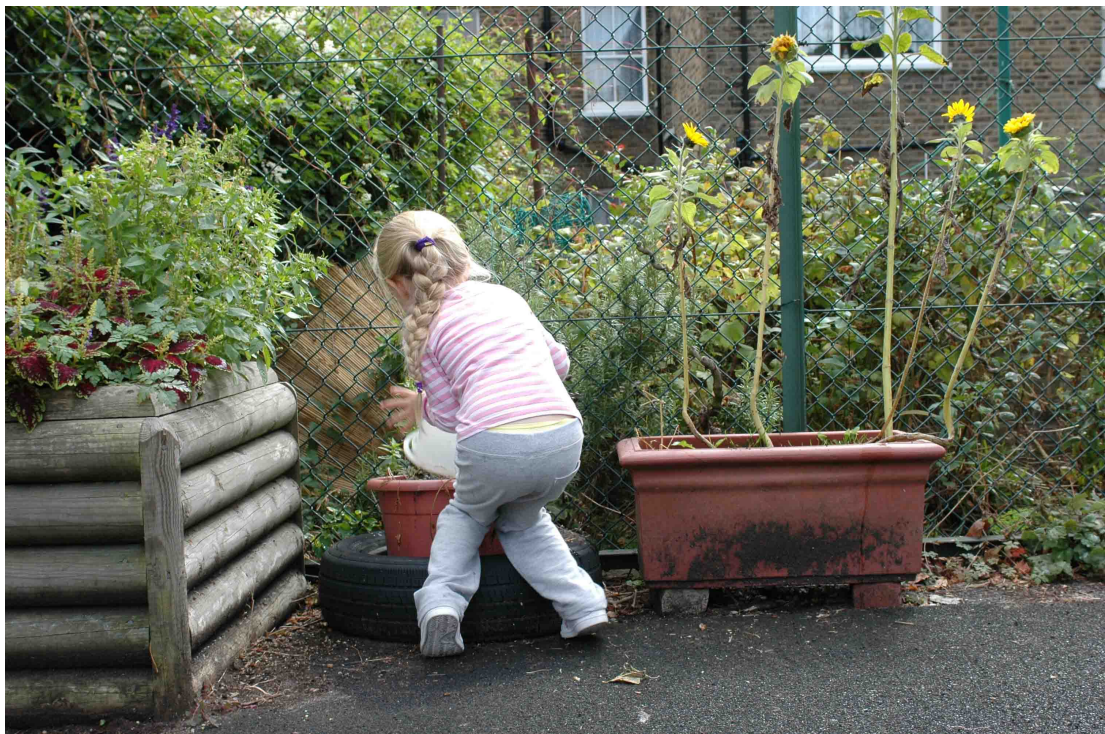


Figure 4.9: Practical 'real-life' skills were emphasised

However there is a warning against too much optimism in the academic critique of the current model of parenting classes, which is argued to perpetuate a middle-class pedagogic ethos and simultaneously pathologise working-class parents (Gillies 2007; Jensen 2010). Thus any subject deployed through the education system is in danger of being corralled by an individualist discourse that perpetuates middle-class dominance. This has been interrogated particularly in relation to the deployment of an academic-vocational divide.

4:6:3 The Academic-Vocational Divide

Johnny (working-class), embarked on a mechanic course at college but despite his excellent practical skills he dropped out due to academic pressure, and his narrative suggests the challenges involved in providing a variety of valued educations that negotiate a putative academic-vocational divide,

I went to Southgate technical college and they used to have an engine... no problem, I'd get the engine running, perfect, but the minute it come down to sitting down and do it on the paper I used to get freaked out... I just couldn't write anything. But when it come to fixing the engine, what I was there to learn and do, I was the best. I think I did it for 6 weeks and then I just thought, I could fix the engine but where I'm going to get the marks and the grades I can't do it. He (the tutor) used to always call me up and say you're brilliant at this. He said you're meant to do this. And I could. I'm not boasting, no-one could get the engine quicker than me. But then I'd go down and I wouldn't have a clue how to word it and how to write, so in the end it was like, what is the point of coming here, day in, day out, when I know I'm not going to pass the course 'cause I can't put it on paper? I was gutted.

This narrative articulates the pride, pain and loss involved in the failure of the education, system to adequately support Johnny's skills, which are therefore wasted as useful to himself and society.

Whilst there are noises across Right and Left political parties to support apprenticeships, with claims to offer inclusion, critics argue that these discourses work to hide the increased class differentiation and stratification of an academic-vocational divide, with

academic credentials remaining the valorised signifier of individual and institutional worth (Leatherwood and Hutchings 2002). Wolf (2011, in Wintour 2012) reports on the low intrinsic value (as a credential) and exchangeable value (in the labour market) of the vocational qualifications currently on offer, and Leatherwood and Hutchings argue, “the academic/vocational divide in educational institutions, curricula and qualifications has been key to the re-affirmation of middle-class privilege in education and employment” (2002:153).

Historically in the UK, separating classes into different forms of learning excluded working-class pupils from academic subjects, reinforcing their sense of inferiority (Plummer 2000:13-16; Tomlinson 2001), and several working-class participants articulated resistance to the lesser value accorded vocational training against academic qualifications. Other participants vehemently expressed their upset and disgust at having been segregated into an area of study without valuable accreditation. Maggie (working-class), for example, said, “I didn’t make O Levels, I was only CSE shit”.

Overall, however, participants’ experiences and narratives, discussed in this and the previous sub-section, do suggest an expanded notion of educational achievement and mobility, based on plural forms of learning that foster and recognise individuality. These include practical, vocational, life, creative and ‘soft’ skills. Existing research suggests that making connections between different kinds of learning, such as between academic learning and the workplace, would better engage pupils in education (Page 2006), and this approach could also work to erode the dichotomised and hierarchised system of credentialism that privileges academic over vocational learning, which, in turn, privileges middle-class reproduction in the education system.

4:7 Conclusion

Addressing research question one, I have demonstrated in this chapter that there are an array of ways in which unequal class positions, resources, systems and structures shape subjective experiences of educational achievement and progression and future social mobility trajectories. The inter-relating impacts of social, cultural, economic and emotional capitals were highlighted, as were class structures. I argued that economic inequality is a key way through which unequal educational experiences are structured, producing unequal pressures, orientations, parameters of 'choice' and outcomes

I affirm and develop Savage's argument (2000) that class processes work through subjectivity, in terms of making choices and constructing identity in relation to classed others and relative class resources. The research indicated how embodied, emotional and intersectional class divisions were experienced. Class processes were emotionally embedded into subjectivity, producing relational self-identities and differing degrees of confidence that impacted on participants' expectations and experiences. Emotions shaped dispositions, such that unreflexive, as well as reflexive, class processes worked through subjectivities. Overall, the individualization of class identity, which Savage described with reference to changing workplaces (2000:139-146), is also implicated in the organisation and practices of the educational field.

Whilst Savage downplays the role of collective class processes, I argue that middle-class parents in the educational field can be construed as a collective group, not because they think and act together in an organised way, but, as Reay (1998:161) argues, because as a collection of individuals they are engaging in similar self-interested activities to reproduce their class positions, based on their superior resources, and situated within the same class structures. These actions act relationally against the interests of working-class groups within a competitive educational system.

The embedding of a pedagogic ethos of academic merit can also be regarded as a collective class process that forwards middle-class interests and has become deeply institutionalised in the educational field. Drawing on Skeggs (2004), I demonstrated how the pedagogic ethos promoting academic learning constructs a system of value and categorisation that privileges middle-class cultures and knowledges. Because the

accreditation system claims to confer value according to individuals' merit, and ignores how class continues to shape educational outcomes, personal characteristics, such as laziness and stupidity, come to define working-class people whose relative educational attainment remains persistently low. It was demonstrated how the low-achieving participants (*all* working-class) internalised blame for their educational failures, thus consenting to their pathologised representations and the notion of education as a meritocratic field. This hegemonically reproduces the existing dominant discourse, embedding middle-class advantages, whilst at the same time hiding the workings of power. Moreover, the state, by individualizing blame, fails to take responsibility for structural class inequalities.

I also argued that there has been an intensification of these discursive processes, with the contours of class relations shifting, as widening participation has led to increased class competition. The defensive response of the middle class has, arguably, been an increasing credentialism and occupational professionalism, with value placed on a hierarchy of universities and subjects.

Addressing question two, these findings challenge the individualist claim that the educational field is a key site for forwarding upward mobility through merit and, moreover, indicate how the discourse works to sustain class inequalities. I examined the individualist discourse of 'raising aspirations', which under-estimates working-class aspirations, ignores the impact of class, and works to symbolically pathologise working-class cultures. My class analysis also contested an individualized construction of working-class and middle-class identities as dichotomously un/reflexive and im/prudent.

The findings indicated that resistance to academic credentialism is difficult, because people compete for jobs that increasingly demand qualifications. However, resistance was audible, and I considered how participants' narratives of educational value and achievement suggested an alternative to the individualist mobility discourse – thus addressing question three. The impact of the emotions and personal relationships on participants' educational trajectories, plus their positive evaluation of happiness, suggests that a more holistic understanding of people's needs and goals could improve support for their social mobilities. It was encouraging that participants' put a high value on equality and inclusivity, but, as Reay et al (2008:252) warn in their study of middle-class parents

who expressed similar sentiments, it is illusory to think that everyday articulations and practices of equality can suspend structural inequalities and power relations.

However, participants' positive evaluations of plural kinds of learning suggested an alternative to the privileging of academic learning, which could, arguably, work to construct a more egalitarian politics at the structural level. Whilst this study does not claim to provide coherent policy solutions, the notion of plural kinds of learning does suggest a more inclusive and flexible educational system, with credits conferred more equally across a diversity of educational forms. This approach suggests an educational ethos that aligns with participants' values of equality, and suggests a shift of political emphasis from individual responsibility for educational achievement to a more collective notion of responsibility for educating every child, as Rebecca indicated was the ethos of Camden Green School. As such, I argue for all children to be given an equal chance to excel at their particular talents and interests so that, as Rebecca said, "properly every child matters" (Fig 4.10).

In the next chapter I pursue the inquiry into what constitutes social mobility (the study's central aim) by examining participants' experiences of occupation. As indicated earlier, education does not necessarily mediate the transition to occupation according to merit, and thus I pursue the interrogation of how class processes impact on mobility experiences.



Figure 4.10: 'properly every child matters'

Chapter 5: Occupation

5:1 Introduction

In this chapter I continue investigating what constitutes social mobility, experientially and conceptually, with a focus on participants' occupational experiences. As in the previous chapter I do this through three lines of inquiry, looking at how participants' occupational experiences are framed by class processes, how they relate to a dominant individualist social mobility discourse, and how their experiences may suggest alternative notions of social mobility.

Notions of meritocracy and equal opportunity, that frame the individualist model of social mobility, justify unequal value and reward conferred on people holding variously ranked occupational positions in a competitive labour market. This symbolic discourse has a particular current political manifestation whereby, as argued in chapter two, the neo-liberal workfare policies that distinguish between 'hard working families' and those dependent on benefits have been reconfigured by the current Conservative-led Coalition government through the binary of 'skivers' versus 'strivers'. This discourse has a distinctly moral tone, attaching shame and blame to 'work-shy' individuals who are held culpable for their unemployed situations. There has been a particular demonisation of young working-class single mothers who are vilified for being stay-at-home mums at the taxpayers' expense, represented as irresponsible, immoral and inferior. These discourses are replicated in the mass media, who add in an array of class-coded pathologising tropes such as 'feckless', 'scroungers' 'chav' and 'pramface' (Gillies 2007:1; McDowell 2009; Jones 2011; Slater 2011; Tyler 2013; Coote and Lyall 2013). This indicates that the individualist-individualizing social mobility discourse has become hegemonic.

Thus whilst the individualist approach to social mobility denies the role of class structures in individuals' occupational positions, it simultaneously constructs class identity. Further, as some critics argue, this pathologising discourse directed at workless working-class people is then deployed to justify policy welfare cuts that impact on both the unemployed and the working poor (Raco 2009; Amable 2011; Slater 2011; Slater 2012; Coote and Lyall 2013).

As discussed in chapter two, the individualist frame of social mobility, in which individuals are regarded as responsible for their own mobility, chimes with individualization theory, which posits individuals as the autonomous and reflexive authors of their own biographies in the context of post-industrial flexible workplaces. (Giddens 1997; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001). In these terms, people in low-status jobs can be regarded as lacking ambition, oriented to stasis and routine work, to ‘getting by’ as opposed to ‘getting on’, labouring for money rather than self-development, against people in middle-class occupations who can be lauded for rationally and reflexively exploiting their agency in order to access career-oriented jobs (Savage 2000; Gillies 2007; Taylor 2010; Taylor 2012).

The overall structure of this chapter echoes that of the previous chapter, develops some of its themes and introduces some new emphases. Similarly, I begin by analysing how occupational experiences are shaped by class through investigating the role of the habitus, class dispositions and class resources on experiences of un/employment and intra- and inter-generational mobilities. I pursue an emphasis on the role of economic and emotional capital in these processes. Thus I develop the interrogation of research question one.

I then develop the investigation of question two by examining how participants’ experiences relate to the individualized notion of the agentic, mobile and autonomous individual who constructs their own biography. I examine how participants’ dispositions, choices, and access to occupational positions are influenced by class processes, systems and structures. In this context I introduce an interrogation into the theoretical binary that symbolically construes the working-class as fixed, against the middle-class as mobile. Especially with reference to studying parents, I consider the impact of relational dispositions (Gillies 2007) and dependencies (Armstrong 2010) on occupational choices and experiences.

Analysis of the body is much more developed in this chapter. I examine cultural capital on the body in everyday space, and focus on the emotional embodied experience of co-present interaction (McDowell 2009). I explore how processes of everyday inscription onto bodies relate to wider symbolic systems of status and stigma (Bourdieu 1986; Skeggs 1997; Taylor 2010), with particular reference to ranked occupational statuses and the pathologising discourse directed at unemployed people, as described above. I also

examine subjective internalisation of, and consent to, these discourses in processes of cultural hegemony. Therefore, I develop chapter four's investigation into how everyday experiences of class distinction-making relate to structural symbolic systems that deploy classed bodies as resources to reproduce middle class dominance (Skeggs 2004), forwarded through dominant individualist-individualizing notions of social mobility.

Finally I turn to question three to look at participants' resistances and alternatives to the dominant discourse of occupational success, in which I re-evaluate 'spoiled occupations' and unrecognised labour and mobilities. This includes attention to 'getting by' as well as 'getting on', and to paid and unpaid domestic work, which I frame within broader feminist debates about the role of domestic labour in processes of reproduction (James and Costa 1972; McDowell 2009; McDowell and Christopherson 2009), and offer as a challenge to the individualized notion of autonomous identity.

5:2 The Habitus and Capitals: Inter- and Intra-generational Mobilities

In this section I analyse how participants' occupational experiences are shaped by class, paying attention to inter-and intra-generational reproduction and change, and making comparisons between differently classed participants. I examine how dispositions, choices and access to un/employment are shaped by unequal class resources. Firstly I give an overview of the participants' employment situations and occupational mobilities. Then I examine reproduction and change of the habitus, and the inter-relation of class capitals and economic structures in these processes. I then go on to focus on the impact of economic resources on dispositions and choices and, following that, focus on the inter-relation of emotional with other class capitals.

5:2:1 Overview of Participants' Occupational Statuses

Participants' past and present employment statuses range across all eight categories of the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification Analytic Classes from 'Higher managerial and professional occupations' to 'Never worked and long-term unemployed' (Appendix 5:1). Correspondingly financial rewards also varied, from below to over

double the median household income levels (Appendix 5:2)²⁴. The vast majority of participants in the lower categories 5-8 (lower supervisory and technical occupations to the unemployed) were women, whilst the higher occupational classifications were more gender-mixed. The six interviewees who became downwardly mobile after they had children were women, although Johnny also became downwardly mobile after gaining sole custody of his school-age children.

In terms of inter-generational transmission, most of the participants from middle-class origins reproduced their parents' middle-class occupational positions, although two were downwardly mobile. Those from working-class origins were roughly split between those reproducing parental statuses and those who were upwardly mobile (Appendix 5.3). However, this overall picture was complicated by much change and complexity, different timescales involved and un/even trajectories, with much up, down and horizontal mobility across life-courses. Disruptions came in the shape of difficult childhoods, migrations, redundancies, having children, divorce, separation, illness and death. In the following section I will look at the role class played in these experiences.

5:2:2 Reproduction and Change of The Habitus: Capitals and Structures

Here I examine how the experiences and resources of participants' class habituses influenced their occupational trajectories in processes of inter- and intra- generational reproduction and change (Fig 5.1). Many participants reproduced elements of their parents or other family members' occupations, such as Helen (working-class) becoming a teaching assistant at exactly the same local primary school where her mother had been a teaching assistant. But these reproductions were by no means carbon copies. Helen, for example, changed jobs to work as a gallery assistant towards the end of the research period.

²⁴ I use household income because I consider it a better indicator of individual wealth/poverty situations. For example, some middle-class women did not have a personal income but lived with wealthy partners. It also captures the lower economic resources of the lone parent households compared to couple households.

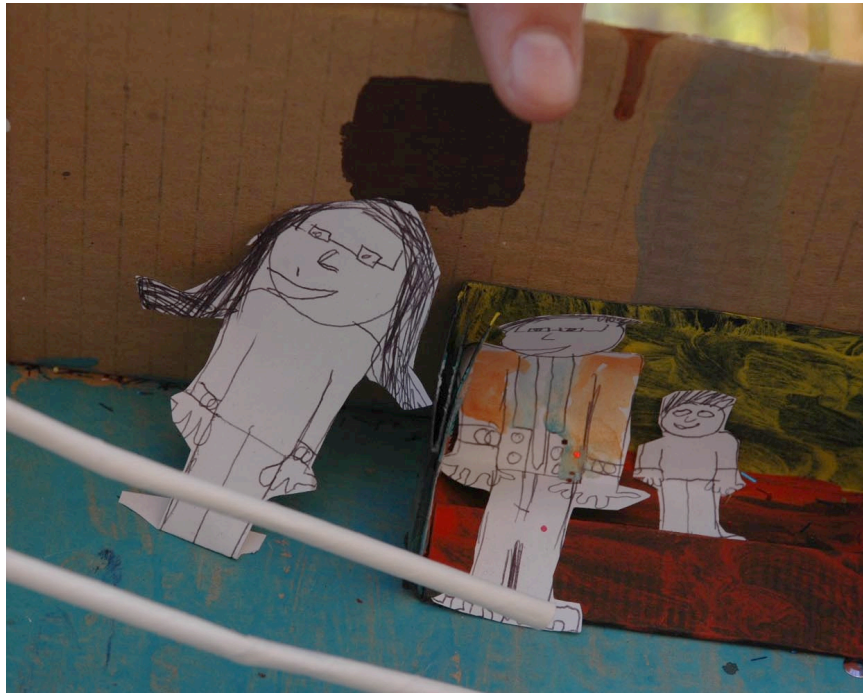


Fig 5.1: Inter-generational reproduction

Carrie's (middle-class) mother and Aunt ran catering and food businesses, and she worked for them when she was younger. Despite having a degree in textiles, a Montessori teacher-training qualification, and trying to set up as a self-employed artist and craftsperson, she was employed in a low-level catering job. She said,

I think the whole catering thing in my family affected the fact that I've ended up doing that and I feel most at ease doing that. ... And anything else I've done has often petered out and catering has just stuck.

This suggests the significance of experience on the reproduction of practices, as argued in the previous chapter. However, Carrie was downwardly mobile, employee rather than employer, so as Bertaux and Thompson (1997b) argue, families can try to transmit their advantages, but children will not necessarily choose, or be able, to reproduce them.

Eva (middle-class), in contrast to Carrie, was upwardly mobile after she got married to a professional man. Her own parents had been downwardly mobile on migration from Czechoslovakia to Canada, and Eva describes how her marriage shifted her habitus and occupational trajectory as she drew on her husband's family's cultural and social

resources to establish herself in business, first as a self-employed hair stylist, then as an events manager. She says,

When I was doing the event management, because the clientele that we were seeing, they were, you know, the sort of glitterati of Canada... when I look back on it I really did walk into it... I mean I had quite a diverse contact book through my hair styling work ... But I suppose the event management work, it was very well-paid and it sort of put me in the way of other, I suppose that was the circle we kind of moved in anyway, Michael was an entrepreneur and so we got to meet lots of, you know, the movers and shakers around town and I don't know, you just get used to people being professionally on par with you ... I've wafted in and out of roles, I've been very lucky, I've had opportunities presented to me on a platter just through people I know.

Eva and her husband's social networks overlapped and embedded over time, contributing to a spiralling up of social, cultural and economic capitals.

Gary's (middle-class) narrative expresses the nuances of familial reproduction and change, and the economic structural contexts within which it occurs. From a working-class background, he worked in many different jobs, including being in a band in the 1980s, whilst at the same time supporting himself as a builder. He said of family influences,

No, no, no. I can say to you categorically that apart from an interest in music, which my dad, he sang in jazz bands and stuff like that... But apart from that, I've always thought that we had pretty much nothing in common. And what's really interesting for me is that one of my mum's brothers, who's now in his 70s, he did like carpentry and was a builder so I've always felt I had more in common with him. So there must be some sort of thread that comes through my mum's side of the family.

Gary articulated both identification and dissociation, continuity and disjunction, thus expressing the complexities involved in inter-generational transitions (Thomson et al. 2011a:122). Moreover, other jobs Gary did bore no relationship to those of family

members, emerging instead from his contemporaneous temporal-spatial circumstances. For example, he toured with his band and moved to the U.S., and from there he became a band manager, and then on to working in public relations in San Francisco, which he described as “another sort of transition that happened naturally”. This natural-feeling personal shift, however, was located within the structural context of a shifting local and global economy, as Gary said, “I applied for three jobs in different PR companies and got offered them all, because just everybody was getting hired, you know, it was just ridiculous... at the beginning of ’99, that’s when the boom year was”. And when Gary worked as a builder it was in London in the context of the 1980s regeneration, “I worked in Docklands and round Liverpool Street when it was being developed”. Gary’s narrative loosens Bourdieu’s notion of the ‘acquiescent’ habitus that mirrors its position in the field (see 2:6:1), and suggests a way to understand inter-generational transitions in a more fluid, nuanced and contextual way. As Thomson et al. argue, in their inter-generational analysis of motherhood, transitions often consist of simultaneous reproductions, recuperations and rejections that occur in the context of both biographical and historical temporality (2011a:10 &119). In many ways Gary appears to have grasped opportunities and shaped an individualized biography, affirming the concept of the self-reflexive figure proposed by individualization theory (see 2:3:1). On the other hand, in a reverse direction to Carrie, he arguably just shifted the shape of his inter-generational reproduction in the context of the opportunities afforded by the favourable structural economic circumstances. However, the current historical and economic context of low absolute mobility rates, economic recession and increasingly polarised occupational incomes (see 2:2:1) is not so favourable, and thus individual social mobilities need to be understood in this wider structural context.

Other participants’ narratives, however, like Eva’s, highlighted the role of capitals on mobilities, with participants’ capacities to take up opportunities or, alternately, to withstand downward mobility, shaped by the resources of the habitus. Therefore for the rest of this section I focus, in turn, on the impact of economic and emotional capital on participants’ occupational mobilities.

5:2:3 The Impact of Economic Capital on Dispositions and Choices

It was argued in the previous chapter that class dispositions to risk were shaped by the economic resources of the habitus, which I also found in the occupational field. Gary and Cecil (both middle-class), for example, were able to risk setting up businesses because of household and family economic resources, including, variously, spouses' incomes, inheritance and money gained from property speculation. Lily (middle-class) described how the economic assets of her middle-class background impacted on both her actions and disposition, enabling her to take risks and make favourable career choices,

I think if I'd come straight out of university... and I really had to pay for everything then I would have had to take that job (I didn't want)... I wasn't paying any rent and that is a very privileged thing because you don't then have that pressure. And even when I left the job I was in last time, I was confident I'd get another job, but also you know you've kind of got a fall-back.

All the things where I say I was able to make that decision and I wouldn't feel that worried... but then you realise that actually financially you're really secure and that's why you've got that level of confidence. And I've always had that because you come from that background ... it does influence how you are and how you can be moving forwards really.

Rather than Lily's middle-class disposition better orienting her to self-motivated risk-taking, her risks were actually diminished by reliance on her high levels of economic and material family assets.

In contrast, Pedro (middle-class), a degree-educated middle-class Brazilian migrant, came to London to learn English in order to improve his career prospects, following being made redundant from his job as a mechanical engineer. However, his limited English restricted his UK work opportunities (Cox and Watt 2002), and he was spending so much time earning money in low-paid jobs that he could only intermittently study English. He describes he and his girlfriend's arduous routine of working as hotel cleaners by night in order to study English by day,

we were studying like 4 to 6, and then we wait until 11... we went to school in Hammersmith, and we just had a nap at Hammersmith you know, when we wait for the underground, it's closed so we had a nap 'til 10 O'clock and then we go to work... So then we go from 11 to 7. And then go home. And then we sleep there for 7 to 1 O'clock. And then shower and go.

Thus the opportunity for education may be available, but Pedro is hard-pushed to take advantage of it. Time, then, is also a key resource, accessed or constrained by differing levels of economic capital and proximity to necessity.

Working-class proximity to necessity arguably becomes internalised in the habitus, constructing self-ascriptive positioning, as people are constrained by what they perceive as possible. Pedro did finally move back up the pay and status scale, after he had learned English and then computer programming. He said he had been too ashamed to face his middle-class friends and family in Brazil until he had restored his class position. Thus, arguably, the middle-class habitus he grew up with persisted in shaping his expectations. In contrast, most of the participants' from working-class origin described family pressures and assumptions that they would leave school at 16 in order to go to work and earn an income. As Helen (working-class) says, "I weren't friends with anyone who stayed on, we all went out and got jobs and stuff". These narratives affirm the debate of the previous chapter, whereby aspirations were argued to translate into expectation and practice in relation to the resources, which shape the parameters of possibility, of the habitus (Skeggs 2004; Brown 2011). 'Expectation' is a useful concept through which to examine unequal levels of entitlement people feel, in which 'higher' aspiration is arguably an emotional and cultural class capital rather than an individual personality trait. As such aspiration is not so useful for indicating who has the better personal disposition, but rather who has the better class position.

However, a few working-class or low-income participants could progress their careers, or were simply enabled to work, because of state subsidies, such as tax credits and in-work training and education. This indicates the key redistributive role welfare payments have for redressing unequal class resources and enabling more equal opportunities, currently threatened by the continuing neoliberal roll-back of state support (see 1:3).

5:2:4 The Inter-relationship of Emotional with other Capitals

As in the previous chapter, I now turn to the impact of emotional capital on mobility processes, and similarly find that levels of confidence and wellbeing impact on what people can imagine for themselves and engage with. Several participants related how lack of confidence deterred them from aiming high in the job market. For example, Carrie (middle-class), working as a low-level caterer, said,

because of my ultra crap time at school, no confidence, didn't pursue my possibilities in textile design from being at art college, just went back into the village shop... so confidence-wise, getting a job, it just wasn't there.

Similarly Rebecca (middle-class) describes how failing at medical school had a long-term impact on her confidence in the labour market,

I did lose confidence for a long time. And it means you end up doing jobs that really you should have said no to.

Self-confidence is thus arguably a key factor in enabling resources to be activated. However, Carrie is cushioned from the economic consequences of low-level work by her parents' economic capital, whilst Rebecca was financially assisted by her parents' economic capital and cultural expectations to progress occupationally,

I ended up with quite an exciting job. And culturally it suited, there were lots of very similar people ... so the career moved on acceptably, and undeniably I got some fantastic jobs.

Further class capitals came into play as Rebecca's narrative indicates that her cultural capital gave her access to the social capital of "very similar people", which she utilised for career progression.

Compare this to Johnny (working-class), Vanessa (working-class) and Karen (inter-class) who all had problematic childhoods, characterised by parental alcoholism and mental health issues, that impelled them to leave the family home at 16. The low levels of resources associated with their working-class backgrounds, however, put them in

precarious and vulnerable situations. Whilst wellbeing and confidence are not fissured along class lines, as discussed in the previous chapter, poverty is associated with lower levels of mental and physical health (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009), with negative effects on social mobility (ESRC 2012). Karen's narrative about her father, who worked on the railways, gives some ideas of the impact of poverty on families and work,

My mum's illness was going on and my dad, for goodness sake, we lived in a time when they were throwing people into jail because they couldn't afford to pay their rates, my dad got thrown into jail. I mean, my God, a family man, gets thrown into jail for an entire week, away from his family, he's got a job, because he can't pay his rates. What does that do to a proud man? So you know sometimes we'd be there not knowing where our food's coming from, had to go and borrow money, we'd have to get wood, make fire, put a pot on ... and that's how I learned it from home you know, yeah, you just did all of that to survive.

Crucially, working-class participants had fewer resources to help them redress their difficulties, low confidence and 'failures'. Karen, Johnny and Vanessa all had few or no academic qualifications and no family economic backup. By 16 they were all homeless and living in precarious situations, taking informal and low-paid jobs, without career prospects, to survive. In various ways their situations further eroded their capacities to engage successfully with the labour market. Vanessa, for example, talked of low self-confidence,

Over the years... I haven't really, through lack of confidence and just being so fearful of doing anything incase I failed, I haven't done anything.

Whilst Eva's narrative earlier demonstrated how capitals can 'spiral up' to construct advantages, these stories in contrast indicate a 'spiraling down' of capitals, exacerbating disadvantage (Reay 1998).

It took Johnny, Vanessa and Karen years of emotional struggle to build up sufficient resources and/or self-confidence to be upwardly mobile. In their mid to late 30s, Karen did eventually train to be a teacher, and Vanessa to be a chef, following, for both of them, early motherhood, several failed attempts to return to education, divorce/separation and

mental health problems. Johnny spent years sleeping rough, which he said made it impossible to hold down a regular, permanent job. He therefore relied on casual, informal labour, which he was not able to use for his CV or references. Only now that he is relatively settled, living with his children, has Johnny embarked on a plastering course at college. Therefore they all put in years of emotional and physical labour to gain sufficient resources and self-confidence to engage effectively with opportunities. This aligns with Watt's (2001) findings that working-class people take relatively longer than their middle-class counterparts to achieve middle-class jobs.

Narratives throughout this section have indicated that class works through individuals (Savage 2000) to impact on occupational trajectories, with class capitals of key importance for structuring inequalities. This challenges the assumption of the neoliberal social mobility discourse that individuals compete equally in the labour market, with equal access to shaping their biographies. Thus addressing research question one in this section, about the impact of class on participants' experiences, has informed question two that interrogates the individualist social mobility discourse. In the following section I develop this second line of inquiry by further examining how participants' experiences relate to assumptions about individualized identities.

5:3 Participants' Experiences and the Individualized Self

In this section I consider how participants' experiences relate to individualization theory's representations of an autonomous, agent, reflexive cultural identity, that critics claim are constructed along class lines (Taylor 2010; 2012; Gillies 2007). Firstly I interrogate access to future- and mobile-oriented career identities, and then I examine the assumption of an autonomous identity.

5:3:1 Who has Access to a Mobile Future-oriented Career Identity?

As discussed in relation to education (4:4:2), there is a popular idea that working-class people do not have an interest in investing in their futures, while, in contrast, middle-class career-oriented people defer immediate material gratification in the interests of future occupational rewards.

Many participants from middle-class backgrounds did perceive their jobs in terms of careers, and some of the un/employed working-class participants appeared to be oriented to more routine day-to-day work and lives. Brendan, for example, likes his painting and decorating job, of which he said, "tomorrow's normally pretty much like today". However, practices and orientations are arguably shaped by the structure of the jobs. Savage (2000) notes that many menial working-class jobs had few structures for promotion, and that workers are unable to improve their positions by up-skilling. This highlights that it can be the jobs, not workers that produce career immobility.

However, constrained access to planning into the future is also, arguably, related to economic caution, as low-skilled work is often insecure (Wills 2008b; Standing 2011; Shildrick et al 2012). Brendan's job security as a painter and decorator, for example, was vulnerable in the context of neoliberal economic trends, as he was made redundant when the Housing Association he worked for outsourced their painting and decorating work to the private sector, and subsequently he had to compete within a context of an increasingly liberalised global labour market. When Brendan's son entered the labour market as a casually employed builder Brendan, unsurprisingly, warned him not to make future projections,

you're only going to work there for a few weeks now, don't think you're a big I am just now, because that job could finish tomorrow... just appreciate what you got today and see how it goes.

Thus as emphasised earlier, classed dispositions are shaped by the level and security of economic resources, which in turn are shaped by wider economic structures. This disrupts an individualist discourse that stigmatises working-class cultures and identities as 'backward-looking' and oriented to stasis (Taylor 2012).

However, experiences of upward and downward mobility indicate there was no strict class divide regarding orientations to mobility and career. As found in the educational field, working-class participants commonly wanted themselves and their children to have improved life chances. Moreover, not all working-class jobs were routine and repetitive. For example, Selina (working-class) moved from retail assistant to pharmacy assistant, to working as a lunchtime nursery assistant. Despite her low-level school qualifications, Selina had enrolled for an Open University course and was intent on progression. And whilst Selina's job is primarily manual and low in status and income, it nevertheless involved variability, learning, decision-making and responsibility (Fig 5.2).



Fig 5.2: Nursery

These arguments, overall, contest the notion that middle-class participants were more oriented to careers and mobility against working-class participants disposed towards stasis and dependency, and thus (as in the previous chapter) I challenge the individualist discourse that blames and pathologises working-class culture for failing to engender aspiration and mobility (Cabinet Office 2009). It is important not to conflate a situation of stasis with an orientation to stasis. Working-class participants were not equally free to plan for the future, take risks or be mobile, because often they were fixed by their low-paid or workless situations. This counters tendencies (in politics and academia) to generalise about, and thus risk essentialising, cultural class dispositions. The next discussion, in which I look at notions of autonomous/relational identities with particular reference to parenting experiences, develops these arguments.

5:3:2 Dispositions, Dependencies and Resources

Participants, across all classes, shifted between orientations to ‘staying put’ and ‘moving on’ as their situations changed, and interrogating parental responsibilities highlights this. I draw on Armstrong’s (2006; 2010) notion of “dependencies” for the following discussion because it draws attention to what is demanded of participants (what ‘goes out’), which complements the investigation of what resources participants have to draw on (what has ‘gone in’).

Having children was a key moment as it interrupted occupational trajectories and shifted priorities, often involving a desire for stability rather than progress. Gender was a key intersection as mothers most often carried the burden of childcare (Gillies 2007:9; Thomson et al. 2011a:161). This, however, was across classes, as *all* mothers, and a few fathers (across classes) changed their attitudes and practices regarding their careers when they had children, variously giving up work, going part-time, and finding new work patterns to fit round their children. Some did this *at the same time* as attempting to pursue individualized mobility projects, with working- as well as middle-class participants re-training and/or taking jobs with a view to ‘moving on’ to better occupational positions. This emphasises social mobility as a changeable process that occurs unevenly over lifetimes (Savage 2000; Watt 2001), and also the fluidity of orientations, which troubles binaried conceptualisations of class identities.

These findings challenge the dichotomous construction of class categories produced by an individualist discourse that stigmatises ‘immobile’ working-class people against their middle-class counterparts, but also dichotomous representations by critical feminist academics who contest the individualist discourse by explaining *why* working-class women have more relational identities than their middle-class career-oriented peers (Gillies 2007; Armstrong 2010). Whilst my findings strongly support these critics’ arguments that dispositions are shaped in relation to economic circumstances, I diverge by emphasising that *all* the participants in this study had relational orientations and dependencies from the point of becoming parents. I argue, then, that middle-class economic resources play a role in *managing* these dependencies, and thus enable access to an individualized identity *at the same time* as retaining strong relational orientations. For example, whilst working-class women worked in relational childcare types of work that drew on their family experience and fitted around their children’s lives, I found many middle-class parents at Camden Green School (some men as well as women) working variously as teachers, nurses, with children and young people, in colleges and schools, both drawing on relational experience and fitting their work around the demands of being a parent. Single-parenthood was a notable inter-sectional identity that added additional pressures to discontinue previous working practices. Jane (middle-class), for example, shifted her job and working patterns after she had her daughter because she had no partner or family to help her with childcare, having many years before been spatially mobile (moving to London from Northern England) in order to be socially mobile. This does not, however, negate the resources, such as partners’ incomes or personal savings, which helped many of the middle-class participants’ manage their relational changes.

The notion of ‘dependencies’ draws attention to the myth of autonomy. Feminists have long noted that the idea of the independent masculine self is illusory because this identity depends upon the unseen, unrecognised, undervalued and underpaid labour of women (Hochschild 1983; Armstrong 2010). Critics have noted that the mobility of the middle class increasingly depend on the fixing of working-class others into domestic labour positions offering little symbolic or economic rewards (Skeggs 2004; McDowell 2009). This undermines claims that the middle class is orientated to independence. However, in this study both working- and middle-class women depended on childcare in order to work, the former enabled by the child tax credit system, which offered some redress of unequal class resources for some working-class women at least. However, tax credits, and their

redistributive effect, are threatened by Coalition government cuts to welfare support²⁵. Gender, being a parent, household structure and distance from extended family thus all intersected with class identities to produce a variety of complex relational dependencies, dispositions and practices. The consistent divider, however, was unequal access to resources that could facilitate the management of these dependencies. Therefore class shaped reflexivity and choices, challenging the idea of equal access to individualist/individualizing identities. As such, an independent disposition is neither the result of a superior set of aspirations and choices on the part of the middle class (Savage 2000; Armstrong 2006), nor the classless product of the current economic and cultural moment of modernity (Giddens 1997), but rather the result of middle-class privilege.

5:4 Experiences of the Symbolic Construction of Identity

Having undermined some key concepts associated with the individualist-individualizing social mobility discourse, I now examine how dominant symbolic constructions of value are experienced at ground level. I look at participants' everyday experiences of distinction-making regarding occupations, and how they relate to the dominant individualist discourse. I focus, firstly, on experiences of status and stigmatisation, including ascription and inscription on the body. I then examine how distinctions play out through embodied interactions in the workplace. Following this, I consider everyday distinctions in terms of processes of classed cultural hegemony, attending to experiences of consent and doxa (Bourdieu 1986). Finally I examine the stigmatisation of worklessness, and its inscription onto parent-identities.

5:4:1 Status and Distinction-making

Work provides unequal degrees of status and respect, which contributes to the construction of self-identity and self-worth in relation to wider symbolic social systems of evaluation and legitimation (Sennett and Cobb 1973; McDowell 2009:26). Most participants related instances when they felt judged, either positively or negatively, in relation to their occupational statuses, as the following examples indicate,

²⁵ Specifically through the absorption of tax credits into Universal Credit, starting in 2013.

When I was cleaning... it wasn't a job that I'd go round saying, (*shouts*) I'm a Cleaner! I'm a Cleaner! And now I'm a chef I get a different reaction from people ... Wow that's really interesting... (*laughs*) and it's kind of funny... It's not so funny now because I'm unemployed. (Vanessa, working-class)

When I was a porter I used to say I'm a cabinet-maker. For some reason, I was embarrassed. Not that I really cared what people think but ... I don't know, you just feel a bit inferior to them... I went to a big party with one of my friends, her work do, all suited and booted and all these posh people. 'What do you do?'... And without even thinking, 'I'm a cabinet maker'. Instead of just saying, oh I've got custody of me kids and I'm not working... I've had it where I can look at people and I think, yeah, you're looking down your nose but they won't say anything ... You're picking up something. (Johnny, working-class).

Johnny's narrative indicates the subjective internalization of 'objective' social divisions. In Bourdieu's terms, this is the infra-conscious fit of the habitus and the field, in which domination operates through doxa (common-sense beliefs).

The narratives substantiate Savage's (2000) thesis that class processes work through the individual as people position themselves, or feel positioned, relatively against classed others. Further, Skeggs (2004) argues that representations of bodies construct symbolic systems of knowing that represent the interests of the middle-class group, and, arguably, it is the middle class who benefit from these symbolic systems that attach high status and remuneration to their own jobs. As Harry (middle-class) points out, it was in middle-class dominated spaces, such as his children's private nursery, that he experienced people getting, "very het up about what you do... (*pompous voice*) 'I'm an accountant or I'm a lawyer or I'm a hedge fund manager'... There is this big middle-class thing I think about defining yourself by your career".

5:4:2 The Embodied Workplace

Clearly many workplaces are characterised by occupational hierarchical structures (Savage 2000), and in this section I examine how this is lived at the embodied scale, by considering face-to-face, inter-active encounters (McDowell 2009:37). Critics note that employment in the expanding service sector of the UK's post-industrial economy

demands particular types of bodies and workplace performances, which draw on, structure and exacerbate class divisions (Bourdieu 1986; Savage 2000:138; Goldthorpe 2007[1997]; McDowell 2009). The importance of cultural capital inscribed into bodies is particularly important for face-to-face interactive service work, and McDowell (2009) argues that a whole range of embodied characteristics, such as skin colour, weight, height, accent and posture, map onto gender, ethnicity, class and age, construct hierarchies of eligibility in the labour market. Moreover, once in the workplace, bodies themselves become commodities, part of the process of exchange. In this context, I look here at emotional, embodied experiences of doing low-status, inter-active service work (Hochschild 1983; McDowell 2009). Developing the argument in the previous chapter that examined embodied, classed experiences of dominant hegemonies in institutional places (different schools), here I consider how the workplace can refract and embed class relations.

McDowell (2003; 2007; 2009) notes that bottom-end service-sector work demands deference and docility as key attributes of a desirable workplace identity. This was iterated by several participants, including Pedro (middle-class), a Brazilian migrant, who described his experiences of working in a café soon after he moved to the UK,

people at the other side of the counter don't speak to you really well, especially when you start speaking to get the order, they say yeah you are a foreigner... So they look at you like, ahhh, not a nice feeling.... Because they pay they think they can do whatever they want, and you need to not say anything, just to smile and say thankyou.

'Race' and migrant status are inscribed onto Pedro's body, intersecting with his servile class position in the workplace, to produce embodied feelings of shame and embarrassment. This indicates his disadvantageous position in a set of power relations, and also the commodified emotional labour involved in inter-active service work. Deference is demanded of Pedro, in a relationship in which the inferior must obey the injunctions of a superior (McDowell 2007:191-211). His experiences, thus, demonstrate the way that subjective processes of moral distinction-making play out and are embedded through embodied, emotional everyday practices (Sayer 2005). They also demonstrate the way that wider structural socio-spatial relations of power (in this case, those of global

capitalism) intersect at the site of the body. Moreover, analysis of Pedro's embodied experience reveals how his spatial mobility, in the context of liberalised global labour relations, did not engender an agentic shaping of his biography but, rather, a classed and raced fixing. This reveals the 'other' side to Savage's focus on the post-industrial, individualized middle-class career.

In a similar low-status job, Carrie (middle-class), from middle-class origins, described her emotional discomfort when working in her job as a caterer, making barristers' lunches (Fig 5.3),

I really really don't enjoy working at my job with the barristers because they have children at boarding school and I have the boys at boarding school and yet I work in the kitchen and my colleagues are two Irish ladies who are very working-class. So it's really demoralising because it make me feel that I should and I could be doing more. ... I've actually started blushing now when the barristers talk to me ... I don't fit into the box of people that are from the class that I've come from, which is going to private school and having a relatively posh accent, but I don't actually want to be with the people in that box because they're more successful than me.



Fig 5.3: Catering work

Carrie's job dissatisfaction centred less on her routine work than on the shame and embarrassment she felt being face-to-face with high-status others: against whom she felt inferior; from whom she felt a class gaze, and with whom her self-judgment was invoked, as she compared herself against what she felt she should have achieved, given their shared class origin. Thus, as Valentine (2007) argues, the power relations of spaces are revealed by examining which aspects of intersectional identities come to the fore in particular places. Thus Carrie's class anxiety demonstrates how class difference and power are working through both individuals, as Savage (2000) argues, and places, as Valentine argues.

Both Pedro and Carrie's narratives indicate that the internalisation of assumed judgment is particularly emotionally acute when status relationships are lived through face-to-face interactions, especially in spaces that produce embodied encounters in relations of servility and deference. Thus status is not only an idea about one's value, but a painful lived experience, repeated and embedded through the routine performances of everyday social relationships (Butler 1990).

In contrast, the organisation of the workplace in typically middle-class jobs can elicit an embodied experience of the autonomous self (as Savage, 2000:141, suggests), for example, the personal work-desk evidences differing degrees of personal space, autonomy and status associated with middle-class white-collar occupations, which was evident from participants' photo-diaries (Figs 5.4 & 5.5).

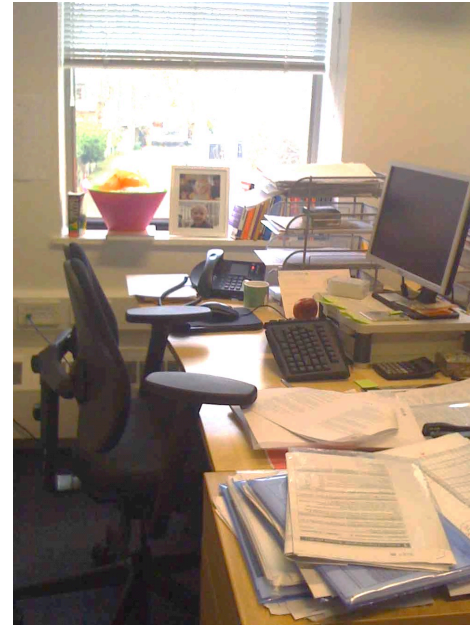


Fig 5.4 & 5.5: Participants' workdesks: manager and IT consultant

Therefore the body is a key player in the repetition, embedding and reproduction of class relations, and next I examine how symbolic inscriptions made onto classed bodies constrain the access some participants' have to particular identities.

5:4:3 The Hegemonic Norm

Karen (inter-class), from a working-class African Caribbean background, described how she felt lacking and evaluated in relation to a white, middle-class, masculine norm. She told me that throughout her life she felt 'othered', criticised and misunderstood because her clothes, her accent and her way of talking were perceived as being at a bodily tangent to the somatic norm,

I always feel like I have to battle, battle, battle, and to be quite honest, what would be really wonderful and interesting is without any of these challenges of being black, being a woman, being a, you know, issues in the family and dududu, who would you be?... you can see how much the impact of environment has got

on somebody in making somebody who they are. And what the challenge is, is to I suppose is you try to believe in your potential... to meet that potential. To actually show people if we weren't slaves this is what I would be.

Karen thus felt that the identities available to her, as a black working-class woman, were proscribed in relation to a white middle-class model (slaves and masters). In her job as a teacher she often emulated a white middle-class accent, which she described as exhausting. Thus the working-class body labours to fit with the dominant practices of the social field, and struggles to be accepted and pass in the guise of the middle-class norm (Reay 1998; Skeggs 1997; 2004).

Karen's narrative indicates that working-class bodies need to conform to middle-class bodies to facilitate social mobility, but at the same time their bodies may work against them, barring access to dominant white middle-class models. Thus social mobility is not a neutral backdrop in which people can freely move and choose, but a middle-class dominated cultural field, in which particular bodies have unequal access to particular locations. As Skeggs argues,

Identity inscription is a mobile resource for some, whilst fixed into bodies of others as a limitation... The interest here lies in how some forms of culture are condensed and inscribed onto social groups and bodies that then mark them and restrict their movement in social space, whilst others are not but are able to become mobile and flexible (2004:1-2).

Karen (inter-class)'s narrative indicates the strong hold of the social mobility discourse that valorises upward occupational mobility. Karen left home at 16 and struggled for years to become a qualified secondary school teacher,

I think I've actually been quite strong about a lot of things... things that I've managed to achieve. And it's all coming to a bit of a head with the fact that you're just tired, and you just want to live... and then the pressures of here and trying to maintain the timetable... it came to a point where I felt like I didn't know who I was... I think I'm just a reaction, a response... there's so much emphasis on money and status... who's life am I actually living? And do I

actually own my life? And to me I really don't feel this is any different than slavery... And it's scary how I'm trying to push my children into the same thing because the system says.

Karen's feelings echo those of "profound dislocation" felt by socially mobile white collar workers in Boston, U.S.A., who felt driven to social mobility to command symbolic recognition in wider society, yet could not respect themselves because on their own terms, "these jobs aren't real work where you make something" (Sennett and Cobb 1973:21). Karen seems to have 'bought in' to the social mobility discourse, but in the process has lost a sense of what it is that she wants, or even who she is. Thus power is embedded, and hegemony takes its hold, as the power of the dominant discourse silences alternatives.

I found that participants reproduced the meritocratic view that individuals are responsible for their occupational positions through narratives of self-blame. In the previous chapter, it was demonstrated that people in marginalised working-class positions internalised blame, and similarly, in the occupational field, several participants in low-status jobs talked in self-berating terms of underachieving. For example, Brendan (working-class) discussed how his career as a painter and decorator was compromised by economic structural changes that reduced his bargaining power in the labour market. But, despite this insight, he re-iterated the discourse of meritocracy,

B: If you're working class you can get yourself into middle class lifestyle by either being lucky in life, working hard in life or being educated enough to get yourself into certain annual wages, which gives you the big house, the car, the two holidays a year and so forth, now I would class that as a middle-class thing. But a working-class man can get there if he works hard enough.

D: But you've worked hard enough though.

B: Yeah, not hard enough though is it? I still haven't made my first million (*laughs*).

I do kind of beat myself up a bit.... you can always improve yourself and your situation, you know what I mean... so yeah I, myself, I hold myself back sometimes.

Thus Brendan has internalised, and thus consented to, the dominant discourse that individualises blame. As the majority of British people persist in investing in the idea that hard work, effort, and talent are effective in leading to just rewards (Savage 2000; Natcen 2010:73-75), this indicates that the political discourse that dissociates this notion from class structural effects is hegemonic. As such, objective occupational locations become embedded subjectively as evaluations of self-worth, and when people are positioned by individualist discourses as lacking, there is little space to explore alternative understandings of the self (Gillies 2007:71). Thus they consent to and perpetuate the cultural hegemony that ascribes higher value to the dominant class.

In the next section I examine the intersection of gender, parenting and class as it has particular pertinence for this study, and for the understanding of how dominant discourse become hegemonic through inscriptions onto bodies and practices of consent.

5:4:4 Gender, Worklessness and Parenting

As discussed above, critics have noted the political and media representation of a self-excluded irresponsible work-shy class, with a particular emphasis on the working-class single mother who claims benefits. I examine here how everyday practices of distinction-making are bound up with these wider symbolic systems of value by looking at how participants' deploy and receive inscriptions and ascriptions associated with worklessness and the labour of childcare.

As Vanessa's narrative above indicated, the most stigmatised position was not working, and this played out through many everyday embodied classed interactions. For example, Maggie (working-class), who had given up working as a chef and head waitress for health reasons, described her encounter with a middle-class volunteer coordinator,

I went to apply for this volunteering but the woman said to me 'what qualifications have you got and are you working at the moment?'. I said 'no, I'm not working', so I got a 'hmmm....' and I thought she's a snob, she huffed at me for not having a job, she already pre-judged me, didn't think I would be capable. Because in the conversation I said, 'what kind of volunteering do you want?', and she says 'umm I don't think you would be able to do that', and that was her

looking at the list, not even giving me the list. She judged me, and I said ‘you didn’t even ask me if I had ever worked, you just asked me if I was working at the moment’, so I said ‘why are you treating me like a twat?’, I just turned around and just pissed off. I won’t be treated like that.

This indicates the emotional humiliation as well as the substantive effects of the symbolic inscriptions onto bodies. In the context of the power relations, in which Maggie was dependent on the co-ordinator to give her voluntary work, the only resistance left to Maggie was to withdraw from the ‘opportunity’, before she was further maligned. Thus, as Skeggs (2004:2) argues, the metaphorical positioning of bodies in symbolic space affects their movement through physical social space’ (Skeggs 2004:2).

Unemployed parents who claimed benefits felt particularly stigmatised. For example, Katie, a working-class single mother, gave up working as a hairdresser after she had her daughter because it was no longer economically advantageous for her, and would mean she (the only parent) would have little time to care for her baby. She described feeling that judgment was inscribed onto her body,

When I was younger and I had Nirmalee I used to feel, if I was walking down the street pushing the pram, ‘cause I looked young... I sort of did feel, oh people are looking at me like, look at her wasting her life, having a baby just so she can have a flat kind of thing... Older and working-class people sort of look down on you a bit if you’re a single parent on income support and you’re not working... sitting around on your bum all day, sponging off the government... those sort of old chavvie sort of, you know, parents who are estate, estate parents.

Thus personal cultural characteristics are read onto Katie’s body through a normative class-coded discourse that stigmatises young working-class ‘lazy’ unemployed mothers, judged to be having children to get an (implicitly, undeserved) council flat²⁶. This experience indicates a wider symbolic system of power relations, in which these young women are evaluated according to middle-class norms (Gillies 2007; Tyler 2008; Thomson et al 2011:17). The trope of the ‘chav mum’ emerged in Katie’s narrative as

²⁶ See 1:3:3 and 2:3:2 for policy and media discourse on unemployed working-class mothers.

used in processes of intra-class distinction-making (Savage 2000), against which other working class women claimed respectability (Skeggs 1997). Thus the discourse of a pathological class is consented to and reproduced by working-class people themselves, constructing the doxa necessary for hegemony. As Skeggs (1997) argues, when working-class people concur with a middle-class discourse it indicates the prevalence and legitimation of that discourse.

Sara's (middle-class) narrative gives insight into processes of consent to the pathologising discourse attached to unemployed parents who claim benefits. An upwardly mobile working mother, she explained why she worked although her mother did not,

Things are different now. When we were growing up no-one's mum really worked and, oh I'm going to sound really snobby, it wasn't sort of about dossing and being on benefits, mum didn't work because... they were there, to take you to school and pick you up and stuff. And I think society now ... 'Cause you hear, and the kids hear it, just around you everywhere, from the television and the newspapers and other people, you know, oh that's fine living on benefits and you get your council tax paid and your housing, and what point is there working when you get all those things for free? I want them to – to not sit around and have fifteen million kids and let the state pay... if mummy and daddy work we can buy nice things and it's like the rewards for working hard... I don't want them to grow up on benefits because you kind of get in that cycle, and I think it, it kind of breeds another generation of it, doesn't it?

Sara's views inter-weave with a dominant normative discourse that she articulates as ubiquitous, historically situated, and taken for granted. When she says '...doesn't it?', she invites common-sense approval of, and consensus with, her views. Sara's narrative, arguably, articulates a doxic internalization of the individualist pathologising discourse attached to worklessness. She replicates this dominant perspective despite her acknowledgement that, from a different historical perspective, working-class women did not work for the positive reason of prioritising childcare. Moreover, she expresses these perspectives as common-sense and personal opinion, which thus denies and hides their instrumental deployment via powerful institutions such as the media. This analysis

therefore supports Skeggs' (2004) argument that classed bodies and identities are made according to the values of the dominant groups, and become embedded in processes of cultural hegemony.

The 'chav mum' discourse is arguably just a more recent version of the long-standing devaluation of women's domestic and childcare work associated with the 'natural' attributes of femininity (McDowell 2009; Skeggs 1997, Armstrong 2010), which impact on status and remuneration in the labour market. As Sara said of her job as Playcentre manager,

As soon as you mention the word 'play' they think it's just you hang around with kids for a few hours... the importance of it doesn't, people don't really understand what you can bring to a child's life, and also kind of the horrible bits, like working with kids that haven't been treated very well... people just think it's a bit easy and there's nothing to it, anyone can do it, can't they?

Despite the emphasis on women by feminists, men too become tarred by the discursive devaluation of 'women's work' when they do it. Johnny (working-class), a single parent, for example, said,

It was a bit of a confidence knock, do you know what I mean, I'm not knocking women but I'm a bloke and it was just, I just felt Jesus, forever washing, cooking, cleaning, and then my brother sent me a pinny in the post and (*laughs*) a set of high heels and he goes, there you go, get on with your cleaning, and it was funny, but it hit a chord in me head, I was like this is how people are viewing me now.. Johnny the housewife... To be honest with you I love looking after my kids, I enjoy it. But it's just that bit, turning into a female... do you know what I mean, I should be out there working, but I'm at home cleaning and cooking and I know how women feel now and it's horrible.

Johnny is devalued because he is embodying a spoiled feminine identity, and doing low-status 'women's work'. His narrative both re-enforces and exposes the unjust devaluation of domestic work that is mostly done by women and devalued in the labour market as a

low-status, working-class job. This quiet plea for a re-evaluation of such work will be discussed in the next section.

In this section I have argued that the dominant individualist-individualizing discourse of occupational mobility exacerbates and perpetuates class inequalities. The symbolic stigmatisation of particular class cultures and bodies erodes symbolic and emotional capital, and exacerbates material class inequalities. These representations are deployed for the purposes of cultural hegemony (Skeggs 2004), evidenced by doxic consent to dominant perspectives. The classed bodies then work to obscure the state's responsibility for redressing inequalities, and to justify its withdrawal of welfare support.

5:5 Resistance and Alternatives to the Dominant Discourse

Having considered participants' experiences of class in the context of the individualist social mobility discourse (research questions one and two), I now interrogate what participants' themselves experience and consider to be of value in the occupational field, and how this may suggest an alternative social mobility model (thus addressing question three). In this context I consider the value of jobs, labour and mobilities that are *not* recognised by the individualist-individualizing social mobility discourse, including the status indicators by which success is measured.

5:5:1 Re-evaluating Spoiled Occupations

As in the previous chapter, I listened for participants' subordinated perspectives of value in contradictory narratives, in which they struggled to speak against a dominant discourse (Anderson and Jack 1991). Cecil (middle-class), for example, struggled to hold onto his own values regarding his son's future in the face of a dominant perspective,

my fantasy would be, and it really is a fantasy because I wouldn't impose this, is that Paul will, at the weekends he'll play the cello, he'll be the lead cellist in a orchestra somewhere. He would have read philosophy at Cambridge, of course. And he'll do a part-time one of those horrible banker sort of jobs to get money, 'cause I've told him he has to have a yacht and a private jet to look after me when I'm older... But, you know, it's slightly loaded. I didn't say he's got to be,

you know, the greatest businessperson in the world, he's got to make an absolute fortune. I never tell him things like that. What we keep on trying to drum in, even at this early stage, is it doesn't matter what you want to do, it'd be really good. Whatever you want to do, it'd be really good. And that's the honest truth.

Cecil's intends for his "slightly loaded" narrative to express his struggle against a dominant social mobility discourse that seems to both attract and repel him. The indicators of success include both modern and traditional, and cultural and material symbols of class status, from academia at its most abstract, through 'high' culture to elite consumer objects. Cecil's long list nearly drowns out his muted alternative narrative that expresses an equal valuation of any occupation, provided it is what his son wants to do. As such, Cecil considers the holistic context of social mobility, by giving value to his son's happiness ('Whatever you want to do'). Having thus rejected status, in favour of work satisfaction, a more equal valuation of a plurality of occupations is suggested. Moreover, attention to the individual is also suggested, whereby, rather than an individual having to fit into some pre-formed structure of value, value is instead given to a particular fit between the individual and the occupation. Cecil's narrative, therefore, develops and adds weight to the arguments in the previous chapter (drawing on Elliott, 1997; Brown, 201; Raco, 2009), as it suggests a counter-hegemonic, expanded notion of social mobilities, that considers success in more holistic ways, and that incorporates plural and more equally valued routes to multiple social mobilities.

The sentiment that each individual should find the right occupational fit for themselves was echoed when participants talked about what they valued in their own jobs. In most cases participants said how much they enjoyed their various jobs, from trainee to manager positions, manual to service jobs, professional to semi-skilled work. Gary (middle-class), who had worked as a builder, for example, cited the satisfaction of seeing the material outcome of a job well done. Katie (working-class) enjoyed working both as a mechanic and hairdresser, and emphasised enjoyable social relationships in the workplace (McDowell 2009). Sara (middle-class), who disliked sitting in an office all day, left her job in an accountant's office to work as a playcentre assistant. People do not, then, necessarily want to 'move on' from occupations lower down the class schema. Vanessa (working-class), who is a chef, said,

I've got friends who've got professional qualifications, social workers, doctors, teachers, I don't feel inferior because... they've got jobs that are very stressful and they don't like, and they marvel at me and say, 'wow you actually jump out of bed in the morning and go to work'. And I said 'yeah because I'm motivated, I like my job'. And that's the key. Just find something that you actually like to do. It doesn't feel like work, it feels like it's my passion, so that's what I do.

Vanessa framed her own values against classed others whom she assumes will be judged as having more desirable jobs. However, whilst she has found the fit and job satisfaction emphasised by Cecil, she struggles to acquire the symbolic capital to go with it.

These narratives also make a case for re-assessing the value conferred on jobs, and for re-evaluating what occupational success means. This is particularly the case for occupations lower down the scale that, in the same way that working-class identities may be regarded as spoiled identities (Skeggs 1997), could be regarded as spoiled occupations.

Karen made an explicit demand to re-evaluate the status conferred on "lowly" stigmatised occupations,

I've had students going to me 'why is it always, miss, why in our school, why are all the cleaning staff black?' And I had a little issue with that. I said 'the way you're saying it is making it appear as if, it just sounds in your tone and your attitude that you see that as a lowly place'. I said, 'how is it lowly if you're taking care of your family with the salary?' To me that person is a hero in my eyes, do you know what I mean? Yeah. And bowing down and having to take orders from people who are on massive ego trips and like the sound of their own voice and are quite authoritarian, and I said to this student, I said 'lets deal with you first and how you see it because I need to get you to flip the way you see it for a moment. There's nothing lowly about cleaning a building, and I'll tell you what, when I was a cleaner I made sure, damn sure, that my toilets were clean spotless'.

Karen's narrative expresses several complexities and contradictions that are illuminating to examine. On the one hand she wants to recognise and raise the value of a spoiled occupation, and the spoiled (classed, raced) identities who do them, yet at the same time she acknowledges the indignities of the job. Echoing some of the earlier narratives, it is not the tasks of the job that Karen objects to, but the embodied relations of power that the worker is situated in. Similarly, Wills (2008b:317) found that low-paid contract cleaners were distressed, not by the nature of their work, but by the lack of respect their status elicited. Karen's narrative thus articulates the tension involved in the analytic balancing act of both acknowledging the value given by working-class participants to their jobs, whilst retaining a critical perspective on the substance, challenges and constraints involved in those jobs (Armstrong 2010). In this vein Karen communicates pride in a job well done and the capacity to support a family, yet she also points to the unequal power relations running through it: in organisational ways as the worker is open to humiliating authoritarianism (Ehrenreich 2001; McDowell 2009); in structural ways as particular marginalised bodies are designated to this low-status job (McDowell 2009); and in symbolic ways as her students' common sense (doxic) evaluations re-enforce cleaning as a stigmatised occupation. The narrative therefore makes a plea for recognition and respect, in and out of the embodied environment of the job, for this spoiled occupation.

The status divide between manual and white-collar ('brawn and brain') work has been challenged by critics (McDowell 2009), and Brendan (working-class), of Irish origin, forwarded an argument for re-evaluating manual work. He contextualised his alternative perspective within a wide inter/national scale as he indicted a dominant national discourse for failing to recognise the value of Irish manual labour,

The Irish workers... they done the roads, the undergrounds, you know what I mean, there was a lot of stuff that should be appreciated by people and they don't, and the Irish get stick for it ... also they were recovering from the war, you know what I mean, so there was a whole new city to be built so that side of it helped get London back on it's feet.

Brendan articulates the absence of value that is silenced by class hegemony, as the subordinate class are unrecognised, devalued and 'given stick' at the national level, which hides the dependence of the dominant class on their labour (Sassen 1991).

This relates to the educational division between vocational and academic learning, and this fits with Young's (1990, in McDowell 1999:48) idea of 'scaling bodies', which refers to mechanism of power that distinguish hierarchical social worth on the basis of bodily distinctions, and specifically to inferiority conferred on the subordinate group by defining them in terms of their body ('brawn'), against dominant groups who are characterised by a rational disembodied position ('brain') in a hierarchical split between body and mind (also see McDowell 2003). Thus, as Skeggs (2004) argues, bodies are deployed as a class resource to construct and embed hierarchy and reproduce middle-class domination. This discursive hierarchical evaluation contributes to constructing economic inequalities as these bodies not only are inscribed with less status but also are less exchangeable for economic capital in the labour market (McDowell 1999; Skeggs 2004).

Given the value participants attached to an array of jobs up and down the occupational scale, it is unsurprising that aspirational narratives were not limited to the sphere of middle-class occupations. But a discourse attaching higher status to middle-class jobs slides into only recognising aspiration when attached to such jobs. Brendan said, "I'd always wanted to be a decorator". Jose (inter-class) pointed to the value of the transferability of manual skills across national borders, given that they carry less language barriers (Fig 5.6). From the 'dominant' point of view these aspirations exemplify limited aspiration, with no recognition of goals and achievements outside a middle-class frame of value.

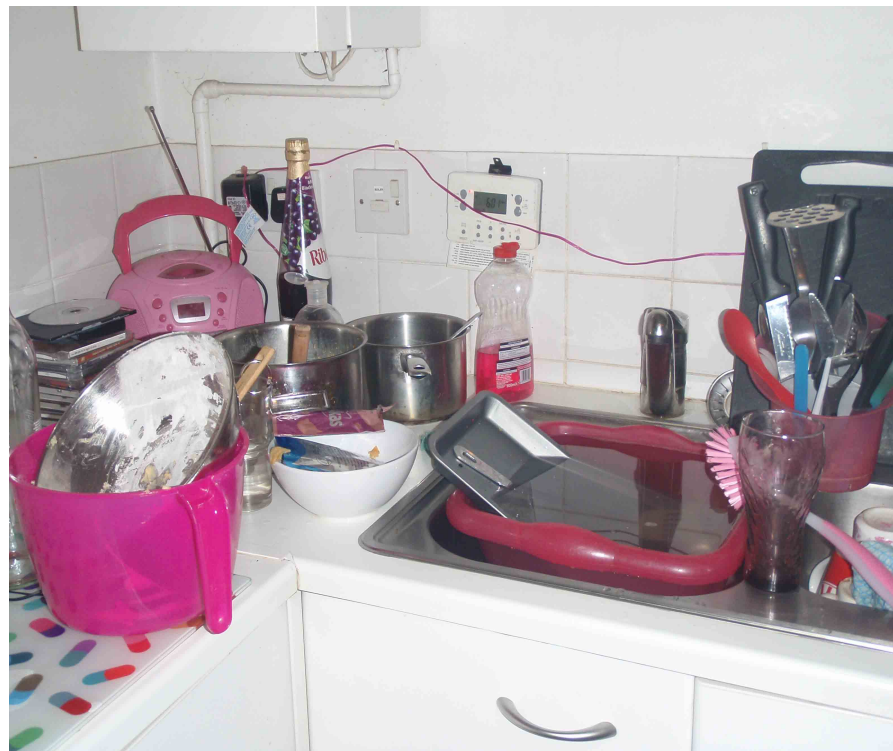
Fig 5.6: Dinner Lady



However, just because participants did not necessarily want to ‘move on’ from jobs lower down the status scale does not mean they did not want to be appropriately remunerated for doing them. Katie, for example, argued, “you should be paid for what you do rather than how qualified you are”. Critics have pointed to the inequity of lower financial rewards for the most unpleasant, dirtiest and dangerous jobs (Sayer, 2009). The failure to symbolically credit these essential jobs that the middle-class and the economy depends on arguably underpins the glossing over of unequal economic rewards. So whilst the current discourse of meritocracy justifies low pay as just reward for lowly jobs, the participants’ narratives that positively evaluated lower-status occupations suggest an alternative economic paradigm that adequately respects and remunerates these essential and valuable occupations. This fits with the notion of giving more equal value to a plurality of occupational statuses. Where spoiled occupations are insufficiently recognised and valued, so too are the efforts and mobilities involved in these labour positions. Thus, next, I focus on what is arguably the most spoiled occupations of all - domestic and child-care labour.

5:5:2 The Unrecognised Labours of Parenting

The labour many participants put the highest value on was their parenting yet, across classes, this was the labour that they felt was most devalued. Parenting, as with all domestic work, tends to be invisible labour, obscured by the symbolic figures of the autonomous worker and the ‘chav mum’, as well as often occurring in private homes, out of sight. As discussed, the burden of childcare falls primarily on mothers, who are the most likely parent to give up paid work, go part-time, lose income, interrupt or change their working patterns, or take a pay/status cut to accommodate the labour of parenting (Thomson et al. 2011a:161). Feminist critiques of Marxism have long urged that ‘women’s work’ be recognised for the essential part it plays in the national economy, arguing that caring and housework done outside of the market produces the workers (i.e. reproduces the labour force). Thus they argue that market economy needs to be understood as being built on women’s unwaged work (James and Costa 1972) (figs 5.7 & 5.8).



Figs 5.7 & 5.8: Participants' images of their everyday lives.

Johnny's narrative, above, arguably make a plea for a re-evaluation of domestic and parenting work. Rather than the polarised policy view associated with the workfare discourse that sets up paid work in opposition to unpaid 'not work', an alternative is suggested here that to recognise both as labour, with the domestic unpaid kind necessary to reproduce the workers to do the paid kind. Maggie (working-class), a mother with three children, who is not engaged in paid work, expressed the overlooked economic value of such work,

You can't put a price on what I do. You could not pay me the amount of money that you pay the professional person to do what I do. If I had a chef in here every day to cook the meals, how much would that cost me? If I had a black cab here every day to run the kids around like I do? If I had to get a professional counsellor in here every day to counsel us for all the problems that we go through, as siblings and a family? If I had a private chauffeur to take me shopping? If I had money to pay somebody to do my shopping every day, you would not be able to afford what I have to do. And my job isn't nine to five, my job is 24/7 – 365

From this perspective, women receiving social security money to enable them to labour as parents undermines the indictment of 'scrounger'. As Louise's (working-class) said,

D: Are you working at the moment?

L: If motherhood is a job, yes. If receiving a wage, well yes, from the government, I receive a wage from the government. A government-sponsored mother ... I could say that I'm not paid, but because I'm on benefits I see the state as my symbolic husband.

This also draws attention to a discursive class divide between the vilified state-supported mother and the middle-class stay-at-home wife. Both may be devalued, but as argued earlier, it is the 'chav mum' that is indicted for her 'dependence' on benefits, with no acknowledgement of the 'dependence' of stay-at-home middle-class mother on being financially supported, or, more importantly, the dependencies that all the stay-at-home mothers themselves support.

It is not that the government does not acknowledge the importance of parenting. On the contrary, a central element of its individualist discourse is blaming working-class parents for a whole array of social ills, including the failure of their children to be socially mobile. However, this policy is contradicted by the individualist discourse that coerces lone mothers on benefits into work (although not their middle-class counterparts). The narratives above, however, suggest an alternative to the stigmatised figure of the ‘chav mum’, the concept of the autonomous individualized figure, and the ‘static’ working-class, and calls for a recognition of dependencies, and the labours involved in servicing them. As such, domestic and parenting labours are included in the counter-hegemonic notion of expanded social mobilities, that seeks to give more equal recognition and remuneration across a plurality of occupations.

5:5:3 The Unrecognised Labours of ‘Getting By’

Whilst there is currently a political discursive emphasis on social mobility, arguably status per se continues to hold a primary value, regardless of distances travelled. This was indicated in the earlier narratives when status (and stigma) was conferred on people in different occupational positions without reference to the struggles involved in attaining or maintaining these positions. Thus someone who has moved horizontally inter-generationally from one middle-class situation to another, such as Harry (a manager), is, arguably, given more value than someone like Vanessa (working-class, a chef) who (as discussed earlier) made arduous upward moves to overcome substantial barriers, but is located lower down the occupational status scale. As Vanessa herself said,

I could have done a lot worse, you know I could have been in some mental institution or whatever, or dead. And I’m grateful for what I’ve got. To wake up and come home and feel safe. You know. Isn’t that an achievement?

As Elliott (1997:206-207) found for some of his participants, the struggle to evade downward mobility was regarded as a significant achievement. However, as argued in chapter one, the government emphasises the upward mobility of ‘getting on’, and tends to ignore downward mobility and the associated labour conditions of ‘getting by’, arguably because they are framed in the terms of just rewards and thus do not require government attention.

‘Getting by’ often involved a series of horizontal mobilities as working-class participants moved from one low status job to another, sometimes within the same labour sector, and at other times changing career completely (such as Selina, above). Even those remaining in the same job over time worked and labored to maintain these positions. Therefore ‘getting by’ may look like standing still, but is the result of effort, movement and conversion and reconversion strategies to maintain position, an achievement for someone with the odds stacked against them. For example, Pete, a self-employed carpenter, struggled to maintain his work over time despite a structural economic downturn, and battling with depression. He described a conversation he had during counselling for his depression,

They kind of pointed it out to me and said, ‘don’t you see that as you’ve been successful?’ ‘No’. ‘The fact that you can still, what you’ve been through, you’re still there, you still manage to get to work and build up a reputation for yourself and people want to employ you, so isn’t that successful?’ And it weren’t until they actually pointed it out to me that I went, ‘yeah you’re right, you’re so right’.

Pete had assimilated the discourse of career progression, and thus struggled to sustain self-esteem for what he had achieved.

Skeggs argues that the working-class women in her 1997 study responded to their denigration by dominant symbolic systems of inscription by generating alternative systems of value for themselves, which were central to their self-esteem and capacities to act, “(t)his daily struggle for value was central to their ability to operate in the world and their sense of subjectivity and self-worth” (2004:2). I therefore argue for people’s own evaluations of labour, mobility and success to be attended to, for value to be given to ‘getting by’ as well as ‘getting on’, and for more equitable value to be given to a wider range of occupations, including manual, caring and domestic work. This, then, supports the argument in the previous chapter, for a counter-hegemonic discourse of social mobilities that can include, but is broader and more equitable than, the narrow model of the current social mobility discourse.

5:6 Conclusion

I have progressed the arguments of the thesis by investigating what constitutes social mobility in the occupational field. Addressing question one, I demonstrated that class processes shaped participants' experiences and mobilities. I developed the idea that class works through individual identities (Savage's 2000) with attention to how emotional experiences inter-relate with positions in the labour market. I also demonstrated how class relations played out through participants' embodied experiences, arguing that power relations intersect at the site of the body (McDowell 1999:34). Bodies were, moreover, revealed to be resources that had unequal exchange value in the labour market, playing a key role in the construction of classed and raced relations of power (Skeggs 2004).

Fluidity and mobility were emphasised, with reference to the habitus, inter-generational reproduction, and the multiple labours involved in upward, downward and horizontal mobilities, and maintaining labour positions. However, different types of mobility experiences were shaped by the type and level of participants' resources. Cultural, social, economic, emotional and symbolic capitals were, again, shown to inter-twine in spirals of dis/advantage, with higher levels of capitals helping to convert aspirations into expectations, expectations into practices, and providing support through transitions and difficult times.

Therefore, I did not find a strict class-identity divide regarding orientations to mobility. Neither did I find that working- and middle-class participants, in the context of having young children, had differing dispositions regarding relational identities. However, class resources were central for the way that dependencies could be managed, just as they were for enabling different kinds of mobilities.

Material and discursive class processes inter-twined. The symbolic value attached to classed bodies shaped unequal access to occupations. Consent to an unequal remuneration of jobs was evidenced in participants' narratives, albeit often expressed through contradictory sentiments. I argued that the individualizing of blame and pathologising of 'workless' working-class bodies works to justify the withdrawal of state support, which then exacerbates unequal resource levels. Therefore these findings accord

with Skeggs (2004) thesis that a moral discourse is inscribed into bodies and deployed to reproduce class power relations. I argued that the middle class have the most to gain from the current occupational structure of status and reward, and thus social mobility can be regarded, not as a neutral backdrop in which people can freely move and choose, but as a middle-class dominated cultural field in which classed power relations are embedded.

These findings also address question two, because the impact of class on participants' experiences belies the meritocratic claims of the dominant social mobility discourse. The research indicated that opportunities were not equally available to the participants, and that participants were not equally able to exploit them. Moreover, the individualist mobility discourse was argued to be itself part of the workings of class power.

The symbolic figures of the 'scrounger' and the 'reflexive self', the focus of political individualism on upward mobility, and the hegemonic processes of consent, all work to deny working-class experiences. Therefore, addressing question three, I drew out participants' subordinated experiences and narratives of occupational achievements, and considered how they suggested a counter-hegemonic social mobility discourse.

Developing the previous chapter's argument for an expanded understanding of social mobility, I propose holistic, plural and more equitable notions of occupational success. 'Plural mobilities' includes recognising the valuable work of parenting and domestic labour, as well as horizontal and even downward mobilities. It seeks to recognise obstacles overcome and distances travelled. I argued for ascribing more equal value across plural occupations, and suggest this as the basis for a redistributive policy approach in which more equally valued occupations are also more equally remunerated. As such, I offer a more collective understanding of social mobility that considers all directions of mobilities, and seeks to value and support all the different occupations that are required for the UK economy.

In the following chapter I further interrogate social mobility by examining participants' experiences in the housing field. Housing may be regarded as a positional good that imparts differential levels of status and mobility in itself, but also it is part of the holistic context of people's lives. As a symbolic, material and emotional base, housing is likely to have an impact on participants' social mobility experiences.

Chapter 6: Housing and Displacement

6:1 Introduction

In this chapter I address the first research question by investigating how class processes impact on participants' housing experiences, in the context of the structural setting of the housing market, with reference to national policies. This class analysis then informs the second research question that examines how participants' experiences relate to the individualist social mobility discourse that downplays the role of class. I discuss how a privileging of home-ownership has been integrated into the individualist social mobility discourse, and how this impacts on participants' experiences of housing, class and social mobility. A key way I interrogate the dominant individualist discourse is by examining what participants' themselves experience and narrate as valuable about housing, which relates to the third research question.

The structural backdrop to this chapter is detailed in chapter one, which discusses how the housing market, since the 1980s, has been transformed by a neoliberal politics that has reduced the provision of affordable housing, due to the sale of council housing and the rising costs of private housing. This has resulted in a housing crisis in London where house prices are particularly high, and council lists particularly long, such that it is now difficult for low and middle-income people to access affordable housing in inner London. The result is a city increasingly inaccessible to the workers it depends on, and high levels of homelessness and overcrowding.

As mentioned in chapter one, an academic debate emerged in response to the post-World War 2 transformation of tenure organisation, when both home-ownership and public housing rapidly expanded and private renting reduced, leading to a largely binaried tenure distribution (Harris and Pratt 1987:10). This debate examined the relationship between class formation and social stratification along tenorial lines, and between production and consumption as axes of inequality (Rex and Moore 1969; Saunders 1984; 1990; Forrest and Murie 1989; Hamnett 1999). In the context of the currently more complex and fragmented tenure-organisation in the UK, I re-address the discursive

privileging of home-ownership over social housing that emerged from these debates, alongside an associated hierarchical construction of class identities (Sullivan 1987; Saunders 1984, 1990; for critiques see Gurney 1999).

This discourse was perpetuated through Conservative and New Labour, and is evident now in the individualist social mobility discourse, which frames home-ownership as a positional good, the consumption of which indicates upward mobility. The home-owner is associated with a forward-looking individualized reflexive self, constructed as having the foresight to invest in property, the capacity to access their home independent of state support, and whose superior aspirations propel them up the property ladder in agent acts of spatial mobility and elective belonging (Savage et al. 2005). As David Cameron's speech, quoted in chapter one (1:3:4), demonstrated, home-ownership is narrated as a step up from council renting, and is associated with agentic, hard-working, law-abiding, independent families (Cameron 2012; see quotations in Watt 2012). Tenure types become essentialised as having intrinsically superior characteristics to social housing. Similarly, the home-owner is ascribed superior moral character traits, in contrast to the social renter who, implicitly, has inverse characteristics. This discourse, therefore, symbolically makes class through these representations, whilst simultaneously failing to acknowledge the impact of class processes on access to housing.

This chapter is also concerned with displacement in the context of the radically altered landscape of housing provision in London. With the increase in home-ownership, particularly from the 1960s, another large body of academic work examined the gentrification of formerly working-class urban places by the middle classes, with a critique focusing on the working classes who had been displaced (Marcuse 1985; Slater 2006; Slater 2009; Watt 2008a; Davidson and Lees 2010; Watt 2013). My focus, however, is to examine displacement in relation to both long-standing and more recent policy directives that impact on the security of housing and threaten the displacement of lower-income people in London from both private and public rented sectors²⁷. In this context, I discuss participants' differential access to spatial mobility and fixity and the relationships between social and spatial mobility.

²⁷ This is not to say that there is not a gentrification effect, but this was not something I could systematically capture in this research.

I draw the perspectives of the housing studies debate above, together with the home literatures, which can crudely be regarded as favouring objective and subjective analyses respectively, as the former emphasises housing provision, policy and economics, and the latter draws attention to experiences, feelings and meanings (Young 1997; Blunt and Dowling 2006). I thus continue to emphasise and draw together participant's material and emotional experiences.

Overall, this chapter examines how class inter-relates with participants' experiences of housing as a way to interrogate the individualist discourse that obscures the impact of class structures and resources on access to housing. I examine the essentialism of tenure types, and of the people associated with them. I examine how the privileging of home-ownership shapes participants' experiences by shaping policies that have classed effects. Whilst the research does not assume that class positions align with particular tenure-types, I examine how class dispositions, resources, processes and structures are interwoven with different tenures. I question the privileging of home-ownership by asking what housing qualities participants value. This inquiry cuts across tenure types and, as such, questions the use of a tenure-lens to evaluate housing and orient policies. I therefore consider how participants' evaluations of housing suggest an alternative approach. Moreover, I question the appropriateness of regarding housing as a positional good within a discourse of social mobility. At the same time I explore the ways that housing experiences impact on people's social mobilities, thus considering the inter-relation between the housing, education and occupational fields. Therefore, as stated above, I address all three research questions, which will develop the key research aim of interrogating what constitutes social mobility.

I address these questions, firstly, by discussing participants' experiences in the context of the structural housing field, with reference to economic resources. I then focus on experiences of insecure housing and displacement, highlighting security of tenure as a key value emphasised by participants. In the following section I explore two other key values that participants attach to housing, which are spatial mobility and space. Finally I examine head-on how participants' housing experiences relate to the discourse that privileges home-ownership, and then, alternately, how their narratives construct a discourse that values social housing.

6:2 The Housing Field and Economic Capital

In this section I focus on the economic dimension of housing experiences. I examine the relationship between economic capital and the housing field, including looking at housing equity, mortgage debts and wealth, and their relationship to orientations to risk and access to choice. I examine the individualist assumption of equal opportunity in the context of how class shapes autonomy and reflexivity.

6:2:1 Wealth, Class and Tenure

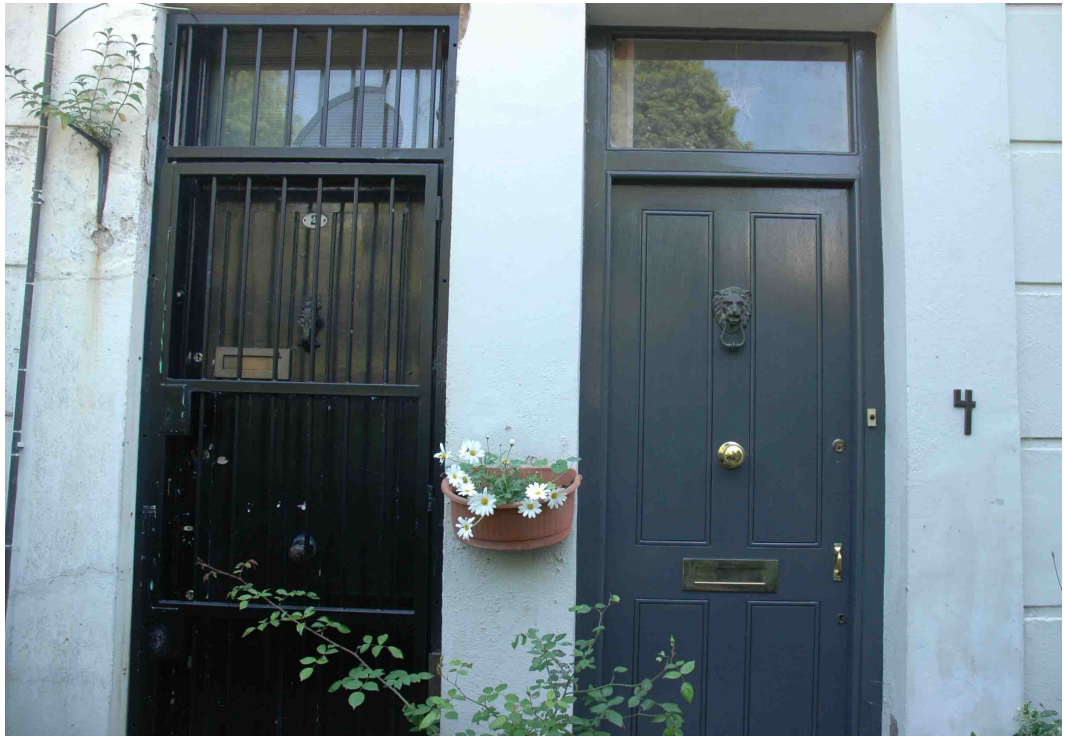


Fig 6.1: Mixed tenure housing

The participants lived in a diversity of tenure situations, roughly split between social housing renters and owner-occupiers, with three private renters (Appendix 6.1). As discussed in chapter three (3:3:1), properties in the catchment area were mostly Victorian terraced housing and 1970s council housing estates, although both had mixed tenures.

Thus people in diverse socio-economical situations lived in close proximity to one another (Fig 6.1).

I found a clear relationship between economic capital and tenure-type in this inner London setting. All of the home-owners had substantial equity in their properties, but with a great range, from £100,000 to £1,000,000. The amounts of equity were significantly affected by structural factors, such as the different temporal ‘value-points’ at which the participants entered the market, and on the size and location of the properties. There was an uneven ‘geo-economy’ (Dorling 2010), with up to 80% price differentials in the neighbourhood for equivalent sized properties, varying, for example, according to proximity to ‘desirable’ schools or ‘undesirable’ housing estates²⁸. Three participants had accumulated sufficient capital through property speculation to pay off their mortgages, whilst younger participants had only just started paying off high mortgages for relatively smaller but more expensive properties. However, despite the variation, there were no home-owning losers in neutral or negative equity, as found in other spatial and temporal contexts (Hamnett 1999), with home-ownership thus providing a fast route to economic wealth in the context of London having a global housing market (Sassen 1991; Dorling 2010).

Access to economic capital, and therefore private home ownership, was embedded in employment relations and wealth, including through inheritance (Savage 2000; LBC 2008; Dorling 2010; HSU 2011; Alakeson and Cory 2013). Only participants with current household earnings of £61,000 or above had mortgages, all those on lower income either being in rented housing or owning their properties outright (Appendix 6.1). Only those at polar ends of the income ranges (under £10,000 or over £60,000 p/a household annual income) had access to expensive private rental properties, either via high incomes, or through the council housing allocation system, financially assisted by state housing subsidies.

Reflecting the crisis of insufficient affordable housing, middle as well as low-income participants variously narrated exclusions from social and private renting and home-ownership. Grace (middle-class), a home-owner, indicates the dramatic structural

²⁸ Based on property and local estate agent websites.

changes to the housing landscape in the past decade, “We were lucky to buy this house relatively cheaply... I mean you can’t even get a one bedroom flat for what we bought this house for 11 years ago”.

Several participants were desperate to get out of overcrowded or unsuitable council properties but could not afford to rent or buy, including Karen (inter-class), a single parent earning a professional teachers’ wage above the national average. Whilst Ayanna (working-class), married to a trainee accountant, said, “to rent a private place will be double our rent, what we’re paying now, and that’s all my husband’s wages”.

Experiences indicated negative change over time across all housing sectors. Single parents, as single-income households, were particularly disadvantaged, and only two of the twelve single parents in this study owned their own homes.

On the other hand several participants were desperate to access affordable social housing. Due to the shortage of council housing Johnny (working-class) was assisted by the council to access a private rented flat for himself and his two children, but was about to lose his home due to housing benefits cuts that meant he would no longer be able to afford the rent. Johnny articulated the way that policies have worked in multiple ways to obstruct access to affordable housing, threatening to displace lower-income residents from the city,

Why’s this bloke in Camden selling all the houses and there is no houses and then they’re going to close all the hostels. ...but the government ain’t paying what the landlords want for private renting so that’s, they’re just forcing everyone out of London.

In contrast, several participants had profited from property speculation. Several owned second properties, and two had bought their current properties outright largely on the profits of selling second properties (Fig. 6. 2)

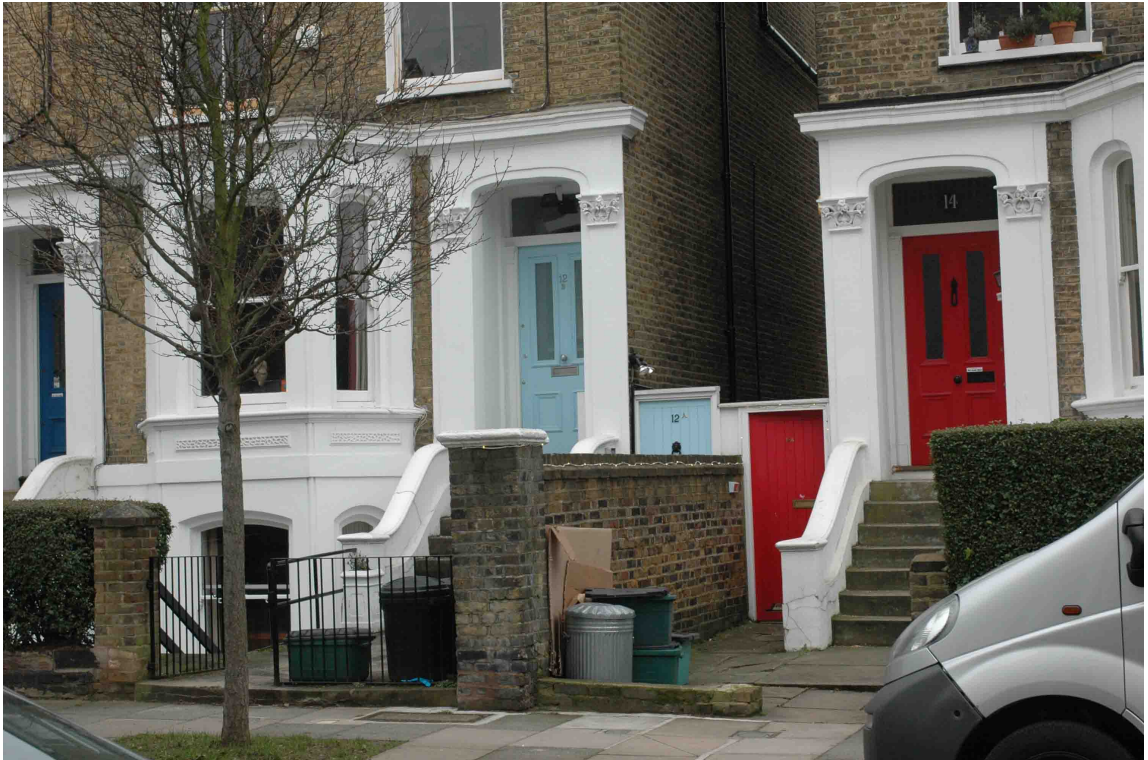


Fig 6.2: Home-owned properties in the research setting

Yet even when expensive private renting is accessed, lack of sufficient rent controls and checks mean that provision of adequate conditions, and recourse for tenants to report exploitative behavior, is poor. For example, Johnny described harassment and extortion,

I'm getting hit with bills that they didn't tell me about, you know like cleaning, lifts, caretakers. He turned up at my door one day saying right there's a backlog of rent, you owe me seven hundred pound, and it turned out we didn't owe money... If I knew what I know now, then, I would have stayed in the hostel... it's just been a nightmare.

Johnny's narrative suggests a zero-sum class relationship of exploitation as tenants' economic resources are invested for the capitalist landlord who profits through rent and equity. From the late 1990s, state policies supported home-ownership and the consumption of private housing (discussed in 1:3:4), with huge expansion of the buy-to-let market. So whilst the state withdraws its support for housing benefit, it facilitates property owners and private landlords. Johnny's flat was bought by a council tenant

under the Right to Buy (RTB) scheme so what was once public housing is now privately owned and rented. Johnny said,

they're trying to charge me 110 or 115 quid a week for me water and me heating but it's on constant. So people who are in Camden, council tenants, it's in their rent, but their rent's only £110, £120 a week, mine's 450.

Johnny's situation highlights the structural inter-relation of social housing depletion and the expanded private rented sector, with the private sector profiting directly at the expense of the public sector. The result for the individual, Johnny, is that his rent is four times what it would have been had it stayed in the public sector (Fig 6.3). Gentrification of this kind may be less visible as the occupant (Johnny) is not middle-class, but the spatially removed absentee landlord, estate agents and lawyers who profit from this arrangement are a capitalist class (Smith 1996). Therefore structural capitalist processes work through individuals' experiences. This elaborates Savage's (2000) argument, but also highlights how class relations function in structured collective ways.



Fig 6.3: Local council estate, with private rented (ex-RTB) flats four times the cost of adjacent council flats.

6:2:2 Capitals and the Reproduction of Dispositions

Across generations I found both tenure reproduction and mobility, with some evidence of reproduction of dispositions in relation to risk and tenure choice. As shown in the previous two chapters, participants' attitudes to risk were influenced by proximity to economic necessity and, as Allen (2008) argues, this can shape dispositions and norms in the habitus. Participants who were not familiar with buying properties via their parents' experiences were more fearful about purchasing property and taking out a mortgage, even when they could afford it. In contrast, participants from home-owning backgrounds were often encouraged and sometimes financially supported by their parents to buy property.

Allen argues that working-class people's attitudes to home-ownership is "to hand" (2008:161), focused on the practical use-value of their homes, as opposed to middle-class home-owners who purchase property to secure their class positions through the acquisition of economic and symbolic capital. However, for Lily (middle-class), property-ownership was to hand as she lived in, then bought, her mother's investment property. Meanwhile Katie's (working-class) grandfather, who worked for a housing association, helped her and several other family members to access housing association properties. Thus for both of them dispositions were shaped by cultural and social capitals, indicating the importance of identifying working- as well as middle-class capitals. Lily then acknowledged that her lack of anxiety regarding upkeep of the mortgage payments on her home is underpinned by the knowledge that she and her husband can rely on their parents for financial help. Thus the economic capital in the habitus shapes dispositions to taking on the risks of investing in property. Meanwhile participants who were brought up in social housing, and whose friends and family lived in council houses, often described wanting to live in secure council housing.

Mark (inter-class), in discussion with his partner Holly, talked about why he did not buy his council flat under the RTB policy,

H: I think you got it from your nan, your nan has never owed any money in her life

M: no no I don't owe nothing

H: Borrowing money that you haven't got. So unless we won the lottery or, we wouldn't take a loan

M: I'm totally against the idea of owing money to anyone. I hate the idea, I refuse to be in debt to anyone or anything... that's always been a big factor of like having what turns out not just to be owing someone a pound but owing them one pound fifty. It makes me feel sick.

Capitalism often involves taking risks with debt with the aim of capitalising on it. In contrast, working-class debts are historically associated with losing money borrowed for use-purposes and repaid with interest. This supports Allen's assertion that middle and working-class home-owners approach the housing market with the former being "enthralled with the use of money", whilst for the latter the notion of investing in housing is "existentially foreign" (2008: 83). It was not lack of foresight, insufficient reflexivity or poor orientation to mobility that prevented Mark from buying his home, but rather a considered moral and practical decision produced in response to his class position and habitus.

However, the picture was not a clear binary as several participants of working-class origin had profited from home-ownership, through the exchange value of their homes, and one had a second property in the locality. Perhaps people across both classes are more attenuated to, and able to profit from, the market value of houses in an expanding global city than those living on the margins of an economically depressed shrinking city, as in Allen's (2008) Liverpool study.

In summary, then, I argue that it is not that people from home-owning backgrounds have higher aspirations (to own homes), but rather that they had different sets of capitals, assumptions and reproduction practices. However, whilst this accords with Allen's (2008) insight that working- and middle-class people can have different dispositions in relation to housing, I found more nuances and variation than he did in this London context.

In the next section I focus on one of the primary impacts of neoliberal economic housing policies, which is increasingly insecure housing and displacement. I will also consider how these experiences in the housing field have a knock-on effect on experiences in the educational and occupational fields.

6:3 Insecure Housing and Displacement

6:3:1 Overview

As discussed above and in chapter one, over thirty years of government policies have impelled the displacement of the working-class from London alongside processes of gentrification. This has been exacerbated by recent Coalition policies, including the introduction of time-limited tenancies and reduced inheritance rights for council tenants, the capping of housing benefit and reduced welfare support for ‘under-occupied’ properties (the ‘bedroom tax’). The general trend towards eroding secure tenure for social housing is expressed in a government policy document produced shortly after they came to power,

It is time to change the social housing situation... Margaret Thatcher introduced statutory lifetime tenure for social housing in 1981. Times have changed, and it is no longer right that the Government should require every social tenancy to be for life, regardless of the particular circumstances. (DCLG 2010:5)

This approach goes alongside support for home-ownership, the private rental market and economic inflation of the private housing sector, as discussed.

Over a third of participants, nearly all from working-class backgrounds, had experienced homelessness, eviction, hostels, temporary insecure housing, and/or threatened, pressured and actual displacement, variously from homes, localities and the city (Marcuse 1985). These experiences were directly related to the structural organisation of the housing market. The relationship between the movement in to London by the middle class and the movement out by the working class was not always explicitly visible, but rather experienced implicitly in terms of a critical shortage of available affordable social housing, as Johnny’s earlier narratives indicate. However, the context of a direct relationship between gentrification and displacement was not lost on the participants. For example, Karen (inter-class, council renter) said,

They’ve run Tottenham down into the ground because they want to develop it, and they want to turn it into something where eventually they’ll run out most of the people that live there that can’t afford to be there... And it’s happening in

Camden... just watch out for the new estate agents and think Ahh, now there are these new cafes in Camden, Kentish Town High Rd appearing that never would have been, and you know that eventually they're going to run you out. (Fig 6.4)



Fig 6.4: Estate Agent in Dartmouth Park.

The four outright home-owners in the study had the ultimate security of tenure, whilst the other home-owners' considerable equity and access to working in a global city no doubt accounted for their generally low-levels of anxiety about keeping up their mortgage payments. However, the social housing tenants with secure long-term tenancies also generally felt secure in their homes²⁹. This contradicts Saunders' (1990) claim that feelings of ontological security are greater for home-owners than renters, eroding the idea of immanent tenure characteristics.

The narratives from the participants with secure housing were in stark contrast to the highly distressed narratives of the four participants whose housing security was

²⁹ The exceptions were one lease-holder (Liz) and one social tenant with a permanent tenancy (Stef), who will be discussed below.

threatened at the time of the interviews, and many of the participants' recall of previous situations of insecure and temporary housing. Of the participants who lived in social housing at the time of the research (two thirds of the sample), half of them had previously lived in hostels, a third had lived in temporary housing, and one had been a rough sleeper for many years. All of these experiences were characterised by struggle, limbo and distress. Most of the owner-occupiers had lived in insecure private rented accommodation or had 'sofa-surfed' at some point in their lives, but these trajectories were mostly transitional (Watt 2001) and had not necessarily been experienced as distressing. However, once the participants had families they were *all* focused on accessing secure housing. There was a generational effect due to the erosion of social housing supply over time. For example, when Vanessa got pregnant in 1987 she got a permanent council flat within weeks, but applicants since around 2000 had waited, with their children, for between two and eight years to secure permanent council tenancies. Whilst insecure housing does not necessarily cause displacement from localities and the city, all the participants in insecure housing *feared* being forced out of their neighbourhoods, and had extremely limited choice over where they would go. A few critics have emphasised the emotional impact of grief and trauma on being forced from homes and localities (Fullilove 2004; Slater 2013; Stenning 2013), and I will examine this next. Overall, the following narratives emphasise the key value participants placed on secure housing, which was not intrinsic to home-ownership, but applied also to accessing secure *social* housing.

6:3:2 Emotional Impact of Displacement

I now consider current and past participant experiences of insecure and temporary housing, threatened or pending eviction and displacement, and living in hostels.

Johnny's private rented flat (described earlier) had a typical fixed-term tenure, which he would be unable to continue once the housing benefits cap took effect (starting April 2013). He described the emotional impact on himself (single parent) and his children,

When this price cap comes I'm terrified of being forced out of London... its no good for the kids, because then they're further away from their mum. They're just getting back to seeing their mum, and staying overnight. That's all going to be ripped away from them again and I'm just thinking it's gonna be more

therapy.... because all the therapists have said the kids need to be settled. After what's happened with their mum, you know what I mean. We was living in one room. They're still in therapy, they're upset and they're saying this is like a really good stable environment.

In a similar vein, Louise (working-class), who was facing the third eviction since her 7-year old daughter was born, expressed fears that her emotions elicited by this situation would impact on her daughter

D: How do you feel about this thing (eviction) looming?

L: Terrified. Sick. So it goes from the extreme of being terrified to the extreme of being furious... And in the middle of all that I've got to try and contain these emotions so that Meg doesn't pick up on it. And I've got to contain these emotions so that I can remember to play with her, cook for her, be a parent to her. Pretend that I'm really happy and this isn't happening at all.

These narratives reflect the importance of a secure home for families' wellbeing (Young 1997:136).

Stef (working-class) moved with her two children and sister to a four-bed housing association property to make a new start after her partner died. However her sister moved out, and the government's under-occupancy criteria associated with 'the bedroom tax' deemed her to have too many rooms³⁰. This policy was in the planning stages at the time of the interview, but she was already frightened she would be forced to move out. I asked her how this made her feel,

Slightly dis-attached to the house... I saved up and got the money and took out a loan to get this floor, and it cost me about 800 pounds. I kind of thought I've invested in something I'm gonna have to, it's not like it's your own, you sell it and you think well I'm adding value or you know you might get it back. I'm literally going to have to pick up my stuff and walk out. I own nothing. And even silly things like the bloody tree... that's a magnolia tree outside, and that

³⁰ The 'under-occupancy' penalty was implemented via the 2012 Welfare reform Act, in process since April 2013.

the girls planted for their dad. And I was saying, yeah when like in the future when we move you know, and they were like what are we going to do about the tree? You know, it doesn't feel like it's my house, I don't know why I ever thought that it was my house to do something so personal with it.... Because I don't wanna move anywhere.... I did think it was my house and actually it's not. ... not nice. 'Cause I'm not, I don't ever, I've never been in the situation where I thought I'd want to buy anywhere... It's not like I can say I'll move out of here and buy somewhere that I really like. Well I'll just have to go wherever they put me. Which isn't a very nice thought. (Figs 6.5 & 6.6).

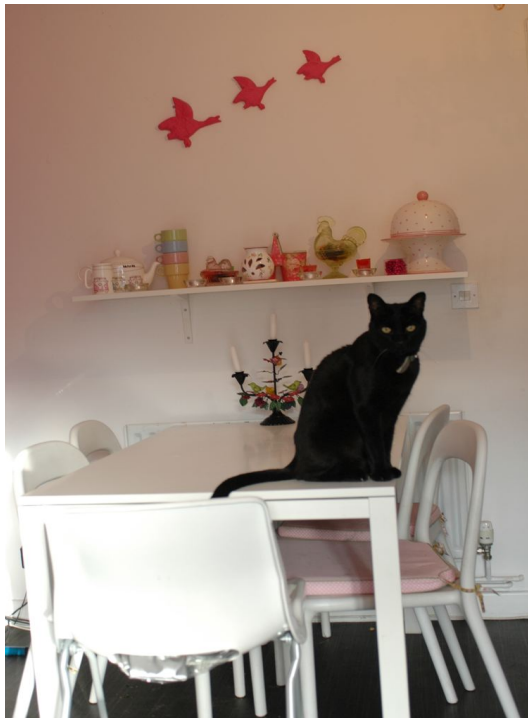


Fig 6.5: Stef's living room

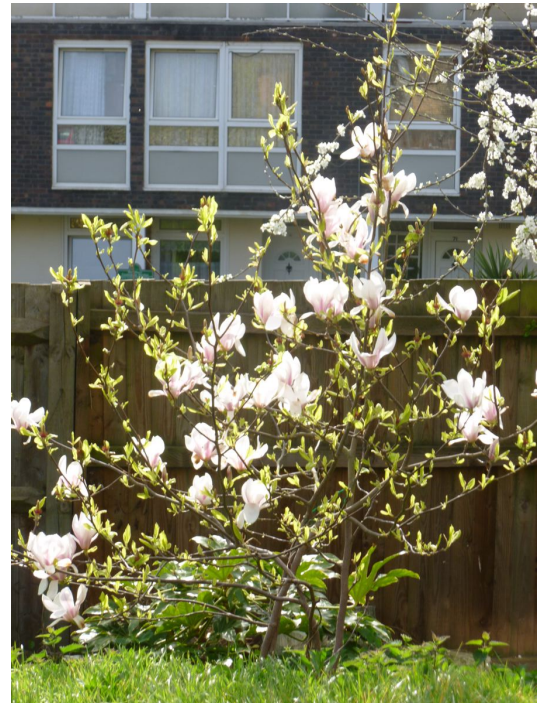


Fig 6.6: The tree Stef planted in memory of her partner

Stef's narrative indicates how secure housing generates feelings of possession and attachment, which in turn generates economic and emotional investment in the home. It also exemplifies, as the 'home' literatures emphasise, how the loss of a material house is associated with the loss of an emotional home, including the identities, attachments, memories and future hopes embedded in it (Young 1997:136; Blunt and Dowling 2006:23). Not just Stef, but numerous social housing homes I went to in my various

capacities as researcher, neighbour and friend, were witness to the great pride, love and care invested in homes through home-making practices (Blunt and Dowling 2006) (Figs 6.7-6.10).



Figs 6.7 - 6.10: Care and investment in the homes of friends and neighbours who live in social housing in the research location.

The narratives and homes therefore contradict the idea that social housing tenants are less likely to look after their properties than home-owners, with insufficient pride to invest in their homes and gardens (Saunders 1990). This was the implication of David Cameron's speech when he re-launched the RTB policy in 2012, and said home-ownership generated in people "a sense of pride and ownership not just in their home, but in their street and neighbourhood, helping to build strong families and stable mixed communities" (Cameron 2012:1)³¹.

³¹ See Gurney's (1999) deconstruction of the normalisation of home-ownership, against a devaluing of council housing, in 1990s Conservative policy documents, in which owners and renters are associated with sets of values, including their orientation to pride and investment in the home. He also cites everyday narratives that resist this discourse (1999:175-176).

However, the participants' home-making practices, across tenure types, indicate that a sense of ownership, and orientation to agency and investment, in the home is *not* generated by tenure type, or type of person, but rather by security of tenure, i.e the *conditions* of tenure. This, then, unravels the essentialist idea that tenure types, and their occupants, have immanent characteristics, and highlights instead the contingent nature of tenure conditions, which can be changed by policy.

Like Stef, other participants expressed anger, fear and frustration at their inability to influence their movement in and out of their homes, unable to exercise agency in constructing their futures. Therefore it is external structures, not individuals' personal characteristics, which constrain agency and autonomy. However, the policies that construct the conditions of social housing tenure, rather than facilitating people to agency, reflexivity, and investment in, and responsibility for, the home, instead are hindering it by an array of policies that erode the security of tenure.

The lack of agency that participants, unable to access secure housing, felt, was transmuted into feeling stuck for those who were waiting on council lists for secure homes. Being fixed in place (Skeggs 2004; Taylor 2012) is a chronic condition for many people unable to access affordable housing, who commonly spend long and indefinite waiting periods on council lists and in insecure accommodation in London (LBC 2007b). This placed an on-going strain on participants, which was particularly difficult for families living in hostels, which deprived them of access to all the most valued housing qualities: security, space, privacy, spatial mobility and autonomy. Families lived in one room and found sharing communal spaces and the constant presence of other people very stressful. Selina lived with her husband and young son in a hostel for four years. She felt she had no private time with her son, and described the experience of waiting for a secure home,

every day... we would want to hear something, at least we are progressing to get a place... and it's like when there's nothing there, that's it, no more life... I mean it was horrible, it was upsetting, there was cryings... you see because it wasn't my own place... it was suffocating and stressed, urghh it was like hell.

Sitting in that room and, what am I? what am I doing? Who am I? It was hard. Not knowing about what would happen in the future, and being there for so long... What did I do wrong?

This narrative articulates the ways in which a situation of limbo erodes hope, wellbeing, self-confidence, autonomy, agency, spatial mobility, a sense of a future and a sense of self. Selina is thus structurally constrained from embracing a reflexive forward-looking identity. Moreover, Selina internalised her negative experiences as self-blame, echoing similar findings in the previous two chapters in relation to people in disadvantaged educational and occupational situations.

Typically participants lived in hostels at vulnerable transitional moments in their lives, such as migration, becoming parents or leaving difficult family situations. However, much as hostels are needed, these narratives indicate that many are not fit for the purpose of supporting already vulnerable people, or for long-term family living.

6:3:3 Impact on Social Mobilities

Insecure housing and displacement also threatened a knock-on effect on the social mobilities of education and occupation, as the following narratives indicate. Liz's (middle-class) leasehold flat was on a council housing estate that was being redeveloped, and she was threatened with compulsory purchase at a price too low to enable her to stay in the neighbourhood where she has lived for 28 years, all her adult life. She described her anxiety at being wrenched from social ties and feelings of belonging and safety, as well as from the local social and cultural capitals via which she had been planning to set up in business as a nutritional therapist,

I'm familiar with all the health food shops and things round here, you know, I've got a network of people. ... That type of business works by word of mouth, someone says oh I've got eczema, oh I could help with that... but if you were in a new area you've got none of that.

Liz also expressed anxiety about her children having to leave their schools.

The eldest is just doing his GCSEs ... And he's the one with ADHD and he doesn't cope at all with change, he needs to know what's what, so I would absolutely dread having to move him out of his comfort zone.

Louise's situation of uncertain housing meant that she was unable to plan for her daughter's secondary school, and Johnny's impending eviction following the housing benefit cap left him frightened of losing access to Camden's secondary schools,

I don't want to leave this area when this price cap comes because... We're lucky where we live that there is that many good schools coming really high up the table. And if I get moved out then the kids ain't gonna go there, they won't get a good education, and then they, it's like a snowball innit?

This articulates the knock-on effect that displacement can have across a range of social mobility fields, and in relation to himself, Johnny said,

you're finished... you can't get anything. You can't get your work, you can't be settled, you don't have a base. If you ain't got a base to work from what have you got? You've got nothing, it feels like everything's in the air all the time. I can't emphasise how important it is to me to get a council flat.

Echoing Selina's narrative earlier, Johnny thus expresses how prolonged housing insecurity erodes the material and emotional base from which to make future plans.

Therefore insecure housing can create a downward spiral of emotional, cultural and economic capitals, eroding access to mobility processes. This indicates the inappropriateness of the political discourse of 'choice' and 'equal opportunities' that does not address the structural issue of providing sufficient affordable housing provision. The slide over time towards increasingly insecure housing draws a parallel with critics who highlight increasing labour insecurity (McDowell and Christopherson 2009; Standing 2011). This provides a counter narrative to government claims that moving out of social housing represents social mobility (Davies 2011). Theoretically it draws spatial settlement (fixity, stasis) together with better chances for upward social mobility, and as such disrupts the individualized notion that conflates spatial and social mobility together

as characteristic of the mobile reflexive get-ahead individual. This inversion offers a new approach to analysis of displacement, social mobility and inequality, as Paton suggests.

The concept of control over fixity to place offers a critical insight into gentrification in relation to displacement but also stratification research. This could invigorate present conceptual reading of class identities and inequalities (2012:270).

Additionally, the narratives in this section have indicated the importance of considering social mobility in a holistic context (drawing on Brown 2011), in order to better understand how people's emotions, social relationships and desire for stability influence their future goals for themselves and their families, and shape their trajectories.

6:4 Access to Spatial Mobility, Access to Space

Whilst I have emphasised the importance of capacities to settle, participants also valued the capacity to move home (Blunt and Dowling 2006:20), which I will now discuss. Then, following a discussion of access to spatial mobility, I will consider access to space, which participants also cited as a key value associated with their housing experiences.

6:4:1 Spatial Mobility

The experiences of forced displacement, just described, contrast sharply with the access to spatial mobility experienced by the home-owners in this London study, whereby they all had equity in their homes and thus were favourably situated to move (Fig 6.11).



Fig 6.11: Family recently moved to a privately-owned flat.

Critics have noted that middle-class spatial mobilities enable access to desirable schools (Butler 2003; Bridge 2006; Butler and Hamnett 2011b), and several home-owning participants said they had moved to the neighbourhood because they would be in the catchment for good local schools. However, whilst participants threatened with displacement were worrying about their children being forced away from good local

secondary schools, some of the home-owners were worrying about whether they should move to access better schools.

The key difference in the moving home narratives of home-owners and social renters was the degree of choice. Even when the home-owners felt under pressure to move, for example for more space, they narrated these pressures as dilemmas, weighing up competing factors that they would choose between. Lily (middle-class), for example, talked about the dilemma of moving home to access a better school for her daughter, against her attachment to a London identity and local social networks. This parallels other researchers' findings (Bridge 2006; Butler and Hamnett 2011a), as she is choosing between different forms of middle-class cultural capital - education versus place-identity. However, rather than expressing distress or frustration, she felt "vaguely excited".

In contrast the reason most working-class participants wanted to move was overcrowding (which I discuss below), followed by wanting to flee from unsafe situations, such as street and neighbour aggression and violence, as unsurprisingly they put a high value on feeling safe in their homes (Blunt and Dowling 2006:10; Young 1997:136). On the whole, however, and in contrast to middle-class home-owners, the social renters faced near-insurmountable barriers when they wanted to move due to the structural shortage of affordable housing. Council tenants could apply for swaps, but many participants said this was impossible because the flats they were so keen to leave were 'undesirable'. Ayanna (working-class), was desperate to move because she was scared her children might fall out of her 18th floor council flat, but said, "We've tried swaps. People just hear 18th floor Tower Block and they're like 'no, sorry'". Reflecting the experiences of several other participants who wanted to move but did not have the economic resources to do so, Ayanna expressed feeling literally fixed in place when she said, "I'm stuck there now".

Other participants were frightened to move out of London because they felt they would never access a foothold in London housing again should they want to return. Thus they lacked access to home as defined by bell hooks as, "that place which enables and promotes varied and ever-changing perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference" (1991:148). One parent (working-class) did negotiate a council swap to Cornwall, but it took her several determined years. Compare this with Carrie (middle-class), a home-owner who moved to Suffolk. In the context of

scarce London housing, she rented her flat immediately, raising sufficient economic capital to rent a much cheaper property in Suffolk. At the same time she could retain both the security of a London home, if she wanted to return, as well as her capital investment.

The concept of moving out and moving on has been associated with an aspirational middle class who move to access better houses, jobs and education for their children (Lawler 1999; Savage et al. 2005; Bridge 2006; Butler and Hamnett 2011a). This correlates to the individualized concept of the reflexive forward-looking self. However, several social tenants did articulate a desire to move out and move on, for careers, better schooling or simply a better lifestyle. But in their case they felt constrained by the structural factors described above. Therefore, as argued in the previous empirical chapters, it is not a lack of personal aspiration that is the barrier to working-class people moving on, but rather class-based resources and structures, both economic and social. For example, Vanessa (working-class) said that although she always wanted to move to Brighton,

I'd be on my own and I wouldn't have any network system, you know that's important for any mum, or single mum or young family, you need your support ... Yeah it would be nice to move away but at what cost would that be?

Because Vanessa had an insecure financial and employment position as a self-employed chef, she feared losing her local social capital that could compensate for her lower levels or resources, for example in the form of unpaid childcare, which she regularly drew on. Thus the home-owners not only had a greater degree of control over moving due to their higher levels of economic resources, but these resources also meant that moving involved less risk. Thus it is participants' complex positions in relation to housing, occupation and income that structures unequal access to spatial mobility. Thus I argue that, added to Paton's theoretical notion of using control over spatial fixity as an analytic lens, control over spatial mobility is also significant for the analysis of class inequality and social mobility.

This aligns with a general finding that participants valued control over their housing, expressed as desire for control to stay, to move, to home-make. A Camden research report found that, "People in social housing are less likely to be satisfied with the amount

of control they feel they have over decisions affecting their lives than residents of other tenures” (HSU 2011:72-73).

Participants’ positive evaluation of the capacity to move suggests an alternative lens through which to understand the relationship between housing and social mobility. Rather than the tenure-type or tenure-holder being regarded as immanently characterised by stasis or mobility, this analysis demonstrates that it is unequal resources and the shortage of affordable housing that structure access to stasis and mobility. And both these conditions are contingent, and can be addressed by policy.

6:4:2 Space

Added to the value participants put on spatial settlement and mobility, and on safety and autonomy, was access to sufficient space in the home. This was emphasised across tenure-types. By far the most common complaint amongst participants about the quality of their housing was overcrowding, which was also caused by the chronic shortage of secure affordable housing (LBC 2007b; TSA and CLG 2009).

Despite the Borough of Camden being a positive practice example for helping overcrowded families (TSA and CLG 2009:29), it has chronic overcrowding and, again echoing the situation with access to secure council housing, there was a generational inequality due to the housing stock depletion occurring over time. The most recent occupiers of social housing all lived in overcrowded conditions, compared to earlier occupiers who had sufficient or ample space. Seven of the nineteen social housing tenants, and one of the private renters, lived in overcrowded accommodation, with the parents either having to sleep in the living rooms or share their children’s bedrooms (Fig 6.12). None of the home-owners had to do this. In fact, most of the home-owners had spare rooms, and one of them earned an income through renting hers out.



6.12: Mother sleeps in the living room of over-crowded council flat.

Space seemed particularly important in the context of families, with participants emphasising the need for shared family space. For example, Karen (inter-class) shared a bedroom with her daughter so that her teenage son could have his own bedroom. She said,

The sofa bed is not in the living room because we need a family room, so that we have the dining table. I like that we eat around a table... It's a central room to help organise myself and the children. lets do some family games too.... So that family communal area, really important. And when you don't have it... it's very easy not to feel like a family.

As other critics have argued (Ambrose and Farrell 2009) such cramped conditions put families under great stress, and participants reported their children having nowhere to study or play. Seham, in a one-bedroom flat with her husband and two children, described fearing for her children's safety in the cramped kitchen, and described the impact on the family relationships,

I stay here with two boys, please. And look, the kitchen... I buy safety cooker, I scared... it's not easy, it's only one bedroom, you know how many years now, we're still waiting, waiting, waiting... my husband sleep here in the sitting room, and me I sleep with my children in the bedroom... where is my life if I haven't got a bedroom you know?

This echoes Selina's earlier 'limbo' narrative, as Seham expresses frustration and feelings of a life being on hold. Seham is therefore unable to fully access either individualization of 'individuation', the term Young gives to the experience of having a place to call one's own (1997:136).

The spatial contrasts in this study were extreme, as Seham's flat, for example, was smaller than the bottom floor of Rebecca's 3-storey house. Home-owners, however, also experienced generational differences in access to space, with the more recent home-owners tending to live in more cramped conditions (albeit spacious compared to the many overcrowded council tenants). This may be partly explained by being at earlier stages on the 'property ladder', but Harry (middle-class), a home-owner who lived in a small two-bedroom flat with his wife and two children talked about his generation being 'cash rich, space poor',

we're space-poor, we don't have enough space but we have quite a lot of money effectively in relation to the amount of space that we've got. Whereas my mum and dad had lots of space because space was cheap but had no money to fill it with things... I earn probably twice the median national salary... you know I am quite rich. But then at the same time thirty years ago if I was in a similar position... I'd probably be living in one of the houses down Burghley Rd... Whereas I can't afford it.

This indicates the impact of house prices rising at a steeply increasing level compared to wages. Thus, cutting across tenure types, and alongside a decrease in access to home-ownership per se, there is arguably an expanding group of people across both public and private sector housing subject to a structural 'downward' trend of spatial erosion in the home. Dorling argues that the rich and super-rich have been increasingly occupying more square feet per person, increasing the space ratio calculation in the world's richest cities

such as London (2010:249). Owning two homes has also become commonplace, even for the “relatively quite rich” (Dorling 2010:28), and four of the twelve home-owners (none of whom were super-rich) had at some point owned two properties. Thus there is a shifting, structural class process occurring in the housing market, resulting in increasingly polarised spatial inequality, not because there is an overall lack of space, but simply because it is so unevenly divided (ibid. 2010). As such, the occupation of differential amounts of space could also be regarded as a particular form of gentrification and displacement as one group (wealthy people) gain space at the expense of another group (low and middle-income) losing it.

6:5 Discourses of Housing

In this section, following the arguments of the previous chapters, I investigate the dominant social mobility discourse, this time in the field of housing. Firstly I explore how participants’ experiences relate to a dominant symbolic division that valorises home-ownership over social renting, examining processes of internalisation, doxa and hegemony, with attention to processes of distinction-making, ascription and inscription onto bodies. In the second section I look at alternatives to the dominant discourse, drawing on the discussions above regarding the housing qualities valued by participants.

6:5:1 Dominant Discourse: Valorising Home-ownership

As found in the previous two chapters, participants’ contradictory narratives revealed what dominant discourses were being struggled against (Anderson and Jack 1991). Several council renters, who could have taken advantage of the huge 33%-50% discounts with RTB in the 1980s and 1990s, struggled against regret that they had not bought their London properties and made massive profits. For example, Brendan (working-class) simultaneously resisted and re-iterated a privileging of home-ownership. He said he was glad he did not buy his flat because he would have had to contribute thousands of pounds to the council freeholders for external works done on his housing estate. Yet at the same time he said that owning his flat would have given him more chances in life. He also rejected the consumption of housing as a form of status,

if you've got a big house to maintain, that can be a big strain on a guy's pocket... if he's struggling at work or suddenly, like with the climate today, your wages go down, you're fearing for your job... some guys feel better if they've got the car and the big watch on their arm, to me again that's all rubbish because I might have had that but its for their own ego... going around being a big 'I am', it doesn't impress me.

Against Brendan's pragmatic assessment of the pressures that taking on a mortgage brings, he nevertheless iterates the house as part of a set of positional goods that mark social status and social mobility, indicating his awareness of, and struggle against, the normalised value attached to home-ownership (Gurney 1999; Allen 2008).

Brendan's narrative therefore suggests that, at least to some extent, the privileging and normalisation of home-ownership has been internalised as common sense (doxa) indicating it holds hegemonic status. This aligns with Paton's argument that the prevalence of the normalised home-ownership discourse amongst working-class council tenants works to reinforce the neoliberal political agenda that promotes consumerism,

By promoting home-ownership while deconstructing formerly fixed positions such as working-class support for social housing, it is used to attach this group to the 'new' set of ideas on increased privatisation of housing... This expresses the interest of the neoliberal national and local state that attempts to promote consumerism, responsibilism and individualism (2012:262)

As such the neoliberal agenda is reproduced through subordinate voices indicating its hegemony.

This normalised home-ownership discourse was also reproduced by participants in the terms of divided and stigmatised bodies, aligning with the individualist pathologising discourse discussed earlier in this chapter that blames variously static, 'workshy' and dependent renters as the antithesis to the mobile-oriented, hard-working home-owner. Thus this wider stigmatising neoliberal individualist-individualizing discourse, that was evident in educational and occupational experiences, was also expressed through the normative home ownership discourse, as stigma was attached to both social housing and

the people living in it, particularly in relation to social housing estates (Gwyther 2009; Watt 2009a; Gidley and Rooke 2010).

This was evident in participants' distinction-making based on housing statuses. For example, Lily (home-owner) defined herself and her home-owning friends against 'renters', whilst other participants felt negatively positioned because of their housing situations. For example, Helen (working-class, living in a council flat) felt herself to be a target of inter-class distinction-making in relation to both her tenure- and housing-type,

My (teenage) daughter thinks, she says to me that sometimes a lot of her friends live in their own property... she just happens to have quite a rich friend (*laughs*). And I think she's a little bit embarrassed about this. And that really upsets me. Cos I think that's just terrible. Why should she be ashamed of renting? And living, I think it's 'cause it's an estate. Instead of a house, like a street property, and I don't understand that at all. I love where I live.

The discourse that attaches hierarchical value to housing according to tenure-type, and thence to the bodies inhabiting them, has been emotionally internalised and reproduced by Helen's daughter. Their feelings of upset and embarrassment correspond to what Skeggs calls "shameful recognitions... of the judgment of others and an awareness of social norms" (1997:123), whereby a subordinately-positioned person feels stigmatised by a hegemonic middle-class discourse.

The symbolic systems of stigma and status reproduced through everyday processes of distinction-making in relation to housing tenure-type are thus part of a wider system of cultural hegemony that deploys class bodies and identities as cultural resources to reproduce relations of power (Skeggs 2004). This was indicated earlier in David Cameron's (2012) RTB speech that conjured the figure of the aspirational, hardworking tenant, who deserved to own their own home. This discursively ties home-ownership into an individualist social mobility project, with the position of owner-occupation ranked at the top, accessible on the basis of merit and fair reward. The rhetorical pathologised counterpart is made explicit a year later when Cameron introduced the 'bedroom tax'. Slater argues,

it is claimed by senior Tories that the policy will reduce "welfare dependency" and encourage people "parked on benefits" to find work in "fairness to the taxpayer", judiciously disregarding the fact that only 1 in 8 households claiming housing benefit are workless. (2013:1)

The moral divisive political narrative of individualizing blame is thus used to justify state withdrawal and evade state responsibility for redressing inequality in the housing field, paralleling findings in the educational and occupational fields. As such, as Gurney (1999:171) argues, pro-social housing views are submerged under the weight of a hegemonic home-ownership discourse, that the powerful classes use to support their material interests, such as profiting from the market for housing and claiming most space.

Johnny, however, expresses an alternative discourse of 'normal' as it is his exclusion from a secure permanent council tenancy that elicits his emotive feelings of not being normal,

it sounds really pathetic, I just want to be like everyone else. You know like my kids I don't want them to feel, I just want to be like everyone else.

We're gonna be a normal family. That's it. I can do it. I will do it. And eventually we will have our own house and we will be normal.

This powerfully expresses Johnny's feeling *and* reality of being excluded from 'normal' society as he cannot access the basic necessity of a secure home. It also frames a different idea of normal to that of the normalisation of home-ownership, because Johnny's normal is accessing secure council housing. This subordinated narrative, expressing working-class support for social housing, has not yet been entirely stamped out by the hegemony of home-ownership. I discuss the possibility of an alternative counter-hegemonic discourse to the normalisation of home-ownership further in the following section, drawing on the housing qualities that participants valued to construct an alternative discourse of housing value and mobility.

6:5:2 Alternative Discourse: Equality across Tenures

A counter-hegemonic discourse has already been suggested through the earlier subordinated narratives of participants that articulated what qualities they valued about housing, cutting across tenure types. There have also been resistant narratives, such as Stef, Brendan, Helen and Johnny's (all working-class), which articulated a desire for and appreciation of secure affordable social housing. I look at these ways of thinking about housing as potential alternatives to the current divisive individualist discourse centred on tenure-types and their occupants, which, moreover, is tied into the idea of home-ownership as a marker of upward social mobility and a sign of a mobile-oriented aspirational individualized identity.

Participants have articulated that they want secure affordable housing in their neighbourhoods, with access to both staying and going, fixity and mobility. They also wanted enough space to house a family, and to not have to wait for long periods in insecure housing and unsuitable hostels. Unsurprisingly they preferred secure affordable social housing to insecure unaffordable private renting, valuing the former on a par with home-ownership for offering security (ontological and practical), a sense of ownership and autonomy, a place to situate self-identity and have control, from which to plan and make social mobilities. This aligns with Young's (1997:136) normative values of home: security/safety, individuation, privacy, and identity-making.

The housing qualities of affordability, space, security, access to spatial mobility, safety, privacy and autonomy cut across tenure-type, i.e. they are not immanent to a particular tenure type. This undermines the privileging of home-ownership and presents an argument for social housing to be considered an equivalent option. For people on low incomes it is often the preferable, indeed the only, option for staying in the city, in known neighbourhoods, near friends, social networks, schools, jobs and opportunities.

Council housing estates, so casually derided in media and policy discourse (Watt 2008b; Gwyther 2009; Jones 2011), are largely appreciated by people that live in them. Helen returned to live in the housing estate where she grew up after she had her daughter, and recounted a conversation she had with another local parent,

We enjoy living in social housing... it absolutely fits my political views as well. But my friend was saying I really like that I go out of my door and there's kids playing and all this kind of thing in front of me... It's part of the landscape having big housing estates, and I think that is ok. Why isn't it ok to have big housing estates?... like everyone says about these buildings that they need to be knocked down and I just think, no, I think some need to be kept, this is how some of us have grown up and I don't see why people are so negative about it all the time. (Fig 6.13-6.15).

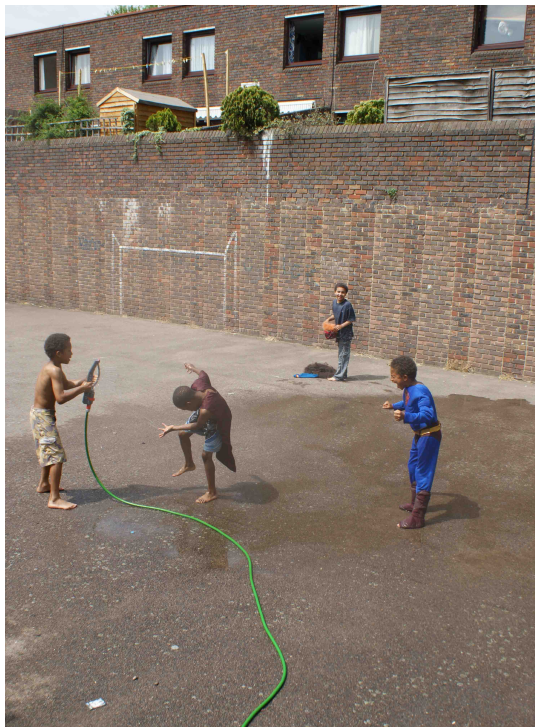


Fig 6.13-6.15: Local council estates' open spaces.

Neither Johnny nor Stef privileged home-ownership. Stef said, “it’s not something that’s important to me to own my own house”. As demonstrated, Stef accessed the valued qualities of ‘ownership’, feeling at-home, ‘ontological security’ and home-making because she had *secure* tenure conditions, not because she had a particular tenure type. The participants valued homes as bases from which their families could build stable social and emotional lives, with secure affordable rented housing offering equivalent advantages to owner-occupation. As Johnny said,

you’ve got a council property and it’s yours. Know what I mean ... I pay my rent, it’s mine, as far as I’m concerned that’s like buying your own property, it’s like, it’s mine.

I thus argue that security of tenure, rather than tenure per se, structures a key inequality in housing situations, and is a better measure than tenure-type by which to assess social or housing mobility.

In contradiction to the individualist notion that moving into home-ownership represents social mobility, and staying in social housing is the ‘residual’ option, Mark (inter-class), a self-employed artist, described why his decision not to take up the RTB option was interwoven with his ambitions for his career,

I didn’t know whether it was what I needed to have these little securities, which were actually false securities... I’ve never felt sort of financially secure enough... I’m doing a career that doesn’t actually have a year-on-year guarantee of money ... I think if I had’ve bought it, it would have changed my obligations or my pathway because it would have meant that I couldn’t then concentrate on my art, because I’d have had to have been following some kind of money-making path ... I think there’s a degree of feeling comfortable in this, like you’ve got your secure tenancy, you pay your money and you’re cool with it, and if things go wrong then you can jump on the old housing benefit ... because I did want to make a career.

Facilitated by intermittent housing subsidies, Mark was able to survive lulls in his career to achieve regular work, an income above the national median, and a growing career, “the

last three years I've been lucky enough to be earning enough to sort of count it as being... a fully fledged career". The housing benefit system then, rather than deterring people from work, can enable careers that take time to build.

Mark's experience thus lent him some equality with the outright-owners who, also relieved of housing costs, were able to develop more desirable or risky careers. Cecil (middle-class) had left his public service job to set up a printing business, and said, "you wouldn't be speaking to me now if I had a mortgage 'cause I'd be in the same job... so it provides a massive flexibility". Thus housing benefits, now under threat, can work towards levelling the uneven class playing field of differential wealth.

The lack of equivalence between social renting and owner-occupation is starkly evident in this inner London location by the equity the latter accrues. Some participants in social housing articulated regret that they would not have property to leave to their children. Whilst the inheritance characteristics of council housing offer an equivalence to home-ownership, in terms of hereditary security if not economic capital, this 'levelling effect' is also closing down as the Localism Act 2011 has narrowed succession rights of council housing to partners only, and no longer children (Shelter 2012). Helen, however, who lived and grew up in council housing, celebrated its wider circulation as a fairer collective model of inheritance,

It's this thing about leaving it to your family. Loads of people say that. Why is that a problem that I don't leave some bricks to somebody that I love? I don't particularly want that. You know when my mum died we gave up her flat in Lambeth Street... And now a family have got her flat and I'm really happy they've got it. You know the fact that it's Right to Buy and my brother could have had it, that's not fair... it's fairer that a family have now got that property, and they can live in it and that's their home now.

However, the ideal of collective inheritance (Dorling 2010:28) can only function effectively if there are sufficient properties to go round.

Participants, like Brendan, but also across classes, articulated resistance to regarding housing as a positional good and indicator of social mobility. Several middle-class

participants, who had bought their homes on council housing estates, rejected the status of a more gentrified property in favour of the pragmatic purposes of accessing more space, and being proximate to work, family and friends, which the more affordable ex-council homes enabled.

Other participants, across classes, articulated anger at the inequity of housing, and some resisted it, albeit in small ways given the steamroller of structural inequality in the housing market. For example, Grace (middle-class), a home-owner, who lives in an enclave of primarily home-owned Victorian properties, actively opposed the suggestion by a new home-owner that the residents apply for conservation status,

She was saying ‘oh it’ll protect the value of your housing’ and I was like ‘we don’t fucking care about that’... And I thought that’s why I want to live here. Because it’s people who kind of think that if anyone can live here, great. You know we shouldn’t be trying to keep people out.

This counters critics who argue that the middle class are disposed towards regarding home-ownership as a positional good (Allen 2008; Butler and Hamnett 2011a), against working-class purchasers who are more inclined towards pragmatism (Allen 2008). My more nuanced findings thus help counter tendencies to essentialise class dispositions that reinforce divisive constructions of class identities. I also argue that this cross-class discourse, which values a more equitable form of housing, suggests potential support for a redistributive political approach to housing, and counter-hegemonic resistance to the current neoliberal model.

6:6 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that whilst housing tenure is not synonymous with class, class processes structure access to tenure types, and the organisation of tenure-types structures access to class. Differing amounts of economic capital associated with employment incomes and wealth shape who can access what in the London housing market. The hugely inflated private housing sector means that lower-income people can only afford social housing, or require welfare subsidies to access private renting. As these latter two options are being eroded via current policies (such as RTB, restricted social housing tenure conditions and housing benefit cuts), lower, and even median, income people are increasingly unable to access secure housing in the city. This leads to displacement from neighbourhoods and the city, or situates people in stressful temporary or inadequate housing situations in which they are unable to access valued housing qualities such as space, security, privacy and control. Both these scenarios then result in reduced access to a variety of class capitals, such as wellbeing (emotional capital), jobs (economic capital), schools (cultural capital) and social networks (social capital). In contrast, the already economically-advantaged have increased access to housing equity, settlement in the city, spatial mobility and therefore advantageous choices in the educational and occupational fields. Hence there are complex inter-connections between diverse social fields impacting on social mobilities, with the organisation of tenure conditions working to further exacerbate existing class inequalities and structure uneven access to choice. As such, the reflexive self that shapes its auto-biography is not a subject position equally open to everyone, but resonates with the middle-class experience of privileged access to resources and choices (Skeggs 2004:53). Therefore my class analysis has undermined the theoretical underpinnings of the individualist social mobility discourse.

The tenorial alignment with economic and occupational class positions, however, was not immanent to tenure-type, but structured by state power in alliance with neoliberal capital interests. The policies constructing inequalities between tenures are accelerating a shift from public to private sector housing provision. Therefore the policies and power relations that construct tenure-type, rather than tenure-type itself, are the cause of class and social mobility inequalities. The evidence in this thesis thus lends support to the view that displacement is produced and supply-led, by capital and the state, via policy-making

and the legal system (Smith 1996; Watt 2009b). Therefore contingent legal tenure conditions construct tenure type, and thus structure socio-tenurial divisions, which are not 'natural' or immanent but constructed, divisive, and unjust.

I argue that a key strategy to justify the implementation of neoliberal structural policies is the construction of a hegemonic discourse that privileges home-ownership, and works through an individualist social mobility discourse. Home-ownership is represented as the tenure of choice for forward-looking reflexive individualized consumer selves. In contrast, secure social housing is residualised as the tenure of last resort for the welfare-dependent, the workshy and the spatially and socially immobile. This divisive pathologising discourse, constructed along the lines of tenure-type, adds symbolic insult to the material injuries inflicted by policies, but also justifies these policies by constructing the disadvantaged as self-responsible. Housing is therefore another field in which classed categories are symbolically constructed and discursively deployed in the interests of class power (Skeggs 2004). There is evidence of consent to this hegemonic perspective, as people constructed their identities in relation to the normative home-ownership discourse. Echoing the arguments of the previous chapters, the emphasis on housing as an individualised mobility project detracts attention and value from those positioned lower down the ladder and fails to support their struggles to 'get by'. As such, the structural causes of insufficient affordable housing, and the state responsibility to redress this situation, are sidelined.

This analysis develops the previous chapters' argument that whilst class processes work through individuals' subjectivities (Savage 2000), they are also shaped by collective processes of competition and struggle (Skeggs 2004). This analysis also points to the historically situated shifting contours of class relations, as in chapter four, this time with a spatial emphasis, as I argue there is a geographic and economic remapping of the landscape of inequality, power and class across the housing field. London has particular exclusions with its high private property prices, but the increased insecurity of housing, related to the expanded private rental sector, fixed social housing tenancies, welfare cuts and further reduction of social housing stock, has implications across the UK. These arguments address both research question one, that focuses on class, and research question two, that interrogates the individualist model of social mobility. However, as the organisation of tenure has been argued to be contingent and constructed, it can also be

changed, so I now consider how participants' own evaluations of housing may construct an alternative to the individualist framing of it as another facet of social mobility.

The analysis of the valued housing qualities that cut across tenures suggests a move away from measuring the adequacy or desirability of housing according to tenure-type. The valued housing qualities were affordability, security, space, flexibility of movement and autonomy, and most of these qualities were, or could be, available to people living in social housing. In this context, many of the lower-income participants narrated social housing as a desirable option equivalent to home-ownership. Therefore I contest the hegemonic valorisation of home-ownership that represents access to it as a form of social mobility. Rather than constructing tenures hierarchically, I emphasise the possibilities for equivalence across tenure type. This echoes the arguments of the previous two chapters for considering a plurality of educational and occupational routes in more equal terms. In line with this approach, I propose that the valued housing qualities be used to measure equality across tenures, within a redistributive politics of equality. In this model housing is valued as a basic need, as Slater suggests (2009:294), for its pragmatic function of providing access to the valued qualities, and the tenure debate is 'levelled' as each tenure is assessed in terms of how legal and political processes can best shape the tenure *conditions* in order to provide these qualities. I argue that participants' support for housing equality, and their resistance to regarding it as a positional good, suggest support for a redistributive politics aimed at redressing the structural inequalities resulting from the neoliberal organisation of the housing market. Key to this is the provision of more social housing and the provision and protection of secure tenancies. Thus whilst I reject privately-owned housing as an indicator of social mobility, I nevertheless argue that a concern for redistribution and equality in the housing field can work to construct more equal chances for social mobility in the educational and occupational fields.

This chapter has been able to directly compare participants' experiences in the locality through the lens of housing, and in the next chapter I examine social relations in the locality close-up by looking at participants' experiences of social mixing.

Chapter 7: Social Mixing

7:1 Introduction

7:1:1 Overview of the Analysis

In this chapter I examine how participants' social mixing experiences relate to the policy discourse of social mix, which claims that lower-income individuals benefit from mixing with higher-income neighbours because the latter will provide social capital in the form of role models, enhanced aspiration and improved access to employment (Musterd and Andersson 2005; van Ham et al. 2012). This addresses my research aim to better understand social mobility, as I examine experiences of social mobility in the context of social mixing practices, and I examine theoretical assumptions about social mobility underpinning social mix policies. An array of neoliberal urban interventions across Western Europe and Northern America are driven by social mix policy approaches (Lees et al. 2012), and whilst the socio-economic and tenure mix in the research setting has emerged in a more gradual and organic way through individuals buying their own homes (discussed in 3:3:1), this analysis nevertheless can contribute to the wider debates on social mix policies and social mixing practices³².

I address these issues specifically by examining inter-class social mixing experiences in the residential site, as framed by the policy approach, but I also extend the analysis to investigate experiences outside of the neighbourhood, and to include intra- as well as inter-class social mixing. This addresses research question one that explores how class processes inter-relate with participants' experiences of social mobility. The social mix policy approach is embedded in an individualist-individualizing set of assumptions (which I discuss below), and therefore this analysis also addresses research question two that considers how participants' experiences relate to a dominant individualist model of social mobility. In the latter part of the chapter I explore what participants' have themselves experienced and narrated as beneficial social mixing experiences, facilitative for their social mobilities. I consider how these narratives and experiences suggest an alternative discourse of social mixing to the current individualist model. This, therefore, contributes to research question three that looks at how participants' experiences and

³² See Lees et al. (2012) for an elaborated discussion of social mix policy approaches, in the context of gentrification.

narratives of social achievement suggest an alternative model of social mobilities. I draw on the expanded notion of social mobilities that I have developed thus far, incorporating attention to the emotional and holistic context of participants' experiences (Brown 2011), and to horizontal movements that incorporate 'getting by' as well as 'getting on'.

7:1:2 Theories of Social Mixing and Social Capital

The currently dominant discourse of social mixing, that underpins neoliberal social mix policies, rests on an individualist approach because it holds individuals responsible for social mixing, who are tasked with constructing advantageous social affiliations (social capital) with other individuals in order to improve their own life chances. This contrasts with a redistributive approach that regards the state as responsible for providing resources and jobs in order to improve life chances.

This individualist social mixing model is drawn from Putnam's social capital theory (1995; 2005), which was influential on European and U.S. social mix policies. He emphasises the importance of weak *bridging* ties between heterogeneous individuals and groups in public associational societies for strengthening civil society, against strong *bonding* ties that he argues reinforce exclusive identities between like individuals and groups. His approach has been heavily critiqued, associated with a right-wing reactionary communitarian politics that privileges traditional group forms and proposes mobilising community bonds for social progress (Navarro 2002; Amin 2002:972). This political perspective drives a re-alignment of the relationship between the individual and the state, as the state withdraws and power is devolved to individuals and community groups, who are regarded as responsible for their own life chances (for example through New Labour's New Deal for Communities and Cameron's Big Society) (Amin 2002:972).

A class dimension is, arguably, implicated in this individualist social capital/social mixing perspective, as working-class people are represented as failing to generate the appropriate wider networks of support because of their backwards-looking, over-dependence on the bonding ties of local family and friends, useful for 'getting by' but spatially and socially immobilising them. In contrast, middle-class people are represented as forward-looking role models, based on their access to loose but wide influential social ties that are instrumental for 'getting ahead'. This dichotomous representation relates to the individualization theory of Beck (1999; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001) and

Giddens (1991;1997), as the middle-class are constructed as reflexive selves who disembed from traditional social groups and then re-embed into loose social networks of their own choosing, which helps them to construct their biographies. In contrast working-class people remain passively attached to the strong ties of traditional group forms and fail to exploit their reflexivity and mobilities. This infers that the causes of inequality lie with the cultural attitudes, behaviors and affiliations of ‘problem’ individuals and groups. Therefore social-mixing policies offer a cultural solution for the economic and structural problems (Mellor 2010; Paton 2012; Taylor 2012; Arbaci and Rae 2013). There is an intersectional dimension, with different facets of identity inter-acting to re-shape relations of inequality, as working-class people with some ethnic and/or religious identities are a particular target of blame, including white and Muslim working class people (Mellor 2010:75). This parallels my argument throughout that an individualist ideology constructs dichotomous and hierarchical class groups in order to perpetuate middle-class hegemonic perspectives and power (Skeggs 2004), and evade state responsibility for redressing inequality.

In light of this critique, and aligning with my class analysis throughout, I therefore draw on Bourdieu’s model of social capital, which is conceived as the property of the dominant class, who use it instrumentally to access and reproduce their status, privileges and power, in competition with the subordinate class. I investigate the inter-twining of participants’ capitals and, as with the analysis of workplaces in chapter five, I use the concepts of habitus and field to consider how embodied social interactions in particular places are shaped by, and reproduce, processes of class power and domination. I consider distinctions, exclusions, exploitation and inequalities between social groups, and draw social capital/ mixing theory together with an emphasis on the role of resources and redistribution in improving life chances (Arbarci and Rae 2013; Amin 2002). In this context, I develop my argument as to how a concern for social equality may be compatible with a concern for social mobility, in contrast to the claims of Boliver and Byrne (2013), who regard them as incompatible.

However, I draw on Putnam (1995; 2000) and Coleman (1988) to make some distinctions between different types of social capital, which is useful for my analysis. My key distinctions are between strong and weak ties, and between homogenous and heterogeneous ties. Although, at times, I also distinguish between horizontal and vertical

ties - i.e. people on the same or different socio-economic/class levels (Field 2003:65-67). I also draw on Coleman's emphasis on the importance of strong bonding ties for wellbeing and self-identity.

I examine various kinds of social mixing experiences in the chapter, and have organised the chapter according to types of ties, and types of places. Firstly, I examine loose ties between neighbours in the informal residential research setting. Then I focus on strong ties in the informal residential site. In the following two sections I consider more formal institutional sites of association that produce everyday interactions, looking, in turn, at firstly, heterogeneous loose ties and, secondly, at homogenous loose ties. In this final section I explore what participants' narrate as social capital that is productive for their social mobilities.

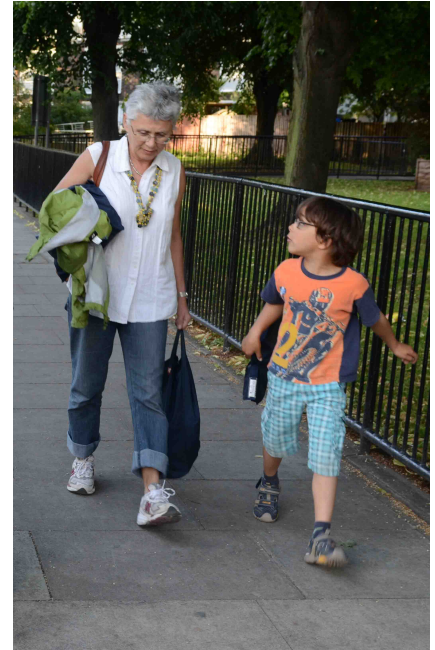
7:2 Loose Ties in the Informal Residential Site: Using and Sharing Resources

In this section I am directly interrogating the claims of the social mixing policy discourse that higher-income residents will provide social capital for the benefit of lower-income residents in the form of role models and improved access to job and educational opportunities. However, many critics argue that these claims are not borne out by empirical evidence (Cheshire 2007, Musterd and Andersson 2005; Fraser et al. 2012; Bridge et al. 2012b), with some critics arguing that social mixing can lead to increased social segregation and division and exacerbate existing inequalities between class groups (Butler and Robson 2003b; Gwyther 2009; Bridge et al. 2012b). I will give an overview of general informal mixing patterns in the general neighbourhood, and then focus on the implications for participants' social mobilities.

7:2:1 Overview



Fig 7.1 & 7.2: Street scenes in the research location



There was a mixed picture in the neighbourhood, with informal neighbourhood places such as shops, restaurants and children's leisure spaces, demonstrating both shared class spaces and some dominated by one class (Figs 7.1 & 7.2). However, in contrast to the findings and claims of other authors, middle-class people did not have rigid 'tectonic' mixing patterns (Butler and Robson 2003a) or 'parallel lives' (Phillips 2004), but developed both loose acquaintances and deeper bonds with their working-class neighbours.

However, some participants experienced discomfort in relation to their class 'other', although this operated both intra- and inter-class. For example, some working-class parents were anxious about their children 'playing out' in the communal council housing estate spaces with the less 'respectable' working-class children (Skeggs 1997; Watt 2001), whilst one pioneer gentrifier middle-class participant was anxious she would have nothing in common with the recent 'bankers' moving into the area, who sent their children to private schools. There was also some intra-class conflict in struggles for resources such as jobs and houses, as other researchers have found (Hewitt 2005; Dench et al. 2006). In contrast to critics who stress cosmopolitanism as a middle-class preserve

(Skeggs 2004), I found that many participants *across classes* enjoyed the cosmopolitanism of the area. However, some working-class participants articulated anger and distress in response to living next to the privileged. For example, Karen (inter-class) compared her over-crowded council flat in Gospel Oak with the large home-owned houses in the bordering area of wealthy Hampstead,

I've seen round certain parts of Hampstead. Uh Christ! When you sort of live in that juxtaposition, you just feel, aghhh!... Which is why I understand why people blitz themselves on drugs and drink... (seeing things) that you ain't got, things that you think you've got a right to. Oh it's just envy. Simple plain envy.

I will now address the central question of whether any of the classed interactions led to improved social mobility prospects.

7:2:2 Using Resources

Several working-class tradespeople accessed employment opportunities in the sectors they already worked in, via middle-class neighbours, and whilst this did not benefit upward mobility, it did sustain employment and 'getting by', the significance of which is overlooked in the social mixing discourse.

However, the only unemployed participants who gained new, different employment opportunities through their wealthier neighbours were already middle-class, and they used their existing capitals to do so. Eva and Michael were Canadian migrants who worked in the media, but had been unable to transfer their skills to work in the UK. The couple, however, used their economic capital to rent a flat in the middle-class area of Hampstead, and this gave them access to a shared garden, where they met their neighbours. One neighbour was a managing director of an advertising agency, and he helped Michael get a job there as IT manager. Eva said, "What is funny is that Michael had already been for an interview at the same agency and not gotten a position". Therefore the family's economic capital, via renting the flat, gave them access to social capital, through which Michael's existing work skills (his cultural capital) could be used.

Eva explained how the cultural resources of the whole family were put to work to even make friends with the neighbours in the first place. She said,

They can't believe that our children don't go to one of the independent schools... But you know once you start talking about how they all go to music lessons and they're learning French and they've got their art history... they make allowances for that, so even though you don't necessarily have the money there, you still speak the same language.

This indicates the importance of class resources as Eva used the cultural capitals invested in her children to emphasise cultural commonality with the neighbours, specifically as a way to bridge wealth disparities. Therefore class resources played a key role, as the loose neighbourhood ties did not enable Michael's mobility on their own, but were transformed into profitable social capital because of the family's existing economic and cultural capitals. Put simply, it is only because they were already middle class that they profited from the loose ties of social mixing in the residential site. Moreover, social capital is not profitable in itself, but is productive because of the other class capitals it carries (Bourdieu 1986), with middle-class social contacts tending to carry more valuable resources (Field 2003; Butler and Robson 2003a). Therefore, as Taylor argues, "'choice' does not exist as a free floating notion but rather is often a mobilisation and manifestation of resources" (2009:27).

This analysis emphasises the importance of using a resource-centred conception of social capital (McNamara et al. 2003), with attention to the key role of other resources that work with and through social capital (Lareau 2003; Field 2003:16-17; Bourdieu 1986; Taylor 2009). It also develops the emphasis in the previous chapters on the key role resources play in expanding social mobility opportunities, and supports the argument that a policy approach of equal opportunities needs to be coupled with attention to the redistribution of resources (Goldthorpe 2012). Next I look at situations where resources were shared across classes.

7:2:3 *Sharing Resources*

As discussed above, there were social interactions across classes in the neighbourhood, including instances of deeper relationships and the sharing of resources. However, resources shared between classes were not a one-way street, as the social mixing theory and Bourdieu's 'lacking' analytic model suggest (Butler and Watt 2007:175; discussed in 2:6:1). For example, Jane (middle-class) became very close to her elderly working-class neighbours after her daughter was born. Her single-parent identity intersected with her class identity to contribute to the development of their reciprocal relationship, which included exchanges of childcare (including the transfer of emotional and cultural capital), transport and practical help. (Fig 7.3)

Fig 7.3: Mutual sharing of resources across classes



Carrie (middle-class) provides an example closer to the social mixing model of one-way middle- to working-class transfer of resources. Carrie was an owner-occupier on a council estate and actively sought to share her family's resources (toys, computers, skills) with the working-class children on the estate who she regularly invited into her home. However, when Carrie's mother paid for her children to go to a boarding school in Suffolk, Carrie moved from London to Suffolk, indicating how individualised weak residential ties are not necessarily sustainable.

Moreover, sharing could have counter-productive effects, for example, Grace (middle-class) owned her Victorian house in a gentrified enclave in Gospel Oak and told the story of when she invited a local working-class boy inside,

He said, ooh God, I've never been anywhere like this. And I said 'Don't be silly, come in, it's Nicky's home, you're welcome'. And he said 'No, look, I'd never be able to be like', I said 'Of course you would, come up', but I kind of knew what he meant... he was just wide-eyed, and I said 'Of course you can, if you work hard, and get a job you like and you're lucky, you know, get a break, of course you can, it's only a house painted white, it's only 2 rooms really'. He said 'yeah', and he changed, from being outside playing with Nicky... and I felt quite bad about that.

The implication from Grace is that, rather than the experience of her middle-class home expanding the boy's horizons, it re-enforced his sense of comparative disadvantage. The boy felt out-of-place and, arguably, his habitus, transposed into the micro-middle-class field of Grace's home, 'naturally' took up a position of relative subordination. In this interpretation the unfamiliar environment, and low level of resources in his habitus, positioned him as relatively disadvantaged, making an infra-conscious fit with his wider subjective sense of his relative class position. As such, his structural position of subordination is re-enforced by the embodied face-to-face encounter with the middle-class 'role model'. Thus this narrative and Karen's earlier narrative of envy suggest that material class structures work through individualized subjectivities to become deeply emotionally embedded into them (Skeggs 1997; Sayer 2005).

In summary, whilst some benefits were accrued for 'getting by' in the informal residential site, my findings largely re-iterated those of critics (above) who found few improvements for lower-income residents' upward mobilities, with evidence that social mixing can re-enforce class positions. Even when there were potential benefits, such as with Carrie's deeper engagement and redistributive action, they were random. Therefore the transfer of resources at the level of the individual, as proposed by the theory of social mixing, is not sustainable, which suggests that redistribution of resources may more effectively and systematically be organised at a wider social scale than that of individuals (Fraser et al. 2012).

7:3 Strong Ties in the Informal Residential Setting: Static Identities?

Whilst the concept of social mixing explicitly refers to loose bridging social capital made between heterogeneous individuals and groups, in this section I examine stronger bonding ties in the residential neighbourhood amongst homogenous class groups. I discuss the symbolic construction of static-mobile class identities, as discussed in the introduction. Firstly, I investigate working-class strong ties, as emphasised in the literatures (Watt 2003; Taylor 2012), but then I focus on middle-class strong ties, which are rarely interrogated. I draw into this latter discussion an analysis of the discursive conflation of social and spatial mobility.

7:3:1 Working-class Bonding Capital: Getting By or Getting On?

I found some support for critics' arguments that the working-class strong ties of family and friends, which carry limited amounts of valuable resources, support 'getting by', rather than 'getting on', which can work to level-down aspirations and options (Elliott 1997; Watt 2003; Field 2003:79-80; Shildrick et al. 2012). For example, Brendan achieved well at school, but at 16 he got work as a builder through his Irish social network, and never returned to school to take his qualifications, thus constraining his future employment options. This does not, however, mean that Brendan was static as he *moved* into employment and he progressed his manual skills. Nor does it mean that the job Brendan did was without value, because he built up a good living over the years in one of the few manual trades still thriving in London. Therefore bonding social capital based on cultural networks may work variously as enabling and constraining (Mellor 2010:75).

Critics particularly emphasise strong reciprocal relationships for working-class women's survival strategies (Fig 7.4) (Young and Wilmot 1957; Lareau 2003; Field 2003:69; Taylor 2009:36), so I will examine Katie's experiences, a working-class, unemployed single mother, who grew up locally. Katie saw each of her parents, sisters, grandparents and friends in the local area every week. She gained and generated emotional capital from her strong bonds, as well as reciprocating care, food, money, advice, transport and labour. Whilst all the participants, across classes, valued the strong ties and capitals embedded in local place, those on lower-incomes depended more heavily on them to access resources that they could not afford to buy. Lewin (1993, in Taylor 2009:35)

found that social support systems were key to whether parents viewed their incomes as sufficient. Whilst working-class social capital is regarded as carrying relatively low levels of valuable capitals, nevertheless these personal exchanges carry significant social, emotional and cultural value.



Fig 7.4: Personal photo of family and friends

Whilst critics note the role of strong ties in providing supportive emotional and reciprocal networks important for ‘getting by’ (Coleman 1988; Watt 2003; Shildrick et al. 2012), as argued in previous chapters, emotional capital is also a key resource for building the self-confidence necessary for orienting the self towards upward mobilities. Thus, in line with this study’s emphasis on a holistic understanding of social mobilities, and as other critics argue (Mellor 2010:74; Evans 2010), affective bonds can play an instrumental role in ‘getting on’, and may be exchangeable for the purposes of ‘getting on’. Katie, for example, worked unpaid as a mechanic in her father’s garage. Thus she gained skills useful for future employment, whilst her labour contributed to her father’s business. Other working-class participants’ strong social networks were used to provide childcare, enabling work and study. These narratives trouble the representation of working-class strong ties as limited only to facilitating ‘getting by’.

Katie's story exemplifies social mobility as a family project, with benefits for the three generations of herself, her father and her daughter. As discussed in chapter five, several participants emphasised social mobility of the family as a unit rather than of the autonomous individual, aligning with researchers who stress the significance of pooled family resources used for strategic collective advancement (Mellor 2010:74; Franz 2003). For example, several working-class participants' parents funded their grandchildren's private tuition, extra-curricula lessons and outings.

Unsurprisingly, then, Allen et al. (2007:242) argue that the forced separation of people from their strong ties and local social capital leads to households living in more precarious social and economic worlds as they are forced to lead increasingly individualised ways of life. It is therefore vital that stories such as Katie's are not lost in the context of a dominant individualist-individualizing discourse of social mobility. The notion of the reflexive self ignores the relational model of reciprocity and care to which strong ties are central. Bourdieu's frame also lacks acknowledgement of the importance of affective social capital (Field 2003:17). I would therefore argue that, given their lower levels of economic capital, working-class women, and particularly those in single-parent households that are persistently over-represented amongst the poorest households, are especially reliant on the resources embedded in reciprocal relationships (Bradshaw and Millar 1991:18; McKay 2002:3). This is not to support the view that the 'the big society', rather than the state, is responsible for redressing inequalities, but to argue that the value of these personal resources be recognised.

Thus working-class strong ties are not the passive result of staying in place and lacking an orientation to mobility. Whilst some working-class people didn't have sufficient resources to move elsewhere and choose to electively belong there, as argued to be characteristic of middle-class people (Savage et al. 2005), they often articulated an active desire to stay, and made active pragmatic "resistant investments" in strong local social ties (Taylor 2012:87). Several working-class participants actively chose to stay in the area against moving out to access bigger properties, in order to access local bonding capital. Thus, as Taylor (2012) argues, rather than strong local ties producing a disabling situation characteristic of 'backwards' people who lack the ability or vision to choose better lives, they can be agentic and productive, enabling a better quality of life and ameliorating structural class inequalities.

The accumulation of social capital by working-class people has important returns for ‘getting by’ and, rather than privileging ‘getting ahead’ over ‘getting by’, I argue they are better understood as *both* being of importance, and as inter-connected, with movement between them. The association of strong bonding capital with ‘getting by’ and loose bridging capital with ‘getting ahead’ is re-iterated by academics (Gilles 2006; Taylor 2009). Useful though these distinct concepts are, a more nuanced understanding of how they play out in lived experience helps to prevent a rigid binaried construction of class identities. I develop my critique of the symbolic hierarchical binaries of weak/strong ties and mobility/stasis in the next section by examining the use of bonding capital by middle-class participants.

7:3:2 Middle-class Bonding Capital: Deconstructing Binaries

*Fig 7.5: Strong ties:
middle-class couple*



Despite the emphasis on working-class generation of and reliance on strong ties, it is a mistake to couple bonding social capital with working-class identities as all participants, across classes, benefitted from strong ties, including their use for emotional support, reciprocal exchange and upward mobility. As seen earlier, Eva and Michael put the whole family’s class resources to work in order to access Michael’s job opportunity.

Couple relationships arguably tend to be taken for granted and thus excluded from discussions of strong ties (Fig 7.5). However, reflecting wider statistics, in my research far more middle- than working-class participants lived with spouses or partners, and they drew on each other's resources to access job opportunities, and social and economic capital. Moreover, whilst working-class participants' parents contributed finance for children's extra-curricula activities, middle-class participants profited from much larger parental subsidies, such as Harry who was supported through 6 years of university, and Carrie who used an inheritance from her father to buy a property outright in London, whilst her mother financed her children to go to boarding school. Thus working- and middle-class identities cannot be neatly dichotomised along static-mobile lines, and next I deconstruct the conflation of another binary, social and spatial mobility.

As with several other international migrants in the study, Eva was unable to transfer her skills to find employment when they moved from Canada. She was explicit about her resulting financial dependence on her husband, and said, "I don't think I'd ever felt quite that vulnerable financially or emotionally for a really long time". This contests the notion that working-class women have a greater propensity to relational dispositions, or a greater reliance on strong familial ties. Moreover, Eva forfeited mobility options for herself as Michael's elite global type of employment threatened to shift the whole family again to work in Singapore,

as far as (his) career progression goes it was a really good move, but then... I was hoping to study here next year ... (and) I was working on that art project, and I'd made that commitment, and then all of a sudden the feeling was that I couldn't do it because we were leaving... so I think the whole emotional insecurity of the move, there are times when it does intrude into your life and that's when it becomes difficult ... that you know we could have this life taken away from us.

Thus Eva's own access to educational and employment choices and to a reflexive individualized identity suffered because she was tethered to global spatiality (as well as to strong ties). This is a conceptual reversal of the stigmatisation of working-class identities for being socially immobile due to their tethering in local place. Neither

working nor middle-class identities entirely disembodied from family groups or local place, as individualization theory claims. As McDowell argues, “for many people in the world, everyday life continues to take place within a restricted locale. Even for the most mobile” (1992:2-3).

Clearly spatial mobility does not necessarily equate with upward social mobility, as both middle- and working-class participants’ job opportunities were often progressed by remaining spatially static. Sara (middle-class, upwardly mobile) for example, progressed from being a volunteer play assistant as a teenager to managing the same children’s Playcentre now. Thus attention to local place-making investments, sidelined by discursive emphases on mobility, is important, and develops the arguments made in relation to displacement in chapter six. At the same time, neither should strong ties in local place be confused with being spatially static, as many internal and international migrants had strong local ties. Indeed none of the participants’ lives were marked by stasis as even inter-generational reproduction was characterised by agencies, barriers overcome, changes negotiated and re-inventions (Thomson et al. 2011a).

The arguments in this section have therefore mixed-up a binarised discourse of strong ties and static backwards working-class identities on the one hand, against loose ties associated with forward-moving middle-class identities on the other (also critiqued by Datta 2009:362). This develops the contestation made throughout the thesis against a hierarchical dominant discourse of social mobility that constructs symbolic valorised/pathologised classed bodies in political discourses to construct middle-class hegemony and to justify state withdrawal and divisive policies (Gwyther 2009; Skeggs 2004; Slater 2012).

7:4 Heterogeneous Loose Ties in Micropublics: Camden Green School

Having discussed in detail both weak and strong social capital with an emphasis on the informal local residential site, I will now look at more formal institutionalised local places, focusing primarily on Camden Green School as a case study. Amin (2002) argues that local institutionalised formal sites of association such as schools, workplaces, and youth centres are “micropublics” of everyday interaction and “prosaic negotiations” (ibid. 2002:969) that offer the possibility for fruitful intercultural interactions as equals. Similarly, Bridge et al. (2012:322) argue for future research on the interactions between individuals and groups in public forums such as local neighbourhood and school meetings. Camden Green School might thus be expected to facilitate greater opportunities for building stronger social ties and productive social capital than the more informal residential area, because of the parents’ shared spatial and social experiences over time. As such, Putnam’s emphasis on organisations and associations is relevant, but by using Bourdieu’s framework I add in an analysis of inequality and power, with attention to institutional contexts and mechanisms.

In this section my primary analytic focus will be on the dynamic inter-relationships between embodied subjective experience and organisational systems and discourses. As such, I am trying to understand the underlying social dynamics of social mixing as lived within the organisational structures of institutional micropublics.

7:4:1 Overview



Fig 7.6: Proximity or Mixing?

The school was a differentiated field, constituted by a variety of changeable micro-fields of varying formality, social composition and rules of the game. Thus unsurprisingly, and as found in the informal residential site, I found a mixed picture, with evidence of both divisive and equitable social relationships (Fig 7.6).

The ties amongst like-class and -cultural groups were visibly evident in the playground, with ethnic, class and gender intersections noticeable (Figs 7.7-7.9) as noted by the parents, who made distinctions between groups, with for example “scary women” and “the smoking mums” euphemisms for working-class mothers, and “the CAGSA crew” and “the cool dads” euphemisms for middle-class parents³³. Such distinctions arguably carry coded binaried stigmatising/privileging cultural value attached to bodies, as Skeggs (2004) argues. However, participants were as fearful to be thought of as a middle-class snob as working-class and inferior, and discomfort with unfamiliar classed bodies often changed over time through familiarisation. I will firstly examine in more detail productive inclusive experiences, followed by an analysis of division and power inequalities.

³³ CAGSA is the Camden Green School Association for parents and teachers.

Fig 7.8: Kosovan dads



Fig 7.7: CAGSCA mums



Fig 7.9 Bangladeshi mums

7:4:2 *The Institutional Habitus: Ethos of Equality?*

Grace (middle-class) echoed the notion that micropublics can produce fruitful social interactions when she said,

A good local school means... walking to school, being nice, lets hope generally kids mix well in this mixed community. I think that school and other schools like it have a lot to contribute to the harmony of your local area. And, you know, people work there. There are connections made between all different socio-economic, all those things are important.

In chapter four Camden Green School's ethos of inclusivity was emphasised. This ethos was valued by many participants, and narrated via Rebecca's (middle-class) experience of taking her son with special needs out of an oversubscribed middle-class-dominated local state primary school where they both felt excluded, in favour of the less sought-after but more inclusive Camden Green School. Given the striking similarity between the school's stated ethos of inclusivity (Camden Green website 2012) and the parents' prevalent discourse of valuing inclusivity, I develop this line of inquiry here via the notion of the "institutional habitus" (McDonough 1996, in Reay 1998:63), examining how the institution of the school and its actors may be regarded as co-shaping each other to produce taken for granted assumptions ('doxa' in Bourdieu's terms).

The school's inclusive ethos was manifested in its organisational structures and services specifically targeted at redressing inequality, such as investment in learning mentors and projects aimed at supporting socio-economically disadvantaged children. The provision of extra-curricular cultural and sports programmes gave children an equal chance to acquire a broad cultural education and acquire the soft skills, which, as argued in relation to the educational and occupational fields, are integral to the reproduction of middle-class privilege (Bourdieu 1986; Skeggs 2004). This approach aligns with this study's emphasis on equal value to a range of types of learning for plural social mobilities. The school-based programmes also meant that children from diverse classes shared experiences in the same place on equal terms. This contrasts with Reay's (1998) study of two London primary schools whereby middle- and working-class children were culturally, socially and spatially segregated as the former were ferried to extra-curricula classes after school,

whilst the latter, lacking money and transport, went home. Equality principles were also embedded in the school's labour structure, including training and resources for the non-teaching staff. Rebecca (middle-class), in her role of chair of governors, interviewed the teachings assistants and said,

I think it is a dynamic forward-looking positive environment, ... the TAs are so proud to be working in a school and in a job that many others don't consider to be a valuable job, because the head is absolutely clear that he does value it.

This institutional ethos was also echoed in parental practices as many participants volunteered at the school. Maggie (working-class), a school volunteer, said, "I want my kids to do well. Not just my kids, if I can give back to other people's kids as well".

Thus the institutional habitus was embedded into the practices of both parents and institution, highlighting the key importance of experience, as previously emphasised. Arguably it was from such practices that discourse emerged. For example, in contrast to findings of other studies (Reay 1998; Butler with Robson 2003a) I did not detect a dominant discourse of anxiety amongst parents regarding their children's academic achievements. This did not mean the parents were not interested in their children doing well, and secondary schools choices were keenly and anxiously discussed leading up to secondary transfer. However, most of the children from Camden Green School went to the nearest secondary state schools, and whilst occasionally both working- and middle-class parents told me of strategies to get their children into independent or particular sought-after state schools, this was not a discourse I heard in the school's public spaces. This was in sharp contrast to reports from other local parents whose children attended more over-subscribed, local state primary schools.

As discussed in chapter four, Rebecca (middle-class) took her son (Billy) out of a highly sought after state primary school in favour of the more inclusive Camden Green School. An elaboration of the institutional practices of the two local schools illuminates how contrasting 'institutional habituses' can be effected. The first school practiced some systematic exclusions, such as separating Billy from school routines, and this was replicated in the practices of the parents who avoided them. Rebecca described feeling consigned to a position of marginalisation, "I was made to feel ashamed of my son rather

than being concerned for his health and wellbeing”. Her child was thus pathologised as “a problem”, and therefore the school’s practices echoes the neoliberal discourse of individualizing blame, which contrasted with Camden Green School, whose staff emphasised it was their responsibility to help her son, drawing him and Rebecca into the same routines as everyone else. The ethos of care they provided was replicated in the practices of parents at the school who were friendly and welcoming. Rebecca described her internalisation of the schools’ different ethos’,

You feel completely out of place, to somewhere where you feel completely in place, and for it to be so different. I really, I really thought I’m a horrible person, all my views on life are wrong, um, you know if your child isn’t successful they don’t deserve a, they don’t ... And you, to come into an environment where that so obviously isn’t the case... where suddenly, suddenly the person I am is perfectly acceptable it’s really, really odd.

Whilst in one school her habitus was shaped such that she felt marginalised, in the other she subjectively developed feelings of inclusion, comfortable in an institutional environment with systematised equality practices. As Valentine argues,

When individual identities are “done” differently in particular temporal moments they rub up against, and so expose, these dominant spatial orderings that define who is in place/out of place, who belongs and who does not (2007:18).

The convergences found between schools’ and parents’ approaches to academic achievement, equality and social mixing thus indicates the co-construction, by both subjectivity and field, of the institutional habitus. I acknowledge Reay’s critique, however, that middle-class parents are better positioned to shape the institutional habitus than working-class parents, with Rebecca’s position as a school governor a case in point. Thus later in this section (7:4:4) I will challenge the idea that an institutional habitus is smooth and homogenous, by focusing on the ways in which power works through micropublic sites to produce patterns of inequality. However, first I will examine whether the inclusive aspects of the school’s habitus facilitated participants’ social mobilities.

7:4:3 Productive Social Mixing?

There was evidence of close ties across class groups, which provided support during and beyond their children's time at Camden Green School. As such, weak links between people from heterogeneous class groups developed into strong bonding capital over time. I noticed this particularly for women, unsurprisingly as they were more evident at the school than men (Reay 1998). In this context middle-class parents helped working-class parents with job applications and relevant information and skills, although this kind of productive social capital was not always a vertical association as several parents, cross-class, accessed job opportunities through horizontal as well as vertical relationships with other parents. Nor was it one-way as working- and middle-class parents helped each other, for example with reciprocal childcare practices, the sharing of skills, resource and knowledge.

I will, however, focus on Stef's (working-class) experience of gaining cultural capital, potentially useful for accessing employment, via the organisational bridging social capital of the parent-teacher association (CAGSA), which she was drawn into through the stronger social capital of her middle-class friends. As such it is a critical case (Flyvberg 2004) that can interrogate in the specific school context the proposition of social mixing discourse that working-class residents benefit from their association with middle-class residents. Stef described what happened,

Linda asked me to do it and I kind of was, I can't, I've never taken minutes in my life, I don't know what to do. And she said, because it's a registered charity, you can put it down as a job, you know, you can put it on your CV that you've done it. And that kind of made me think well maybe that's good for me personally then to have that experience, and the woman who done it before showed me the minutes and I thought actually, you know what, I can do that... The first time I did it I had a friend of mine, Alice, writing the notes at the same time, and then she gave me her copy, and I had my copy, just incase I'd forgotten anything ... And if I hadn't have been able to do that I wouldn't have done it.

Stef arguably experienced the disjuncture of shifting habitus (that other critics have noted in relation to educational upward mobility) with insufficient knowledge of the rules of the

game, which she had to labour in order to learn, thus acquiring cultural capital. Field (2003) notes that people need skills and social competencies (cultural capital) to benefit from the co-operation of social capital. Stef did not have these and required various resources to acquire them: information about the instrumental value of gaining skills (cultural capital); encouragement and labour of middle-class contacts (social capital), and overcoming her lack of confidence (emotional capital). This reiterates the importance of existing resources, or alternately the need to access them, before people can ‘choose’ the opportunities on offer. Stef’s habitus did not include these resources and thus she could not ‘naturally’ take up a position of confidence and authority in the institutional field of CAGSA (Lareau 2003). Whilst she did access the necessary resources through the social capital of her middle-class friends, this was to some extent arbitrary (as in the residential site more widely) as the emotional and cultural support she received was down to individuals and not embedded into the sustainable institutional systems of CAGSA.

Thus I argue that Camden Green School offered more sustainable opportunities for accessing social and other capitals, compared to the residential site, with some evidence of a collective and redistributive ethos. However, whilst I found that the school provided some form of facilitating mechanism for productive social mixing, it was not focused on social mobility outcomes, and was thus random and situational, as found in the residential site more generally.

7:4:4 Power Runs through It: Withdrawal and Reproduction of Hegemony

Despite this optimistic argument emphasising the equitable aspects of Camden Green School, it was a differentiated field and situated within wider structures of class and power relations, “these are sites of mercurial social interaction, divided allegiances, and cultural practices shaped also beyond the school gates” (Amin 2002:969). The white middle class dominated avenues for influence at Camden Green School, and thus the institutional habitus of the school is not even, as Reay (1998) argues, necessarily equitable, as working-class parents had less influence in shaping their school’s practices than their middle-class counterparts. As Valentine (2007) argues, places are produced and maintained by dominant occupying groups, via hegemonic cultures through which power operates to shape ways of being, and to mark out bodies as in or out of place.

Participants narrated classed practices of distinction-making, divisions, exclusions, conflict and even violent hostilities (Gwyther 2009; Bridge et al. 2012). Mostly, however, differences were worked with and around, rather than completely wished away, suggesting a dominant method of engagement with, rather than avoidance of, difference (Massey 1991; Sennett 2002). However, not everyone had the desire, confidence or the skills to thus negotiate, particularly the least resourced. Unsurprisingly, then (and despite Stef's positive experience), few working-class parents were involved in CAGSA, and even less acting as school governors. Grace (middle-class), a school governor, said,

We approached different groups and said will you come and join... but a lot of people don't want to do it... because they're frightened, and they're shy and they're not used to sitting in meetings a lot of the time.

Arguably a person with a working-class habitus, unfamiliar with taking an assertive position in institutional fields (Lareau 2003; Reay 1998), will thus be inclined to absent themselves from situations in which they feel unconfident, and have internalised subservient positions. This accords with research that argues the middle class produce schools as a hegemonic middle-class spaces through which they reproduce their positions of dominance, via processes such as dominating the parent-teacher associations (Reay 1998; Ball 2003; Butler and Robson 2003a). Inversely researchers report that disadvantaged groups have low levels of participation in community and voluntary organisations, deterred from joining when they do not regard them as representative of their interests (Field 2003:81). In these ways, then, hegemonic middle-class spaces reproduce relations of power.

The finding of self-withdrawal was replicated in other micropublics in the neighbourhood. For example, Katie (working-class) described her preference for volunteering in the informal communal garden rather than attending tenants' meetings on her housing estate,

I was asked if I wanted to join... But, in all honesty, I don't like, you know, all that having to, you know like paperwork and having to answer to somebody and going and sitting and having discussions in meetings. Personally I'd just rather get up, go down to the garden... I just sort of tend to work better, not on my own but with people that I know, rather than going to sort of join a group where

there's a lot of strangers and then you, you're all sort of, you might not get on with some and stuff like that.

Aligning with Lareau's (2003) analysis, Katie's working-class habitus, with its particular resources, is not inclined to feel comfortable in the formal space of the institutionalised meeting. This emphasises how identities shift through time and spaces, as Valentine (2007) suggests, with Katie's working-class identity felt by her as uncomfortable in the setting of formal meetings, but not in the outdoor informal garden space. This suggests a disjunctive habitus, with insufficient knowledge of the rules of the game.

I found a similar pattern of withdrawal in 'participative' planning meetings associated with the redevelopment of six local council blocks. At one meeting I observed a vocal group of home-owning anti-regeneration activists who lived on the estate, who could be regarded as advocates for all the residents. However, there appeared to be tensions, rather than agreement, between them and the tenants' representatives. Thus, as Bridge et al. (2012:320) argue, the beneficial effects of having middle-class incomers as neighbourhood advocates is arguably limited. Both Helen (working-class) and Grace (middle-class) attended tenant and stakeholder meetings in their respective capacities as tenant living on one of the estates, and community governor representing Camden Green School. Both reported class conflict at the meetings, resulting in the working-class tenants' representatives retreating from the wider partnership forums and fragmenting into discrete factions of self-interest, holding meetings for their estates separately, barring others from attendance, and disengaging from shared information and dialogue networks. Grace interpreted these practices of withdrawal as responses to a dominant official and middle-class presence that, moreover, was intersected by ethnicity,

I think they just fear somebody else deciding the future of their homes and their environment... they just saw any attempt at a partnership as something that would be a white middle-class kind of organisation with articulate people taking over, not representing the true community's concerns.

This indicates the intersectional power relations of class and ethnicity at play, with a defensive tactic of withdrawal, in response to fears that other more powerful middle-class voices would dominate, resulting in self-exclusion from an institutional arena of decision-

making. This further dislocates the working class (and perhaps particularly those from minority ethnic groups) from arenas of representation and power. These withdrawal practices help to explain the class imbalance at the CAGSA meetings, and can be regarded as part of the hegemonic processes that enable powerful groups to dominate particular places. As such, the working-class habitus is consensually according with the power relations that dominate particular places, even in those purporting to practice community participation (Paton 2012:262-264). In this situation of social mixing, the dominant habitus defines the rules of the game in the field, with the dominant and subordinate habituses having tendencies towards durability, as individuals are predisposed to transposing their habitual dispositions and practices across a range of social spaces over time. As such, existing inequalities are exacerbated.

These processes indicate collective social relational practices in contexts of embodied interactive power relations. Helen (working-class) described how these class processes work through the individual, as internal subjectivity makes an infra-conscious fit with external ascription at the scale of the body,

I feel it now because of my accent and stuff... your voice not being heard as much as someone who has got a posher voice... but I think working-class people are like that generally anyway, that they won't be listened to.

It's hard, you don't feel... I think you don't feel as articulate. I think that is something to get across. Because of your background and that. I don't think you are as articulate as some and that's scary, that's scary. Whereas a lot of middle-class kids are brought up and they are articulate, which is great, and they have been brought up to say their opinion does mean something and they are the best at what they do, and they should be questioning things. I wasn't brought up like that, no way.

As such, the practices of the embodied habitus in a middle-class hegemonic field align with Bourdieu's notion of 'hexis', which elaborates on how classed bodies relate to classed others in co-present fields of social mixing,

one's relationship to the social world and to one's proper place in it is never more clearly expressed than in the space and time one feels entitled to take from others; more precisely, in the space one claims with one's body in physical space, through a bearing and gestures that are self-assured or reserved, expansive or constricted... capable of evoking a whole relationship to the world and through it a whole world (1984:474, in McDowell 1999:41-42).

Thus rather than these micropublics producing mutual 'intercultural' social mixing, they were instead spaces of cultural hegemony that reproduced class dominance, played out through fear, suspicion, antagonism and withdrawal. As Savage (2000) argues, processes of class and inequality, of dominance and subservience, work through individualised bodies and the 'choices' they make, which in turn reproduces relations of power. The institutional setting, then, rather than facilitating social mixing, has been seen to embed class relations, in which different class habituses were unequally able to feel comfortable, engage and access resources and power. This engendered unbalanced representations and exclusions, and even when bodies were present they did not necessarily have the confidence to speak, the skills to be articulate or the authority to be heard. As Amin argues "Habitual contact in itself, is no guarantor of cultural exchange. It can entrench group animosities and identities, through repetitions of gender, class, race, and ethnic practices." (2002:969). Such places can thus be understood as constructed, maintained and altered by wider spatial and structural relations of class and power that work through them, in embodied dynamic ways, but within persisting institutional structures reproduced through practices (Massey 1994a; McDowell 1995:5; Bourdieu 2002[1977]). As Bourdieu argues,

A habitat can be occupied physically without really being inhabited in the full sense of the term...

If the habitat shapes the habitus, the habitus also shapes the habitat, through the more or less adequate social useages that it tends to make of it. This certainly throws doubt on the belief that bringing together in the same physical space agents who are far apart in social space might, in itself, bring them closer socially (1996:128)

Thus as Amin (2002:969) argues, equal interaction will not just happen but needs some deliberate fostering, and, as Bridge et al. (2012b:322) argue, an examination of institutional contexts and mechanisms can include the analysis of possible points of intervention and redesign. Thus in the next section I examine practices, situations, institutions and places in which participants narrated positive experiences of social mixing, productive social capital, spaces of equality and expanded opportunities for social mobilities.

7:5 Homogenous Loose Ties in Micropublics: Productive Models

In this section I focus on what participants narrated as useful for their social mobilities, with a particular focus on social capital, at the school, in the locality and beyond. Given that my findings thus far accord with other research indicating that the informal residential social mixing does not lead to social mobility, except in random unsustainable ways, I extrapolate from these narratives alternatives to this approach. As such, I will develop the argument made so far that emphasises the importance of resources and services for expanding the possibilities for social mobility – both horizontal and upward, i.e for both ‘getting on’ and ‘getting by’.

7:5:1 Space of Equality?

Whilst Camden Green School has been shown to reproduce patterns of class power and inequality, it nevertheless had elements of an equitable institutional habitus embedded into organisational systems. I now investigate more widely situations and places which participants narrated as fostering attitudes and practices of equality that could facilitate productive social mixing and social capital.

I found a significant number of both middle- and working-class parents who explicitly practiced class equality, including in voluntary and paid work. They reported being motivated by wanting to help others. This is what Jose (inter-class), a nurse, refers to as “social care”, aligning with Sayer’s notion that ethical dispositions include concern for the welfare of others, “oriented to social well-being and happiness” (2005:51). This presents an alternative kind of social capital to Bourdieu’s model, centred on building care and support between people, rather than competing against others for instrumental

advantages: more akin to the bonding capital of like-ties, but relating more widely and collectively across heterogeneous individuals and groups.

Vanessa's (working-class) narrative of attending AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) meetings presents an argument for how such social care can be embedded into the organisation of an institutional space to promote equal relationships between socio-economically diverse individuals. Vanessa's experience at AA led to her gaining sufficient confidence to pursue a chef's training. Vanessa left school without qualifications, and supported herself by doing low-level manual jobs and working in the illegal economy. As discussed in chapter four, she said the result of her difficult childhood was that, "I haven't really, through lack of confidence and just being fearful of doing anything in case I failed I haven't done anything". She described how attending AA helped her to move forwards,

I was always one living on the edge, just total like chaos... for 2 years I kind of got my shit together and found the confidence to go back to college and do my professional qualification for chef. I wouldn't have done it without AA... I feel normal. Like you know whatever normal is... I just feel I fit in somewhere. Yeah. I'm accepted... now I feel empowered, confident and I can do.

To someone else doing the job I do is nothing, but to me, I'm so proud of myself, because I know where I've come from... So to do something that it's been hard for me to do and enjoy it and fucking get paid for it it's amazing... Especially for me because I could have ended up in the gutter somewhere.

These narratives allow some understanding of the emotional barriers and struggles that Vanessa had to overcome in order to progress her social mobility, and she described how AA's values, systems and processes aimed at building mutual supportive practices helped her,

I went and I thought Ahhh I just identify with everything that's going on in this room. Everyone that's saying something, I'm like, that's me ... and it was like a realisation that it was such a relief to be in a room full of people who were doctors, writers, composers, celebrities, every person from every, the one in the corner smelling of piss, every walk of life you could imagine, was there.

And they speak to you! You know they just treat you like, their shit is the same as yours, it's that way, and then all of a sudden you belong in a community, and you're being carried, and you're carrying someone else.

The social levelling was central to Vanessa's capacity to move forwards. She described a model of mutual recognition and empathy, as opposed to one of competition and envy, as the organization facilitated its members to recognise the commonalities that cross-cut their socio-economic differences. This approach fundamentally contradicts the political social mixing discourse, which is premised on the dichotomous construction of privileged middle-class identities who acts as role models for inferior working-class identities (Paton 2012:258).

It cannot be assumed that institutions will promote equality, but they are nevertheless organised spaces that, arguably, equity can be built into, via systems to actively promote respect and recognition, and actively discourage ascription and hierarchy: micropublics for expanding self-confidence, mutual support and social mobilities. Whilst a Bourdieuvian perspective is important for deconstructing how fields are characterised by struggles for power, it is also important to think about how sites of equality can be *constructed*, that use systematic strategies to optimise diverse talents, skills and interests, supported by inclusive values. Implicit in this model is the notion of a two-way equal exchange of mutual benefits, across classes, in contrast to one-way hegemonic models that oblige subordinate and working-class groups to assimilate to dominant middle-class rules, values and ways of being.

Vanessa's journey of occupational mobility includes the wider holistic conception of social mobilities as it was premised on her increasing self-esteem and happiness, which gave her the confidence to do the chef's training. This offers a more complex understanding of how individuals can be supported to progress within a plural model of social mobilities that is sensitive to a range of values and skills (as discussed in chapters four and five). Vanessa described AA as an institution that emphasised self-development, which echoes the individualist-individualizing model of social mobility. However, what facilitated Vanessa's access to an individualized identity was the availability of the

service of AA. This key point was elaborated by Vanessa when she compared her life to her mother's,

My adult life I would say is much better and a lot different to my mum's because of the empowerment that I've had over the years that wasn't available to my mum. My mum didn't have women's refuge for women of domestic violence, and there wasn't organisations where she could go to get support or help, and I've had any help that I've wanted. Resources basically to help me, so that's the difference.

This narrative re-iterates the persistent emphasis throughout this study on resources, and is compatible with critics who argue that to shift inequality in the local area requires, not random social interactions, but resources, services, welfare provision and redistribution, via institutional local spaces and formal programmes (Abarci and Rae 2013; Fraser et al. 2012). My argument thus aligns, overall, with critics who propose progressive open spaces of social inclusion to be focused around a redistributive vision, including sensitive strategies to build voice and confidence, arbitrate disputes and inculcate a sense of common benefit, leading to shared proposals emerging from open discussion (Amin 2002:970-3; Massey 1999; Abarci and Rae 2013).

As argued in previous chapters, and demonstrated earlier when discussing formal institutional spaces, opportunities and resources may be available, but subordinate bodies do not necessarily feel confident or able to take them up. Thus next I look more closely at the subjective processes involved where working-class participants *did* access support for educational and occupational progression, drawing on the analytic tools of habitus and field.

7:5:2: *The Fit of Habitus and Field*

Selina (working-class) left school at 16 with few GCSEs, and became a sales assistant. Her progression into childcare training and work was facilitated by information (leaflets) and support from teachers she knew at her child's nursery. This emphasises the importance of *targeted* services as this was a familiar place that Selina came to regularly, with the opportunity offered through professionals that she already had trusting social ties with. Selina articulated a similar lack of confidence to that discussed in this and previous chapters, saying "I had doubts and everything". But she was given the confidence to engage with the training because of her trust in and encouragement from the teachers with whom she already had a relationship. She said,

If I didn't have mixing with those people and all that, so that made me more pushed you know, I thought no, I will do something.

I used to get along with them, they start liking me as well, it was so easy ... all the teachers, the staff, it was so nice. And then they did this coursework, doing childminding, and I thought let me do that.

Thus Selina's pre-existing relationship with the teachers was key to her taking up the opportunity, and thus transforming her social ties into productive social capital.

Similarly Karen, from an African-Caribbean working-class background, narrated a trajectory from unemployment into work via a series of local micropublics. Firstly, Karen did some voluntary work at Camden Green School, a familiar place that she had to go to anyway to take her children to school. Through social networks there she then started taking her children to the local Caraf Centre, a black parent-teacher association. She volunteered for the centre, which led to her getting paid work as a playworker, then as co-ordinator of the playscheme. This then led to employment with a local anti-bullying organisation, and eventually on to working with young offenders a few miles away in Hackney. From this position she then felt sufficiently confident to go to university and do a teacher training course, eventually getting her current job as a teacher at a secondary school.

As Watt (2001) argues, analysing trajectories over time enables a better understanding of class identities and mobilities. Karen's trajectory was an organic process as she incrementally expanded her social and spatial worlds. She said,

You know, it wasn't contrived, it wasn't in the least bit me being ambitious, it was just the way life was moving for me. I was very happy that it moved that way for me, with all its challenges.

This narrative is striking because, outside of this experience, Karen described finding it difficult to fit into mainstream society (akin to Vanessa), variously told that she was stupid or too loud or crazy. She felt unconfident in the face of authority, and that her identity was subject to ascription and constraint in relation to a dominating white middle-class norm (as discussed in 5:4:3). In contrast, this experience of social mobility was comfortable as she progressed through places of like-belonging that were oriented to supporting subordinate groups, offering Karen a fit between her (working-class, minority ethnic and parent) habitus and the field. As with Selina, Karen was facilitated through places and people she was already familiar with, which gave her the confidence to engage and progress. (Fig. 7.10).



Fig 7.10: A local community centre

Several other participants from working-class origins and BME groups progressed their occupational mobility through local work, community and public sector sites of cultural, social and spatial familiarity that aligned with their habituses. Thus they avoided the discomfort of a habitus ‘misfit’ in a middle-class-dominated field, and the ensuing infra-conscious fit of taking up a subordinate position that in such a power-laden situation feels natural (as discussed earlier in relation to CAGSA).

Magan (inter-class, Somali migrant), for example, developed a career for himself by helping and working with the Somali community. Over 20 years he moved from voluntary into paid work, and is now as an established and respected community leader. As such, he facilitated other Somalis to similarly progress from sites of socio-ethnic familiarity, where their skills and confidence were fostered, moving into mainstream education and work. Magan said, with reference to helping Somali young people,

we wanted to build up their confidence and bring them together and then, when they have the confidence, to move on and actually integrate into the society. And also the parents, we have to run ESOL classes and basic courses and things like that. Most of the times, the mothers, they were indoors, they were not going out because they didn’t know where to go, so have to bring them into an environment where they can talk and then learn something and then, yeah, feel confident to go on and do something. And then some of them going to college and then universities, the women actually, doing good work now for themselves.

Thus social, cultural, social and emotional capitals are built from ‘marginal’ but familiar spaces, accessible for people who are neither confident nor well-positioned in mainstream sites (Fig 7:11)



Fig 7.11: Emotional support offered in like-group micropublics

The argument that weaker, wider heterogeneous social networks are more easily accessed by first gaining confidence amongst the stronger like-ties of ‘intra-group’ belonging is fairly well-rehearsed in the integration and cohesion literatures that focus on BME groups (Temple and Moran 2005; Robinson and Reeve 2006; Hudson et al. 2007; Mellor 2010). But I argue that this theory is applicable to a variety of intersectional class identities, such as white ethnicity, gender, age, disability and parent-identities.

What these stories shared was that participants started their social trajectories from familiar local places, populated by familiar people, and from here gradually progressed their social mobilities. In other words, participants began their moves upward from places and amongst people that they felt comfortable with. As such, their habituses made a ‘fit’ with the field, in that they did not feel positioned as subservient or powerless, but rather felt confident enough to engage with the opportunities on offer.

These experiences challenge a fundamental tenet of social mixing, that a working-class person needs to mix with middle-class difference in order to improve their life-chances. This research, in fact, has indicated the contrary, that mixing with middle-class difference was often intimidating or uncomfortable for the ‘other’. This aligns with the earlier

emphasis on the importance of strong homogenous bonding ties, thus I argue that like-affiliations, strong and weak, are facilitating for upward social mobility. Secondly, as well as being socially familiar, these sites were spatially local, suggesting the local as an accessible site for building equity, social justice, social and cultural capital. This indicates the importance of targeting resources, services and education, training and employment programmes in well-used local neighbourhood sites (Bridge et al. 2012b). van Criekingen, for example, argues that policy should concentrate on, “the upward social mobility of the incumbent population in working-class neighbourhoods, rather than the promotion of the spatial mobility of middle-class newcomers” (2012:319). This additionally re-iterates that the dichotomisation of spatial stasis and social mobility is a false one. Thirdly, all of these spaces can be argued to foster, at least to some extent, an ethos of inclusivity. For some of these spaces this ethos was supported by welfare support and services, which many critics have argued to be the key facilitator for improving individuals’ life chances (Wacquant 2008; Fraser et al. 2012; Arbaci and Rae 2013). This aligns with the findings throughout the chapter (and indeed in the other chapters) of the central significance of resources to facilitating social mobilities. Lastly these were all micropublics in which sustained social interactions were possible. This suggests that formal institutional sites can be suitable for facilitating both social capital and social mobility, if the other facilitating factors (familiarity, like-ties, an inclusive ethos and resources) are in place.

7:6 Conclusion

The findings of this chapter add to a growing body of critique of the social mixing discourse by arguing that bridging capital in residential space does little to promote an improvement in working-class life chances. Where there are benefits they are random and not embedded into sustainable systems. It is naïve to think social or cultural capital can simplistically ‘trickle down’, or assume that if you put diverse people together they will communicate and help each other. Thus even in micropublics, such as the school, that can produce a density and duration of ties, they cannot predictably or systematically lead to improved opportunities for social mobility.

On the contrary, it was shown that social mixing can be detrimental: hardening and exacerbating class divides as pre-existing class and power relations run through socially-mixed fields, and through the individuals who inhabit them (Bourdieu 1986; 1996; Savage 2000). This was particularly evident in formal institutional sites, which, whilst having organised systems that could potentially work to better sustain equitable social ties, instead often worked to sustain and reproduce the class power relations that structured them. Moreover, differential class dispositions, based on unequal levels of resources, were unequally positioned to engage with and exploit any advantages from these sites. As Field argues, “The opportunities for support are then closely related to an individuals’ or group’s position in the wider social hierarchy” (2003:82).

Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus and field were useful for illuminating the way that classed subjectivities engage with institutional fields, such as the school and other local micropublics, to reproduce class relations of power. Bourdieu’s lens exposed the embodied and emotional ways that individuals react in relation to their classed ‘others’ in a variety of socially mixed environments. The experience of face-to-face social mixing produced poignant and pointed subjective comparisons, and relational practices, that reinforced positions of subordination and domination. The extent and prevalence of feelings of lack of confidence embedded in the working-class habitus was exposed, and I argued that feelings of relative powerlessness led to practices of silence and withdrawal, thus becoming part of the consensual process of hegemony working to reproduce class relations of power (Gramsci 1999[1971]); Skeggs 2004). These findings align with Savage’s (2000) argument that class processes work through individuals, which I develop

by paying analytic attention to intersectional identities, such as the intersections of class by migrant, ethnic and gender identities.

In contrast to the lack of evidence that vertical loose ties in the residential site improved the life chances of working-class participants, I argued for strong ties to be recognised as a valuable social resource for both ‘getting on’ and ‘getting by’. As such I contested the privileging of bridging over bonding ties. Rather than strong ties limiting and fixing people into place, they were enabling, and I thus challenged the stigmatising association of strong ties with static working-class identities, as well as the conflation of spatial with social mobility. Whilst I argued that strong ties were particularly important for ameliorating working-class economic disadvantages by providing access to emotional, cultural, and economic resources, they were nevertheless useful for both middle- and working-class people, thus challenging the construction of a class divide along the binaries of bonding and bridging capital. The dominant social mobility model, which frames the social mixing discourse, actually ignores the important process of getting by (which would then involve taking into account the loss of services, affordable retail outlets, strong social capital at stake with gentrification processes), and its claims for upward mobility is unevidenced. This develops the argument in the housing chapter for the importance for many of staying put, suggesting a right to settlement (Paton 2012), a key theoretical point in the context of a progressive political rejection of the importance of rootedness of place because of its association with a reactionary communitarian exclusionary politics (Young 1990; Massey 1994b:5)

Developing this argument for recognising the value of like-ties, I also argued that building on horizontal ‘linking’ ties is particularly fruitful for improving working-class people’s access to social mobility. There is both a social and spatial element to this argument, drawn together through the conceptual lens of habitus and field, whereby it was argued that people with a working-class habitus are more enabled to access opportunities for social mobilities with people, and in places, where they feel comfortable and can develop their confidence.

This argument was complex as several inter-weaving factors were cited as key facilitators in this context. The importance of accessible local sites was emphasised, that were populated by familiar or like ties, or existing comfortable social contacts. I argued that

local micropublics were appropriate settings *if* they had inclusive practices and ethos' of equality because, as such, they offered the opportunity for developing durable and sustainable social capital over time, of focusing outcomes specifically aimed at improving social mobility, and embedding these into systems and processes that enhanced inclusivity. However, of central significance was that such places could offer sustained access to resources – social, cultural and emotional.

Resources were argued throughout the chapter to be the key ingredient for improving access to upward mobility and to redressing disadvantage (Bridge et al 2012b:319). Other resources, such as economic and cultural capitals, were the way in which social ties become productive social capital. Analytic attention was also given to how existing economic, cultural and economic capitals were used to activate social ties to become productive capitals (Lareau 2003). It is in this context that I argue for a redistribution of such resources through accessible local micropublics.

In these terms, policies aimed at encouraging the promotion of social mobility through social capital would do better to concentrate resources and welfare services at familiar local micropublics already used by the target audience, where people already have relationships, and where an inclusive ethos already exists or can be built into organisational structures. Thus I align with critics who emphasise local institutions, services, and welfare support as far more effective for enhancing upward social mobilities than individualised remedies, such as the random practices of residential mixing, and who therefore call for welfare adjustments rather than population adjustments, and economic and structural solutions rather than cultural ones (Bridge et al 2012b:320; Paton 2012:255). I therefore reject the argument that a relational social capital approach is opposed to a structural redistributive approach (Arbarci and Rae 2013; Amin 2002). A resource-sensitive social capital theory, such as Bourdieu's model, is useful, not because the individual is responsible for their own social mobility, but because institutional, voluntary service and welfare support can facilitate access to *genuine* opportunities by embedded them in existing or potentially positive social relationships. Moreover, I argue that there is a place for area policy approaches, not through social mixing, but rather through targeting resources in existing local inclusive micropublics.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

8:1 Summary of the Findings

8:1:1 Revisiting the Research Aim and Questions: What is Social Mobility?

Throughout this thesis I have addressed the overall research aim of investigating what constitutes social mobility by analysing the experiences of parents whose children attend the same state primary school in an inner London borough. I started from the premise that the concept of social mobility requires investigation in the context of the current Coalition government prioritising social mobility as the principle goal of its social policies (Cabinet Office 2012), in view of widespread political and public confusion about the nature, causes and solutions for low social mobility rates in the UK, and because evidence suggests that class fluidity has remained near-static for nearly one hundred years (Goldthorpe 2012). I explored the key research aim via three primary inter-related strands of inquiry. The first research question examined how class inter-related with participants' social mobility experiences. The second question considered how participants' experiences related to a dominant individualist social mobility discourse. The third question explored how participants' narratives and experiences of significant social achievements in their own lives suggested an alternative model of social mobilities. As such, I have sought not simply to critique current models of social mobility, but also to open up the analysis to new and subordinated discourses about social mobilities.

8:1:2 Key Findings

In relation to question one, I found that there were multiple ways that class processes impacted on participants' social mobility experiences to shape unequal life choices and life chances. The impact of class on parents' aspirations, expectations, choices, outcomes and social mobility trajectories was evident as wider class structures, fields and processes worked through individuals and everyday embodied interactions. The research therefore qualitatively fleshes out Goldthorpe's (2012) quantitative-based argument that class background continues to have a significant impact on individuals' social mobility outcomes.

These findings threw light on research question two, because the influence of class on participants' social mobility outcomes contested the notion, underpinning the

individualist social mobility model, that these outcomes are the fair reward for individuals' hard work and merit. However, whilst denying the role of class structures, I argued throughout that the individualist mobility discourse constructed class categories by attaching stigma and status to classed individuals and bodies that were conceived as responsible for their own social mobility trajectories. This suggested that there were collective class processes at work because this discourse worked to reproduce and exacerbate existing class inequalities as, for example, it justified the resources and rewards of the most advantaged, and the conditions of the most disadvantaged. There was much evidence of consent, and therefore hegemony, to the individualist-individualizing social mobility discourse, but at the same time there was evidence of resistance and alternatives, which was drawn out by the third research question.

Participants evidenced an array of subordinated narratives and experiences of social achievement that were unrecognised and devalued by the dominant social mobility discourse, including positive evaluation of personal social ties, domestic and parenting labour, vocational/manual forms of learning and occupations, getting by as well as getting on, and holistic aspirations for happiness and inclusivity. This contested both the underpinnings of the individualist mobility model, and the narrow hierarchical indicators it rests on. Together, the subordinated experiences and narratives, across classes, suggested a counter-hegemonic social mobility discourse that accounts for the holistic goals and contexts of people's lives, gives more equal value to a plurality of educational and occupational achievements, as well as to diverse housing tenures. Participants' narratives also suggested that a policy interest in improving social mobility opportunities would do better to expand the notion of social mix, and consider the value of intra-class, bonding and homogenous social ties in accessible and resourced micropublics, rather than claiming (against the evidence here and elsewhere) that working-class residents benefit from mixing with their middle-class neighbours. Therefore, overall, I reject the neoliberal individualist discourse of social mobility and call for a reformulated mobility discourse that draws class back into the analysis and is reframed as a collectivist equality agenda based on the redistribution of resources.

In the next three sections I discuss the findings in more detail, organised around the three research questions. Then I consider the contributions this research has made to academic knowledge, followed by a discussion of the limitations of the research and suggestions

for future research. In the concluding section I reflect on my personal journey and learning experience.

8:2 Participants' Experiences of Class

Addressing question one, I have made the case that class processes impacted on social mobilities in a range of ways, which I discuss below in terms of class resources and then class structures.

8:2:1 Class Resources and the Habitus

The study evidenced intergenerational class reproduction processes across all the social fields, and made the case that these processes were shaped by the unequal resources of the habitus. As such, capitals in the habitus influenced participants' capacities to progress their educational, occupational and housing mobilities in a multitude of complex and inter-weaving ways.

The research indicated the importance of economic capitals for choices and access in the educational, occupational and housing fields. For example, differing amounts of economic capital associated with employment incomes and wealth shaped what could be accessed in the London housing market, including the further equity gains of home-ownership. Attitudes to investment and risk were also shaped by unequal levels of economic capital.

The analysis also focused on emotional resources, "revealing how class both produces and is produced through emotion" (Gillies 2007:34). One key line of inquiry was looking at the emotional impacts of material class conditions, which has been given little attention in class analysis of the emotions compared to cultural distinction-making (bar Gillies 2007). The stresses of poverty and the emotional impacts of insecure, temporary or overcrowded housing, for example, resulted from class positions and, in turn, impacted on capacities to 'move on'. Whilst middle-class participants also underwent stress and distress, they faced less material pressures and had more economic resources to alleviate their situations. Self-confidence was shown to be a key emotion in the study. It was eroded in response to the material and symbolic conditions of class, and then had a major

impact on capacities to engage with aspiration, risk and opportunities. As Skeggs' found, "there are potent signs of unremitting emotional distress generated by the doubts and insecurities of living class... on a daily basis" (1997:167).

Cultural capital was important in terms of educational qualifications and embodied soft skills that influenced access to both education (such as university admission) and occupation (such as embodied service jobs). But cultural capital was also important symbolically, with unequal value ascribed to class identities emerging via everyday distinction-making processes and inscriptions of class onto bodies.

The role of social capital was discussed in some depth in the social mixing debate, which also developed the analysis, made throughout, of how different kinds of capitals worked in inter-related ways to produce spirals of dis/advantage. The research progressed the understanding of how resources convert to capitals. It was found, for example, that the conversion of social affiliations to social capital depended on other already-existing cultural and economic capitals.

Self-confidence, as indicated, was a key emotional capital for exploiting cultural or social capital opportunities, and participants' noted how their feelings of self-confidence and power in relation to others varied over space (Valentine 2007). I interrogated this in some detail by using Bourdieu's notions of habitus and field, and looked at experiences in a number of socially-mixed institutional settings (micropublics), such as schools, community centres and meeting spaces. This demonstrated how inter-subjective interactions could reproduce pre-existing class relations of subordination and dominance, as middle- and working-class participants took up positions of authority and subordination in the formal micropublics, embedded in the relationships of habitus and field (Lareau 2003). Withdrawal from public spaces of power was found to be a key subordinate tactic in these contexts, further exacerbating inequalities. This impacted on access to opportunities and skills available in these spaces, and on capacities to express opinions. Therefore by paying attention to space and place, the research revealed how class hegemony works through bodies and space (Valentine 2007), with formal institutional settings such as the parent-teacher associations, the workplace and regeneration meetings shaped by middle-class domination.

Various relational emotions were produced in a variety of interactive classed situations. For example some workplaces were structured to perpetuate relations of authority and subordination, resulting in discomfort, embarrassment, shame and guilt. The analyses of multiple social mobility fields across the chapters also drew out these connections in intra-and inter-generational ways, for example as economic capital impacted on housing, which then impacted on children's education, which in turn had an effect on occupation and thence economic resources.

8:2:2 Class Structures

The research added a structural element into the Bourdieuvian emphasis on embodied relational practices. It drew out how class structures, such as the organisation of the housing market and systems of educational assessment, shaped class relations and impacted on participants' experiences. The structural impact of national policies on participants' experiences was interrogated throughout, from examining the material impact of welfare cuts to the discursive impact of workfare discourse.

The research evidenced how participants' economic resources inter-acted with educational and economic structures to shape uneven access to learning experiences. So, for example, private schooling, university tuition fees, the abolition of Educational Maintenance Allowance and pressures to work on benefits claimants, all shaped uneven access to the institutional cultural capital of higher education, differently valued credits and continuing education, as well as the 'softer' cultural capitals of school trips, after-school activities and a sense of self-confidence and entitlement (fostered through the private school system). Participants' experiences were contextualised within the occupational terrain in which low absolute mobility rates were argued to have increased competition for a near-static number of middle-class jobs in the context of widening participation. Participants demonstrated unequal amounts of knowledge about the nuances of educational accreditation that would help them in this competitive occupational market place, for example in relation to the academic requirements for accessing university, the importance of accessing the most prestigious universities, and the 'hard' subjects required to do so. Therefore it was argued that current policies intensifying academic credentialism favoured the knowledge and skills embedded in the middle-class habitus. Participants also had unequal economic, social, cultural and emotional resources to enable them to compete in the unequally structured educational

market on equal terms. Therefore I added evidence to existing literatures that argue the education system has become a key cultural site through which the middle-class reproduce their occupational status and privileges (Bourdieu and Passeron (200[1977])); Reay 1998; Savage 2000:89-91; Butler and Robson 2003a).

There was a strong structural analysis in relation to the market for housing and processes of displacement in chapter six, in which policies were shown to structure class inequality along tenure axes. Participants' experiences were contextualised within a neoliberal political approach that privileges home ownership at the expense of providing access to secure, affordable rental tenancies, either through a sufficient stock of social housing or through private rent reform. The distressing and disabling experiences of the high numbers of low-income working-class participants' living in insecure and temporary accommodation was highlighted. Moreover, long-standing policies interacted with recent welfare cuts to produce devastating and divisive material and emotional impacts. Overall the structure of the housing market effected increasingly unequal access to space, mobility, security, control, which were the housing qualities valued by participants, exacerbating the inequalities already embedded in class positions. The huge price inflation of the London private property market was also associated with massive capital gains for those participants who owned homes. Crucially, unequal housing situations impacted on access to resources in other fields, for participants and their children, such as education and occupation.

The impacts of a shifting housing-class landscape on participants was evidenced by both low and median income participants struggling to access any form of secure and affordable housing in London. Their experiences indicated this is a critical historical moment due to the increasing costs of private property, an array of welfare cuts, including to housing benefits and the 'bedroom tax', and the regeneration of council estates, which threatened the security of existing tenants and leaseholders. Participants' experiences demonstrated a generational shift, with both social tenants and home-owners (albeit to differing degrees) finding it harder to afford and access adequate space. Underpinning unequal access to the valued housing qualities of space, security, affordability, spatial mobility was the persistent, ongoing and continuing erosion of secure social housing, which was the only genuinely affordable housing option for low and median income people.

Thus to conclude this section on participants experiences of class, I argue that class structures shaped access to resources, with evidence of exacerbated inequalities. Then inequality of class resources in the habitus shaped access to agency and choice, to reflexivity and an individualized identity, and thus to capacities to construct auto-biographies and social mobilities. Class, therefore, is not absent but simply less visible than in its industrial collective place-based forms, which is, arguably, why it has been missed and thus denied by critics such as the individualization theorists. I examine this aspect of the research findings in the following section.

8:3 The Individualist-Individualizing Discourse of Social Mobility

The second research question sought to understand how participants' experiences of social mobility related to (converged with, diverged from, were impacted by, constructed, reproduced, consented to, and contested) the dominant individualist discourse of social mobility. The findings, above, addressed this question because the evidence that class impacted on participants' social mobilities undermines the assumption of the individualist discourse that the autonomous subject rises and falls on the basis of their own talents and abilities within a meritocratic society. Therefore in this section I concentrate on two other key findings relating to this question. Firstly, I discuss how participants' experiences indicate that the dominant social mobility discourse constructs hierarchical class categories as a form of symbolic dominance and hegemony to perpetuate class inequalities and power. Then I focus on how participants' experiences construct a critique of the symbolic figure of the individualized self, and the associated symbolic class categories.

8:3:1 Cultural Hegemony, Class Domination

The study established that participants ascribed or felt ascribed with value (status and stigma) according to the social mobility indicators, in relation to education, occupation and housing, via everyday narratives and practices of ascription, inscription and distinction-making. For example, participants made judgments of the self and others based on academic qualification levels, which they translated as relative ascriptions of stupidity and intelligence. They made self/judgments regarding occupations, felt as acute

emotional experiences of discomfort, shame and embarrassment for those in low-status positions, particularly in situations of embodied interaction with classed others. Re-iterating other studies, this research also indicated that people living in housing estates felt stigmatised (Gwyther 2009; Watt 2006; Gidley and Rooke 2010). Therefore participants suffered the everyday indignity of feeling positioned as having less value relative to others. Moreover, this was often either implicitly or explicitly articulated in terms of class, whether Johnny feeling inferior in the context of an elite (“suited and booted”) middle-class work party, or Helen feeling not listened to because of her accent.

Moreover, these everyday distinctions echoed wider symbolic discourses in policy and the mass media that represented middle- and working-class cultures as relatively value/less. For example, David Cameron (2012), when relaunching Right to Buy (chapters two and six), explicitly constructed home-owners and social tenants in morally evaluated terms. Participants felt particularly negatively positioned with regard to ‘worklessness’ in the context of claiming welfare benefits, with a particular slur felt by working-class parents. This echoed the punitive tone of the ‘welfare to work’ discourse, and associated pathologising political and mass media tropes of ‘skivers versus strivers’, ‘hardworking families’, ‘pramface’ and ‘chavs’ (Gillies 2007; Jones 2011; Tyler 2013). Sara, for example, replicated this discourse when she distinguished herself against people she narrated as ‘breeding’ an inter-generational cycle of benefit dependency, a discourse that she noted herself was ubiquitous, “around you everywhere, from the television and the newspapers and other people”. Overall, these narratives indicate processes of hegemony as political and media discursive constructions of class distinctions were evident in participants’ common sense (doxic) ways of thinking, and reproduced through their practices, emotions and relations in everyday spaces.

Moreover, participants often framed their own and others’ social positions as just reward for their efforts, even when contradicted by their experiences. For example, Brendan articulated his relatively low income as a painter and decorator as the result of not working hard enough, even though he was simultaneously proud that he did work hard, and held the view that manual labour was insufficiently valued. Therefore there was consent to a moral discourse of individualising blame, as participants internalised the ascriptions *and* the culpability fostered on them, whether it was Selina’s feeling there was something wrong with her because she lived in a hostel or Rebecca’s feelings of personal

shame when the school she sent her disabled son to failed to accommodate his needs. Participants also consented to the legitimacy of the notion of meritocracy by justifying their own advantages. For example, home-ownership was narrated by several participants as their reward for working hard. Thus participants often took on personal responsibility for their social positions and blamed others for theirs. That everyday distinctions were interpreted in the terms of merit and culpability indicates the hegemony of the individualist social mobility discourse. In fact this mobility discourse, underpinned by the notion of individual responsibility, is the ideal conceptual vehicle to construct the self-internalising processes necessary for hegemony.

Attaching blame to the most disadvantaged and powerless section of society produces an intra-class discursive divide between the ‘working’ and the ‘workless’, which, as argued throughout, works to justify the withdrawal of welfare support, as part of the wider neoliberal roll-back of the state. The most disadvantaged are deemed to be insufficiently mobile because of their dependence on benefits, the withdrawal of which will spur them to take more responsibility for themselves. Yet the majority of those claiming benefits, and having them cut, are actually working (Coote and Lyall 2013), which the narrative of ‘scroungers’ and ‘skivers’ conceals. This further indicates that processes of hegemony are at work as the deployment of the pathologised ‘workless’ figure obscures the fact that benefits are being cut for *all* those on low incomes, the working and workless alike. This supports Slater’s (2012) argument that the state is deliberately producing misinformation and ignorance, via social pathologies and the notion of personal responsibility, in order to justify welfare reform and obscure alternative redistributive political solutions to addressing poverty and inequality. In Bourdieu’s terms, symbolic violence is at work. In a similar vein housing tenures were argued to be tied into an individualist social mobility discourse that was put to work to stigmatise social housing tenants as insufficiently hard-working or responsible, which then justifies the continued erosion of social housing stock and persistent support for private housing interests.

The intra-class discursive divide between the ‘working’ and the ‘workless’ arguably both diffuses working-class political solidarity and distracts attention from the inter-class relations of power at work. This research, however, indicated throughout that the dominant social mobility discourse privileged the middle class, as the status indicators for education (promoting academic learning), occupation (favouring desk-based jobs) and

housing (valorising home-ownership and promoting gentrification) privileged middle-class knowledges and values, and reproduced their advantages and power. Meanwhile the social mix policy discourse re-iterated a privileging of middle-class identities, against devalued working-class cultures. The systems and spaces of the education, occupation and housing field, as well as many of the formal spaces in the socially mixed neighborhood, were all shown to shape processes of inscription, evaluation, exclusion and exchange according to middle-class perspectives and interests.

Therefore, as Skeggs (2004) argues, class is discursively made via the construction of symbolic class identities and bodies, which are then deployed as resources in collective class power struggles. Therefore, whilst the individualist notion of meritocracy denies the influence of class structure, it nevertheless constructs hegemonic class power via the cultural construction of class identities that are evaluated according to their class positions and perceptions of their orientations to mobility. This discourse then works to obscure state responsibility for redressing class inequalities, such as unequal access to education, polarised labour conditions and wages, insufficient housing, displacement and socio-spatial segregation. Whilst the government states its “primary focus is on addressing the obstacles faced at critical moments across the life cycle” (Cabinet Office 2011:21), it fails to address the key structural inequalities that hinder social mobility. Therefore, as Amable (2011:14-24) argues, the individualization process reinforces constraint rather than offering the neoliberal promise of freedom. I am not contesting Goldthorpe and his colleagues use of class indicators to assess relative and absolute mobilities and the fluidity of class structures, but I do contest the appropriation of these indicators by an individualist rhetoric to construct, divide, hierarchise and stigmatise class identities and bodies for the purposes of hegemony.

The distinction identified between the class indicators that Goldthorpe and his colleagues use to measure social mobility, and their translation by an individualist discourse into status measures conferring hierarchical value, is important, because one is an indicator that aims to identify inequality, whilst the other is a status marker that works to exacerbate it. This highlights the importance of conceptual clarity about how social mobility is theorised, indicating the different ways it can be put to political use.

8:3:2 Critiquing the Individualized Self

As discussed in chapter two, there is a strong theoretical relationship between the political individualist discourse of social mobility and the individualization theory of Beck (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001; Beck 1999) and Giddens (1991; 1997), as the idea of the individual who can progress on the basis of their own merit correlates to the individualized self who is able to autonomously construct their own biography. It was then argued that the characteristics of the individualized self were more accessible to middle-class people than to working-class people because of unequal levels of resources (Savage 2000; Taylor 2012) and unequal relations of power (Massey 1994b; Skeggs 2004). Moreover, because individualization theory does not acknowledge the effects of class, I highlighted critics who have argued that different experiences of, and orientations to, individualized characteristics of identity (such as autonomy, reflexivity and mobility) are interpreted as characteristics of personal identity rather than the effects of class positions (Haylett 2001; Skeggs 2004; Taylor 2012).

It has already been argued earlier in this chapter, with reference to question one, that class processes impacted on participants' access to an individualized identity, and this already has produced a critique of the notion of the agentic, autonomous and reflexive self, able to construct their own biography. I now pursue that critique by drawing together the ways in which participants' experiences illuminate the critique of the concept of the individualized self, re-iterating some of the ways that class processes impacted on access to the individualized self, but also troubling the discursive classed binaries constructed around the characteristics of the individualized self. As such, this debate also develops the previous discussion that highlighted the ways that the political individualist mobility discourse constructs dichotomous class categories. I therefore discuss the notion of the autonomous, upwardly-mobile self, the notion of the spatially mobile self and, finally, the notion of the aspirational self.

Many critics have critiqued the notion of the autonomous self with reference to the idea of the relational self, which they argue is particularly applicable to working-class women who are the primary carers of their children and are oriented to family care and occupations that fit in with caring duties and their caring dispositions (Gillies 2007; Armstrong 2010). This notion was addressed in chapter five, in which the research found that all the participants, because of their parent statuses, had relational identities to

differing degrees, with their dependencies shaping their trajectories. This was across classes and genders, although the research re-iterated critics' emphasis on women being the most likely parent to have their social mobility trajectories interrupted by the responsibilities of childcare (Thomson, et al. 2011a; Gillies 2007). Single-parenthood was also a significant intersection, with an extra burden of 'dependency' placed on these parents, across classes. However, most participants, across classes, were found to have orientations to autonomous projects of the self *and* relational concerns, but the balance of these dispositions shifted over lifecourses.

Despite the fact that some middle-class women depended on close social ties for childcare, and some working-class women used childcare in the market because of their access to tax credits, the key crucial divider between orientations to autonomy or relationality was participants' access to resources. The middle-class access to childcare and domestic help in the market, enabled by their higher levels of economic capital, enabled them to manage their dependencies better. This is likely to become an even more crucial divider in the context of welfare cuts, including tax credits. Some middle-class participants also depended on their high-paid spouses to support them in changes of career and returning to education, which demonstrates the complex relationship between autonomy (pursuing their own projects) and dependency (requiring the money of their spouses) that even the middle-class participants experienced. Moreover, the so-called 'autonomous' worker (often, although not always, male) depended on the domestic and childcare services of others (either paid domestic workers or unpaid, household members, usually female), which re-iterates the long-standing Marxist feminist critique that the market economy depends on the domestic economy in the home (James and Costa 1972). Thus relationality can be understood as a mobile, flexible identity characteristic, and autonomy can be understood as inter-woven with dependency and levels of resources. Both the concepts of autonomy and relationality, and the class identities associated with these characteristics, are therefore argued to be blurred binaries, whose boundaries are troubled by relations of dependence, class and inequality.

Moreover, in contrast to the slur of 'dependency culture' attached to working-class benefit-claimants, the participants, across classes and including those who accessed welfare support, disliked experiencing dependency and valued autonomy and control.

This was expressed, for example, in relation to workplace relations, practices of home-making, and access to settlement and spatial mobility.

The notion that middle-class identities are more oriented to spatial mobility than their working-class counterparts is another facet of the individualist-individualizing classed discourse. I found that several participants across classes expressed a desire for spatial mobility and planning futures elsewhere. However, working-class participants were primarily constrained by the structure of the housing market that provided insufficient affordable and secure housing to operationalise these aspirations. The greater reliance on the unpaid help of strong local ties, given their lower economic resources, was also a deterring factor. Thus where spatial stasis was a characteristic of working-class participants' experiences, this was structured by low levels of economic resources, coupled with the structure of the housing market. However, some working-class participants were threatened with enforced spatial mobility due to eviction and displacement, which was again structured by the housing market, coupled with welfare cuts. Moreover, middle-class participants were also found to value settlement and stasis, particularly in the context of being parents, with value, for example, placed on continuity of children's education. The greatest difference, however, was the degree of choice the participants had, which was again dependent on unequal levels of resources. These findings also disentangled conflation of social and spatial mobility, as there were clearly many benefits of staying put for upward mobility, across classes, for example, through building social and cultural capitals in neighborhoods, useful for accessing opportunity through familiar accessible micropublics, setting up in business, providing emotional and practical support, and networks and knowledge (as discussed in chapters six and seven).

The individualist emphasis on aspiration was also critiqued, with the findings blurring the binaries constructed between aspirational, forward-looking middle-class identities and backward-looking, unmotivated working-class identities. The research found that working- as well as middle-class participants had aspirations for themselves and their children, both in educational and occupational terms (in line with other critics' findings, such as Reay, 1998, and Brown, 2011). However, participants' aspirations were shaped and transformed into expectations, plans and actions by resources and past experiences, including the expectations of others, the fear of failure, and pragmatic assessments of what appeared to be possible within the parameters of the habitus. Moreover, aspirations

were not always recognised when they were attached to devalued educational, occupational or housing statuses, or associated with ‘getting by’ rather than ‘getting on’. I therefore argue that for the most part working-class people do not lack aspiration, but lack recognition, resources and support.

Therefore, for participants across classes, orientations to acting autonomously or relationally, and to social and spatial mobility, shifted over time and across life-courses. However, class positions, and the associated levels of resources, shaped access to an individualized identity, and indeed shaped access to social mobility opportunities generally. Thus as Savage (2000) argues, individualized processes are contingent and situated, operating in relation to individuals’ class positions. This analysis also supports Skeggs’ (2004) argument that the ‘reflexive self’ is a rhetorical device through which to deny working-class experiences and values, working to produce middle-class symbolic dominance. Thus the reflexive self can be regarded as part of the cultural hegemonic processes discussed earlier. Hierarchised discursive distinctions between differently ‘reflexive’ people not only maims working-class people with blame and stigma, but also erodes the capacity for the working class to claim identity on their own terms. Thus the middle-class deploy the idea of the ‘reflexive self’ as the symbolic frame for a material battle. Material injustice is framed in terms that justify and embed privilege, and distort and disable alternative forms of valuable identities, such as relational identities and the hugely important labours of ‘getting by’. In the next section I therefore turn to the research findings in relation to question number three, which gives both working- and middle-class subordinated values and experiences some air.

8:4 Expanding the Discourse of Social Mobilities

The impact of hegemony, as discussed above, is that the legitimated individualist social mobility discourse effects a near silencing of subordinated values, experiences and mobilities. This includes ignorance of political alternatives to the current neoliberal approach of welfare cuts and state withdrawal (Slater 2012). Therefore, in this section, I address research question three by summing up what was learned from listening to the subordinated discourses (or as Anderson and Jack, 1991, would say, muted voice) of the participants, by drawing together participants’ own experiences and narratives of social

achievement and mobilities, and considering how they may suggest a counter-hegemonic model of social mobility. Critics stress the importance of drawing working-class viewpoints into academic debate, as they are most likely to be hidden by the cultural hegemony of a dominant class (Kuhn 2002[1995]; Haylett 2003; Skeggs 2004; Gillies 2007). However, as emphasised throughout the thesis, I do not assume that all middle-class voices are homogenous or hegemonic, and will thus draw in subordinated perspectives from across classes to consider how together they may offer an alternative politics. I organise the analysis around the key concepts that I used throughout to interrogate question three. Thus, firstly, I discuss the findings in relation to the idea of plural mobilities (Elliott 1997; Raco 2009), secondly, in relation to holistic understandings of social mobilities (Elliott 1997; Brown 2011) and, lastly, I consider how a concern with social mobility might be drawn together with a politics aimed at redressing class inequalities (Raco 2009).

8:4:1 Plural Mobilities

In the educational and occupational fields, many participants' valued practical learning, life skills, and vocational and manual skills as much as, if not more than, academic education and 'brain' desk-based jobs. Some participants were highly skilled in these capacities but felt unrecognised and devalued. Structurally this was, for the most part, reflected in unequal job conditions and remuneration. However, participants emphasised the importance of education and jobs fitting with diverse but particular individual skills, talents and interests. This challenges political individualist claims to be improving individuals' access to choice, whilst at the same time only conferring due credit for academic and desk-based mobility routes. Given the array of different kinds of jobs required for the UK economy, the approach of recognising multiple routes appropriate to diverse individuals' skills and interests would seem viable.

The identification of alternative ways to pursue social mobilities was often expressed through contradictory narratives, indicating the difficulty of even articulating alternatives to the hegemonic norms. Practicing alternatives was even more difficult as participants risked pursuing paths for themselves or their children that would ultimately be unrecognised and unrewarded, jeopardising the chance of 'getting on'. I thus argue that expanding the symbolic recognition of social mobilities is important for facilitating the practice of them.

The key role of domestic labour, including childcare, has already been highlighted, and the discursive stigmatisation of the 'chav mum' on benefits is premised on a devaluation of the work of parenting - despite a simultaneous contradictory policy emphasis on the importance of parenting. However, the participants all took the job of parenting seriously, and the research re-iterates other critics who stress the significance and labours of parenting (James and Costa 1972; Reay 1998; Gillies 2007; Thomson et al. 2011a), not least for its role in children's own social mobilities. This suggests that the labour of parenting should be recognised, valued and remunerated, and that the economic significance of unpaid domestic work should be brought into the social mobility debate, including a discussion of what kind of welfare is required for those on lower incomes or bringing up children on their own. With reference to each social field the participants articulated the importance of economic resources, and in chapter six their experiences indicated the crucial significance of an affordable, secure and sufficiently spacious home.

The research also revealed the efforts, labours and mobilities working-class participants often underwent simply to 'get by', unrecognised in the current political model of social mobility that emphasises upward mobility and pays slight attention to either downward or horizontal mobilities (Shildrick et al. 2012). Whilst several participants from middle-class origin experienced an easy passage as they moved horizontally into similar jobs to their parents', those from working-class backgrounds, such as Stef, Vanessa, Karen and Selina (in chapters four, five and seven), often struggled for years to earn enough to survive, acquire jobs that they liked, or access education. The necessity of bringing in an income often forestalled ambitions for 'investing' in their education and aspirations. Yet even when, against the odds, they eventually got jobs they wanted, they still often struggled to support their survival or be recognised for the movements and labours they had made. In the context of relatively low remuneration, Brendan found it hard to value his achievement of sustaining work as a painter and decorator though several recessions, whilst the status and remuneration of Selina's job as nursery assistant belied the demands of the job and the shifts of direction, training and efforts she had made to get there. Despite the emphasis of the social mobility discourse on mobility, it therefore appears that status per se is given greater recognition and value. As such, people's starting points, what they have overcome, and the real social distances travelled in lifetimes, remain unseen and devalued.

Whilst the individualist social mobility discourse justifies the rewards of high-level jobs, it not only devalues low-level work, but actually constructs stigma and blame as the low incomes involved necessarily demand welfare support. Thus respect for the working-class ‘work ethic’ is replaced by a punitive moral discourse of pathology and culpability. Moreover, because the efforts and achievements involved in ‘getting by’ are devalued, it is harder to challenge the low pay and poor conditions of these jobs. This analysis adds weight to the argument for ‘lower-tier’ jobs to be put on a more equal symbolic and material footing with ‘higher-tier’ jobs.

Therefore, in summary, I critique the privileging of the one-dimensional hierarchical frame of academic success, particularly given the evidence that it is used by the middle class to reproduce educational and occupational advantages, and argue for attributing plural pedagogies with more equal value and status. Additionally, as economic and status advantages are accrued by the middle class from the current hierarchical organisation of brawn/brain occupations, participants subordinated narratives suggest that more equal value and remuneration could be conferred across a diversity of occupations.

8:4:2 Holistic Contexts of Social Mobilities

The holistic analysis of social mobility considered wider life aspirations that lay outside of the mobility fields of education and occupation, but impacted on them (Elliott 1997; Brown 2011). In this context I briefly discuss the emotional context of participants’ lives, then focus on housing, home and displacement, before moving on to consider participants’ positive evaluation of equality and social care.

Like Brown (2011) with the young people he researched, I found the parents’ positively valued happiness and personal affective relationships for themselves and their children. This included fitting parenting into their plans for education and work, as discussed earlier. Throughout the study’s focus on emotions, self-confidence was found to be a key emotional capital that impacted on social mobility experiences across all the social fields examined, as discussed above. It shaped participants’ aspirations, expectations and practices, their abilities to take up opportunities, and interactive embodied social relations. As such, this thesis supports Brown’s argument that the wider emotional and relational context of people’s lives be taken into account when considering how best to support

people's future goals. I look more closely here at housing, which was bound up in participants' emotional wellbeing, their social ties as well as their and their children's social mobilities.

With reference to housing and home, there was an overall consensus across the participants that, regardless of tenure, they all valued affordability, security, adequate space, privacy, safety, the option for spatial mobility, and control. Whilst home-ownership was desired or/and attained by some, others enjoyed living in, or actively wanted to live in, social rented housing. These findings therefore challenged the privileging of home-ownership, and deconstructed a fetishising of tenure-type. Whilst social housing was not an economic investment, it could be equivalent to home-ownership in most other ways. This undermines the framing of housing in terms of a hierarchy of tenure-types indicating status, with home-ownership constructed as a coveted positional good. Moreover, participants' experiences emphasised the value of their houses as *homes*, as bases for feelings of safety and security, places to practice home-making, and spaces in which to make financial and emotional investments. This 'use value' of homes was appreciated across classes, which as well as challenging critics who dichotomise class orientation to housing (Allen 2008), also challenges the mobility perspective that frames housing as a positional good. Rather than framing housing in term of social mobility, then, participants' experiences and narratives suggested regarding a secure home as a basic need.

Where social mobility *was* relevant to housing was, instead, the crucial role that the valued housing qualities played in enabling and enhancing participants' and their children's social mobilities. Access to spatial mobility was important in this respect, and sufficient space impacted, for example, on children's homework. However, security of tenure was crucially important for providing an emotional base from which to make future plans, for access to stable educational experiences, to providing social networks and local knowledge useful for participants' businesses, and for providing strong social ties that assisted both 'getting by' and 'getting on'. Moreover, in the analysis of social mixing in chapter seven, some familiar local micropublics were found to be useful for facilitating social mobilities. The demand for secure housing is not abstract, because it was a concrete experience for most of the lower-income participants who, in their struggle to secure permanent social housing tenancies, had spent years in hostels,

temporary housing and even on the streets. In the context of the currently increasing threat in London of insecure housing *and* displacement, due to a severe shortage of affordable housing and Coalition policies eroding access to secure tenure, this research emphasises the right to security and settlement. In these terms I thus propose housing to be regarded not as a social mobility indicator, but as right, a need and a central holistic context impacting on social mobilities.

Participants themselves emphasised an ethos of care and equality, across classes, echoing some of the middle-class parents studied by Reay et al. (2008). For example, many participants valued the inclusive ethos of Camden Green School, they cited respect for and engagement with difference as a key value they wanted to transmit to their children, and practiced engaged empathy and involvement across classes, rather than simply the more distant and guarded “knowing” found by Reay and her colleagues (ibid. 2008:244). As Sayer emphasises, “The habitus has a moral dimension... Ethical dispositions and beliefs need not merely promote actors’ self-interest, but to varying degrees can include the welfare of others” (2005:51). The inclusive institutional ethos of Camden Green School was also found to help create some favorable situations for mutual friendship and understanding across classes. Thus the study found benefits of inter-class social mixing for building empathy and understanding across classes, suggesting that physical proximity can offer improved chances for cross-class solidarities. However, the research also found some of the school and neighborhood spaces, particularly the formal meeting spaces, perpetuated and even exacerbated inter-class inequalities as participants’ class habituses rendered them unequally comfortable, confident, entitled, authoritative and cognisant of the rules of the game in a variety of places. Where there were positive inter-class relations in the neighborhood, they were not necessarily sustainable or embedded into systems aimed at redressing inequalities or improving mobilities. Therefore, overall, whilst both inclinations and practices of inclusivity were encouraging, in so far as they suggested support for a more egalitarian alternative to the currently dominant individualist politics, the findings also indicated the random and limited impact of these inclinations and practices. As Reay et al. argue,

Attempting to live an egalitarian lifestyle in a society, which is structurally unequal, is difficult, conflictual and tension laden (Sayer, 2005). It is vital to recognise the relations of distance, power and conflict that living with difference

is embedded in.... living in the same neighbourhoods and going to school with class and ethnic others rarely dissolves distance and hierarchy (2008:252).

Therefore in the next section I draw together participants' subordinated experiences and narratives of social achievement, their dispositions and practices of empathy and inclusivity, the expanded notions of plural and holistic social mobilities, to consider specifically how they might suggest a counter-hegemonic alternative to the individualist social mobility discourse, better placed to address the class inequalities that this research has consistently found underpins social mobility experiences.

8:4:3 Counter-hegemonic Discourse: Social Mobility and Equality

The point just made, then, is that unequal class resources, processes and structures are central to any alternative discourse of social mobility. I elaborate this point here in relation to the discussion on self-confidence, to make a wider point about the difference between the emphasis this thesis makes on the way class works through individuals' subjectivities, and the individualist emphasis on the personal responsibility of individuals. I then go on to discuss what kind of change might be envisaged and what this study can contribute to a counter-hegemonic alternative conception of social mobility, with particular reference to the ideas of plural mobilities and inclusive micropublics.

Class ran through participants' emotional experiences, with their self-confidence shaped by other people's expectations and inscriptions as they internalised (made an infra-conscious fit with) their structural positions of status and power in relation to classed others. Class resources and positions shaped the stress and distress participants endured, the emotional pressures they were under and provided unequal levels of support in difficult times. My analysis, therefore, is that rather than self-confidence building workshops aimed at personal development (as Helen was tasked with in her role as classroom assistant, for example, in chapter four), change needs to be effected at the structural level by redressing the underlying problem of unequal class resources – economic *and* symbolic. Similarly I do not argue that happiness (or self-confidence) be used as an indicator for social mobility, as Professor Paul Gregg, commissioner on the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, recommended (Womack 2012:98-99), as this conflates the causes, effects and indicators of social mobility, is too easily co-opted

into an individualist agenda that holds individuals responsible for their social mobilities, and is in danger of losing focus on the impact of class resources and structures on happiness and social mobility (Allen et al. 2013; Bradshaw et al. 2013). Therefore any moves to open up the social mobility indicators and discourse needs to be both conceptually precise and embedded in a concern for class inequality.

Clearly, then, the changes argued for are not restricted to making small changes within the status quo, but call for a paradigmatic shift from an individualist to a redistributionist political agenda. This point was implicit throughout the thesis' class analysis and made explicit at several points in the analyses of education, housing and social mixing, and analysis of participants' experiences and narratives suggested that the education system, the occupational structure and housing market be radically reconsidered. The structural analysis of education and housing, particularly, revealed that the dis/advantages embedded in the institutionalism of a pedagogic ethos and tenure types were not immanent or fixed, but contingent and shaped by policies that changed over time. And being contingent, policies and structures can be changed. Bridge et al. (2012b:319) warn of the scale of the task of challenging a marketised neoliberal environment, and this thesis does not claim to provide structural solutions or comprehensive policy recommendations. Nevertheless it can contribute some relevant insights and suggest a way of theoretically re-thinking the social mobility discourse. Whilst critics point to the absence of empirical research underpinning theories of individualization (Savage 2000:115), the theories proposed here have grounding in the empirical evidence of lived experience.

The notion of plural mobilities, discussed above, proposed that more equal value be conferred across a diversity of learning experiences and occupations. A recognition of the equivalence of different tenure types also aligns with this notion. Challenging and re-calibrating the unequal values given to diverse statuses in the educational, occupational and housing fields cannot completely redress class inequalities as, for example, class relations embedded in employer-employee relationships are structured by power, and owning an inner London property produces equity assets unavailable to social housing tenants. However, policies can still have ameliorating effects by structuring more equal validation and material outcomes in these social fields, for example by upgrading accreditation of manual learning, supporting more equal remuneration of jobs and

expanding access to secure social housing. Lower-income participants had variously been able to progress their training, education and careers through in-work training, educational grants, tax credits, welfare benefits and affordable social housing. This demonstrates the importance of state intervention to ameliorate inequalities, yet all these subsidies have been curtailed, cut or are under threat with the Coalition governments' continued roll-back of the welfare state. Therefore this study argues not only for a more equal remuneration of paid work, but also for unpaid and low-paid work, such as parenting and domestic labour, to be valued and supported by welfare benefits, both in terms of income *and* housing.

This approach is appropriate for addressing the decreased structural expansion of middle-class jobs that accounts for the currently low absolute mobility rates (Goldthorpe 2012). As upward mobility is currently likely to be accompanied by downward mobility, attention to downward mobility and to the conditions and remuneration of 'lower-tier' jobs is a more appropriate solution to slowed mobility rates than increasing credentialism and professionalism, which evidence indicates is leading to increased competition, new middle-class strategies and reproduction of unequal class outcomes (Goldthorpe 2012; Roberts 2013).

Recognising the relations of mutual dependence between high and low status jobs would help to challenge the unequal value given to divergent education and occupational routes, which was highlighted by participants, from Brendan pointing out that post-war Irish labour built London's infrastructure on which its economy rests, to the many participants who supported their children, working partners and/or paid employers with un/paid domestic and childcare labour. Acknowledging both the relationship between upward and downward mobilities, and the inter-dependence of different kind of labours, theoretically emphasises relationality, as opposed to autonomy and individualism, and presents an argument for a collective responsibility for equality that fits a collective understanding of how the different class positions in the social mobility indicators work together (as emphasised in Goldthorpe's model, but lost by the individualist social mobility discourse).

The analysis of social mixing in chapter seven developed a more equitable model of social mobilities and provided concrete suggestions for how this might work at ground level. Whilst I found little evidence that informal inter-class social mixing in the

residential site provided sustainable social mobility benefits for working-class people, I did find that mixing in familiar and inclusive micropublics with known and trusted social ties did. The research demonstrated that micropublics could have practices of equality built into them, but that this could not be taken for granted due to the pre-existing power relations that often worked through them. It was important that participants' felt comfortable and supported in micropublics, rather than positioned as the subordinate habitus in hegemonic middle-class spaces. The significance of resources was re-iterated as the offer of funded training or support from professionals helped provide systematic and sustainable benefits. In chapter four the research demonstrated the significance of providing information to fill knowledge-gaps regarding education and occupation (Page 2006:48-49), and experience was highlighted as important for transforming aspirations into practices. Therefore I propose that cultural capital be offered through programmes such as after-school clubs and community education, targeted through existing social capital in familiar inclusive micropublics, such as Kamil and Magan were involved with. This offers practical possibilities for a redistributive politics to facilitate the mobilities of both 'getting on' and 'getting by'. Politically this combines an area policy with a redistributionist approach, and theoretically it draws a collective concern with equality together with a resource-centered theory of social capital (such as Bourdieu's) (Arbaci and Rae 2013). With its attention to people's emotions as they move through space, coupled with a concern for facilitating the social mobilities of getting on and getting by, it can also be regarded as combining a holistic and plural approach.

Returning to the question posed at the beginning of the thesis, as to whether a concern for social mobility can be brought together with a concern for redressing inequality, I answer a resounding yes, and not just 'can' but 'must'. As Goldthorpe and his colleagues stressed, social mobility is an important indicator for assessing class inequality. Therefore I argue that social mobility *needs* to be tied to a concern for equality in order to return it to these theoretical roots, rather than allowing it to become a justification for inequality within the assumption of meritocracy, as it is currently framed. Savage (2000:95) argues that there are valid reasons people endorse meritocracy, because hard work, ambition and educational excellence are important influences on individuals' trajectories, but he stresses the need to add in the crucial rider that class is embedded in these individual virtues. Similarly, Goldthorpe argues that equal opportunities policies can be helpful *if* combined with class redistribution policies (Goldthorpe 2012). Crucially, then, class must

be brought back into the understanding and analysis of social mobility, but in its structural and processual form, not as a way to symbolically construct divisive and hierarchical class categories that inscribe onto everyday bodies (Skeggs 2004).

The expanded model of social mobilities proposed, including plural mobilities and accounting for holistic contexts, addresses the class issue head on. The plural model aims to narrow the gap between class positions. The social mobility indicators would still be useful for measuring fluidity from one class position to another, but these positions would not be so symbolically or materially unequal. Whilst a holistic approach aims to be sensitive to people's emotions and social relations as they move in embodied interactive ways through power-structured places (Bourdieu 1996; Valentine 2007). Therefore, whilst I accord with Boliver and Byrne (2013) that a collective concern for equality is incompatible with an individualist model of social mobility, I propose instead that a collective, plural and holistic understanding of social mobilities, sensitive to the lived experience of class, *is* compatible with an interest in redressing inequalities. The welfare state was not always a dirty word, nor was social housing or mothers who stayed at home to look after their children (Jones 2010). So I propose a new social mobility discourse, embedded in the principles of redistribution, to claim back both the political agenda and the popular language.

8:5 Contributions, Limitations and Future Research

In this section I will highlight the key contributions this study makes to academic knowledge. Then I will outline some of the limitations of the research, coupled with suggestions for future research.

8:5:1 Contributions to Academic Knowledge: Social Mobility and Class

In the introduction I itemised four key contributions this research makes to academic knowledge. The first three contributions relate to the three research questions, so where relevant contributions have been covered in the discussion above, I only briefly highlight them here. The fourth contribution related to methodology, and the particular situatedness of the research setting has already been discussed (in chapters one and three), as have the audio-visual, participative and insider-outsider approaches (chapter three) so I won't

repeat them here. As such, I therefore will outline, firstly, how the research has addressed the central research aim of interrogating social mobility, and then discuss in depth how I have developed class theory.

The first major contribution of this study relates to the central research aim that sought to understand what constitutes social mobility, both in terms of theory and lived experience. This draws in two of the contributions itemised in the introduction, namely examining social mobility and the individualist model (contribution one, relating to research question two), and expanding the notion of social mobilities (contribution three, relating to question three). Together these contributions interrogate, contest and ultimately reject the individualist model of social mobility, and suggest instead an expanded more egalitarian model that can account for the influence of class processes on social mobility experiences on the ground. It was detailed in the discussion above how this thesis deploys a political and intellectual critique, and also offers a counter-hegemonic alternative. This contributes to the call by Left academics for “a compelling alternative vision” for a new politics (Hall et al. 2013). As such, this analysis goes further politically and theoretically than many other qualitative studies on social mobility (such as Bertaux and Thompson 1997b; Elliott 1997; Armstrong 2010; Butler and Hamnett 2011a) and, being empirically grounded in lived experience, adds detail, nuance and weight to quantitative and theoretical studies (Savage and Egerton 1997; Goldthorpe et al. 1980; 2012; Boliver and Byrne 2013). The study has also made a particular contribution by making connections between diverse social fields and sites of stratification (Harris and Pratt 1987:14), which has provided a fuller picture of how capitals inter-twine and social mobilities are experienced, across educational and occupational fields, as more commonly researched together, but also across housing and social mixing fields.

The second major contribution was developing a class theoretical approach that could examine social mobility experiences (relating to contribution two, and question one). As mentioned, Savage’s (2000) theory of individualization provided a way to analyse how class works subjectively through individuals, which I brought together with Skeggs’ (2004) theory of discursive class domination, which enabled an analysis of how class categories are made and inscribed onto bodies for the purposes of reproducing middle-class privileges and power. This combined a focus on subjectivity and identity with class as collective, oppositional and conflictual (Reay 2011). This was then operationalised

through Bourdieu's theoretical-methodological framework, which added clarity and complexity due to the differentiation of different forms of capitals, and notion of fields that framed and connected different social mobility experiences. His notions of habitus and field enabled the close-up analysis to connect everyday subjective, embodied class relations in place, to wider systems of class power. Bourdieu's concepts of doxa, symbolic violence and pedagogic action fitted with Skeggs' emphasis on symbolic power relations, but his framework also incorporates economic, social and cultural systems of power.

My approach is unusual for using all Bourdieu's primary concepts. Watt (2012) argues that critics often use the concept of the habitus to analyse working-class people, which reiterates the idea that they are driven by cultural dispositions that hold them back, whilst the notion of capitals is used to analyse middle-class people, which emphasises their active capacities and strategies. This study, however, has sought to erode these skewed analytic binaries, firstly, by emphasising the value of working-class capitals and strategies and, secondly, by locating the concepts of habitus and capitals within Bourdieu's wider notions of field, doxa, symbolic violence and pedagogic action, which demonstrates how everyday classed dispositions and practices are shaped by wider structural power relations (Reay 1998).

I have therefore taken Savage's analysis of class individualization beyond the workplace, and situated individualized class processes within collective class structures of power. As Reay (1998) argues, if a number of same-classed individuals reproduce similar practices at the same time and in the same place, this can be regarded as collective class action. This was evidenced in the research on many levels, from tendencies for people from working-class background to practice withdrawal in mixed-class social fields, to middle-class capacities to throw money at the competition for education, occupation and housing. However, Skeggs' lens enabled me to draw out how class worked collectively through *symbolic* means at ground level, as I identified how an individualist neoliberal politics, working in the interests of the middle class and private capital, justified its policies through discourses hegemonically embedded in everyday subjectivities and practices.

The analysis of hegemony indicated how subjective aspirations and expectations were not a result of an inadequate self, but were deeply inter-twined with wider discursive

ascriptions that were internalised by the participants. This relates to the insight (in chapter four) that emotions can be so deeply embedded that individuals engage in practices and make choices in unconsciously class-positioned ways. This extends Savage's notion that class works in individualized *self-conscious* ways through individuals, to include analysis of how class works in *unconscious* ways through individuals. This helped the research to uncover the 'hidden' ways that power took effect through everyday practices. This theoretical refinement is significant because it enables the identification of when people are making choices with self-awareness of their relative class position, in contrast to when they do so from the position of unconscious consent to a hegemonic discourse. So, for example, in the first instance a participant may make a self-aware assessment of risk regarding continuing education in relation to their economic resources, but in the second instance they may fail to take up education because they have internalised narratives about their own stigmatised identities and regard this path as 'not for the likes of them'. Whilst the former awareness offers the possibility of fighting against economic injustice, the latter internalised self-indictment saps the subject of political power.

Overall, my class framework was able to reveal how class processes worked in diverse, complex ways through changeable subjectivities, which could accommodate the new fragmented forms of class relations at this particular spatial-temporal moment of capitalism in a post-industrial global city. This is a significant academic contribution because as class shifted on the ground from visible place-based, industrial forms to less visible, spatially fragmented, post-industrial forms, many critics simultaneously become conceptually blind to the continuing impacts of class processes (e.g. Pahl 1989; Giddens 1991; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001). Therefore this study contributes to the work of other critics who have re-theorised class in ways that make it both visible and comprehensible in its reformulated post-industrial shape (e.g. Bourdieu 1986; Skeggs 1997; Savage 2000; Bottero 2004)³⁴. This is in stark contrast to individualization theory, which has analytically addressed the global scale of social relations but, because the ideas are not grounded in qualitative empirical research, has failed to understand the way that global relations work in situated contexts. It is therefore unsurprising that they have missed how class works in multifaceted ways through embodied relational individuals, who, across classes, continue to be attached to both place and traditional group forms.

³⁴ See 2.4:1 for more references and a fuller discussion.

The class lens was enriched by adding the emotions, embodiment and intersectionality into the theoretical framework. The emotional lens lent depth to the understanding the ways that class didn't just work through individuals, but was deeply embedded into their subjectivities, both consciously and unconsciously. As emphasised earlier, the emotional analysis made a particular contribution by examining the little-researched impact of material class conditions on the emotions. The focus on the body went through every level of analysis, from everyday interactions to processes of hegemony, as detailed throughout the previous section. For example, the notions of embodiment and performativity were particularly useful for interrogating classed interactions in place, and drawing out the power relations involved. Using intersectionality was useful for examining how class is shaped and changed by other axes of inequality, with gender, ethnicity, parenthood, single parenthood, migrant-identity, generation and disability all relevant in this study. This further captured the complex ways that class processes worked through diverse individuals, and highlights the distortion involved in constructing simplistic class binaries.

8:5:2 Limitations of the Research and Future Research

The most significant limitation of this study was that, as already mentioned, it was not able to engage in a systematic way with how a more equitable, collective and expanded model of social mobilities could be developed into a coherent and practical politics, or even into a more commonly heard discourse. Some focused suggestions were made in the discussion of micropublics in chapter seven in response to the empirical research. However, for the most part this study drew on participants' experiences and narratives to propose only a general theoretical approach. This leaves much room for further research across each of the social fields investigated, in order to explore the possibility of how these theories might translate into a practical redistributive politics.

Perhaps inevitably for such an ambitious study there are several unanswered questions and lines of inquiry that would benefit from more in-depth analysis. For example, whilst I have incorporated intersectional analysis into my research, various dimensions of this could be developed more systematically. The focus on class structures and government policy also calls for more focused research engaging with the structural processes of late global capitalism, which was only touched on here, for example in the debate on the

housing market. Drawing in a Marxist analysis could be a helpful way to pursue this. I drew a parallel in chapter six between my emphasis on precarious housing situations and other critics identification of precarious labour situations (Sassen 1991; Hamnett 2003; Wills 2008a; Standing 2011), and this connection, within the context of late global capitalism, could be further investigated. The debate on social mixing in chapter seven calls for further research on how displacement caused by current policies interact with gentrification processes. I would be interested to investigate how Smith (1996) and Marcuse's (1985) concepts could be used in this context.

There is also a relationship between this study's analysis of how class works unconsciously through individuals in hegemonic ways, and critics examining psychological class processes (Reay 2005; 2008), which could be further investigated. The emphasis this study made on status as part of social mobility also calls for a deeper analysis of consumption practices. Whilst this was addressed to some extent through the analysis of housing, there were some fascinating participant narratives that tempted me to develop this theme further. For example, I was interested in the consumption and performance of clothing and decoration on bodies, and parents' practices of consumption for their children, which played out in classed ways. Whilst an already complex study did not need to be further complicated, I would nevertheless like to return to these narratives and consider how consumption interacts with people's ideas of social status and mobility. This seems particularly pertinent given the shape of the 2011 riots, with some critics highlighting consumption as underpinning social conflict (Bauman 2011; Harvey 2013).

Methodologically, I would like to build in time for feedback on my interpretations by participants. I identified in chapter three that the key site of symbolic violence was the analysis and writing of the research account and therefore, as Lawless (1992) suggests, I would like to show participants' my interpretations of their stories, and then incorporate their responses into the final account. This would enable participants "to respond to my interpretations with her own... (then) both should be presented, and... the dialogue between us should be part of the whole picture. No one gets the "last word"; we merely share the opportunity to speak directly to the reader" (1992:313). In the context of the dialogue between myself and the participants, I will now conclude this thesis with some personal reflections on what the relationship with the participants meant to me.

8:6 Personal Conclusions

I briefly pay homage to the participants by elaborating on what they gave to me as a person through both their stories, and the experience of their being told to me. I worried initially about the burden of becoming too involved with research subjects that I would not be able to extricate myself from. This involved anxiety that I would let the participants down, and that I would have to continue to face this burden of ethical responsibility in my everyday life as a parent at the school and a resident in the locality. But I faced these fears and chose to deepen my relationships with the parents, and accommodate the risks and tensions this might involve. Anais Nin (1994[1966]) once said that with courage your life expands, and indeed this was the case. I changed as a result of doing the research, not simply as a researcher, but in terms of friendships made, my feeling of belonging in the neighbourhood, and my emotional self-identity. I was inspired by the courage and compassion I met through doing the interviews, and most importantly, I discovered that hearing other people's troubles enabled me to be more accepting of the difficulties I had had in my own life. (Fig 8.1)



Fig 8.1 Adieu but not goodbye.

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Appendix 3.1 Description of the Sample

Ayanna	Married, 23, wc, unemployed, husband trainee accountant, A levels, secure council tenancy, British Somali, mother business woman in Somalia, unemployed in UK.
Carrie	Single, 39, mc, caterer/artist, BA degree, owner-occupier (no mortgage), white British, father own printing business, mother own catering business.
Eva	Married, 32, mc, homemaker, husband IT manager in advertising agency, equivalent A levels, private renting (own home in Canada), Canadian, father supervisor steel manufacturing company, mother housewife.
Flutera	Married (currently separated), 39, wc, teaching assistant, husband carpenter, NVQ level 3, permanent council tenancy, Albanian British, father foreman on building site, mother housewife.
Grace	Married, 46, mc, magazine editor, husband architect, BA degree, owner-occupier, Irish white British, Father manual labourer.
Helen	Single, 44, wc, teaching assistant, BA degree, permanent council housing tenancy, Irish/Scottish British, parents train driver and teaching assistant.
Jane	Single, 49, mc, photographer, MA degree, owner-occupier (no mortgage), white British, father own motorbike business, mother housewife.
Katie	Single, 27, wc, unemployed, GCSEs & NVQ, permanent housing association tenancy, white British, father car mechanic, mother administration and secretarial.
Karen	Single, 44, ic, teacher, BA degree, permanent council tenancy, Black British, father railway worker, mother not working/disability.
Lily	Married, 40, mc, “career break” (was PR company director), husband PR, BA degree, owner-occupier, Sri Lankan British, parents doctors.
Liz	Married, 45, mc, housewife/student, husband public service worker, BA degree, owner-occupier, white British, parents work unknown – working class.
Louise	Single, 39, wc, full-time mother, MA degree, insecure housing association tenant (statutory homeless), white British, father property developer, mother housewife.
Lubna	Married, 31, wc, Customer service agent for airline, husband hotel breakfast waiter, BA degree, permanent council tenant, Bangladeshi British, father restaurant worker, mother housewife.
Maggie	Single, 42, wc, “domestic engineer” (ie parent), City & Guilds, permanent council tenant, white British, father car mechanic, mother office worker (costs, drafts, legal).
Rebecca	Married, 48, mc, student, husband, own media production business, MBA degree, owner-occupier (no mortgage), white British, father in the army, mother housewife.
Rupa	Married, 33, wc, housewife, husband waiter, school educated in Bangladesh until 16, permanent council tenant, Bangladeshi British, father employee/worker, mother housewife.

Sara	Married, 37, mc, senior playworker, husband electrician, GCSE, City & Guilds level 3/4, owner-occupier, British, mother housewife, father unknown (working-class).
Seham	Married, 35, wc, housewife/not working, husband disability/not working, entry level ESOL certificate, permanent council tenancy, Algerian British, father fisherman, mother not working.
Selina	Married, 31, wc, nursery lunchtime assistant, husband manger bar waiter, GCSEs & NVQ level 2, permanent council tenancy, Bangladeshi British, father indian chef, mother unemployed (1 year textile factory worker).
Stef	Single, 32, wc, student, AS levels, permanent housing association tenancy, white British, father manual worker, mother social work manager
Vanessa	Single, 44, wc, chef de partie (temporarily out of work), NVQ level 3, permanent council tenancy, Anglo-Indian British, father worked in a bakey and train-driver, mother office and secretarial work.
Brendan	Single, 45, painter and decorator, no qualifications, permanent council tenancy, Irish British, father leading railwayman, mother barmaid.
Cecil	Married, 44, mc, unemployed - planning to start printing business, wife works for charity, degree, owner-occupier (no mortgage), Black Caribbean British, father diplomat for High Commission of Jamaica, mother businesswoman in Jamaica, unemployed in London.
Gary	Married, 45, mc, café proprietor, wife advertising director, left school at 16, qualifications unknown, owner-occupier, white British, father musician/unemployed, mother unknown.
Harry	Married, 34, mc, Assistant Director of charity, wife architect, MSc degree, owner-occupier, white British, father lecturer, mother teacher.
Johnny	Single parent, 38, wc, unemployed, no qualifications, private renting through council, white British, mother worked in a casino.
Jose	Married, 40s, ic, registered staff nurse, wife crèche worker, BA degree, permanent council tenancy, African British, father army, mother trader.
Kamil	Married, 41, mc, community centre director, and leader of Camden Council (Labour), wife social worker, BA degree, shared ownership/owner-occupier; Bangladeshi British, father cook, mother housewife.
Mark	Cohabiting, 35, ic, artist, partner artist, MA degree, permanent council tenancy, mixed heritage British, father truck driver, mother “menial” and unemployed
Magan	Married, 42, ic, co-ordinator of Somali community association, wife childcare work, MA degree, Permanent housing association tenancy, Somali British, father own importing business, mother didn’t work.
Pedro	Married, 38, mc, computer software analyst/developer, wife works in a bank, BA degree, owner-occupier, father own furniture shop, mother housewife and mother.
Zamir	Married, 45, wc, waiter, wife not working, started medical degree/interrupted by war, Albanian Kosovan, father salesman, mother housewife.

Legend: wc– working-class; mc - middle-class; ic – inter-class (where possible I have used the category definitions of participants’ themselves, bar class category, which is defined in Appendix 3.1 below. Some occupations have been changed to protect anonymity

Appendix 3.2 Class Identity Classification of Participants

	Education level <i>at/below HE level</i>	Occupation	Home owned/ <i>Rented</i>	Household economic circumstances <i>above/ below median 20%*</i>	Class Origin	Self-identity	Overall class identity
Ayanna	WC	IC	WC	WC	IC	Unknown	WC
Carrie	MC	WC	MC	WC	MC	MC	MC
Eva	WC	MC	MC	MC	IC	MC	MC
Flutera	WC	WC	WC	WC	MC	MC	WC
Grace	MC	MC	MC	MC	WC	MC	MC
Helen	MC	WC	WC	WC	WC	WC	WC
Jane	MC	MC	MC	WC	MC	MC	MC
Karen	MC	MC	WC	MC	WC	IC	<i>IC</i>
Katie	WC	WC	WC	WC	WC	‘Neither/ot her’	WC
Lily	MC	MC	MC	MC	MC	MC	MC
Liz	MC	MC	MC	MC	IC	MC	MC
Louise	MC	WC	WC	WC	MC	‘classless’	WC
Lubna	MC	MC	WC	WC	WC	‘I don’t know’	WC
Maggie	WC	WC	WC	WC	WC	MC	WC
Rebecca	MC	MC	MC	MC	MC	MC	MC
Rupa	WC	WC	WC	WC	WC	WC	WC
Sara	WC	MC	MC	MC	WC	Not stated	MC
Seham	WC	WC	WC	WC	WC	‘Not working’	WC
Selina	WC	WC	WC	WC	WC	WC	WC
Stef	WC	WC	WC	WC	IC	WC	WC
Vanessa	WC	WC	WC	MC	WC	WC	WC
Brendan	WC	WC	WC	WC	WC	WC	WC
Cecil	MC	MC	MC	MC	MC	WC	MC
Gary	WC	MC	MC	MC	WC	Unknown	MC
Harry	MC	MC	MC	MC	MC	MC	MC
Johnny	WC	WC	WC	WC	WC	WC	WC
Jose	MC	MC	WC	WC	MC	WC	<i>IC</i>
Kamil	MC	MC	MC	MC	WC	Not stated	MC
Magan	MC	MC	WC	WC	MC	WC	<i>IC</i>
Mark	MC	MC	WC	MC	WC	IC	<i>IC</i>
Pedro	MC	MC	MC	MC	MC	MC	MC
Zamir	WC	WC	WC	WC	WC	WC	WC

Leger: MC- 14; WC- 15; IC- 3

* Based on *the National Statistics socio-economic Classification Analytic Classes 2010-2011* (ONS (2013) ‘Middle Income Households, 1977-2010/11’; 18 March 2013. http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_303386.pdf.)

Most of the participants ticked an income/wealth category in table devised by me, or I calculated incomes based on typicity for their occupations.

Appendix 3.3: Introduction to the Interview**'Moving on?' – Research project by Debbie Humphry, Sussex University.**

Introduction to the interview:

1. I am using the information to investigate changes in people's lives concerning some or all of the following: travel, movement and migration; occupational changes; cultural changes; emotional changes; family histories.
2. The information will be used mostly in academic and educational contexts, such as my writing up the research as a thesis which will be examined; presentations and academic journals and books. It may also be used in more public spaces such as magazines, newspapers, exhibitions and film showings. At the end of the interview you will be given a signed consent form in which you can agree to some or all of these uses.
3. Interviewees can stop the interview at any point.
4. Interviewees have the right not to answer any questions they are not comfortable with.
5. Consent for use of the interview can be changed or withdrawn at any time without an explanation.
6. Interviewee can have a written or audio copy of the interview if they wish. Ideally the transcript will not be changed but: parts or all of it can be marked to be kept anonymous and confidential; information can be added on to it by the interviewee either verbally or written; spelling mistakes and names can be corrected.
7. Do you have any questions?

debbiehumphry@btinternet.com

020 7485 1293

07831 811490

Appendix 3.4: Consent Form

Permission slip for interviews and for using photographic or video images and artwork

The whole of this document should be read out to the participant and each box discussed and agreed to one by one. Participants may tick as many or as few boxes as they are happy with.

Title of research project: Moving on?

Name of researcher(s): Debbie Humphry...

Name of interviewee/participant:

Date of interview:

Yes ☐ No ☐

1. Participation:

I agree to participate in this study, the purpose of which has been explained to me by the researcher.

I agree to the transcription (typing up) of the tape of my interview. ☐ ☐

I agree to the photo/video/other images and 'art' to be used

I would like to see a copy of my transcript. ☐ ☐

I would like an audiotape of my interview

I would like to see a copy of the images/artwork.

2. Anonymity:

Definition of anonymous: that the information given will be kept confidential, protecting the interviewee's identity when the researcher uses the information. The interviewee will be made anonymous if quoted, and any personal information that will make it easy to identify them or their family will be removed:

☐ ☐

I give my permission for all the verbal information I will give/have given to be attached to my name and identity

OR

I give my permission for all the verbal information I will give/have given to be used anonymously i.e. not attached to my name and identity

OR

I give my permission for the verbal information I will give/have given to be attached to my name and identity *except for parts that I have indicated should be kept anonymous*

I give my permission for all the visual information to be attached to my name and identity

OR

I give my permission for all the visual information to be used anonymously

OR

I give my permission for the visual information I will give/have given to be attached to my name and identity *except for parts that I have indicated should be kept anonymous or not used*

3. Use:

I give my permission for the verbal or audio-visual information that I am about to give/have given the researcher for the above project to be used for research purposes. This might include:

- Reports, articles, summaries or book chapters for academic and educational journals and publications.
- Academic and Educational Presentations and exhibitions

- Magazine and newspaper articles
- More general exhibition and audio-visual presentations
- Local exhibitions and presentations

4. Aural recordings:

I consent to aural voice recordings to be used in the following contexts:

- Academic and Educational Presentations
- Presentations, exhibitions and films for a wider public audience
- Local spaces

Further comments on permission:

6. Data protection

I understand that tapes, transcripts and images gathered during this research will be treated as confidential and securely stored.

☐
☐

7. Other issues

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

☐
☐

8. I have had my questions answered satisfactorily.

☐
☐

9. I understand that I can withdraw my consent at any time without having to give an explanation.

☐
☐

Name of person interviewed (printed):

Signature _____ Date _____

OR Signature of witness to oral agreement:

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date _____

OR Signature of parent/legal guardian:

Name: _____

Signature of researcher: _____ Date _____

Please contact me if you have any further questions - Debbie Humphry 020 7485 1293/ 07831 811490 – debbiehumphry@btinternet.com

Appendix 3.5: Interview Information Sheet

Moving on? A research study: what have been the important social changes in your life?



Information about the interviews

For my research study I want to talk to parents or carers with children at Camden Green School. I am a parent at the School and am doing the study as a student at university. It will be read by my examiners and may be in academic presentations and publications. I would be really grateful if you would do an interview with me – it can be anonymous and usually lasts around 2 hours – but I can make it shorter. Thanks! Debbie

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I want to find out about:

- Your experiences of housing, home and the local area.
- Your experiences of education for your children and yourself
- Your experiences of working and not working.
- What you think are important achievements and life changes
- A bit about your family history

What can you expect? That I will be friendly, polite, honest and respectful. I can change your name if you wish. You can have a copy of the interview. I can provide a translator if you want. You will tell me how and where I can use the information. The interviews will be in a place you choose.

What do I expect of you? To tell me if there is anything you are not happy about. I really would like your honest opinions. Please ask me any questions you like at any time. That I can use the interview information for my research project.

Appendix 3.6: Interview Questions

Local/housing

How did you end up living round here?

What do you think of the local area?

Do you rent/ own flat etc?

Would you like to stay or move?

What places do you like to go to locally?

Any places you don't like, don't feel comfortable or avoid?

Who do you mix and socialise with generally?

How do you feel about living in a mixed area (ie mixed ethnicity , class/socioeconomic groups etc)?

What are the most important things to you about your housing situation?

Would you want to change anything?

School

What do you think of the school?

Did you choose it?

Do your children have any extra tuition or classes outside or school lessons?

Have you any plans for secondary school for your children?

Do you have any expectations or hopes for your children?

What was your schooling like?

How did you feel about it?

What were your parents or family's experiences of education?

Do you mix with people at the school? What do you feel about the mixedness of school ?

Work

Are you working at the moment?

How do you feel about it?

What led you to this point now of working/not working?

Did your parents or teachers have any particular expectations of you when you were growing up?

How do you feel about the different jobs you've done or times when you've not been working?

How did you get into the jobs you did?

Have you noticed people respond differently according to whether you are working, not working, or according to different kinds of jobs you've held?

Has anything or anyone influenced your choices about working?

What did your parents/family do about working or not working?

Are you involved in any clubs, voluntary work, organisations etc?

Other changes

What would you say are the most important things to you in your life?

What do you consider to be important achievements that you're proud of in your life?

Is there anything you wish you'd achieved or done differently?

Has anything held you back in life?

(How do you feel about that?)

Is your life different to your parents lives?

Is it similar or different to the people you grew up with?

Have any values from childhood or along the way influenced your life path?

What have been important changes in your life?

Has mixing influenced any choices, opportunities, attitudes, actions, knowledges in our life?

How do you see the future?

How did you find the interview?

Appendix 3.7 Participant Observation

Formal Ethnographic observations (written up)	Informal Observations as insider-outsider researcher, some written up	Informal interviews and chats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - school playground - CAGSA (parent-teacher association) meetings - several - annual public governors meeting – 3 - school social events for parents & children such as quiz night, line/Asian dancing nights, xmas fair, international evening - numerous - public art exhibition at school - public meetings for tenants and stakeholders re Gospel Oak 6 estates redevelopment consultation – 2 - local social events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - running a one-off painting class. - CAGSA meetings. - school photographs of each child/whole school, 4 consecutive years. - photographed school for documentary project ‘Day in the Life of the school’ - regular pickup and drop off from school. - school social & fundraising events, including volunteering (such as jumble sale, bingo, line dancing, xmas fair, International evening) - school public events such as car boot sales. - visits to local primary schools (as parent with view to child’s entrance to primary in 2006, and as photographer for Camden Council in the 1990s and 2000s) - visits to local secondary school: as parent with view to secondary transfer (2011 & 2012; as photographer for Camden Council in the 1990s and 2000s. - walking the local area, using local facilities. - visiting local homes including of parents. - Secondary transfer process for my daughter 	<p><i>With Experts:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - local community art co-ordinator - headteacher of Camden Green school until Autumn 2012 - administrator of school - new headteacher of Camden Green school Autumn 2012 <p><i>With Local People:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - parents with children at Camden Green School - parents with children at other local primary & secondary schools - other Camden Green staff members - local people

Appendix 3.8 'Family Stories' Proposal

Proposed mixed-media project: 'Stories from Home'

Workshop facilitators: Debbie Humphry and Serena Wilkinson (parents).

Media: Mixed art and textual media targeting a variety of learning styles, such as tactile, aural, visual and textual (based on Montessori theories of learning).

Timetable: 3 sessions with one class (1-2 hours each session); one session per week over 3 weeks; Spring term 2010 (ideally in January).

Outcome: each child will produce an art-piece that expresses an aspect of each child's life-family history. These art products will be exhibited at the 2010 Camden Green Primary School Art Exhibition and complement the documentary photographs taken by Debbie.

Project aim: to produce a mixed-media life/family history project

Project objectives:

- To foster individual learning
- To foster individual responsibility for own learning
- To value the children's individual experiences and cultural histories.
- To provide materials through which children can access and be creative with different styles of learning, such as tactile, aural, verbal and textual styles.
- For children to engage in some peer collaboration.
- For the children to exchange diverse cultural experiences and histories, thus each expanding their 'lifeworlds' and sense of what is 'out there' and possible.

Project Plan:

Session one: photographing each other

- Understanding photography: group work looking at images to discuss composition (colour, line, framing etc).
- Talking, communicating and finding out: pair work- 'interviewing' each other.
- Planning photographs: individual planning, practice framing with cardboard frames; how to use the camera.
- Taking photographs: in pairs – themes of Colour, Movement, Shape, Environment
- Group feedback: show images on the computer; choose one for each person (photographer/subject or class choose?)
- Set Homework: collect family (hi)stories, object and photographs to bring in for next week (given handout).

Session two: making individual mixed media art products

- Group 'show and tell' from homework exercise (small groupwork and then whole class feedback): talking and Q&A between children.
- Demonstration of 2D and 3D art/writing materials children can choose to use including papier mache 'globes', 'diorama' mini-stage-sets, collage family tree - using materials such as paint, finger painting, glitter, glue, pen,

charcoal, paper, cardboard, textiles, photocopying (including of own images to keep safe), photography (e.g. of own objects).

- Pair work verbal discussion: asking each other questions about the art pieces.
- Homework – Do they/we need to bring anything else in. find anything else out from home to finish the project next week?

Session three: complete art projects and share stories

- Finish off art projects.
- Display in classroom and children look at each other's work.
- Group feedback and Q&A on work
- Writing: children write down 3 interesting things they have learned about each other from the artworks
- Tape-record each child saying one thing they learned about each other (audio tape will play alongside art works.)

Sensitive Issues to consider:

Consent (including families)

Non-conventional histories e.g. care, refugees.

Appendix 4.1 Qualifications of interview participants:

Status of qualification	Working-class background	Middle-class background	Gained	In progress	Unfinished due to war & migration
Left school at 16 or 17	14	0	14		
A' levels, left school at 18	1	1	2		
A' levels & degree straight after school	4	9	13		2
2 or fewer GCSEs grade C	9		9		
Vocational NVQs	5	1	5	1	
Degree as mature student	4	1	4	1	
Postgraduate qualifications	1	5	6	1	
Parents' education unknown	1				

Appendix 5.1: Occupational class of participants

Categories used for participants' class identities in Appendix 3.2: 1-4 middle-class; 5-8 working-class. Defined by current or last job. (NS-SEC scale used by ONS)

1. Higher managerial and professional occupations	
1:1 Large employers and higher managerial occupations	Kamil: Executive Director of community organisation pc & Leader of the Council tc Lily: PR Director pc, ce
1:2 Higher professional occupations	Grace: Magazine editor pc Karen: Teacher pc
2. Lower managerial and professional occupations	Sara: Manager of playcentre pc Magan: Coordinator of Somali Community Association pc Louise: Journalist pc, ce Rebecca: Chief Assistant for Director of large organisation pc, ce/student Cecil: Officer for London Borough Council pc, ce Harry: Assistant Director Nations and Regions for RIBA pc Pedro: Software developer pc Jose: Registered Staff nurse pc Mark: Artist se Jane: Photographer se
3. Intermediate occupations (clerical, sales, service)	Lubna: Customer service agent for major airline pc
4. Small employers and own account workers	Gary: Café proprietor se Eva: Hair & make-up artist se, ce Brendan: Painter and decorator se
5. Lower supervisory and technical occupations	Maggie: Head Waitress, ce Flutera: Teaching assistant Vanessa: Chef, ce
6. Semi-routine occupations	Katie: Hairdresser tc, ce Selina: Nursery lunchtime assistant pc Carrie: Caterer tc
7. Routine occupations	Seham: Cleaner se, ce Stef: Childcare se, ce/student Zamir: Waiter unkn Johnny: Driver se, ce
8. Never worked and long-term unemployed	Rupa, Ayanna
9. Student	Rebecca, Jane, Stef, Selina, Liz

Leger: pc - Permanent Contract; tc – Temporary Contract; se- Self-employed; ce – currently unemployed

Source: The National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC)

Appendix 6.1 Participants' housing situation, household income, wealth and debt

Household Income p.a. (including benefits).	Social Housing (council or housing association)	Private rent	Owner occupation with mortgage/equity/ Mortgage debt	Owner occupation without mortgage/equity	Buy-to-let or second property	Equity
Less 10,000	Stef, Katie, Ayanna, Seham,	Louise Johnny				
11-20,000	Maggie, Flutera, Helen, Rupa, Selina,			Carrie/£300,000		
21-24,000	Vanessa			Jane/£450,000		5000 debt
25-30,000	Brendan Karen Mark Lubna					- 15,000
31-40,000	Jose					
41-60,000	Magan			Cecil/£1,000,000		
61-80,000		Eva	Harry/ £100,000/ 180,000 Sara/ £210,000/ 90,000 Pedro/£245,000/ 130,000	Rebecca/ £1,000,000	Eva/270.000/ 150,000 Sara/ 60,000	
81-100,000			Lily/£250,000/ 150-200,000 Liz/ 300,000/ 65,000			
100-200,000			Kamil Grace/ £800,000/ 90,000			
Income unknown			Gary			

Most house prices and income brackets were supplied by participants. Otherwise estimated from available information and average wage and house price statistics.