Northumbria Research Link

Exploring the factors that promote or hinder graduate retention in the North-East of England

Richard John McGowan

PhD Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Strategy

Submitted March 2023

Abstract

Currently, around 55% of graduates who study at universities in the North-East of England remain in the region for work after graduation. However, HESA's Destination of Leavers Surveys suggest that this respectable figure is boosted by a large number of 'local' graduates, who grew up in the North-East and stayed in their home region for university and then work. Meanwhile, around three quarters of the region's graduates who came to the region to study from other areas of the UK leave, either to return home or to live somewhere new. This all means that most of the 'brain drain' from the North-East is being driven by graduates from its universities who originate from elsewhere in the UK.

Firstly, through qualitative interviews, my research investigates the extent to which a graduate's socio-economic status can impact their ability and propensity to be mobile, and influences the pattern of graduate retention in the North-East described above. Secondly, I am investigating if and why organisations such as the North-East Local Enterprise Partnership and the NewcastleGateshead Initiative (NGI) believe that retaining graduates is important for regional development in the North-East. Graduates are often assumed to be highly mobile; however this is not always the case. My interviews with graduates have revealed that many self-identified working-class graduates from the North-East feel a sense of frustration with their lack of mobility, brought about by certain obligations and restrictions which can be linked to their economic, social and cultural capital. Meanwhile, for those graduates who originate from elsewhere in the UK, social networks and job prospects, amongst other issues, are pulling them back home or fuelling their desire to move somewhere new.

Key words: graduate retention; North-East England; graduate mobility; Bourdieu; economic, social and cultural capital.

<u>Acknowledgements</u>

I would like to thank Professor Tom Mordue and Professor David Charles for being my supervisors and for their advice during the three years of my PhD.

I would also like to thank my parents for all of the support and encouragement they have given me whilst I have been writing this thesis – it means so much to me.

Finally, I am very grateful to all of the graduates who shared their stories with me.

Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

In this introductory chapter, I will firstly set the scene by offering an introduction to the North-East of England. I will demonstrate that it is a region of the U.K. which finds itself enveloped in a challenging economic, political and social climate. However, it is also a region which is excelling in certain industrial sectors, and the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (NELEP) seem to believe that *graduates* will be important in powering these in the future. Having established the potential importance of graduates to the local economy and regional development, I will then proceed to examine graduate retention patterns in the North-East. This will then lead on to my initial interpretations of this data, as well as an explanation of how my idea for this research project emerged. Finally, I will conclude the chapter by revealing my research questions and aims for this research.

1.1. Setting the scene: an introduction to the North-East of England

1.1.1 A region facing challenging times

Surrounded by Scotland to the north, the Pennines to the west and Yorkshire to the south, the North-East of England officially covers the counties of Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, Durham, and the area which was formerly the county of Cleveland. The region contains the cities of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Sunderland and the cathedral city of Durham and is home to around 2.7 million people (ONS, 2018). Along with these cities, the North-East is renowned for its natural beauty, ranging from its remarkable coastline with sandy beaches and rugged cliffs aplenty, to the tranquil Northumberland National Park. It is also home to many nationally well-known landmarks from many different areas, from the ancient Hadrian's Wall in Northumberland which demonstrates the region's historical importance, to the iconic Tyne Bridge which connects Newcastle and Gateshead.

Perhaps the North-East's most renowned landmark is the Angel of the North, a giant sculpture designed by artist Anthony Gormley and erected in 1998, which reflects the region's industrial past by watching over a site where coal miners had toiled for three centuries (Gormley, 2019). This industrial past is keenly remembered and is often a great source of pride and positive identification for inhabitants of the North-East. After all, along with the rest of the North of England, the North-East once 'led the world in manufacturing, extraction and international trade (Headlam, 2020: 4),

particularly in the Nineteenth and into the early Twentieth Century. However, the decline of the region's shipbuilding and the closure of its coalmines, which commenced in earnest from the 1950s due to the availability of cheaper labour and production costs abroad, amongst other factors, has unfortunately left a damaging economic and social legacy that the region is still battling to overcome in the present.

Despite regional leaders and institutions arguing that the North-East is in need of economic revival perhaps more than any other region in the United Kingdom in the aftermath of this industrial decline, significant investment in the region has been hard to come by. An example of this is how the North-East has been frequently overlooked by the 'Northern Powerhouse' policy agenda, the brainchild of the former Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osbourne, who held the post from 2010 to 2016. The concept behind the Northern Powerhouse was to connect and integrate the economies of the major cities of the North, so that together they would match up in scale with the economies of London, as well as world cities such as Tokyo and New York (Lee, 2017). One way of potentially doing this was to improve transport links between the cities to encourage inter-city travel and reduce journey times. It was hoped that the Northern Powerhouse agenda would begin to address the significant North-South economic divide in the United Kingdom – the country is host to significant spatial inequalities, with economic and political power being primarily concentrated in London and the South-East of England. However, whilst the city of Manchester in North-West England has almost become synonymous with the Northern Powerhouse, the benefits of the policy agenda to the North-East region have been more limited. This Manchester-centric focus is demonstrated by David Charles (2020) when he points out that:

> Manchester has received a £235 million commitment for a new Royce Institute for Advanced Materials Research and Innovation. . . The North East however has been less well supported. More recent investment in National Innovation Centres in Newcastle for data and for aging have received around £35 million of government funding support. (Pg. 77).

Furthermore, despite being introduced back in 2014, the Northern Powerhouse has not successfully addressed the economic inequality between North and South. In fact, the gap between the North and London in particular continues to expand (Lee, 2017). For Neil Lee (2017) of the London School of Economics, while some institutional changes have occurred and new economic resources have been made

available for the North, as demonstrated by the investment in Manchester's new Royce Institute, the Northern Powerhouse can also be interpreted as a 'brand', where many previously uncoordinated policies which pre-dated the Powerhouse agenda were merely recycled and regrouped under a catchy title. These policies therefore became 'visible, allowing photo opportunities. . . and the strategy lends itself to a soundbite' (Lee, 2017: 481). As a result, the brand name 'Northern Powerhouse' achieved a high level of awareness among the British public and radiated the impression that the government is acting for the North (Lee, 2017). However, according to Lee, the policy agenda can be described as 'fuzzy' – with unclear aims, an unclear geographical focus and unclear financial backing. In summary then, not only do cities such as Manchester appear to benefit more from the Northern Powerhouse than their counterparts in the North-East, but the debate also continues as to whether the Powerhouse really is an actual agenda capable of germinating economic revival in the North, or merely a clever political marketing scheme with some limited economic benefits.

Along with the economic inequalities between North and South and the current inability of the Northern Powerhouse to adequately address the situation, The North-East must also contend with the fallout from Brexit. The United Kingdom has now officially left the European Union (EU) as of the 31st of January 2020. Original fears of a 'hard style' Brexit – where many of the UK and EU's existing arrangements would be severed - have been alleviated, as the U.K. has now agreed a comprehensive trade deal with its European counterparts. This is positive, as according to Cabras (2020), a 'hard Brexit', involving an abrupt disconnection of ties, would have been a significant threat to the security of the automotive, electronic, technological, pharmaceutical and education sectors in the North-East, among others, as these sectors are reliant on exporting their goods to the European Single Market and also attracting talent from Europe to fill their skills requirements. The continuing health of these sectors is crucial, as they align well with the areas for opportunity for future economic growth identified by the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (NELEP) in their Strategic Economic Plan for the region (which I will cover later in this chapter). However, the fact remains that the U.K. is still *leaving* the EU single market, and this means that when people, goods and capital move between the UK and the EU, there will inevitably be more 'red tape' in terms of new customs procedures and regulatory checks at borders. This could still prove to be a

hindrance, as the movement of people, financial capital and services between the North-East and the EU will not be quite as frictionless as it was before.

As well as finding itself in a rather challenging and uncertain economic and political climate, the North-East, and indeed the North of England as a whole, often finds itself on the social periphery of the U.K. (Shields, 2013). The North of England as an area of land is not precisely demarcated (Russell, 2004). Such indeterminacy may account in part for why the Northern Powerhouse agenda has such a 'geographical fuzziness' (Lee, 2017). As Dave Russell (2004) suggests, the North is also a land of significant diversity in terms of landscapes, people and culture. Yet, it is often uniformly – and perhaps unflatteringly - stereotypically portrayed as 'the homeland of a traditional British Working-class' (Shields, 2013: 229), as well as a place with dreary weather, football hooligans and a landscape smattered with the rusting architectural remains of a once glorious but now defunct industrial past (Russell, 2004). Meanwhile, the South of England is contrastingly depicted in a more flattering way, as it is often described in the national media as a centre for commerce, high culture and institutional power (Russell, 2004; Shields, 2013).

The NewcastleGateshead Initiative (NGI) is one of four Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) in the North-East, along with those representing Northumberland, Durham and Hadrian's Wall (Mordue, 2020). DMOs have the primary remit of marketing their place of focus as an excellent tourist destination. However, as Tom Mordue (2020) points out, DMOs:

> . . . can have an inward investment remit too, built around the axiom that
> a cleaned up, attractive and cultural place is not only good for tourists, it
> is good for inward investment, and good for residents (pg. 108).

Even a quick browse through the NewcastleGateshead Initiative's website demonstrates that the traditional perception of the North-East as a land almost uniformly belonging to working-class people and culture, along with its industrial relics, is one they believe is important to change. Rather than a place of homogeneity, the NGI, along with the three other DMOs that operate in the North-East no doubt, would like to project the North-East as a place which can offer and embrace diversity – of people, cultures, places and landscapes – and as a place which is more akin to the 'cleaned up, attractive and cultural place' that Mordue (2020) describes. This is all done with the belief that such a projection will not only transcend unflattering regional stereotypes and subsequently make the region a

more enticing place where people will want to visit, but also where businesses will want to invest and talented people from the UK and even the rest of the world – including *graduates* - will want to live and work. Hosting events such as the Great Exhibition of the North, which was held in Newcastle and Gateshead in 2018, is undertaken with this aim in mind – to project a progressive, cultural and entrepreneurial North.

1.1.2. The North-East's areas of economic opportunity – powered by graduates?

So far in this opening chapter, I have painted a rather bleak picture of the economic, social and political climate enveloping the North-East. However, it is certainly not all doom and gloom for the region. Nationally, the general consensus seems to be that the North-East is a friendly and welcoming place to visit and live in. In fact, the Geordie accent and all North-East accents in general are associated with friendliness and sincerity, so much so that people who speak with North-East accents are often sought by call centres and for customer service roles (Russell, 2004). The region has consistently proved that it can host top-class sporting events, demonstrated by St. James Park stadium in Newcastle hosting the Olympic Games football tournament back in 2012. Newcastle frequently tops national polls when it comes to its reputation for partying and nightlife, welcoming revellers from all parts of the U.K. who support and sustain the city's vibrant hospitality industry. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the North-East boasts areas of outstanding natural beauty and a variety of famous landmarks, both man-made and natural, which entice people from all over the U.K. and put the region firmly 'on the map'.

Yet another positive for the North-East is its flourishing higher education sector. The region is home to five universities, two of which – Newcastle and Durham – are part of the prestigious Russell Group of well-established, research-led universities. Thanks to the quality of its higher education establishments, along with Newcastle's reputation as a 'party city', the region does not have a problem attracting students from all over the U.K., who play a vital role in supporting the economies of its university cities. *Invest North East England* currently put the total number of students attending North-East universities at 100,000 (in 2019).

Despite the challenging and unpredictable economic conditions the North-East currently faces, in addition to higher education the region is also excelling in numerous other industrial sectors. As previously mentioned, the North East Local

Enterprise Partnership (NELEP), in their Strategic Economic Plan (2017), have identified four areas of industrial excellence in the region which also have the potential for future growth: (1) digital industries revolving around information and communication technologies – this sector is one of the fastest growing of its kind in the UK outside of London; (2) advanced manufacturing of products such as cars and medicines; (3) health and life sciences, and (4) energy technologies – particularly renewable energy. With their Strategic Economic Plan, the NELEP have two main aims in particular. Their first aim is to 'increase the number of jobs in the North-East economy by 100,000 by 2024' (2017: 5), while the second aim is to ensure that '60% of these additional jobs will be better jobs' which offer 'higher skilled, more productive and better quality opportunities for more people in the area' (2017: 5).

For the NELEP, 'better jobs' fall into the top three Standard Occupational Classifications (SOC) categories, which are 'managers and directors, senior officials, professionals and associate professional and technical occupations' (2017: 5). As the NELEP recognise in their Strategic Economic Plan, there are many routes one can follow in order to gain specialist knowledge and training, such as apprenticeships, work placements and further education establishments. However, after reading the plan, I was left with the impression that many of what the NELEP have identified as 'better jobs' would typically be roles held by university graduates, particularly those roles in the technical occupations, such as engineers, architects, surveyors, mathematicians and scientists. Furthermore, in the sections of the Strategic Economic Plan which deal with the digital and advanced manufacturing sectors, the NELEP highlight that almost 50,000 STEM students (those students studying a host of subjects which fall under the overarching disciplines of **S**cience, **T**echnology, **E**ngineering and **M**athematics) currently attend universities in the North-East. For me, this boast about the number of STEM students in the North-East implied two things: firstly, the NELEP view North-East universities as important institutions which help to produce the talented individuals required to support the region's flourishing industrial sectors; and, secondly, STEM students in particular will be important for powering the region's industrial areas of opportunity post-graduation, especially in the digital and advanced manufacturing industries.

1.2. Graduate retention in the North-East

After reading the Strategic Economic Plan, I was left with the overall impression that the NELEP believe that graduates play an important role in advancing the North-East's economy both in the present and future, helping to leave behind the legacy of old industrial decline and powering it through the aftermath of Brexit. As already mentioned, the North-East plays host to a lot of potential talent; the region has a large student population of around 100,000. However, how many of these students stay in the region to live and work after they graduate? To answer this question, I firstly interrogated the data from the 2015/16 Destination of Leavers Survey (DLS) from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), which records a variety of data on graduates six months after their graduation, including where they are residing. Out of the graduates who responded to the survey, 64.6% of graduates who attended North-East universities and who were working at the time of the survey had remained in the North-East for employment after their studies. This is a relatively high figure of overall graduate retention compared to other regions of the country.

However, the likelihood of the North-East retaining a graduate depends significantly on where they originate from in the U.K. The vast majority of graduates who both grew up and went to university in the North-East remained in their 'home region' to live and work post-graduation, with the figure standing at 90%. However, many of the graduates who came to the North-East to study from other areas of the U.K. left the region shortly after their graduation, either returning to their region of origin or moving to another part of the country – 77% of these graduates elected to leave. Overall, the statistics from the Destination of Leavers' Survey suggest that any 'brain drain' (meaning loss of talent) from the region is principally driven by graduates who originate from outside the North-East and therefore the region's graduate population will be primarily comprised of 'locals'.

It must be pointed out that these statistics do not account for graduates who were not in work at the time of the survey, or those who were remaining in higher education to study for post-graduate level qualifications. Also, the statistics are from only six months after graduation. This is a relatively short timescale and at that point any movement (or lack of movement) of graduates could be temporary while they decide what they want to do for a career and where they want to live. To address the timescale problem, I examined data from HESA's winter 2016/17 longitudinal

survey which gathered data from people who graduated in the academic year 2012/13. Being three and a half years after graduation, this survey should offer a more realistic representation of graduate mobility patterns.

In the longitudinal survey, the overall retention of graduates from North-East universities was at 51%. Although this figure is lower than at the six-month mark, it is still a relatively high figure when compared nationally. In England, only the North-West and London had higher retention figures (61.2% and 68% respectively). The high retention of graduates in London is its own special case and is likely down to a different set of dynamics compared to the North-East and North-West. For a start, graduates may be more inclined to consider London as an 'escalator region' (Fielding, 1992), a place with an expansive job market, a high 'glass ceiling' for promotion and overall somewhere they can elevate themselves professionally, economically and socially. Furthermore, Walford and Stockdale (2015) have highlighted that a lot of the internal migration which occurs in the U.K. is driven by the pull of the urban 'bright lights'. The North-East is home to three cities, with Newcastle in particular being relatively large in terms of geographical scale and population. However, in the minds of many of people seeking out an urban environment with the maximum bustle and variety, London's lights appear to shine brighter than most.

Another statistic that stood out from HESA's longitudinal survey was that 71% of graduates who grew up in the North-East were also working in their 'home region' three and a half years after graduation. Unlike the survey at the six-month mark, this data includes graduates who grew up in the North-East but attended a university in a different region of the U.K. This may explain why the figure of 71% is perhaps a little lower than I expected, as those graduates who have already left the region for university may have enjoyed their time living in their city/town, made friends and forged other social connections there, and as a result they may be more likely to live and work outside of the North-East. Nevertheless, 71% is still a relatively high figure when compared to other regions of the U.K. – again this is only surpassed by the North-West (72.1%) and London (80.2%) in England. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland also retained more of their 'local' graduates, although these are countries in their own right with devolved governments, that enjoy a level of autonomy from Westminster. This means that in these countries, graduate retention can be affected by differing policies on higher education and the job market, along with many other issues. So overall, even at the three-and-a-half-year mark, the graduate population

of the North-East still has a distinctly 'local' character when compared to other regions of England.

1.3. Interpreting the North-East's graduate retention figures – and how my idea for this research project emerged

The North-East's relatively high levels of graduate retention are likely to be interpreted as a positive thing by many people in policy arenas and even in some academic circles. This is exemplified by the views of Corcoran and Faggian (2017), who argue that graduates play a vital role in enhancing local economies and that the 'consistent loss of the intellectual elite of a region or country can have negative consequences for the economic, technological and trade assets in that area' (pg. 4). For a place to have a high level of graduate retention is often considered an impressive achievement because graduates are typically perceived to be an almost universally highly mobile group of workers. Such perceptions are heavily influenced by the work of the prolific Richard Florida, who writes in a style which is accessible to non-academics and who paints a picture of cities having to battle it out in a 'war for talent'. Corcoran and Faggian (2017) also assert that 'on completion of a college or university degree, a graduate will [simply] move to a new region or country if there is a greater requirement for their acquired skills in the new area' (pg. 4).

Overall then, the two prevailing narratives about graduates are that (1) they are important for the success of regional economies, and (2) they are a highly mobile and elusive group of people who are highly sought after by companies and employers, and therefore have their pick of destinations to live and work. Crucially in the context of my research, these two narratives emerge within a blog entry from the NELEP (accessed online in 2019) promoting their 'Live, Work and Stay' campaign', which is targeted primarily at graduates. The blog entry acknowledges the North-East's already relatively high graduate retention figures but also asks: 'How can we encourage more graduates to live, work and stay in the North East?' Here, the dominant message seems to be 'the more graduates who live and work in the North-East, the more prosperous it will be'.

However, the fact remains that the North-East's respectable graduate retention figure is 'boosted' by a large number of 'local' graduates, and it still *loses* many of its graduates who originate from elsewhere in the U.K. This trend did not surprise me, as it resonated with my own experiences. I have lived in the North-East all of

my life – I graduated from Durham University with a degree in Geography in 2010 and I have then remained in my 'home region' to live, work and study for post-graduate qualifications. Almost *all* of my friends from university who originated from other parts of the U.K. left Durham and the North-East after their graduation and, to my knowledge, have not returned to live and work at any point since.

At first glance, observers may explain this trend as simply the result of graduates remaining in or returning to their familial home out of choice, no matter which region they are from. For example, Sage and colleagues (2013: 1) argue for the importance of the familial home and the 'parental safety net' for graduates, especially immediately after graduation where they may require economic and emotional support from their parents as they search for jobs and contemplate their futures. However, I believed the situation was more complicated than that. As a graduate, I feel as though my ability to choose where to live and work was restricted by a limited amount of money (savings); the fact that I did not know anyone outside of my 'home region'; and concerns about being able to adapt and integrate culturally beyond the confines of the North-East. Furthermore, my monetary worries were further enhanced by a lengthy spell of unemployment after university. Meanwhile, for the majority of my fellow students at Durham University, who mostly originated from outside the North-East, the situation appeared to be very different. During their time at university, they travelled very frequently, either to their 'home regions' or on holidays abroad, which indicates they had the financial resources to do so; they frequently discussed travelling to visit friends who were living throughout the U.K., including those studying at other universities; and they also did not have my strong, working-class, North-East accent, which would mean they were less conspicuous when entering new locations with different socio-cultural environments. Overall, they seemed a lot more mobile.

When I thought about it, these factors that led to my relative immobility – my limited financial resources, my small, locally based friendship network, and my concerns about my ability to culturally adapt – all sounded exceeding like Bourdieu's (1986) 'Forms of Capital', namely economic, social and cultural. He argues that the higher classes in society tend to have higher or more 'legitimate' endowments of these capitals, and from my personal experience, the possession of these capitals was vital in enabling/disabling mobility. This also links to one of Zygmunt Bauman's (2005) key notions – that mobility is socially stratified, with those in the higher

echelons of society possessing more control over when to be mobile, and when to stay still.

This all planted a thought into my head: universities are supposed to be socially mobilising, but for me this was not really the case. What if other graduates from the North-East who had remained in their 'home region' had stayed more because of class-related restrictions, rather than choice? If this was the case, then such findings would provide a strong rebuke to prevalent narratives within policy and some academic circles of graduates being freely mobile individuals. It could also therefore have important implications for regional policy on graduate/talent attraction and retention, as well as the approach of careers advice services for graduates.

1.4. Research questions and aims:

My research project has two main research questions:

1) **To what extent does a graduate's socio-economic status impact their ability and propensity to be mobile?**
2) **What implications do my research findings have for current academic understandings and regional policies on graduate mobility and retention?**

Within my research, my broader aims are:

1. To discover some of the reasons why graduates either stay in the North-East to live and work, or leave, with a strong focus on social class-related impacts but also highlighting other 'practical' issues such as the competitiveness of the graduate job market.
2. To problematise prevalent notions, particularly within policy arenas, that graduates are a universally highly mobile group of people.
3. To demonstrate that Bauman's literature and Bourdieu's theory can be complementary and beneficial for studying the mechanisms behind graduate migration (and migration in general). (Theoretical contribution).
4. To produce findings which can help organisations such as the NELEP further understand the complex drivers of graduate mobilities and immobilities, and potentially influence their future policies.

1.5. Thesis structure

Chapter 2 of this this thesis is a literature review which introduces the key literature that has informed my research. Chapter 3 will describe the methodology I have utilised and its advantages and limitations. Chapter 4 contains my analysis of the graduate interview data. Chapter 5 is a discussion chapter which brings all of the analyses together and determines this research's contribution to knowledge. Chapter 6 will then conclude my research, as well as providing recommendations for future work.

2. Literature review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will introduce, explain and critique the literature I have selected to use as the theoretical base for my research into graduate (im)mobilities, as well as sharing the thought process behind my selection. I also aim to identify the gaps in the literature that my research can fill.

At the beginning of this research project when I was thinking about suitable literature, I found myself gravitating towards Zygmunt Bauman's work, especially his publications on globalisation and mobility. There were two prongs of his argument I felt resonated strongly with my experiences as a relatively immobile graduate and consequently generated my enthusiasm for his writing. Firstly, Bauman highlights the increasing importance placed on mobility in modern society, and how being immobile or 'rooted' is a disadvantageous state to be in. This message was certainly in accordance with my belief that remaining 'local' and rooted to the North-East was a disadvantage for me in the sense that it limited my opportunities for career progression, as I did not have access to the nation-wide job market. Secondly, Bauman equates mobility to levels of privilege by arguing that those people who operate in higher echelons of society enjoy a greater ability and propensity to be mobile, and therefore have a greater chance of succeeding in modern life. Again, this chimed with my personal experience, as I could not help but compare my relative immobility as a working-class graduate with what seemed like the hyper-mobility of my more 'middle-class' university friends, along with their corresponding success in the job market. When I first commenced my literature search, I had a rather dualistic mindset: my immobility versus my friends' hyper-mobility, my stunted career progression versus my friends' enviable job roles. As I will highlight in this literature review, such dualistic thinking is also a feature of Bauman's thinking and writing (Davis, 2008). This was another reason why Bauman's work was my first port of call when compiling my literature review – his dualistic mindset matched my own.

In the first section of this chapter, I will begin with a more detailed overview of Zygmunt Bauman's writing on globalisation and mobility and how it has influenced my approach to researching graduate mobility. I will then acknowledge critiques of Bauman's work, some of which have important implications for my research. For

example, after extensive reading I have now realised that a dualistic way of thinking about mobility lacks necessary nuance at times, especially in the way it presents people as either mobile or immobile, with nothing in between.

Whilst I believe Bauman's work is very insightful and important for my research, it has also been described in some quarters as being theoretically light. This leads me onto the next main author who is an important influence on my work: Pierre Bourdieu. Contrary to Bauman's work, Bourdieu's writing can be described as theoretically 'heavy'. It provided the extensive 'theoretical toolbox' (Burke, 2016) I required to elevate my research to a higher level, with his concepts of habitus, capital and field in particular allowing for detailed analyses of how class-based inequalities are (re)produced in everyday life. In section 2.4. of this literature review, I will describe Bourdieu's main theoretical concepts in detail, acknowledge other authors' critiques of his work and demonstrate how his concepts are valuable for my research into the socially stratified nature of graduate mobility. Crucially, I will also suggest that Bauman and Bourdieu's outlooks can be compatible, as well as evidencing this. In my view, Bauman insightfully highlights the socially stratified nature of mobility, while Bourdieu provides the theoretical tools required to explain it.

In the final section, I will then proceed to discuss some of the literature about the graduates themselves. Graduates tend to be stereotyped as a rather homogeneous group of middle-class people who are generally highly mobile. However, my experience as a graduate is enough on its own to show that this is not always the case. As the final section will demonstrate, graduates are in fact an increasingly diverse group from many different socio-economic backgrounds, who have differing views on academic attainment, contrasting experiences of university life and, ultimately, unequal chances of being mobile after graduation as a result.

2.2. Zygmunt Bauman's work on globalisation and mobility

2.2.1. Globalisation: an assault on the 'local'

For Zygmunt Bauman, globalisation is one of the most important drivers of contemporary social change (Davis, 2008). He describes our world as being 'full' – not in the literal sense of reaching its maximum capacity of people, but more in how it *feels,* as people who live on the other side of the globe are contactable at the touch

of a button thanks to advancements in communication technologies, while ever-improving transportation methods allow us to cover physical space more quickly than ever before. Exotic places around the world can now be visited virtually on software such as Google Earth with a click of a mouse, meaning almost no destination is out of reach and it only takes a matter of seconds to get there. Due to these technological advancements in this globalising world, it is not only people who have been liberated from the constraints of space and time. David Harvey (1989) famously coined the term 'Time-Space Compression' to describe how the global acceleration, production, circulation and transfer of economic capital has undermined space and time as restricting properties. Information, business and trade have also followed this pattern, now increasingly flowing within global networks. While the formation of these global networks can be positive in the sense that they can facilitate international co-operation and the sharing of ideas, knowledge and culture, Bauman argues that it also means economies, business activity, information and trade are increasingly out of reach and outside the jurisdiction of particular nation states, governments, institutions and businesses at the local level (Davis, 2008). A good example of this is the global stock markets, where one country's economy getting into hardship can have huge implications for the economies of other countries.

For Bauman, being 'local' and stationary in this fast-paced, globalising world can be a disadvantageous predicament. One way he illustrates this is by highlighting the changing nature of the relationship between business owners/investors and their workforce as we transitioned from a period of 'heavy modernity' to 'light modernity' (Harding, 2002). In its 'heavy' guise, spanning the early to middle 20th Century, modernity was fixated on the 'management (domination) of space' (Harding, 2002: 614). Heavy industries such as coalmining, ship building and car manufacturing were rooted to locales, with business owners investing in factories, machinery and other essential infrastructure. Industry was reliant on local populations to provide a workforce, just as local populations relied on those industries for employment. Essentially, in heavy modernity industry and geographical space were inherently tied. However, during the later decades of the 20th Century, a transition into a phase of 'light modernity' commenced, initiated principally by advancements in information communication and fibre-optic technologies (Harding, 2002) and coinciding with the acceleration of globalisation. The dependence of business owners and investors on particular locations and their populations began to wane, especially in the case of

multinational corporations, who could tap into increasingly global flows of finance and information and became increasingly footloose in the process.

For Bauman, this transformation of business during light modernity is succinctly summarised by Albert J. Dunlap's principle that in many cases, 'the company belongs to the people who invest in it – not to its employees, suppliers, nor the locality in which it is situated' (1998: 7-8). Here, the employees are envisaged as being rooted to place thanks to family ties, mortgages and other responsibilities, while suppliers can only operate within a limited geographical radius before their costs exceed their demands. The only people who are unlikely to be locally tied are shareholders, who can buy shares on the stock market and can be located anywhere in the world. Ultimately, the investors rule over the fate of the business. If they decide to relocate, the employees and suppliers who are rooted to the abandoned location will suffer, while the more *mobile* shareholders will be immune from the damaging economic and social consequences for the local area.

This example of the locality abandoned by a business and the resulting hardship for localised former employees is a demonstration of why Bauman proclaims that in modern life, 'Mobility climbs to the uppermost among coveted values' (1998: 2). In fact, Bauman believes that mobility is now so essential to everyday life, he coined the term 'Liquid Life' to describe our contemporary state of being. The term captures how in a world transformed by globalisation, everything seems to be constantly flowing, from streams of traffic on our road networks, to electronic cashflows. In Bauman's view, 'liquid life' has also transformed us all into consumers where everything is an item of consumption, including culture and places. In such a world dominated by consumerism, it is not positive to stand still in any sense. We have all now become restless beings. Liquid Life must continue renewing and reinventing itself daily (Bauman, 2005), whether it is staying current with the latest fashion trends, or visiting 'in vogue' holiday destinations included in a top ten 'must visit' blog entry on TripAdvisor. Tim Cresswell, a prolific writer in the 'mobilities paradigm' literature in geography and sociology, reaffirms that in modern life we seem obsessed with mobility insofar that it frequently appears in everyday narratives, like those found in everyday sayings and in media such as car advertisements: 'We are always trying to get somewhere. No one wants to be stuck or bogged down' (Cresswell, 2010: 21). One television advertisement that comes to mind is for the Renault Kadjar 'crossover' car. The advert commands us all to 'dare to live', the implication being that it is only by having your own car and being on the move that

you can truly experience freedom and live life to its fullest. Overall, mobility is now conceptualised as an essential prerequisite to being successful consumers and, ultimately, being successful in modern 'liquid' life, while to be immobile or 'rooted' is to be stifled and at a severe disadvantage.

The example of the locality abandoned by a business not only demonstrates the importance of being mobile in liquid life, but also that it is, as Bauman describes, 'perpetually a scarce, and unequally distributed commodity' (1998: 2). Despite mobility being so vital in modern times, not everyone *can* be mobile, as demonstrated by the relocating business' former employees, who find themselves tied to location due to family responsibilities, mortgages and the likelihood of newfound economic hardship due to unemployment. As well as highlighting disparities in people's ability to be mobile, the example of the abandoned locality also illustrates how one societal group's mobility can result in another group's immobility (Cresswell, 2010). In this case, the flexibility and fleet-footedness of the shareholders plunged local workers and suppliers into uncertainty and rootedness. The scenario encapsulates why Bauman frequently emphasises that, 'What appears globalisation for some means localisation for others; signalling a new freedom for some, upon many others it descends as an inevitable and cruel fate' (1998: 2).

Mobility often requires the expenditure of financial resources to be possible, whether it involves paying for transportation in physical space, or the equipment to traverse virtual space, with a laptop for example. It may also require social and professional contacts who can facilitate a move to a new place. However, a person's finances and the nature of the social circles in which they operate tend to correlate very strongly with their socio-economic status and levels of privilege. This ultimately leads Bauman to proclaim that modern 'liquid' life is essentially a game, where 'the greatest chances of winning belong to those who circulate at the top of the global power pyramid, to whom space matters little and distance is not a bother' (2005: 3). In a globalising world of high-speed communication and transport, distance as a physical, measurable quality is no longer the biggest limitation to our mobility. Instead, what limits us primarily is the economic cost of being mobile, as well as the time it takes to traverse the distance. Those positioned near the top of the social pyramid are more likely to be able to afford the economic expense of mobility and have more control over time – when to be mobile, when to speed up and when to slow down (Harding, 2002). In our earlier example of the shareholders, they had

more control over time than the local employees of the business, as they were not tied to one location and could choose when and how quickly they wanted to mobilise their investments. In the end, all of this means that in Bauman's view, 'far from being an objective, impersonal, physical 'given', 'distance' is a social product' (1998: 12). Ultimately, in 'liquid' life, it is our position in the social hierarchy that dictates where we can move to, rather than how far away our destination is in miles.

In Bauman's rather dystopian projection of how our world is being altered by globalisation, being anchored to a locality is not just disadvantageous in the sense of being bypassed by increasingly global flows of finance and business. Physical locations are also losing what Bauman terms 'their meaning generating and meaning negotiating capacity' (1998: 3) and they are ultimately being devalued in the process. Harding (2002) highlights how we place a value on things in accordance with the amount of effort and resources it takes to achieve them. Before advanced ICT and transport, in some cases getting from one location to another, or trading goods between two locations, required a great deal of time, effort and money. However, in contemporary times, places can be visited at the click of a mouse, money can be sent between bank accounts around the world instantaneously and goods can now travel as airfreight, reaching far-flung destinations in a matter of hours rather than days. The amount of time and effort to get to physical places has decreased drastically, and therefore so too has the value placed upon them. Instead, the value and the meaning-generating capacity localities once had is now transferring to global networks, with online forums and social media taking the place of public spaces such as town halls as places for debate, meaning negotiation and the formation of a sense of community. Gone are the days of the newspaper seller in the market square - most of the time, a citizen's information now comes from the websites of global news outlets, or even social networking sites like Facebook, which are used by people from all around the world. For Bauman, this circulation of information in the virtual sphere means that localities are 'increasingly dependent on sense-giving and interpreting actions which they do not control' (1998: 3). In some cases, they even have meanings and interpretations placed upon them. For example, TripAdvisor could project your city to the world as one of the top ten tourist destinations for a city-break in Europe, or alternatively, a news article circulating on social media could describe your city as one of the ten most deprived in the UK. Such representations are out of the control of local institutions, and yet have an immense power to circulate and influence how a locality is commonly

imagined by the wider population. Now, people can have a strong idea of what they believe a place is like, without ever physically visiting it.

Throughout his writing, Bauman frequently displays what is described by Davis (2008) as a 'will-to-dualism' (pg. 142). The principal dualism in Bauman's work is distinguishing between 'the haves and the have-nots' (Davis, 2008: 142), and he equates this to another important dualism: the 'hyper-mobile' (the haves) versus the 'locally bound' (the have-nots). Essentially, how mobile you are is equitable to how privileged you are, while being immobile (locally bound) in a globalising, liquid modern world is to be socially deprived and disadvantaged. However, while for the most part Bauman fervently sticks to this tenet, he does also point out that being on the move cannot always be linked to privilege. To demonstrate this, he refers to another dualistic comparison, the 'tourists' versus the 'vagabonds'. 'Tourists' are those people essentially living the 'good life'; they can afford to move and they have a choice about where they move to. They move because of the allure of certain destinations and as Davis describes, they are the people who come to mind when thinking of the 'life of the first world' (2008: 143). The vagabonds are different – they may also be mobile, but that is often because they have no choice. An example of a group of people who fit the vagabond description are asylum seekers (Davis, 2008), who due to events such as war, political unrest and natural disasters, are compelled to move to another country to seek refuge, but can sometimes be met with resentment and mistrust by the native population (Davis, 2008). In summary, the mobility of the tourist is gratifying and is carried out through choice, whereas the mobility of the vagabond is often denigrated and carried out through necessity. As Mark Davis succinctly describes, 'if indeed we are nowadays "all on the move", only some of us are permitted to be so' (2008: 145).

2.2.2. Concluding comments on Bauman's work on globalisation and mobility

The word 'globalisation' is intuitively suggestive of a unifying process which would bring the people, places and cultures of the world together. However, Bauman emphasises that while globalisation has united us all by rendering mobility an essential prerequisite to success in modern life, the fact that mobility is an unequally accessed commodity in society means that globalisation actually 'divides as much as it unites, it divides as it unites' (1998: 2). In Bauman's view, this generally strong correlation between mobility and success has skewed the odds of succeeding in life further in favour of those who operate near the top of the social pyramid, as they are

more likely to have the resources and the control of time required to operate within and be rewarded by the global flows of money, business, trade and information.

2.3. Critiques of Bauman's work on globalisation and mobility: negativity, dualisms and the meaning of place

Even though I believe Bauman's work can be very insightful for my research, I am not in total accordance with all facets of his arguments. For a start, can people and places be *truly* 'local' in the era of globalisation? And is it *really* true that places have begun to lose their meaning and significance for people? Such questions about the nature and importance of places are not only pertinent in the sense that they can provide greater nuance to Bauman's argument. Based on my own experience as a graduate who considered migrating after university, I expected issues around place characteristics and meaning, as well as attachments to places and their inhabitants, to be raised by my research respondents. It is therefore important that I consider questions about the continuing role and importance of places within my literature review. This section of my literature review will not only be a critique of Bauman's depiction of 'liquid life'; it will also establish how I conceptualise places and place meaning within my own research.

2.3.1. Too pessimistic?

In the previous section, I used the word 'dystopia' to describe how Zygmunt Bauman views the state of the modern world as it finds itself in the grip of globalisation. A dystopia is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as being a 'state or society in which there is great suffering or injustice', and even though this is a strongly negative statement, after reading Bauman's work I do feel it encapsulates his message well. This leads us onto one of the most common critiques aimed at Bauman's work by academics such as Mark Davis (2008): that his work can be described as pessimistic and lacking the necessary nuance. Bauman portrays globalisation as a solely negative force that is imposing itself upon us all, rather than being something we are actively doing (Davis, 2008). In his view, it is a force that is disadvantaging localised governments, institutions and people and it is further exacerbating pre-existing inequalities between rich and poor. While I believe Bauman's work is a very important rebuke to romantic narratives of a globalising world where *everyone* is more able and equally permitted to be mobile, I also agree with Davis' (2008) point that Bauman's argument lacks nuance, as he does not acknowledge some the positive impacts globalisation and the emergence and acceleration of global flows

of finance, trade and information have had on the world. As I discussed in the previous section, for Bauman, 'globalisation divides as much as it unites. . . the causes of division being identical with those which promote the uniformity of the globe' *(*1998: 2). I do agree with Bauman that globalisation can indeed 'divide as it unites' – we are all *united* in the sense that mobility is now viewed as crucial to success in 21st century life and there is a certain amount of expectation within ourselves and society in general that we should be mobile, as Cresswell's (2010) reference to narratives about mobility in everyday sayings demonstrates. Yet, simultaneously, we all continue to be *divided* by our differential access to mobility which is significantly governed by our levels of privilege in terms of wealth and our societal standing. In fact, as demonstrated by the example of the locale abandoned by the business, it is evident that one person's mobility can even lead to other people's immobility.

However, while globalising forces and the associated global dependence on mobility certainly do have the power to divide, in my opinion it cannot be said that globalisation and mobility are *always* divisive forces, as they can also unite us in a positive sense. This is highlighted by the co-operation between nations we continue to witness in domains such as science, international relief efforts and trade. People are also more able to immerse themselves in different cultures from around the world through avenues such as film, fashion and food. It is true that the global intertwining of cultures is sometimes viewed as an unwelcome imposition in certain settings, as in Massey's (1995: 46) example of the residents of Hampstead in London, who bitterly resisted the building of a McDonald's restaurant as it represented the 'Americanisation' of their community. However, cultural integration can also be enriching, as well as promoting the decomposition of previously held stereotypes and propagating a climate of tolerance, respect and mutual admiration for other nations and their cultures. Furthermore, thanks to vast improvements in ICT over the last ten to twenty years, we can now have a virtual 'face-to-face' conversation with family and friends even if we are at the other side of the world, whereas before an expensive and therefore rather brief phone call would have had to suffice. I am sympathetic towards Bauman's negative tone on globalisation and his proclamation that mobility has emerged as one of society's most stratifying factors. After all, as a relatively immobile graduate, I know first-hand that experiencing a lack of mobility in a society where so much value is placed on being mobile and flexible can have tangible and distressing impacts on a person's mental

health and outlook, as well as personal finances and the ability to find the right job. Even so, unlike Bauman I do believe it is necessary to recognise that globalisation and the associated rise to prominence of mobility can also be forces for positive change and can positively impact our lives.

2.3.2. Too dualistic?

Along with presenting a one-sided argument, another common and more substantial critique levelled at Bauman's work is that throughout his writing, there is an over-reliance on dualistic thinking (Davis, 2008). As highlighted earlier, Bauman frequently demonstrates a 'will-to-dualism' (Davis, 2008: 142), where almost everything is viewed in polar opposites from 'the rich versus the poor', to 'the global versus the local' and 'the hyper-mobile versus the stationary'. Davis (2008) argues that this makes using Bauman's work as the main theoretical basis for empirical research difficult, as in reality people will be somewhere in the middle of being 'haves' or 'have nots' in society. Most of the time in empirical research, you find that research subjects can be placed somewhere along a continuum, rather than at the extremes.

One study which problematises Bauman's depiction of a society solely composed of 'the haves' and the 'have nots' is a report by Mike Savage and colleagues (2013), who strived to develop 'a new model of social class' using the results of the BBC's 'Great British Class Survey'. The survey asks people a whole host of questions, from enquiring about their household income and savings, to their favourite leisure pursuits, use of media and the occupations of the people they know socially. The authors then analysed and interpreted the findings through a Bourdieusian lens of economic, social and cultural capital (I will review these later) and grouped their respondents into new socio-economic groups, according to the types and amounts of each capital they possessed.

Savage and colleagues' main contribution was to question the validity of the traditional three-class model of socio-economic status, namely working, middle and elite class, instead proposing that a seven-class model is much more representative of the stratification of society in the UK. Their societal model was composed of the 'Elite class', an 'Established Middle Class', a 'Technical Middle Class', 'New Affluent Workers', the 'Traditional Working Class', an 'Emergent Service Sector' and the 'Precariats'. In this depiction of society, while Bauman's 'haves' and 'have-nots' are still present, reflected in a substantial polarisation in wealth, social contacts and

cultural preferences between the Elite group at the top of the social hierarchy and the Precariats at the bottom, Savage et al. (2013) propose that these two groups account for only around 21% of the UK population (6% are elites, 15% are precariats). Most of the population (around 79%) actually reside somewhere in the middle of these extreme categories, belonging to one of the other five diverse groups. Savage et al.'s depiction of the social stratification of the UK's society therefore reinforces Davis' (2008) assertion that while extremes do exist within society, people are likely be situated somewhere in between 'the haves' at one end and the 'have-nots' at the other.

Furthermore, the distinction made between the 'established middle class' and the 'technical middle class' in the study is particularly eye-catching. Despite both groups being labelled 'middle-class', the *established* middle-class tend to have a much broader and extensive social circle, as well as enjoying a more eclectic range of cultural and leisure pursuits, than their counterparts in the *technical* middle-class, who are very career minded and tend to socialise more exclusively with other people in the technical professions. In fact, according to the article, the technical middle-class can almost be described as socially insular and may therefore have smaller social networks than the new affluent workers or the traditional working class. The fact that the middle-class can be split into two groups in this manner intimates that there is not always a neat, positive correlation between a person's assigned position in the social hierarchy and their propensities and endowments of certain commodities. There can, in fact, be large inconsistencies among individuals within the traditional class groupings. Not only are people likely to be situated somewhere between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' of society, it can also be difficult to ascertain exactly *who* has *what* along what appears to be an increasingly 'fuzzy' continuum between society's polar opposites.

Savage and colleagues' (2013) study does have its critics – the most common critique being that the class calculator used to develop their model of social stratification in the UK was too simplistic (Devine and Snee, 2015). Dorling (2013) also argues that the model does not take into account the full extent of inequality and financial and professional insecurity that is present in society, as in reality these characteristics are not solely limited to a 'precariat' class at the very bottom of the social hierarchy. Nevertheless, I do believe the study successfully highlights how assigning people to particular socio-economic groups is a complex task, and in turn also demonstrates that a mere distinction between the 'haves' and the 'have nots'

in society is too simplistic. This is something I must consider when carrying out my research.

Furthermore, in his writing Bauman frequently suggests that being an immobile 'have-not' is essentially a 'cruel fate' (1998: 2), meaning that there is little prospect of changing the situation. Admittedly, during my long, fruitless job search after university, I felt like a 'have-not' in some regards, at least when compared to some of my more mobile university friends who had attained 'high-flying' jobs. At that time, I struggled to see how things would change for the better any time soon. However, my circumstances *did* improve to the point where I am now studying for my PhD, and this leads me onto my next point – that people's situations do not remain static, they can (and often do) ameliorate or pejorate over time. Therefore, not only is the continuum between society's haves and have-nots 'fuzzy'; it is also fluid, where people's wealth and status can fluctuate quite extensively over their life course. In this sense, trying to assess what a person has or does not have over their lifetime is problematic, and being a have-not is not always the 'inevitable and cruel fate' (Bauman, 1998: 2) Bauman describes.

Along with the 'fuzziness' of the social class groupings and people's changing circumstances, there is the added complexity that class is of course way more than just a person's material circumstances. It also permeates culture and identities, at both the personal and group level. For example, a person may accrue greater material wealth over time, which may lead to them being labelled as middle-class by some polls and research questionnaires. However, if they originate from a working-class background, they may still experience a greater affinity with working-class culture and continue to identify as a working-class person. This is why in my research I will choose to listen to what my *interviewees* say about their personal situation and their class status and identities, rather than relying on some pre-set criteria to assign them to class-groupings. Also, I do not want to over-generalise and argue that being in a higher social class grouping automatically leads to higher levels of mobility, although I would argue that it does make it more likely. The complexities of social class and its links to the other incredibly complex phenomena of culture and identity simply do not allow for such sweeping generalisations.

2.3.3. Just how 'local' can people and places be?

Along with the 'haves' and the 'have-nots', another of Bauman's dualisms which can be questioned is the strong distinction he makes between the 'global' and the 'local'.

In Bauman's writing, 'local' people and places are depicted as being marooned as they are cut off from, and bypassed by, increasingly global flows of finance, business, trade and information that they cannot hope to take part in. They can find themselves isolated, neglected and left to their own devices. Of course, it is possible to be localised purely in terms of physical mobility, and it is certainly possible to feel very localised in relation to other people. However, in 'liquid life', is it possible for people and places to be *truly* localised in the sense that they are completely cut off from global influences and flows of information and culture?

As far back as 1995, the eminent social scientist and geographer Doreen Massey addressed this question of just how possible it is for people and places to be completely 'local' in a globalising world. Massey, along with prominent authors in the mobilities paradigm literature (like John Urry and Mimi Sheller) argue for a relational conceptualisation of place, which goes against the more traditional sedentarist approaches in the social sciences which holds places as totally bounded, distinct and settled entities. Instead, they believe places should be conceptualised 'as a meeting place, the location of the intersection of particular bundles of activity spaces, of connections and interrelations, of influences and movements' (Massey, 1995: 59). In essence, their argument is that places do not just stand on their own, bounded and marooned, with an internally developed essential character. Instead, they are a web of relations (Hannam et al., 2006), (re)produced by many different people, cultures and influences coming together over time. From this description, it is clear to see how geographers who envisage place in this relational manner have doubts over just how 'local' a city, town or even a village can be. In their view, places cannot be totally cut off and isolated from *all* global flows of people, finance, information and trade, as they are actually *products* of them.

While such a conceptualisation of place may seem increasingly fitting in a globalising world, with the perceived proliferation and increasing velocity of international travel and trade, Massey (1995) points out that this relationality is not a new, emerging quality of place. Places have always been *"meeting places"*. To demonstrate this point, Massey firstly refers to the city of Liverpool in North-West England, which, as a port city, has relied on trading with countries from around the world over centuries for its very existence. Liverpool is a city with quite a distinct character, from the recognisable accent of its inhabitants, to its love of football and its Merseybeat music. However, as Massey describes in the following passage, this

unique character still emerges from the conjunction and morphosis of many different influences:

> . . .as each new set of links is established, so new elements are added to the character of the place (in the case of Liverpool from profits to trade, to street names, to music), mixing with and in turn being moulded by, the place's existing features. (1995: 61).

For Massey and others who think in this relational manner, a place is like a tapestry, with new influences constantly being woven in, adding to and altering the fabric. That character of place, which can seem so unique and *'local'*, has actually been (re)produced over time by many different internal and external (global) influences merging and interacting together (Massey 1995).

The sphere of influence in which a place operates, or the extent of its reach outside of its local 'boundaries', has been described by Massey as its 'activity space' (1995: 57). This concept does not only apply to places, but also its individual inhabitants - every one of us has our own 'activity space', an area we live in and interact with daily. Massey highlights a consensus among social theorists that globalisation is impacting our individual activity spaces in two main ways: 'Firstly, they are in general increasing in their spatial reach. Secondly, they are increasing also in their complexity and in the complexity of the linkages between them' (1995: 57). This means that while some people's activity spaces will be larger and more complex than others, in today's globalising world it is becoming ever more unrealistic to describe anyone's life as being truly 'localised'. Even a relatively 'immobile' person who rarely travels outside of their home village may shop at a local convenience store which sells oranges from Seville, while their favourite pastime may be watching Hollywood movies on television. In today's globalising world, most people's activity spaces are growing and are becoming more entangled with others (Massey, 1995), even if they are not physically very mobile or particularly aware of the process. Ultimately, this has an important knock-on effect: as individual residents' activity spaces continue to expand and become more complex, so does the activity space of the place in which they live. Even small, seemingly remote villages may now find themselves becoming increasingly connected with the outside world through the expanding activity spaces of its residents. Overall, when people and the places in which they live are visualised in terms of the full extent of their relationality, it can be argued that framing 'global' and 'local' as completely distinct,

mutually exclusive conditions, as Bauman does in his writing, is becoming an increasingly problematic and over-simplistic conceptualisation.

There are some questions hanging over a relational conceptualisation of places. Firstly, how does it account for the fact that places do indeed have boundaries around them, which are designed and enforced to keep people and undesirable commodities out? (Massey and Jess, 1995). Secondly, how can places always remain 'unfinished', when they have physical features like buildings and infrastructure which remain unchanged for many years and can be essential components of the character of place? However, despite these critiques, after reading Massey's compelling argument for the relationality, it remains difficult to envisage how any place or any person can be truly localised without any external (global) influences being present.

Although, as I highlighted earlier, it is important to recognise that people can remain very 'local' purely in terms of their physical mobility, which I believe is the main point that Bauman is trying to get across in his work. It is also important to reiterate that some people and places are much more connected to vital global flows of finance, business, information and culture than others, and this differential connection can lead to considerable social injustices, which Bauman laments in his work. Furthermore, while Bauman's global versus local dualism may lack the necessary nuance, based on my own experiences I would argue that it does successfully capture how it *feels* to be geographically immobile and rooted to place when other people around you seem to be much more mobile and connected to the rest of the world. In this scenario, you can feel very localised and as if the world is passing you by to an extent. Notwithstanding this, nobody is completely disconnected from the world around them. Therefore, rather than being framed in a dualism as entirely mutually exclusive conditions, 'global' and 'local' would be better placed on a continuum (just like the haves and the have-nots), where some people and places are more mobile and connected (global) than others. On such a continuum, it could also be possible to incorporate flows and influences which operate at intermediary levels between 'the local' and 'the global', such as the regional and national levels. These are important scales of analysis which Bauman consistently omits from his writing.

In my research, I do not wish to portray places as isolated and totally bounded containers of social activity, as I believe such a depiction is unrealistic. Therefore,

when I describe a person, group or place as being localised, I mean this in relation to other people who have a relatively greater ability and propensity to be mobile, and to places which are relatively more connected to other locations, both nationally and globally.

2.3.4. Are places really losing their meaning and significance?

The North-East of England, and especially Durham, is a place which still means a lot to me personally. This depth of feeling was an important reason why I remained in the North-East to live and work post-graduation. I was therefore surprised to read that in Bauman's view, places are actually 'losing their meaning generating and negotiation capacity' (1998: 3) to globalised systems of meaning, as I did not feel this matched my own experience. Bauman is by no means the only advocate of this viewpoint either. Manuel Castells, in his early writing on the topic, goes even further than Bauman by arguing that in the era of globalisation, 'social meaning evaporates from places' (1989: 349) as they become mere conduits for global flows of information and culture. In his view, advancements in information communication and fibre-optic technologies have principally driven our transition into a 'networked society', where power has become disembedded from the 'space of places', instead now operating in the 'space of flows' (all quotes from Castells 2010: 31).

Furthermore, within our increasingly connected society, some authors argue that it is not only people and information that flow; so too do cultural goods and services, often irrepressibly so (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992). Gupta and Ferguson (1992) are among many authors who contend that this has contributed significantly to what they see as the increasing homogeneity of places around the world. Such similarity of places is a prospect which is strongly chastised by Beatley, who states:

> Starbucks stores seem to be on every corner in every major city. . .
> The proliferation of mind-numbing sameness is an alarming trend. As
> the march of globalisation continues, it manifests. . . in places that look
> and feel alike. (Beatley 2004, quoted in Duyvendak 2011: 9).

Beatley's account is a further contribution to the wide body of literature arguing that the international spread of cultural products and the ubiquity of huge international 'chains' in the retail, restaurant and fast-food sectors are resulting in many places around the world beginning to look and feel the same, particularly in terms of their cultural and hospitality offerings. Along with power now principally being held within global flows (Castells, 2010), this eradication of the uniqueness of place is yet

another mechanism through which places are said to be losing their individual meanings and value in the era of globalisation.

However, contrary to the views of Bauman, Castells and others, from my own experience, I believe that despite the process of globalisation, places can still have 'meaning generating' and 'meaning negotiating' capacities (Bauman's terms), as well as unique qualities which distinguish them from each other and maintain their significance. Physical places do still matter to people, so much so that people become strongly attached and even identify with them. This debate has important implications for my research, because if places continue to be meaningful and significant for people (including graduates), then surely this will influence where they move to and settle? As Gillian Rose articulately describes, this section will illustrate that places remain 'infused with meaning and feeling' (1995: 88) despite the undoubted impact globalisation is having upon them.

Firstly, accounts which suggest that places are losing their uniqueness in the face of an influx of global imports appear to suggest that places simply accept and passively absorb these external influences like a sponge. Often, these accounts do not take into consideration the real possibility of *resistance* which can come from both the governing institutions of places, as well as their inhabitants. Massey's (1995: 46) example of the residents of Hampstead in London fervently resisting the building of a McDonald's restaurant in the heart of their community, which I referred to earlier, is a good example of how places can fight back against external influences through the will of their inhabitants. Admittedly, despite strong opposition to what the residents saw as an unwanted import into their community, the fast-food restaurant was still constructed. However, this was only permitted after McDonald's agreed to go against convention and 'tone down' the colourful aesthetics of their building, bringing it in line with the character of the local area (Massey, 1995). This demonstrates that even though global influences can sometimes prove difficult to resist, places and their inhabitants can still be a part of the negotiation over if/how new influences are embraced and how they will contribute to the place's overall character and meaning. Even in the era of globalisation, the unique features and meanings attached to places can be so important to people that they are often willing to fight extremely hard to preserve them.

As the example of the Hampstead McDonald's illustrates, even if external (and sometimes rather generic) influences do enter a place, this does not necessarily

mean that the older characteristics and traditions of place are eliminated. People can both embrace new cultural imports and simultaneously be determined to keep their traditional ways of life alive. As Massey (1995) suggests in her argument for relationality, this means places can become a complex tapestry of new and old influences blending together or at least co-existing together, even if there is some tension between them occasionally. I believe this description of new and old characteristics existing in tandem captures the essence of my 'home city' of Durham, in North-East England, almost perfectly.

Over the last fifteen years, Durham City centre has witnessed the emergence of many new bars, restaurants and entertainment facilities, with this being principally initiated by the development and opening of the Walkergate hospitality complex around 2005. Many of the new venues belong to national or international 'chains' and are akin in terms of signage, décor and service to those you would find in many other cities nationally. In terms of entertainment and hospitality then, it is difficult to repute that Durham is becoming more of a generic experience. However, in other crucial ways, Durham remains unique and is still how I remember it from when I was young. The imposing castle and cathedral are constant presences and an important visitor attraction on the top of the hill, remaining iconic features of the cityscape; the river embankments are still forested, giving the city an uniquely green, leafy aesthetic; while the Durham university students continue to create and maintain the vibrancy throughout the city. Furthermore, the Durham Miners' Gala (locally known as the 'Big Meeting'), an event initiated in 1872 by the miners themselves to celebrate their shared culture and camaraderie (Mellor and Stephenson, 2005; Mordue 2020), is still held annually.

As Mellor and Stephenson describe, the Durham Miners' Gala is an 'open-air mix of colliery bands, banners, political speeches and fair held on the second Saturday in July' (2005: 344). Some of the events which take place during the Gala can be described as ritualistic, especially the parading of the colliery bands and their colourful banners in front of the political figures standing on the County Hotel balcony. At the 2019 Gala, one of the key figures on the balcony was the then Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn, which demonstrates the enduring political gravitas of the event. Another ritualistic feature of the Gala is the miners' service held at Durham Cathedral, which originally served as a memorial to miners who had died in the pits, but is now also dedicated to the unveiling of new colliery banners (Mellor and Stephenson, 2005). Overall, Gala day can at times be both celebratory

and solemn, but it is always emotionally charged and it is powered historically by strong, socialist political sentiment (Mellor and Stephenson, 2005).

If places are losing their meaning to more globalised systems of meaning generation as Bauman, Castells and others suggest, then you would be forgiven for expecting that events such as the Durham Miners' Gala, which are inherently tied and completely unique to their city setting, would also be losing their impact and relevance. However, contrary to losing its salience, the Gala is experiencing a resurgence over recent years, with the event in 2017 attracting around 250,000 people to Durham (Mordue 2020: 113). Moreover, not only is this event which is synonymous with Durham still very popular and saturated with emotion, nostalgia and political feeling (Mellor and Stephenson, 2005), the community spirit it continues to generate has the potential to support 'regeneration of place and social inclusion' in the future (Robinson 2002, quoted in Mellor and Stephenson 2005: 349). Overall, I believe the Durham Minors' Gala, with its place-based rituals, traditions and enduring popularity, demonstrates that even in the contemporary era where global and internet-based flows of information and culture are so prevalent, individual places can and still do remain very significant and meaningful for their inhabitants. The event is also an illustration of the preserved uniqueness and traditional character of Durham, existing in tandem with its new cultural imports such as international restaurant chains. While the city's entertainment, hospitality and retail offerings may have a more generic feel, these imports have certainly not led to the total eradication of the uniqueness of Durham's character and social meaning as a place.

For Scannell and Gifford (2010), the social and physical environments of places can be so meaningful for people that they become strongly attached to particular locations. In fact, people can become psychologically invested to the extent that they develop a 'place identity', where they begin to identify with the place and it becomes incorporated into their 'self-concept' (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996). This was certainly the case for some of the residents of the London Docklands area, who were interviewed as part of Twigger-Ross and Uzzell's (1996) study into the mechanics of place identities. In this study, it was argued that the residents who identified with the London Docklands did so because for them, the location supported a combination of Breakwell's (1986) four identity principles: 'distinctiveness', 'continuity', 'self-esteem' and 'self-efficacy'.

'Distinctiveness' is exactly how it sounds – people have a desire to stand out and be unique. Bauman (2005) argues that within modern society there is more pressure than ever on people to be an 'individual', a unique person who is totally responsible for their own successes, as well as their perceived failures. Bauman also makes the tongue-in-cheek comment that ironically, the desire of everyone to be an individual in fact makes everyone remarkably similar. Nevertheless, 'distinctiveness' is becoming a goal which is increasingly strived for in modern life, and Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) argue that places can help people to achieve this. By living in a certain type of place, people can demarcate themselves as being a 'city person' or a 'countryside person'. They may also identify as being from the more bourgeois part of town, in the process associating themselves with the perceivably more prestigious characteristics of that area and achieving distinction from others.

The second identity principle of 'continuity' is all about maintaining a consistent sense of identity over time, which is primarily achieved by linking the past to the present (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996). When someone has lived in a place for a long time, they can experience what is referred to as "place-referent continuity" (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996: 207), which involves the accumulation of an extensive bank of memories and experiences linked specifically to that particular place. Statements like 'I grew up in that street' and 'I attended that school' capture the essence of place-referent continuity. Using a turn of phrase, remaining in the place can 'keep a person's memories alive'. In this way, places provide people with sentimental links to the past and consequently they are vital to maintaining a consistent sense of continuity and identity in the present and future.

Along with 'distinctiveness' and 'continuity', Twigger-Ross and Uzzell also argue that places can play an important role in supporting a person's self-esteem, which is seeing yourself and the social group(s) you are a part of in a positive way. The place can boost self-esteem if it produces positive emotions and makes a person feel good about themselves (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996). The availability of desirable job opportunities, fun amenities and aesthetically pleasing environments are all features of place which can boost morale and lead to a person experiencing place identification. Linked to self-esteem is the principle of 'self-efficacy', the belief a person has in the ability to reach their goals (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996). Self-efficacy can relate to longer-term goals, such as career progression, but it is commonly linked to even the most mundane of everyday tasks by interview respondents, such as being able to go for a coffee in the morning or buy groceries.

If a place supports the everyday lifestyle a person desires to follow, then this is enough on its own to provide a basis for place identification.

Twigger-Ross and Uzzell's study was a pioneering one in the field of place identity, sparking renewed interest and more research into the topic. Their model of place identity, which uses Breakwell's (1986) 'Identity Process Model' (IPM) as a base, has now been supplemented by a newer model from Droseltis and Vignoles (2010), who believe places can also support people's need for a sense of 'meaning', 'belongingness', 'control' and 'security' (pg. 25). They also argue that people can have many 'social and symbolic links to places' (pg. 25), including 'genealogical links', 'economic links', as well as a certain 'spiritual significance' (pg. 25).

What has become apparent from reading the place identity literature is that it provides further ammunition for the argument that places can still be important and meaningful for people. Whether it is providing a sense of continuity and belonging, or boosting people's self-esteem and their conviction in realising their goals, clearly people can experience strong emotional connections to places, even to the point where places can play a pivotal role in shaping people's identities and self-belief. Even Castells, who originally proclaimed that meaning was 'evaporating' (1989: 349) from places, has more recently conceded that 'social and cultural meaning is defined in place terms' (2010: 31), although he still insists that 'functionality, wealth and power are defined in terms of flows' (ibid: 31). While the individual circumstances of graduates and how their socio-economic background influences their mobility will always remain my primary focus in my research, I do expect the importance of places and issues surrounding place attachment and identification to be raised by graduates in interviews when they discuss their migration options.

2.3.5. Being hyper-mobile versus being stationary: are they truly mutually exclusive conditions?

Another key dualism in Bauman's work is the divide between the 'hyper-mobile' and the 'stationary'. Hyper-mobility is equated to privilege and success, while being stationary or 'rooted' is to be left behind, with little control over your future. Bauman depicts mobility as being one of society's most crucial and sought after commodities, with everyone striving to be the 'tourist' in his distinction between 'the tourists and the vagabonds' – people of the 'first world' whose movement is gratifying and is carried out through personal choice. Ultimately, in Bauman's writing, to be mobile and to be stationary are presented as entirely mutually exclusive conditions.

However, is this really the case? Surely even the most hyper-mobile of people will experience short, intermittent periods of rest and immobility? Moreover, even though we have all probably experienced societal pressure to be mobile during some periods of our lives, whether this was from family members, friends, or car advertisements, is it really true that mobility is universally sought after?

First of all, addressing the apparently mutually exclusive nature of hyper-mobility and stationarity, Hannan, Sheller and Urry (2006) present the conflicting and rather compelling argument that there would be, in fact, 'no linear increase in fluidity without extensive systems of immobility' (pg. 7). For these authors:

> . . . mobilities cannot be described without attention to the necessary spatial, infrastructural, and institutional moorings that configure and enable mobilities – creating what Harvey called the "spatial fix". (pg. 7).

The implication here is that every mobile network, whether it is of people, information or money, must be facilitated and held together by a system of stationary hubs, nodes and channels which keep the network flowing coherently. Cresswell (2010) offers the example of our road networks, which as well as being full of vehicles and drivers travelling from A to B, also consists of immobile infrastructure, such as traffic lights, roundabouts, and the tarmac roads themselves, which enable the drivers to reach their destinations in a (mostly) safe and orderly manner. Without an organisational and static infrastructure, most networks, including our road network, would become chaotic and break down. The road network is also a demonstration that even though mobility is commonly associated with freedom, in a sense it is often being restricted and 'channelled into acceptable conduits' (Cresswell 2010: 24).

Another key example of the importance of immobility within networks is Hannam and colleagues' (2006) case study of airports, which they argue represent 'spaces of inbetweeness involved in being mobile but immobilised in lounges, waiting rooms, cafes, amusement arcades. . . an immobile network so that others can be on the move' (pg. 6). Along with places like train stations and bus terminals, airports are a perfect example of killing time temporarily in situ in order to get from one place to another. They are stationary places which have been constructed to keep flows of people connected. However, it is also important to emphasise that airports primarily serve a hyper-mobile elite (Hannam et al. 2006), and that the mobility of this elite group simultaneously requires the immobility of hundreds of workers who maintain airports' functionality, from baggage handlers to check-in operators. Therefore, as

well as demonstrating that mobility and stationarity can be mutually dependent, the airport example also offers further support for Bauman's argument that the mobility of certain people can both require and directly result in the immobility of others.

Overall, what is becoming apparent is that hyper-mobility and being stationary are *not always* mutually exclusive conditions. In fact, temporary periods of immobility can be essential for remaining mobile in the long term. If you are a person who spends a lot of time being on the move, you will still have particular places that you gravitate towards and remain in for meaningful periods of time, from places of work to places of residence. Even forms of mobility associated with personal freedom, such as the 'joy of driving', are often restricted and concentrated into orderly flows, as in the case of the immobile infrastructure of our road networks (Cresswell, 2010). Most crucially, the mobility of people, finance, information and culture is not only facilitated and regulated by immobile infrastructure. In many cases, it is also reliant on the immobility of other people. In this sense, mobility and stationarity are *negatively associated*, as the imposition of immobility on some people for the benefit of elite others represents social injustice.

As I mentioned earlier, for Bauman, mobility has now become 'the uppermost among coveted values' (1998: 2). He does acknowledge that people can be attached to place, but only in the sense that it is a defence mechanism against the global flows of people and culture that they cannot hope to join (Bauman, 1998; 2005). They essentially 'pull up the drawbridge' to preserve the last remaining place where they feel like they belong. However, earlier I demonstrated that places can potentially be important to people in many ways - not just as a defence mechanism. Would people with strong and intricate connections to places really value mobility more than remaining in their favourite location? For Gustafson (2001), it is not always necessary for people to choose between mobility and stability. In a qualitative study with residents from western Sweden, Gustafson demonstrated that it is possible for people to value and to be attached to places, but at the same time have a propensity to be mobile. As he cleverly articulates, people can simultaneously value 'roots and routes' (2001: 669).

One person who equally valued 'roots' and 'routes' in Gustafson's research was Lars-Erik, a teacher in his fifties (2001: 677). Lars-Erik enjoyed foreign travel and liked to visit places which were markedly different from his home nation of Sweden. In this sense, he very much valued 'routes' as they offered him a sense of adventure

through new experiences. However, he also discussed how emotionally attached and settled he was in his hometown, region and country, particularly enjoying the community spirit he experiences with his neighbours and friends. Within Lars-Erik's account, his 'roots' were not just important for stability and a sense of home – he believed that without these 'roots', a person would not be able to navigate or appreciate 'routes' to other places, because such mobility *"requires some sort of anchorage"* (Gustafson 2001: 677). Gustafson goes further when describing the musings of his research respondent:

> "Everybody, he [Lars-Erik] believed, needs a home place representing roots, security, community and identity, but once they have this. . . they can 'go out into the world' and also appreciate place as routes. In this synthesis, roots and routes were expressed as complimentary rather than a contradiction" (2001: 678).

What is particularly interesting here is that for Lars-Erik, it is the attachment and association he has with his hometown, region and country which generates his confidence and propensity to go out and explore the world (Gustafson, 2001). Without his roots, he would probably be a lot less mobile. Once again, Lars-Erik's account is an example of how being mobile and being stationary are not always mutually exclusive conditions - in fact, at times future mobility can be reliant on periods of stasis. What is also very interesting in this account is the idea of places being represented as 'routes', not just 'roots'. Researchers who follow the sedentarist tradition within geography and sociology tend to associate localities with the home, stasis, boundedness and even parochialism (Sheller and Urry, 2006). However, in Gustafson's research, interviewees like Lars-Erik also portray places as routes – places which can offer new experiences, a sense of discovery and ultimately the feeling of travelling and adventure. In this sense, being in place certainly does not mean you are standing still. Even when you are in a particular place, you can still be on the move within it and experience all it has to offer.

What I hope to have demonstrated in this section is that being mobile and being stationary are not always conflicting and contrasting states to be in. On the contrary, the mobility of people, finance, information, culture and any other commodity often relies on the stationary hubs, nodes and infrastructure which link networks together (Hannam et al. 2006). Even the most mobile of people are restricted in the sense that they are channelled into following certain pathways, with our road networks

being a prime example. Furthermore, while there is a societal pressure to be on the move, not everyone wants to be continuously mobile. People can become attached and invested in particular places, meaning they want to remain there. Having that place to call home and to settle can even provide people with the confidence to become more mobile and explore.

When investigating graduate migration, it is important for me to recognise that in some instances, periods of immobility may only be temporary and may in fact be necessary to secure future mobility, as in the case of some graduates who return to what Sage et al. (2013) refer to as the "safety net" (pg. 738) of the familial home. They may do so to take advantage of emotional and economic support from parents whilst they apply for jobs and consider where they want to live next. In such cases, being immobile would not be a disadvantage or represent a 'cruel fate' as Bauman suggests. It may instead represent a retreat to a supportive environment in order to better organise and plan future periods of mobility, during what can be a very uncertain and unpredictable period immediately after graduation (Sage et al. 2013). Therefore, for some graduates, being stationary in the present may at times compliment and even promote their mobility in the future.

Of course, Bauman may have replied that some people simply do not have any *choice* but to remain stationary. Mobility can be very expensive financially and temporally, while it also often requires certain social connections to facilitate it. Therefore, those people who are disadvantaged financially, socially and culturally may find that for them, substantial mobility is practically and even conceptually unfeasible. Alternatively, some people, such as refugees, find that they have no choice but to be on the move - remaining stationary is not a luxury they can afford. Admittedly for these two groups of people, being mobile and being stationary *will* probably seem like completely contrasting and conflicting states to be in.

2.3.6. An evaluation of Bauman's work on globalisation and mobility: how does it influence my research into the movement of graduates?

After reviewing Bauman's writing on globalisation and mobility and reflecting on my own experiences, I concur with Harding (2002) that 'he [Bauman] provides us with considerable insights into globalisation and its effects on humans' (pg. 623). I agree that there seems to be ever more importance placed on being mobile in today's society (which is not always a positive thing), and also that mobility is becoming increasingly associated with 'success' in modern life (Bauman, 1998). Bauman's

account also offers an important rebuke to romanticising narratives of globalisation which depict a world where everyone and everything is constantly in motion, instead highlighting that mobility is actually an unequally accessed resource which is more likely to be possible for people who operate nearer the top of the social pyramid. Furthermore, Bauman demonstrates that even in a world which appears to be increasingly fluid and connected, periods of stasis can still be imposed on people, and by doing so he raises the very important possibility that remaining stationary is not always through choice – a key message that chimes with my experiences as a graduate.

However, even though I agree in principle with many of Bauman's key arguments, there are also a few points of contention. When I first commenced this research project, I was initially drawn to Bauman's writing because, as Davis (2008) points out, he tends to think and write in a dualistic way. This initially matched my own way of conceptualising my experiences as a graduate. However, after consulting the literature discussed in this chapter, I am now in accordance with Davis (2008) that in most situations such polarised thinking lacks the necessary nuance. Bauman pits the haves versus the have-nots, the local versus the global, and the hyper-mobile versus the stationary against each other in a dualistic manner, but in reality these states would be better represented on a continuum. People are very rarely located at the extremes of a spectrum (Davis, 2008). Instead, they are much more likely to find themselves located somewhere in between being a have or a have not, local or global, and hyper-mobile or stationary. In my research, I do not wish to over-simplify the inevitable fuzziness of trying to establish exactly who has what within a particular social class grouping. I also do not wish to portray people as either completely stationary and isolated, or as nomads who have a constant desire to travel around the globe. Moreover, whilst online forums, communities and social media have undoubtedly become very influential, I cannot agree that their emergence is leading to the eradication of the meaning and significance of physical places. I know first-hand that places can still mean a lot to people, and I fully expect this to be reflected within the testimonies of my interviewees.

For Davis (2008), it is a valid point that Bauman may have chosen to present his arguments in a dualistic way for illustrative purposes – to demonstrate the vast inequalities that exist in society, rather than to give an accurate portrayal of what is happening to everyone. That is fair, but this point still does not alleviate the problem that Bauman's dualistic thinking and writing does not provide a good theoretical

basis for empirical research (Davis, 2008). Again, this is because most of the time research subjects will be located somewhere in between opposite categories, rather than at the extremes of the spectrum. Therefore, while my research will continue to be strongly influenced by Bauman's arguments on mobility, to bolster the theoretical background to my research further I have also decided to consult the work of the eminent sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, as he has developed an extensive 'theoretical toolbox' (Burke 2016: 61) which is frequently utilised by many other researchers. Throughout this literature review section, I have frequently discussed how financial resources, social networks and cultural aspects can govern how mobile a person can be. This, of course, links well with Bourdieu's (1986) theories on economic, social and cultural capital, and this is what initially attracted me to his writing. The next section of this literature review will begin by providing more detail on Bourdieu's forms of capital, along with his other concepts of habitus, field and doxa. I will also aim to demonstrate why Bourdieu's concepts will provide a good theoretical underpinning for my research into graduate mobilities.

2.4. Bourdieu's 'theoretical toolbox'

When compiling the literature review for my research, I began to read migration studies literature to learn how the authors approached their research into people's mobility, both theoretically and methodologically. I discovered the work of Van Hear (2014), who argued strongly for 'a rehabilitation of class in the study of migration' (pg. 101). This message caught my attention, as from my own experience I also believed that class could play a significant role in shaping a person's ability and propensity to be mobile. Van Hear then goes further to argue that social class, when:

> drawing on *Bourdieu*, can be conceived in terms of the disposal of different amounts and forms of capital – economic, social, cultural or symbolic. . . holding combinations of such capital shapes the routes would-be migrants can take, the channels they can follow, the destinations they can reach, and their life chances afterwards. (2014: 102, emphasis added).

The depiction of class as being heavily linked to particular endowments of economic, social and cultural resources or 'capitals', and the argument that these resources are crucial in determining the extent of a person's mobility, were so concurrent with my experiences and arguments that I felt compelled to read Bourdieu's work on *the forms of capital* for myself. Afterwards, I was convinced that Bourdieu's 'capitals'

would provide a strong theoretical underpinning for my research, which would allow me to successfully address my research aims and questions.

2.4.1. Bourdieu's 'Forms of Capital' and their potential influence on graduate mobility

In *The Forms of Capital* (1986), Bourdieu described what he viewed as the three principal forms of capital or resources a person can attain, namely: economic, social and cultural capital. As Burke (2016) concisely describes, 'these forms of capital allow us to 'plot' an individual's position within social space', while allowing us to move 'beyond merely economic indicators' (pg. 11), which on their own are not a sufficient indicator of socio-economic status. Having said that, Bourdieu's 'economic capital' does refer to monetary resources and a person's overall wealth (Bourdieu, 1986). In Bourdieu's view, 'economic capital is the root of the other forms of capital' (Burke 2016: 11). However, Burke (2016) also points out that all the other forms of capital are also very important and distinguishable in their own right, as they have their own discernible characteristics and implications for people, which I will revisit later. Thinking in terms of graduate mobility, it almost goes without saying that the amount of economic capital or 'money' a graduate has at their disposal will play a key role in how far and how frequently they can travel, as well as where they can afford to settle down, due to the cost of housing, expense of living and other factors. However, Van Hear (2014) reiterates that it is not always the people with the greatest wealth that are on the move. Being well-off economically means people may also have the luxury to choose to stay where they are. Therefore, it is the element of *choice* – whether to be mobile or immobile – that higher endowments of economic capital affords a person. It does not actually guarantee increased mobility.

Another important form of capital is 'social capital', which refers to the number of social connections a person has with other people, as well as the nature of these connections (Bourdieu, 1986). In general, by getting to know many people, and then maintaining and strengthening these social bonds over time, you are constructing a network of people who are likely to feel a certain obligation to help you, allowing you to achieve things you could not do on your own (Field, 2008). In this way, the social contacts we establish and maintain can act as a resource, or a type of capital (Field, 2008). However, as highlighted by Burke, for Bourdieu the amount of social capital a person possesses is determined by *two* principal factors: 'the size of the contact network' *and* 'the position within the social space each contact inhabits' (2016: 11).

In other words, having connections to many different people is not all that matters. The standing of those people in society - their wealth, profession, cultural legitimacy and ultimately, their social class - is also of vital importance when assessing the amount of social capital a person has and how advantageous it may be. Therefore, 'Bourdieu suggests, social capital is not an autonomous form of capital, independent from economic and cultural capital' (Burke 2016: 11). This is a good demonstration of how all of the forms of capital are linked, a point I will also revisit later.

Just like economic capital (or any form of capital for that matter), social capital takes time to accumulate (Bourdieu, 1986). It also requires work and effort to be built up and preserved, in the sense that relationships between people must be actively initiated and maintained (Bourdieu, 1986; Field, 2008). If relationships are neglected, the social capital they provide begins to dwindle as the level of mutual affinity and obligation between people begins to fade (Field, 2008). This means that a person's social capital can (and almost invariably does) fluctuate throughout their life. Physical proximity is also an important factor in these relationships being maintained. Being further away from people inevitably means that relationships with them require even more work to be preserved or strengthened, by making a conscious effort to communicate more by phone or social media for example. The result is that people are likely to locate themselves geographically close to the social networks they value, and those which prove advantageous, to minimise the workload of maintaining them. Overall, in terms of effort, social capital can be summed up by the adage: 'you get out what you put in'. Although, in my research I do not wish to suggest that we are all callous and calculating when we form relationships with people, doing so solely for personal gain.

For Field (2008), a person's social capital will be much stronger if the people they are connected to are like-minded. He argues that:

> . . . if people are going to help each other, they need to feel good about
> it. . . they need to feel like they have something in common with each
> other. If they do share values, they are much more likely to cooperate
> to achieve mutual goals (pg. 3).

Whilst most of us will know people who are different to ourselves in both status and mentality, in general we tend to gravitate towards like-minded individuals and form the strongest bonds with those people. This means that our social networks tend to predominantly consist of like-minded people of a similar social stature to ourselves,

and this leads on nicely to the next point: that for Bourdieu (1986), social capital simply represents being a member of a group, which provides a 'collectively-owned capital' that is maintained through exchanges. Over time, these exchanges produce 'mutual knowledge and recognition'. One of Bourdieu's key messages about group membership is that as well as being inclusive and advantageous, paradoxically it can also be limiting (Bourdieu, 1986). Being part of a group can mean strength in numbers, but it also means that you must adhere to the value systems, or the written and unwritten rules, that determine what is acceptable and unacceptable as a member of that group (Bourdieu, 1986). For example, it is not likely that you would be accepted into a rock music fan club if your clothes are more representative of the hip-hop music scene. All groups have these value systems or codes, and this is what distinguishes them from other groups in society. Moreover, groups also often have a smaller 'sub-group' within them that come to represent the whole group, sometimes govern the value system of the group, and become the people by which the group is primarily recognised (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu (1986) demonstrates this with the example of when Shakespeare refers to Cleopatra as 'Egypt' in his tragedy *Antony and Cleopatra* – even a group the size of a whole country's population can be primarily associated with the characteristics and imagery of one person as its leader. Overall, while social capital can be beneficial in the sense that it can allow people to achieve goals that would be difficult to achieve by themselves, it can also prove to be restrictive because it can limit a person's autonomy. If group membership does prove to be restrictive, then the associated social contacts may not represent a resource or 'capital' at all.

Thinking about my own research on graduate mobilities, although some forms of social capital and group membership could potentially prove to be limiting, possessing the 'right' social capital, or in other words having social connections to people in advantageous positions (Lin, 2001), could prove to be very valuable to a graduate and certainly has the potential to influence their physical and social mobility, as well as their life chances. This becomes especially apparent when reading Lin's (2001: 20) work, as he gives four main reasons why social capital can be such an important resource for people, namely: 'information', 'influence', 'social credentials' and 'reinforcement'. In the case of a person who has recently graduated, social capital could facilitate access to *information* that otherwise would not have been obtainable for them (Lin, 2001), whether this be knowledge about current job opportunities, or suitable places to live. If the graduate has social connections to a

person who is in an advantageous position, for example knowing a manager of a company from a previous work placement, then this relationship could also *influence* the outcome of their job applications. If many of the graduate's social connections are with people who have a high standing, whether in the business world or general society, then this can reflect well on them and will emanate their elite *social credentials* to the people around them. Moreover, social relations with family, friends, and like-minded people can provide *reinforcement*, both emotionally and in terms of their personal and group identities (Lin, 2001). Such reinforcement could prove vital for a graduate during the occasionally stressful job searches and periods of uncertainty which can occur after university (Sage et al. 2013).

In the context of my research, I will be looking out for Lin's four main benefits of social capital – information, influence, social credentials and reinforcement – in the graduate interviewees' accounts, as these four factors clearly have the potential to influence where graduates decide to live and work after university. I will also be looking out for clues about the social standing of their contacts, the extent of their social networks and if they are members of particular societal groups, as these factors may also prove to be significant in promoting or inhibiting graduates' mobility.

A third important form of capital described by Bourdieu is called 'cultural capital'. Essentially, the extent of our cultural capital is determined by both our knowledge of the socio-cultural environment we find ourselves in, *and* how we subsequently demonstrate this knowledge and utilise it to successfully traverse our cultural setting. Our cultural capital is also reflected to the outside world in different ways, from the way we talk and move, to the prestige placed on the objects we own and surround ourselves with. This means that it is a representational capital (Bourdieu, 1986), which demonstrates to the people around us that we belong to certain societal groups (Bourdieu, 1986), or a particular social class.

For Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital is composed of three different 'states', which he labels: 'embodied', 'objectified' and 'institutionalised'. Embodied cultural capital is the state which refers to the way we talk, walk and our manners – in summary, our bodily actions and behaviour in general. Bourdieu (1986) stresses that most of the time, embodied cultural capital is not acquired instantaneously. Instead, it normally takes a considerable amount of time to accumulate. For example, adopting 'the Queen's English' can require a lengthy period of habitualisation and may even involve elocution training. This means that the starting point from which this

acquisition of embodied cultural capital begins is very important (Bourdieu, 1986); the earlier it is acquired, the more proficient and natural the holder will be.

A form of capital which can often be acquired more instantaneously is 'objectified' cultural capital, which consists of the objects we own and surround ourselves with (Bourdieu, 1986). This includes the clothes, jewellery and cars we own, and even our food. An example of objectified cultural capital is the higher level of prestige associated with owning a Mercedes-Benz car compared to (with all due respect) a Vauxhall. The objects we own demonstrate to other people what our cultural tastes and styles are and are a (conscious or sub-conscious) way of associating ourselves with particular societal groups. Possessing some objects can also require significant amounts of economic capital, which adds to the prestige associated with owning them.

The third and final form of cultural capital comes in an 'institutionalised' state and refers to the labels given to people by society to reflect their standing (Bourdieu, 1986), such as the titles 'sir' and 'madam', as well as qualifications like A-Levels and degrees. A person who has a university degree has more institutionalised cultural capital than someone who only has A-levels, while those who possess A-levels have more cultural capital than GCSE holders, and so on. Institutionalised cultural capital is one of the more easily recognisable and regimented methods we use to distinguish the standing of different people within society.

Whilst it is important to recognise cultural capital that is not classed as elite, such as the 'urban code' of the street, and that all forms of cultural capital are valid and legitimate in certain social settings, it is an unpleasant but unescapable truth that some forms of cultural capital are valued far more than others in society in general, with elite to middle-class cultural capital generally taking precedent and being legitimised. People may strive to acquire the cultural capital which is valued most within general society or the social circles which they frequent, and Bourdieu (1986) argues that it is actually possible to acquire cultural capital through conscious effort. An example is the purchase of a certain style of clothing, or a brand of automobile, which is indicative of a certain level of wealth and status. However, as I have already mentioned, cultural capital (and particularly embodied cultural capital) takes time to accumulate (Bourdieu, 1986). Those who were raised by families in higher social circles will have had the associated cultural capital instilled into them from a very early age, meaning it will be a lot more habitualised and proficiently demonstrated

compared to a late adopter, who has chosen to 'learn' cultural capital, such as new manners or an accent. For Bourdieu (1986), while cultural capital can be consciously acquired or 'learned' in such a manner, most of the time it is gained subconsciously, as in the case of a person who listens to a certain style of music, subsequently takes a liking to it and then naturally listens to more examples of that musical genre in the future. If a person's social setting changes, as in the case of a person who moves to a different country, then they may well find that their cultural capital begins to expand or change naturally without any intention, as they are continually exposed to new people and influences.

Overall, the cultural capital that a person acquires and emanates will inevitably determine how they are judged, and then subsequently how they are treated and interacted with, by the people around them. Therefore, when thinking about how this relates to my research on graduate mobilities, I believe it is reasonable to hypothesise that the cultural capital a graduate possesses could play an important role in shaping how happy they will be to live in certain locations, as it will likely influence how successfully they can integrate with their socio-cultural surroundings.

So far in this section, I have reviewed each of the three principal forms of capital – economic, social and cultural – separately. Now, I will explore how they are linked. Bourdieu (1986) stresses that each of the three main forms of capital can be exchanged for one another. For example, cultural capital in the form of a degree or professional qualification can be exchanged for employment in the relevant field, which in turn provides the person with more economic capital in the form of wages and more social capital in the shape of emerging social connections with new colleagues. However, the potential exchange of cultural capital in the form of a degree for greater economic and social capital does not always run smoothly, and in the case of graduates, some remain unemployed or 'underemployed' as a result of an inefficient exchange. In *theory*, cultural capital in the form of qualifications can be converted into employment in the relevant field, but this may only happen if the graduate also possesses connections with the right people, or the relevant social capital, which will notify them of a job vacancy and result in them applying for it. They may also require the relevant cultural capital, such as knowledge of how to conduct themselves at an interview. This is not even considering the external conditions which are out of the graduate's control, such as job availability and economic decline, which affect their chances of obtaining a job that they desire.

As this example of the job-seeking graduate demonstrates, if a person possesses an abundance of one form of capital, but lacks another, exchange between the forms of capital can become difficult. The best-case scenario is to have sufficient amounts of all the main capitals - economic, social and cultural - but the amount of each capital a person possesses is often dictated by, and representative of, social class (Bourdieu, 1986). *In general*, a graduate is more likely to possess higher amounts of each of the forms of capital if they operate towards the peak of the social pyramid. They are more likely to possess greater financial resources, more numerous social contacts with people in influential positions of power, and the behaviours, attitudes and cultural preferences which are generally viewed as being more acceptable and preferable in general society. They are also more likely to possess a fourth form of capital – symbolic capital – as this represents 'legitimate levels' (Burke 2016:11) of the other three capitals. As Ciaran Burke highlights, symbolic capital is actually 'the most powerful form of capital, as those people who possess it can shape the doxa, the norms (that benefit the dominant group) or common sense of the field' (2016: 11). Basically, those who have greater symbolic capital can exert more influence on other people, by dictating the social standards they are required to strive for.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, Van Hear (2014) conceptualises the four principal forms of capital as 'resources'. He particularly values Bourdieu's conceptualisation of capital as acquirable, transferrable and convertible for studying the movement of people, as:

> Only those who are endowed with certain volumes of capital in certain
> compositions or proportions, or who can convert other forms of capital
> into the required forms at the required compositions, can undertake. . .
> migration (Van Hear 2014: 111).

For Van Hear, Bourdieu's forms of capital and the relationship of exchange between them can be very insightful for migration studies, as they can help us to understand, for example, the seemingly perplexing conundrum of why a person with sufficient economic capital may not be able to move to a certain destination – it may be because they simultaneously lack the required social cultural and symbolic capital or 'resources' to facilitate their mobility and allow them to settle in the location.

As I have already discussed, class influences the endowments of these resources and therefore, consequently, class can also have a substantial influence on a

person's mobility. This link is at the heart of Bauman's (1998) assertion that the ever-increasing importance being placed on mobility in modern society is skewing the odds further in favour of those who operate nearer to the summit of the social class hierarchy, as they have command over the resources and the time required to make mobility possible. Crossley (2008) points out that there is one caveat which exists when determining class from a person's capital (and vice versa) however. He argues that belonging to a certain class grouping does not necessarily *guarantee* that a person will have the same resources (or capitals), propensities and cultural preferences as other people who belong to that group. This point does concur with the argument presented earlier in this literature review: that trying to ascertain exactly who has what along an increasingly 'fuzzy' class continuum in society is becoming ever more difficult. However, although Burke acknowledges Crossley's (2008) argument, his riposte is that while:

> Similarity of positions within social space does not guarantee similar collective practices or attitudes. A similar position within the social field, however, does *suggest* similar life chances and attitudes (Burke 2016: 11, emphasis added).

Burke then proceeds to argue that this similarity is likely because, as I highlighted earlier, people's social networks are more likely to be composed of other individuals who are like-minded and operate within a similar social field to themselves. Consequently, they are likely to share similar life experiences, accumulate similar capitals and share similar attitudes and values. Overall, Burke's point reinforces the validity of linking social class groups with certain endowments of economic, social and cultural capital, as long as researchers are also aware that it is not an exact science – there will be variation in levels of capital even between people classed as belonging to similar societal groupings.

2.4.2. The stereotypical 'cultural capital' of North-East of England

In the previous section, I covered how people possess cultural capital and how this can be demonstrated to the outside world in many different ways, from the way a person speaks and acts, to their clothes and possessions. However, what I did not cover in detail was the fact that regional accents, traditional clothing, and 'local' cuisine are all examples of how people who live in the same place often have similar cultural capital, or what can be termed *collective cultural capital*. As well as being reflected in the actions of individuals, this collective cultural capital can also be

evident in features of both the physical and synthetic environment, as well as the place's cultural milieu and history. Overall, this means that places become strongly associated with certain forms of cultural capital, and how 'legitimate' (to use Bourdieu's term) this capital is considered to be within wider society will determine whether such an association is positive or not.

As I highlighted in the introduction chapter, the North-East of England, and indeed the whole of the North of England, is associated with a particularly distinctive cultural capital which marks it as being very different from the rest of the U.K. However, the way this capital is perceived by people who live outside the North of England is perhaps not always accurate, as cultural stereotyping tends to predominate. Furthermore, these perceptions are certainly not always positive, as overall, within U.K. society in general, the North's cultural capital does not hold as much 'legitimacy' compared to the cultural capital commonly associated with the South-East of England. Unfortunately, this means that the North finds itself being relegated to the social periphery of the U.K. (Shields, 2013). In this section, I now will discuss how the North's collective cultural capital is often viewed from the outside, as well as the implications I believe this could possibly have for graduate retention patterns in the North-East.

Firstly, the North of England as an area of land is not precisely defined, varying depending on who you speak to – some people imagine it being from the Midlands northwards, while others may identify it as being anywhere north of Watford Gap (Russell, 2004). Such indeterminacy may in part account for why governmental policies such as the Northern Powerhouse often have a 'geographical fuzziness' (Lee, 2017). No matter how you define it, the North of England is a land of incredible diversity. As Russell (2004) suggests:

> A leisurely and not entirely direct journey of some 180 miles from Liverpool in the west to Scarborough in the east, would traverse innumerable geological, climatic, linguistic, historical and architectural zones, probably far more than could be found in any other part of England (pg. 19).

Despite this diversity, it is incredible how homogenous all the regions of the North of England are imagined to be by people who live outside of the North and who have not visited it. In the 'national imagination' (a term coined by Russell (2004)), the North and its collective cultural capital tends to be viewed as:

> The homeland of a traditional Working Class and the culture associated with it – ferrets, pigeon racing, mines and mills, fish and chips, regional accents and football – as well as organic communities. It is also the locus for industrial images of the U.K. – coal mining, bleak urban landscapes, and windswept countryside. . . (Shields 2013: 229).

Such a homogenous and in some ways unflattering outlook on the North's people and their cultural capital, which Rob Shields refers to as "the space myth of the British North" (2013: 245), has been propagated and established over the last 150 years primarily by literature and media that originates from the south of England (Pocock and Hudson 1978; Shields, 2013). It can be found in a wide variety of influential sources, from the literature of authors such as Charles Dickens and George Orwell, to 1950's realist cinema (Shields, 2013). To this day, the imagery continues to gain credence from modern television programmes such as *Coronation Street*, which depicts a small, tight community living in red brick houses on cobbled streets near Manchester, where the primary pastime of residents is frequenting the local 'Rovers Return' pub (Shields, 2013).

In shows like Coronation Street, Mark Shields (2013) points out that most of the characters do not particularly stand out on their own. Rather, their strength is in their collective force as a community. Shields also points out that many of Coronation Street's plot lines focus on how characters are fighting a constant battle to be able to stay in the street and remain as part of the community, but often face 'the pains of breaking away and leaving to seek careers and educations' (Shields 2013: 228). This fits in well with common modern-day narratives depicting mobility as essential for advancement and progression in everyday life (Cresswell, 2010). It also paints a picture of northerners needing to leave their peripheral location and often moving to the South in order to escape marginalisation and to further their careers and life prospects. Furthermore, this depiction of northerners strongly identifying themselves as part of a community and resisting mobility is a far cry from Zygmunt Bauman's description of the people most likely to 'win' in modern life – those who are "at home in many places but not one place in particular" (Bauman 2005: 3). The North-East region of England has also been singled out and represented in typical fashion by many television programmes, including the recent television drama *Vera*. The programme follows the trials and tribulations of a police detective with a strong Geordie accent who tracks down predominantly working-class suspects, who dwell in either red-brick houses similar to those found on Coronation Street, or unsightly

concrete tower blocks. All this action occurs to a backdrop of predominantly dreary weather – again true to stereotype.

In my description of Vera, you will have noticed I mentioned her 'Geordie' accent. Linking back to the work of Bourdieu, accents are a key feature of a person's cultural capital, as not only are they indicative of where a person originates from geographically, they are also frequently associated with social class. Unfortunately, some accents are held as being more 'legitimate' forms of speech and are therefore more accepted than others within general society. Dave Russell does not hold back when he argues that northern accents have:

> been central in reinforcing and constructing a range of ideas about the North and its role and status in the national culture. They have undoubtedly provided a key vehicle for the stigmatisation of the region and for the parading and embellishment of prejudices about it. . . (2004: 111).

He then goes on to describe this prejudice, with northern accents being associated with a degree of 'barbarism', as well as being viewed by some people and institutions outside the North as being 'vulgar' and 'comic' (Russell 2004: 113). Of course, speaking with a 'northern' accent does not automatically mean that a person has 'illegitimate' cultural capital – it depends on the social field in which the person is currently operating. Accents are an important way in which people can express their local identity, which many people are proud of (Russell, 2004). It also follows that a northern accent may well be more accepted within the social circles of the North of England when compared to a southern accent, which may be associated with a whole host of personal characteristics - some of which are unflattering and will be described later. However, Received Pronunciation (R.P.), colloquially labelled 'Queen's English', is the legitimised form of speech used by the Royal Family, many members of parliament and other influential southern institutions, including the BBC and their newscasters. It therefore invokes connotations of 'power, learning and authority' (Russell 2004: 113) within general UK society. As a result, some people from the North tend to feel inferior, especially in formal settings, when speaking with their accent, which leads overall to a dearth of self-confidence and a fear of not being respected and taken seriously (Russell, 2004).

Meanwhile, the South of England is often represented by a greatly contrasting 'space-myth' to the North, which also frequents the national imagination and is

propagated by the national media. This space-myth depicts the South and particularly London as a centre for business, commerce, high culture and institutional power, while simultaneously being a region of tranquil green countryside and a more preferable climate (Pocock and Hudson 1978; Russell, 2004; Shields, 2013). Overall, it is fair to say that the South of England enjoys a preferable, advantageous and rather more flattering representation in the common national imagination compared to the regions of the North. To use Ferdinand Tonnies' famous terms, while the South is depicted as a land of *Gesellschaft*, representing society and institutional power, the North is depicted as a land of *Gemeinschaft*, a place of community and parochialism.

It is remarkable how all-encompassing these 'space-myths' are, bringing together urban, rural, and natural environments, people, institutions, climate and even leisure pursuits. In fact, they are so detailed that they also include ideas about people's behaviours and outlook. Russell (2004) provides a detailed summary of what constitutes a stereotypical northerner's personality and traits, including 'lacking social graces'; 'carrying chip on shoulder'; being 'parochial'; but also being 'hardworking' and 'humorous, if crude' (Russell 2004: 37). In turn, northerners sometimes view people in the south as being 'superficial', 'elitist' and 'rootless' (Russell 2004: 37). Despite a limited number of positive aspects, overall the stereotypes that people from the North and South can have of each other are quite negative. Traits such as 'carrying a chip on the shoulder' and being 'superficial' suggest a level of tension and possible incompatibility, a tension which may exist even before people actually meet each other in person. Furthermore, looking at all of this from a Bourdieusian perspective, not only does it appear that there are stereotypes of the North and South's collective cultural capital – these detailed descriptions of people's collective outlooks and dispositions also sound rather like the description of a stereotypical group *habitus* for each region.

The distinctions between North and South outlined in this section may sound obvious to anyone living in the UK – almost too obvious to be credible (Russell, 2004). However, this obviousness is simply more evidence of how deeply rooted these stereotypical distinctions between North and South have become in the nation's collective imagination (Russell, 2004). Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) such as the NewcastleGateshead Initiative (NGI) aim to encourage people to come and visit and study in the North-East, in the hope that they will discover the 'true' North and will therefore discredit some of the more

negative stereotypes which exist about the region. However, what represents the true North and North-East can be contested, as it can mean different things to different groups of people (see Mordue 2020). Furthermore, Russell (2004) presents the insightful argument that although the stereotypes of the North and South are certainly not universally accurate, they are based on what he terms 'observable' truths. For example, on a ride into Newcastle on the train travelling from the South, you will pass many terraces of red-brick houses. During your visit to the city, you are also certain hear the distinctive Geordie accent, while you will be rather fortunate if the sun is shining throughout, as the region is not renowned for its pleasant climate. Therefore, whilst experiencing the North-East first-hand for the first time may prove to be eye-opening in many ways, such observable truths may serve to actually *reinforce*, rather than change, some of the durable, stereotypical views people already have about the North of England.

Thinking about how all of this may influence my research on graduate retention in the North-East, if a graduate from the North believes that their cultural capital will not be congruent with the social milieu of a place in the South, they may feel like they would be leaving their comfort zone if they were to move there, and this may not be a particularly appealing prospect. Meanwhile, those graduates who originated from the South who attend a university in the North-East may find that not all of their preconceptions of the North – some of which may be unflattering - are altered. This could be the result of the observable 'truths' that Russell talks about, or simply because these stereotypes are so deeply ingrained in the first place. Overall, I believe that the stereotypes and pre-conceptions about the North-East and a North/South cultural divide in the U.K. could prove to be an important factor influencing the migration decisions of graduates from North-Eastern universities, and I would not be surprised to see these ideas mentioned in the accounts of my research participants.

2.4.3 Bourdieu's conceptualisation of habitus

Now to return to the discussion on Bourdieu's 'theoretical toolbox'. One of his most influential concepts, which is of equal if not enhanced importance to the 'forms of capital', is *habitus*. Bourdieu did not coin the term habitus (Burke, 2016), but he did develop the concept's meaning significantly and consequently it was thrust back into the sociological limelight. Bourdieu's conceptualisation of habitus was designed to overcome what he labelled the 'spurious opposition' (1990: 54) between the

sociological traditions of determinism and subjectivism when discussing people's actions, as he believed *both* could play an important role in explaining the complexities of human practice. To quickly recap, a determinist viewpoint would believe that human action is dictated by external factors outside of an individual's control, whereas a subjectivist viewpoint would argue that people's actions are determined internally through their own free will.

Bourdieu wanted to discover how human action can be co-ordinated without being the result of following strict 'rules', in the form of written-down instructions, or the 'organising actions of a conductor' (1990: 53). His solution was the habitus, which he complexly defines as 'systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures' (Bourdieu 1990: 53). The use of the word disposition implies that the habitus is a system of natural tendencies or 'habits' which are ingrained within us and compel us to react to situations in a certain way, rather than these reactions being the product of fully-conscious calculation. For Bourdieu, habitus is 'a product of history' (1990: 54) – it is constructed from our past experiences, which in turn are determined by the social circles in which we operate. Throughout our lives, depending on our social standing, we encounter certain 'possibilities and impossibilities, freedoms and necessities, opportunities and prohibitions' (Bourdieu 1990: 54), and subsequently from these experiences we develop certain dispositions (ways in which we are inclined to think and act) as well as understandings and expectations of what life has in store for us. Over time, based on our experiences, we also build up expectations of how people will react to our behaviour, and we tend to repeat the behaviour which results in positive reactions and reinforcement from our peers. Ultimately, this repetitive nature of action leads Bourdieu to describe the habitus as 'a present past that tends to perpetuate itself into the future' (1990: 54). Our past experiences heavily influence how we act in the present and the future, and this guarantees a certain level of consistency in our behaviours, attitudes and practices over time.

Different groups and institutions in society all have different logics - think of all the art styles and musical genres which operate in different ways. These logics or rules are what Bourdieu refers to as *doxa*, the norms of a particular social setting (also labelled by Bourdieu as a *field*). However, doxa are not set in stone or written down for us to learn. Instead, through experience, we are required to develop 'a feel for the game', which over time will become encoded within our habitus. Extending this game metaphor further, when you purchase a new board game, you may read the

instruction manual as much as you like. However, it is only by playing the game that will you become truly proficient and have a chance of winning. For Bourdieu, the same can be said for the game of life, although it is doubly difficult because there is no instruction manual to consult in the first place. A dearth of experience within a particular social field will probably mean a person lacks a feel for the game – meaning they have an incomplete understanding of the behaviours and attitudes which predominate there – and are therefore less likely to succeed or 'win' in that field as a result (Bourdieu, 1990).

The habitus not only equips us to succeed in certain social settings. As Bourdieu puts it, it is also a means of deciphering 'what is and is not 'for us'' (1990: 64), or in other words, what is or is not possible according to our current situation and social standing. Bourdieu (1990) proclaims that the habitus compels us to avoid experiences, places and people which could call into question its legitimacy. People wish to avoid behaving in a way that would be 'negatively sanctioned' (Bourdieu 1990: 56) and this is much more likely to occur in unfamiliar social settings, where we simply do not have the previous experiences of 'playing the game' necessary to compete successfully. Negative reactions can also happen when we strive to reach something that is seemingly unobtainable, whether that be a certain job, or a place at a prestigious university. This avoidance of the potentially threatening and unfamiliar means that our habitus, along with our experiences and history, tend to continue in the present and into the future, as we predominantly choose to remain in our comfort zone. As Bourdieu states, the habitus ultimately plays the role of 'inclining agents to cut their coats according to their cloth, and so become the accomplices of the process that tends to make the probable a reality' (1990: 65). In this way, the habitus is restrictive, as it inhibits us from pursuing the certain possibilities or entering certain social fields that we might do if we threw a little more caution to the wind. If we do not pursue the unfamiliar, we cannot gain experience of it and so the habitus remains unchanged, as does, to a significant extent, our behaviour and attitudes.

As we have seen, the habitus is produced by, and reflective of, our history. While no two people will have exactly the same life experiences, it is reasonable to assume that people belonging to similar class groupings will have been raised in similar socio-cultural environments and will therefore have similar experiences and histories (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; Burke, 2016). Following Bourdieu's logic, this means that they are also all likely to have a similar habitus, explaining how

behaviour appears to be co-ordinated within certain groups or classes of society, without following written rules or the orchestrations of a 'conductor'. When thought of in this way, the habitus has both individual and group dimensions (Burke, 2016). As Ciaran Burke describes, 'it [the habitus] is formed through the individual's history but also through the collective histories of the family and the wider social group/class' (2016: 8). The idea that the habitus perpetuates our individual *and* collective histories into the present and future can explain the sustenance and reproduction of social class groupings and associated inequalities, particularly in terms of classed attitudes and behaviours. Furthermore, Ciaran Burke (2016) goes on to highlight that the collective habitus is potentially even more powerful than the individual habitus, because if many people around you share the same dispositions and tend to think and act in similar ways, they are more likely to have an influence over your practice.

The way I have described the habitus so far makes the concept sound mostly deterministic, as people's actions are largely being governed by external influences from their past which are outside of their control. However, as I mentioned previously, Bourdieu's project was to overcome what he believed to be an erroneous dualism between determinism and subjectivism, by acknowledging the value of both schools of thought, and indeed Bourdieu's way of conceptualising the habitus does allow for subjective input. Bourdieu describes the habitus as 'an infinite capacity for generating products – thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions' (1990: 55). By this, he means that *particular actions* are not dictated by the habitus. Instead, the habitus provides people with a multitude of ways of behaving or reacting to a situation, and ultimately which action is chosen is a subjective decision made by the individual. However, Bourdieu also argues that while the habitus can appear to be an 'infinite capacity' to think and react, it is still being restricted – how we choose to think and behave still always falls within the confines of our knowledge from past experiences and of what we know is applicable in the social fields in which we operate. As Bourdieu puts it, the habitus is therefore subjectively determined behaviour, 'whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production' (1990: 55). Ultimately, this means that any idea of people enjoying complete freedom in their practices is an illusion.

To further demonstrate this idea that people's practices can be both subjective and externally determined (limited), Bourdieu (1990) gives the example of an artist who is an advocate of a particular art style. Take impressionism for example - when the

artist paints something, they are being creative and their product may demonstrate originality. However, they will still be required to follow a certain style code (rules) if the painting is to be recognised as an example of impressionist art. The painting can be novel in many ways, but if it diverges too far away from the norms of impressionism, it will no longer be recognised as an example of that style. For Bourdieu, the same applies to our everyday practice. We can be subjective and creative in how we think and act, and we may even push the boundaries at times, but we can only stray so far away from our normal dispositions, propensities and 'understanding of the game' before this subjectivity becomes uncomfortable and we risk negative feedback from others.

Habitus is a very important concept in its own right. However, from Bourdieu's writing it becomes clear that there is also a strong link/overlap between a person's habitus and their economic, social and cultural capital. As we have already discussed, people's capital plays a crucial role in shaping their history and life experiences by determining what is and is not possible for them, and in turn, this history and experience is what shapes their habitus (Bourdieu, 1990). Influenced by the resulting habitus, people then proceed to have 'subjective expectations of objective probabilities' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; in Burke 2016: 8) in the present and future, such as the probability of following a certain career.

A person's endowment of economic capital will inevitably determine what is and is not possible for them to attain, and therefore plays a crucial role in shaping their life history and their habitus. There are also clear links between the dispositions of the habitus – the ways in which a person is inclined to think and act – and the adoption and embodiment of cultural capital, which includes a multitude of characteristics from cultural tastes, to ways of speaking and other mannerisms. These links are further demonstrated by Bourdieu's (1990) argument that our early experiences in life are particularly influential in shaping our habitus and predominate into the present and future, just as he argues the early adoption and embodiment of cultural capital means it is more natural, habitual and more resistant to change. Essentially, for Bourdieu, our early experiences in life prove to be incredibly influential in shaping who we are as people. Our experiences may change over time, but our early histories and our associated dispositions will remain our predominating reference point. Furthermore, social capital is also strongly linked to the habitus, as Bourdieu (1990) stresses repeatedly that the habitus is a product of the social conditions in which we have been raised. The people around us strongly influence our ideas

about things and our value systems (what is right and wrong). As well as operating at the individual level, the habitus also has a group dimension, where we can share similar dispositions and propensities with some of the people we are connected to.

When I was initially drawn to Bourdieu's work, I was focused solely on the forms of capital, as I was inspired by Van Hear's approach to researching migration. However, after discovering how strongly the capitals are linked to habitus and vice versa, and how influential the habitus is in its own right in shaping how we think, act and how we see the world, I believe any Bourdieu-inspired investigation into people's motivations for migration (or lack of migration) would be incomplete without considering the role the individual and group habitus might have played in shaping people's migration behaviour. This is because it is through our habitus that we decipher what is and is not for us, while the habitus also compels us to avoid people, experiences and *places* with which we deem ourselves incompatible, in fear of being 'negatively sanctioned'. Therefore, in my research into graduate mobility, I believe it is vital that I consider the impacts of the habitus, as well as economic, social and cultural capital, when carrying out my analysis.

2.4.4. Critiques of the habitus

Pierre Bourdieu's work has proved crucial in helping sociology to transcend the simplistic notion of class as being primarily based on professions and economic standing (Reay, 1997). This is because it provides insight into how class both influences, and is influenced by, social contacts and culture, as well as how social class affects people's mentality and world view. However, it must also be acknowledged that Bourdieu's work has also attracted a great deal of criticism, especially due to the way he conceptualises the habitus.

Curiously, one of the most recurrent critiques of the habitus is that it remains too deterministic, despite Bourdieu developing the concept in an attempt to account for both the socially determined *and* subjective aspects of human action. Richard Jenkins believes that even though Bourdieu does include a subjective aspect to human action in his habitus model, the fact that this subjective input is still structured and limited by a set of subconscious dispositions developed from past experiences, while these experiences are also dictated by the 'objective possibilities' presented to us according to our societal position, means that ultimately the concept remains predominantly deterministic (Jenkins, 2002). As Nick Crossley suggests, Jenkins is arguing that despite his best intentions, in the end, 'Bourdieu lets determinism back

in' (Crossley 2001: 90). However, Crossley defends Bourdieu against these charges of determinism. For him, after analysing the habitus concept, it becomes clear that 'Bourdieu is simply claiming that agents come to expect and predict what they find themselves repeatedly subjected to', which seems like a reasonable suggestion, and because of this, 'there is no determinism in any meaningful sense of the word, just pragmatic adaptation and realism' (Crossley 2001: 91). Diane Reay also presents a similar argument to Crossley, as she also rejects the notion that the habitus is predominantly a deterministic concept. For Reay, determinism is not present because, despite some authors' suggestions, the habitus is open to change and can empower individuals to change the world around them (Reay, 2004), an argument I will revisit later.

Another feature of Bourdieu's habitus model which Jenkins criticises particularly heavily is 'the existence of dispositions as beyond consciousness' (Jenkins 2002: 77). Bourdieu famously described the habitus as 'the subjective expectations of objective probabilities', and in his model these expectations are primarily the result of a subconscious disposition to think in a certain way (Bourdieu, 1990). However, Jenkins asks the searching question: 'how can expectation be anything other than conscious?' (2002: 82). He also gives the example of the action of speaking, which he argues has a subconscious, habitual element in the way we shape our mouths to form words, but also a conscious element when we are thinking about what we want to say (Jenkins, 2002). For Jenkins, although subconscious elements do play a role in determining our behaviour, Bourdieu is underestimating the importance of what Crossley labels 'rational conscious calculation' (Crossley 2001: 97) as a motive for human action.

Conscious deliberation also happens to be a strong theme running through the criticism of Bourdieu's habitus from Margaret Archer, a sociologist who prioritises human self-determination as the primary origin of action. For Archer, Bourdieu's emphasis on subconscious dispositions shaped by the 'objective' conditions we find ourselves in is too deterministic as it does not sufficiently take into account the influence of 'the internal conversation' (Archer 2003: 93) on human action - the conversation we have with ourselves about who we are in relation to other people and our position within society. For Archer, whilst we are undoubtedly affected by our external surroundings, our internal dialogue gives us our own causal power to think and then act, or in other words, to determine our own behaviour (Archer, 2003). Further support for Archer and Jenkins' argument comes from Elder-Vass (2007:

327), who asserts that 'the omission of conscious thought from the development of dispositions is clearly untenable', as many 'are learned quite consciously'. And even Nick Crossley, who as you will notice throughout this section often defends the habitus concept against critique, agrees that 'Bourdieu underestimates the extent to which 'rational conscious calculation', indeed reflexivity, enter into everyday life as a matter of course' (2001: 97). To support his view, he suggests that we are constantly making reflexive decisions daily about our jobs, money, leisure pursuits and many other everyday aspects.

Although I am admittedly an enthusiastic proponent of Bourdieu's work, I do struggle to understand why the habitus concept receives so much criticism for highlighting how subconscious dispositions play a crucial role in shaping our actions. In my interpretation of Bourdieu's work, he is not denying that we can consciously make decisions, or even that we have 'internal conversations' with ourselves to a certain degree. Instead, he is arguing that the habitus (and indeed our economic, social and cultural capital) plays a vital role in subconsciously guiding our decision making (our reflexivity), and how we decide what is and is not 'for the likes of us'. Take Crossley's example of money as a focus of our daily reflexive decision making. We all have experienced those internal debates about whether we should be saving more money, or if we should really purchase that expensive, non-essential item. However, in *Distinction*, Bourdieu (1984) demonstrates how even something as apparently reflexive as our current spending behaviour can be influenced by subconscious dispositions, which in turn have been shaped by how much freedom we have had to spend money in the past. In particular, Bourdieu argues that working-class individuals often have a 'taste for necessity' (Bourdieu 1984: 376), which develops from a previous 'deprivation of necessary goods' (ibid: 373). He then gives the pertinent example of clerical workers of working-class origins, who, despite now having more disposable income than before, still:

> . . . get as much satisfaction from calculating how much they have 'saved' by doing without a commodity or service. . . as they would from the thing itself, but who, equally, cannot ever purchase it without a painful sense of wasting money (Bourdieu 1984: 376).

In summary, not only does this feeling of guilt when spending money stem from the person's current financial situation – its origins can also be found in their subconscious dispositions towards spending, which are influenced by previous

experiences of a lack of money during times of greater hardship. To avoid these feelings of guilt, the person would rather save their money, even though on a purely rational basis they could afford to be more extravagant. This ultimately demonstrates how even mundane, everyday reflexive decisions about money are still being influenced by subconscious dispositions. It is also an example of why I am surprised that Bourdieu's habitus concept – which emphasises the importance of the subconscious in shaping our action – has received so much criticism. Furthermore, referring back to Elder-Vass's argument that Bourdieu's 'omission of conscious thought. . . is untenable', as may dispositions 'are learned quite consciously', I believe this does not take into account Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital. As we saw in the previous section of this literature review, embodied cultural capital is particularly heavily linked to the dispositions of the habitus, and, crucially, can also be *consciously* acquired.

The strong charge of determinism from Jenkins, Archer and others appears to relate not only to Bourdieu's emphasis on the subconscious and structured nature of people's dispositions, but also his forthright rejection of Rational Action Theory (Jenkins, 2002), which essentially holds human action as being primarily the result of a 'cost-benefit analysis' (Glaesser and Cooper 2014: 463). According to Rational Action Theory, before people act, they consciously weigh up the pros and cons of a certain course of action (you could say there is an 'internal conversation'), and they will perform the actions that will produce the best result for them at the lowest cost (not just economically, but also emotionally, reputationally, etc.). However, Bourdieu believes that such a theory credits individuals as having too much freedom and conscious control to determine their own behaviour and, as a result, it erroneously belittles the role of society in structuring and shaping people's dispositions, actions and expectations (Bourdieu, 1990; Jenkins, 2002). Bourdieu (1990) defends his position on Rational Action Theory by referring to the work of Weber, who argued that in a society as complex as ours, such rational evaluation is implausible, as it is virtually impossible for a person to successfully comprehend the full suite of options available to them, as well as all of the consequences that their actions could possibly have. Nevertheless, Jenkins appears to take exception to Bourdieu's rejection of the theory, and poses the question: 'if sociologists such as Bourdieu can [consciously and rationally] set themselves goals and objectives, which they can pursue, why can this not be true for their research subject?' (Jenkins 2002: 73-74).

In his paper reviewing the habitus, Crossley (2001) makes a point which can be offered as a defence of Bourdieu against Jenkins' critique. For Crossley, most of the time, researchers are not operating and competing within the same field/combination of fields as their research subjects, who will tend to take their field for granted and 'play the game' in that field like it is the only thing that matters. The fact that researchers are independent from their research subject's field, in Crossley's view, will surely give them 'a superior and more critical view' (Crossley 2001: 96), while they also have academic methodological techniques at their disposal which are simply not available to a layperson (Crossley 2001). Personally, I am not sure that 'superior' is the right word to use when comparing the researcher's gaze to that of the research subject. After all, the research subject is the person who spends every day living and operating in their particular field(s) and will therefore possess a real-life, in-depth understanding of their workings, while there is always the possibility of the researcher's approach to scientific enquiry being influenced (and even clouded) by their own circumstances and experiences. However, if they are 'outsiders', I do see the potential for researchers to be more critical of a field, as they may not be immersed and invested in 'the game' and therefore could be more willing and able to question its workings, as well as objectively compare it with other fields. Therefore, I do believe Crossley's point does at least partly address Jenkins' criticism, as it demonstrates how Bourdieu can consciously and rationally ask questions about fields in a way that his research participants cannot. Bourdieu is not declaring that his own conscious rationality (or that of researchers in general) is superior to that of his research participants.

As I discussed earlier in this literature review, one of the key characteristics of the habitus is the durability of its dispositions. This is demonstrated very clearly when Bourdieu (1990) argues that our early experiences in life are particularly important in shaping our habitus, and that they become our principal reference points for interacting with the social world in the present and future. For Jenkins, this durability is troublesome, as it raises the question of how the habitus concept accounts for 'change, both at the individual level and the collective' (2002: 79). After all, people's outlooks can and do change over time, as do our societal norms and regulations. However, Reay (2004) points out that although habitus are durable and heavily influenced by our early experiences, for Bourdieu they are also always in the process of being (re)constructed (they are unfinished), as well as being "permeable and responsive to what is going on around them" (pg. 434). When interpreted in this

way, although individual and group habitus are still conceptualised as being resilient, they do not just stand still. Rather, they are constantly being added to and morphed over time.

Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) discuss 'times of crises' (pg. 131), events where people either find themselves completely outside of their familiar social field – referred to by Burke (2016) as 'out-of-environment experiences' (pg. 73) - or the field changes quickly and to the extent where people's 'subjective expectations' are no longer in accordance with the objective possibilities on offer (Crossley, 2001). For Burke, an 'out-of-environment' crisis can change a person's habitus, as within the new social field they may be exposed to possibilities that they did not know existed before. He exemplifies this by sharing the account of his research participant Niamh (see Burke 2016: 70), a working-class graduate who, upon leaving university, originally demonstrated relatively low levels of aspiration consistent with a working-class habitus. Originally, she was willing to settle for a 'non-graduate' job. However, later on in Niamh's story, it became clear that her 'aspirations and expectations dramatically shifted' due to what Burke describes as 'a chance encounter working abroad' (Burke 2016: 73), which appeared to generate an interest in international work. In the end, she had applied for, and successfully attained, a 'graduate-level' job working for a national charity, and even described her new-found ambition to gain promotion. Niamh's story exemplifies how spending time in a new social field (in this case working abroad), surrounded by new influences and possibilities, can alter the 'subjective expectations' and aspirations associated with the habitus. It is evidence that the habitus is indeed absorptive, open to change and remains unfinished as Reay (2004) suggests.

Due to what they perceive as the habitus' resilience to change and an over-reliance on sub-conscious dispositions (which I have argued does not capture the whole story), authors such as Jenkins and Archer also question how the habitus can account for the *resistance* we often witness from individuals and groups in society. Surely, Archer (2003) argues, resistance can only originate from an internal, reflexive conversation about one's circumstances? However, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) already account for this. They argue that in times of crisis - when a person's subjective expectations no longer match the possibilities of the field – the individual may indeed need to engage in a rational, conscious and internal evaluation of the situation, as the habitus no longer provides them with a subconscious reference point (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). For Crossley, it is

this rational evaluation that 'stimulates the possibility of critique' (2002: 92) of one's situation, which can lead to a sense of misjustice and, ultimately, acts of *resistance* by the person. Bourdieu makes it clear that the habitus can produce 'revolt as well as resignation' (Bourdieu 1990: 62). He is not suggesting that people always just lie down and accept their pre-determined fate. Rather, knowing what is 'not for the likes of them' can actually produce a sense of misjustice, which can be a powerful force for action and change. Furthermore, Crossley (2001) highlights Bourdieu's acknowledgement throughout his various works that the things we take for granted today, to the extent that they are now located in our subconscious, are actually the result of changes which were brought about by bitter 'struggles and confrontations' (Bourdieu 1998: in Crossley 2001: 92) which occurred in the past. In Bourdieu's view, the group and social class habitus that exist today have been created by groups of people jockeying for position in the game of life over time, and this often involves either asserting their existing authority, or *resisting* the authority of others. This all means that not only does the social environment determine the habitus, but also the habitus allows for resistance which can ultimately lead to change in the social world (Reay, 2004).

For authors such as Nick Crossley, who are sympathetic towards the habitus concept but still feel as though Bourdieu does not adequately account for the amount of rational decision making we perform in everyday life, their argument is not necessarily that Bourdieu is dismissing the importance of rational thinking, change and resistance. Rather, they are more likely to take issue with the fact that these aspects are exclusively associated with times of 'crisis'. Moreover, these crises – where people's subjective expectations do not match the objective possibilities of the field – are depicted by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) as being rare events. On this point, even I would concede that Bourdieu has probably underestimated the frequency of which 'crises' occur, particularly in modern life where there is greater fluidity of information, media, culture and people across borders. In this increasingly globalising and connected world, it is reasonable to assume that the number of times we find ourselves in an unfamiliar field, or the frequency with which the 'rules of the game' and the possibilities within our own fields change, is going to increase. However, in defence of Bourdieu, he was writing about the habitus concept primarily in the eighties and early nineties, where globalisation was happening of course, but perhaps not at the pace that it has since the millennium and up to the present.

Another potential limitation of Bourdieu's work on the habitus, originally raised by Sayer (2004) and overviewed by Reay (2004), is that within Bourdieu's work there is an almost unwavering focus on the influence of social class and familial upbringing on our dispositions. But what about gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disability and other important aspects which can also undoubtedly shape our dispositions and expectations of life? (Reay, 2004; Sayer 2004). Although this is a salient point, Reay argues that the habitus can actually be helpful for studying the influence of these aspects on people's dispositions. For her, it 'can be used to focus on the ways in which the socially advantaged and disadvantaged play out attitudes of cultural superiority and inferiority ingrained in their habitus in daily interactions' (Reay 2004: 436), whether these social advantages or disadvantages are primarily the result of class, gender, ethnicity or other social classifications. It is not that the habitus cannot be used to consider how gender and ethnicity influence our dispositions, it is just a matter of focus. In Bourdieu's case, he was primarily focused on inequalities associated with social classes. Class-based inequalities are also the focus of my research into graduate mobilities, although I do acknowledge that aspects such as gender, ethnicity and disability could also influence graduates' ability and propensity to be mobile. Current and future research investigating the influence of these factors on graduate mobility will certainly be valuable.

As many authors point out, the habitus is a very complex concept, almost to the point of being 'fuzzy' or 'messy' at times. It is challenging to attempt to define exactly what the habitus is, meaning that it can be interpreted by researchers in different ways (Burke, 2016). The fuzziness of the concept can actually be a positive quality, in the sense that it affords a considerable level of flexibility in how it is utilised. Such malleability of the habitus as a thinking tool is demonstrated by Reay (1997), when she argues that the habitus can 'enable us to understand women as a complex amalgam of their past and present' (pg. 227). Within her study, she draws on the habitus to understand how gender interacts with social class to influence people's daily practices, a novel utilisation of the concept which was not originally intended by Bourdieu. However, in a later paper, Reay also warns us that the fuzziness of the habitus means that 'there is a danger in habitus becoming whatever the data reveal' (Reay 2004: 439). This tends to happen particularly when research merely 'references habitus' (ibid: 439), rather than using it to inform the analysis of the data (Reay, 2004). Ultimately, this leads her to conclude that the obscurities of the habitus are what 'simultaneously contain its utility and its pitfalls' (Reay 2004: 439).

Personally, I would argue that some ambiguities of the habitus are balanced out when it is considered alongside Bourdieu's forms of capital - especially economic and social capital - as they are arguably more practical and measurable in nature. Although, making judgements about people's capitals, especially cultural capital, could also be open to charges of selectivism if it is done in an overly simplistic and unnuanced way. I would also suggest that if researchers firstly define their understanding of the habitus as clearly and concisely as possible, and secondly clearly set out how they intend to identify its influence within their research participants' accounts, then this will help them to mitigate the ambiguity associated with using the habitus concept. Clearly defining and identifying the habitus are two areas in which I think Burke (2016) particularly excels in his book *Culture, Capitals and Graduate Futures*, which, as the title suggests, investigates how social class background impacts graduate trajectories through university and then into the job market. Firstly, Burke gives a definition of the habitus which is very concise:

> The habitus [within Burke's study] was understood as a set of dispositions, expectations and aspirations created and influenced by sources such as family, peer group and the educational system that, along with capital and field, influence practice (Burke 2016: 10).

This definition also perfectly encapsulates how I interpret the habitus concept and is therefore one I wish to adopt for my research project. Throughout his research, Burke also makes it clear that the habitus is identified in interviewees' accounts through their repetition or re-emphasis of long-standing beliefs, aspirations and expectations, particularly those which appear to be sub-conscious in nature. He states that this approach is based on 'Bourdieu's (1986/1987) comments that an individual's beliefs and behaviours that are constantly repeated point to their habitus' (Burke 2016: 61). How Burke pinpoints the habitus is exemplified during a discussion about a group of graduates he identifies as belonging to a 'Strategic Middle Class', for who:

> . . . sitting and passing the exam [the 11+ exam to get into grammar school] was taken for granted – or pre-reflexive – to the point that Annie did not know it was possible to opt out. Even from this young age, their expectations had become pre-reflexive. The longevity and durability of their high levels of aspiration can be seen through tracing

similar attitudes to university, once again, seeing it as the natural and next step. . . (Burke 2016: 61).

In the example of Annie and the 'strategic middle class', it was clear that there was no rationalised debate about whether doing the 11+ exam or going to university was the right thing to do, or any consideration of other options which may have been available. Instead, these graduates took this completely for granted – they were *subconsciously disposed* to endorse and follow this education pathway. Furthermore, their outlook on education and lofty aspirations had obviously endured over a considerable time period. Therefore, following Burke's criteria, these attitudes of the strategic middle-class group towards education and attainment were identified as being characteristic of their habitus, which means they were influenced by their family, friends, educational institutions and, ultimately, their socio-economic status. In all, I argue that in Burke's work, there was little ambiguity in how he defined the habitus. Moreover, how he located its influence within his research respondents' accounts was also clear and, crucially, remained consistent.

In this section of the literature review, it has become evident that the way Bourdieu conceptualises the habitus has been the focus of extensive critique. Some authors believe it is too deterministic, it over-emphasises the role of our subconscious in directing our practice and it does not account for social change, while others point out that the concept is very complex, almost to the point of being 'fuzzy' and open to varying interpretation. I accept that there is a complexity and fuzziness to the habitus. However, I also hope to have shown that this characteristic can also be positive in the sense that it is malleable and adaptable, as demonstrated by Reay's (1997) novel use of the concept to 'understand women as a complex amalgam of their past and present' (pg. 227). The complex nature of the habitus can also be overcome if researchers clearly define their interpretation of the concept. However, while I accept critiques of its complexity, I do not personally interpret the habitus as being a predominantly deterministic concept. As highlighted by Crossley, Bourdieu is merely arguing that people 'come to expect and predict what they find themselves repeatedly subjected to' (Crossley 2001: 91), a proposition which seems entirely reasonable. He also allows for conscious debate and resistance, perhaps to a greater extent than is often credited, although I agree with those critics who argue that 'crises' of the habitus are probably more frequent than Bourdieu proposes, especially in today's connected world. Ultimately, despite this extensive body of critique, I still believe the habitus, along with capital and field, will provide a useful

theoretical framework for my research. This is because habitus theory goes beyond conceptualising class as wealth, professions and resources (all of which are still important of course). Instead, it provides an insightful link between our personal circumstances, which are inherently linked to social class, and what we believe is possible 'for the likes of us'. Based on my own experience as a graduate, I believe these deeply ingrained ideas about what is or is not possible 'for us' can be very influential in determining a graduate's level of mobility and where they live and work after university.

2.4.5. The concept of 'Field'

Throughout this review, I have referred to Bourdieu's concept of *field* primarily as a social setting, which also has certain rules or value systems (what Bourdieu (2013) refers to as the field's *doxa*). However, this is only part of the story. It is not simply a static stage or backdrop on which life plays out (Burke, 2016). Instead, it is more akin to a gladiatorial arena, where it is 'survival of the fittest' (or the best equipped) and the rules of engagement change over time. This ongoing struggle for supremacy is reflected in Burke's assertion that:

> . . . all action in the field is competitive; actors or players within this field use forms of strategy – levels of practical mastery – to maintain or advance the position that they hold within the field" (2016: 16).

Key to this 'practical mastery' of the field, or what Bourdieu also refers to as the '*modus operandi*' (Bourdieu 2013: 111, emphasis in original), is the possession of certain types, amounts and combinations of economic, social and cultural capital. To use a gaming metaphor once again, operating in the field is like playing a game of poker – the person with the best hand of cards is in an excellent position to accumulate the most gaming chips. In the field, the 'best hand' belongs to the people with the economic, social and cultural capital which is most aligned to the doxa of that field. They are the people who are most likely to be rewarded by the field. In this way, as Burke describes, 'the accumulation of capital is both the desired result of the game [the field] *and* the genesis for how it is played' (2016: 16, emphasis added).

Of course, as well as capital, a person's habitus is also a vital component of their level of practical mastery of a field. Referring back to the poker metaphor, even if a person has what would objectively be considered to be the 'best hand' of cards, if they have little awareness of the rules of the game, and little to no idea of what to

expect from their opponents, then they are still unlikely to win. In the same way, to successfully master a field, a person would require a habitus with a congruent set of dispositions and expectations, so that, in Bourdieu's words, they are 'objectively adjusted to the logic characteristics of a particular field, whose objective future they anticipate' (Bourdieu 1990: 55-56). As we already know, such a habitus is generated through prior experience of the field in question, along with familial upbringing and guidance, just as mastering a game comes through playing it extensively and/or being instructed by a coach. To reiterate Crossley's (2001) point, Bourdieu's main argument is that people's expectations for the future tend to be primarily based on their experiences of the field in the past, which seems like a reasonable notion.

Where field primarily transcends its status as a mere setting or stage is in its *interactive* relationship with the habitus. This is especially evident when a person enters a field that they are unfamiliar with, or the field they currently occupy changes. When either of these events happen, the person's dispositions may become incompatible, their expectations array, and they may no longer be able to 'anticipate' future conditions. When exposed to such unfamiliar social surroundings, people may either be able to adapt (and may even remain victorious), or alternatively they may struggle to improvise and flounder. It is through this dynamic, shifting and sometimes uncertain nature of fields that 'habitus can be transformed through a process that either raises or lowers an individual's expectations' (Reay 2004: 435). And it is this transformative capacity of field that means it is not just a stage on which habitus is acted out and capital is accumulated. It is actually a vital component of what Burke refers to as 'Bourdieu's triad' (2016: 16), along with habitus and capital.

The field's significance as a concept is further reflected in its reciprocal relationship of validation with the habitus. Just as the habitus' dispositions can be validated and confirmed by the field, Reay (2004) also argues that 'habitus contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful world, a world endowed with sense or with value, in which it is worth investing one's energy' (pg. 435). Essentially, the field only matters because a certain group are disposed to care about it and withhold its values. Crossley (2001) gives the example of the social field of football, which to footballers matters greatly and the rules of the game make sense. However, to an outsider who does not watch or play football, they may wonder why people invest so much time, as well as emotional and physical effort, in following a ball which is kicked around a pitch. Ultimately, if everyone stopped caring about football, the game – or the 'field' – would cease to exist. In this way, the habitus of the field's

'players' are essential in (re)producing the logic of a field and maintaining its existence. Furthermore, if the habitus changes or generates critique, as I highlighted previously that it can do, then it can also contribute to changing the field it is immersed in. In Bourdieu's theory, this is primarily what helps to explain social change. It is also further proof that the field is not a mere stage for the social world, as it both influences, and is influenced by, the agents within it.

Overall, after consulting the work of Bourdieu and many authors who draw from his theory, it has become clear that habitus and capital's influence on human practice can only be truly understood when their interaction with their dynamic and transformative context, the field, is considered as part of the equation. Fittingly, In Bourdieu's writing, the theory of practice is literally presented in equation format: '[habitus][capital]+field=practice' (Bourdieu 2013: 101). Linking field to my research, students and graduates may well find themselves operating in multiple fields simultaneously: the university, the home, 'local' friendship groups, and more. In my case, the university was a particularly influential field where, as a working-class graduate, my unfamiliarity with the doxa of the primarily middle-class field led to me question myself, changed my perception of what was possible 'for a person like me', and even strengthened my sense of working-classness and rootedness. In my research, I therefore believe it is very important for me to consider the influence that different fields can exert on graduate's attitudes and expectations (their habitus), and if/how this affects their ability and propensity to be mobile.

2.4.6. Zygmunt Bauman's work on identity: is it compatible with Bourdieu's theories on habitus and capital?

In *Liquid Life* (2005), Zygmunt Bauman talks about the pressure we all feel to be an 'individual' in modern society, a person who comes across as strong, independent and who can carve out their own path in life. A key aspect of a person's individuality is, of course, their identity, and for Bauman, the never-ending search for individuality has led to identities being 'selected' more than ever by the self, as people attempt to construct a persona which allows them to stand out from the crowd. Ultimately, Bauman's principal argument is that these 'identity wars' (Bauman 2005, pg. 30) have led to the 'hybridisation' of many people's identities, as they select from the myriad of influences which bombard us in today's globalised world (Bauman, 2005). In general, people's identities are therefore becoming increasingly multi-faceted and

cosmopolitan – often intentionally so, in the hope that this will make them more unique.

Bauman suggests that his own theory about the increasing prevalence of hybrid culture and identity may be interpreted as being incompatible, or even 'in open defiance of Bourdieu's thesis of social distinction' (Bauman 2005). This is primarily because Bourdieu theorises that people's habitus are *determined* by, and reflective of, their social class and familial upbringing (although I have highlighted that his theory may not be as deterministic as some authors suggest). On the contrary, Bauman is arguing that identities are increasingly *self-determined* and as a result are generally displaying greater cultural hybridity. In this way, his work is aligned more with Ulrich Beck's (1992) theory about 'individualisation', where in our modern 'risk society' the old social class structure is no longer as important, meaning people are free to 'reflexively construct their own biographies' (Beck 1992: 3).

Moreover, Bourdieu diverges away from Bauman's approach due his disdain for dualistic thinking – after all, the formation of Bourdieu's entire habitus concept began as an attempt to overcome what he believed to be an erroneous dualism between objectivism and subjectivism, while he also argues against viewing conscious rationality and subconscious dispositions as polar opposites (Bourdieu, 1990). As we saw previously in this literature review, Bauman's approach is different in the sense that he tends to frame most things in a dualistic way, although this may be primarily for illustrative purposes.

Despite these significant differences, I do not believe that Bauman and Bourdieu's outlooks are entirely incompatible. As I will cover later in this section, Bauman does appear to link the possession of a 'hybrid' identity (which is an advantageous identity in modern life) with occupying a loftier position in the social hierarchy, which I will suggest does bring him more in line with Bourdieu's ideas to a degree. Furthermore, I believe that in other important ways, the theories of Bauman and Bourdieu can be quite complimentary. This compatibility is important for my research, as I intend to draw on the ideas of both authors when I investigate why graduates come to live and work where they do.

A first accord between Bauman and Bourdieu's work actually begins with something which may at first appear to be a dissimilarity – the fact that Bauman specifically refers to people's *identity*, while Bourdieu talks about their *habitus*. However, this may not be as big a difference as it first appears, as Reay (1997) argues that the

concepts of identity and habitus are strongly linked. This is because in her view, habitus is essentially the manifestation of identity, and 'the habitus invokes understandings of identity premised on familial legacy and early childhood socialisation' (Reay 1997: 227). Furthermore, Reay points out that 'there is no finality or finished identity' (ibid: 227), just as individual and group habitus are a work in progress and can allow for change. Interestingly, Bauman and Bourdieu both metaphorically envisage modern life as 'a game', where the possession of particular forms of habitus or identity within certain social settings manipulates the odds of winning the game in certain (privileged) people's favour. Overall, whilst habitus and identity are different concepts, they are also clearly linked, and this means that comparing (and in some ways, combining) Bauman and Bourdieu's ideas does make sense.

Referring back to the 'identity wars' - Bauman argues that the people most likely to win are those with multi-faceted identities, who draw from a multitude of different cultural influences and are also able and willing to discard the facets of their identity which they deem obsolete or undesirable, swapping them for new ones (Bauman, 2005). They dress in many different styles, enjoy food inspired by a multitude of culinary traditions from around the globe, and appreciate many different styles of art, film and music. Rewording Bauman's thesis in a Bourdieusian syntax, what he appears to be suggesting is that the people most likely to win in life are those with the most varied, cosmopolitan and adaptable cultural capital. Bauman proceeds to argue that possessing such a multi-faceted identity (and varied cultural capital) means that no social group can claim 'ownership' over that person (Bauman, 2005). They are not governed or limited by the rules and regulations of any one particular group (Bauman 2005) and they cannot be burdened with one particular stereotype. Interestingly, within their writings, both Bauman (2005) and Bourdieu (1986) argue that group membership can potentially be a limiting experience due to the acquired adherence to rules and regulations – another important point of concurrence between the two authors.

Ultimately, Bauman's point about the limitations of group membership is where his 'identity wars' become an important factor in people's mobility, and hence relevant to my research. This is because, in Bauman's view, those people with cosmopolitan, 'hybrid' identities are more likely to feel at home and find cultural integration possible in many different locations. This then means they are 'freed from their local ties' (Bauman 2005:), as they can move and adapt from place to place. Essentially, 'the

world becomes their oyster'. However, Bauman does add nuance to his argument by pointing out that not belonging to a particular group, and being footloose as a result, can be a disadvantage in that there is no safety net to fall back on (Bauman, 2005). This could be a daunting prospect even for the most adventurous person. He also describes hybrid identities as 'an ideological gloss' (Bauman 2005: 32), a statement which appears to raise questions about how authentic cosmopolitan identities can be. In Bauman's writing, such identities seem to be consciously acquired, with people relying on 'shared – commonly recognisable and legible – tokens' (Bauman 2005: 16) to demonstrate their newfound identity and individualism. Such statements, particularly this reference to 'recognisable tokens', can be linked to Bourdieu's (1986) notion that certain types of cultural capital can be learned and performed deliberately, and are commonly recognised as exuding a certain social status.

Authentic or not, in Bauman's writing, those people with hybrid identities enjoy a high level of mobility and adaptability. Meanwhile, individuals who have a more homogenous, consistent identity are more likely to be bounded to their local ties, and ultimately, to remain stationary (Bauman 2005). Just how homogenous a person's identity can be in our globalised world is, of course, up for debate. Gillian Rose makes a similar point by referring to the work of Baudrillard, who describes people's identities as 'a switching centre for all networks of influence' (Baudrillard, 1985. In Rose 1995: 52). However, linking back to the work of Bourdieu, there are certainly elements of a person's cultural capital which mark them out as 'belonging' to a distinctive social group, which may also be associated with a set of stereotypical group identity characteristics. The example of the working-class identity stereotype associated with a strong, northern accent is pertinent here. Furthermore, people themselves may possess a strong, more singular sense of personal identity and belonging. This is exemplified by the people of the North-East of England, who tend to have a particularly strong sense of regional identity (Bailey et al. 2007) and are often very proud of it and would not wish to change (Russell 2004).

For Bauman, a more homogenous identity is a sign of 'belonging' to one particular societal group. He then proceeds to argue that in modern life, belonging is actually a *negative* state to be in, as it restricts a person's 'freedom' (which, crucially for my research, includes their *freedom to move*). Although being part of a group may commonly represent a safety net which people can fall back on, this net may subsequently be difficult to escape from, because:

Those to whom they [the group member] belong view their belonging as a non-negotiable duty (even if disguised as an inalienable right); those who they want to join see this belonging as a similarly non-negotiable fate (Bauman 2005: 5).

In Bauman's description, people who are primarily members of one single group are being portrayed as being trapped in a social bubble. They cannot escape due to both the expectations of loyalty and adherence from fellow group members, as well as the exclusionary behaviour of other social groups, who view them as being incompatible with their group identity and values. Ultimately, this means a person is more likely to remain rooted to their locality, as in between the 'duty' (and security) of singular group membership and the exclusionary behaviour of other groups lies a zone of great uncertainty, or as Bauman describes it, 'an abyss into which only a few would muster the courage to leap of their own free will, unpushed' (Bauman 2005: 5). On the other hand, an 'abyss' is not a prospect those people with more cosmopolitan, hybrid identities have to face. They do not have a 'duty' to any one particular group, while they also possess and display the 'commonly recognisable tokens' – or the cultural capital – which will allow them to conform and integrate with the value systems of multiple groups at once. They could move anywhere and feel confident of 'fitting in', at least to a certain extent. It is the cultural hybrids who win the 'identity wars', as they have greater autonomy and 'the freedom to move, freedom to choose, freedom to stop being what one already is and become what one is not yet' (Bauman 2005: 5).

Furthermore, Bauman appears to equate this hybrid, cosmopolitan identity with being middle class. This is firstly suggested when he argues that many people in the 'knowledge classes' (Bauman 2005: 28) – people who work in a knowledge economy primarily comprised of typically middle-class professions - frequently possess these identity characteristics. Even more tellingly, he also specifically states that such hybrid identities allow people to blend in with 'the bulk of society – the new middle-class' (Bauman 1998:4). Overall, middle-class people are portrayed as being more adaptable and eclectic than the working-class minority, and subsequently more likely to win the 'identity wars'. Despite the fact that Bauman believes the middle-class persona, along with the associated 'tokens' or cultural capital, are more heterogenous than Bourdieu would suggest, Bauman does portray middle-class identity and culture as being advantageous and more universally legitimate, just like Bourdieu argues is the case with middle-class habitus and

capital. Although, the main differences are that in Bauman's view, middle-class culture is more legitimate because of its mainstream cosmopolitanism, while for Bourdieu, its legitimacy comes from a more distinguishable set of capital, which is recognised as being more powerful and is conducive to 'practical mastery' of the societal field.

Overall, Bauman's outlook on homogenous identities and 'belonging' can be described as pessimistic. However, to add some nuance, it is clear that belonging and group membership can also be positive for people. Being a member of a tightly knit group may mean a person has many social contacts (social capital) who feel a certain *duty* to help them. Strong, homogenous group identities can also be a source of pride, collective strength and even resistance to social injustices. Moreover, distinctive identities are not always shunned or resisted by those who are members of other social groups. Sometimes they are highly valued, as demonstrated by the fact that the Geordie accent is often associated with geniality and helpfulness, so much so that Geordies are sought after for customer service roles, especially in call centres (Russell 2004).

Another point of contention arises from Bauman's description of 'identity wars' as 'a running battle between the desire for freedom and the need for security' (Bauman 2005: 30). This dualism between security and freedom echoes Gustafson's (2001) 'roots versus routes' debate, where roots represent locality and security, while routes are associated with adventure and freedom. However, Gustafson demonstrated how, in some cases, roots and roots, or security and freedom, can actually be complimentary. After all, for one of the research participants in the study called Lars-Erik, there was no freedom *without* security. Gustafson's work therefore reminds us that having a 'local' place which represents a safety net to fall back on can actually be facilitative of mobility, rather than being in conflict with it.

While I recognise this potential complementary of 'roots and routes', I believe that Bauman's depiction of a battle between the need for security and freedom accurately encapsulates my dilemma as a graduate. As I have highlighted, I had concerns that my distinctive Geordie identity and my associated cultural capital, especially my accent, may hamper my chances of success in locations outside of the North-East, both professionally and in terms of social integration. For me, leaving my 'home' region therefore presented a great deal of *risk*, and as Bauman suggests, it takes a great deal of courage to propel yourself into the unknown and

face that perceived risk, with no guarantees that you will overcome it in the end. Overall, in my case, not only did I not have the resources to move, I also could not muster this courage. It will be interesting to find out through interviews the extent to which other graduates associated moving away from their 'home' region with freedom and risk, particularly those graduates from the North-East like myself. If being mobile is so risky, does it even represent freedom at all, as Bauman suggests?

In this section, I aimed to introduce Zygmunt Bauman's ideas about the nature and importance of identity in modern society and demonstrate how they can relate to people's mobility. I have also strived to demonstrate that Bauman and Bourdieu's ideas can be compatible and utilised together, whilst acknowledging that there are some important differences. The main points of divergence appear to be that Bauman affords individuals more autonomy in the construction of their identity compared to Bourdieu, while he also depicts middle-class culture as being more eclectic, individual and indeterminable. However, both authors appear to agree that middle-class culture is afforded greater legitimacy in society, elevating middle-class people into a position of power and advantage over the working-class. For Bauman *and* Bourdieu, it is the people who can successfully integrate with the middle to upper classes (or, as Bauman argues, the new societal majority) who ultimately win the game of life and have the greater 'freedom' in society.

2.5. The graduate experience: university, jobs and mobility

So far in this literature review, I have principally overviewed theoretical literature, starting with Bauman's views on the importance placed on mobility in modern society, and then moving onto Bourdieu's extensive 'theoretical toolbox' (Burke, 2016). However, in this section, I intend to talk more about the *graduates themselves,* as well as their experiences in higher education (HE)*.* As we will see, graduates are commonly perceived to be a rather homogenous group of people who have similar personal traits, skillsets, academic/professional goals and privileges. However, the broad body of literature on graduates shows that this is not the case, as they now originate from a multitude of different socio-cultural backgrounds, possess different skills, and have varying expectations of university and their working life post-graduation. Their experiences at university can also vary greatly depending on their social and economic circumstances, the location and prestige of their institution and the people they meet and socialise with during their enrolment, amongst other factors. For my research, I believe it is crucial that I transcend some

of the common assumptions and stereotypes and consider how differences in graduates' socio-economic backgrounds and their university experiences impact their ability and propensity to be mobile. This is essentially what this section is all about. Firstly, I will begin by reviewing the literature on what a graduate actually 'is'. I will then move on to consider the varying and at times unequal nature of HE, before evaluating what this all means for graduates' mobility.

2.5.1. What is a 'graduate'?

Within policy circles, the media and the public imagination, there are certain ideas and stereotypes of what graduates 'are' and what they represent. Firstly, as Sage and colleagues (2013) argue, graduates tend to be viewed as a predominantly middle-class cohort. However, whilst a university education was once primarily reserved for the middle-classes, after the mass expansion of higher education in the UK, instigated by Tony Blair's Labour government in the mid-1990s, university students and graduates now originate from many different socio-economic backgrounds. Although, admittedly, access to the Oxbridge and Russell Group universities still has a classed dimension.

Secondly, it is often assumed that graduates, and talented people in general, are very mobile, as places and companies battle it out to attain their knowledge and skills. This narrative can even be found in the work of some academic authors (e.g. Corcoran and Faggian, 2017; Florida 2002, 2008), with Richard Florida in particular arguing that in order for places to attract this highly mobile talent, places need to battle and out-compete each other by developing technology intensive industries, as well as a tolerant cultural climate (Florida, 2002). However, the very fact that around 90% of graduates from North-East universities who were domiciled in the region remain in their home region for work six months after graduation suggests that graduate talent may not always be as mobile as frequently imagined in the literature. Moreover, as Sage et al. (2013) point out, rather than choosing from a multitude of locations to live and work, many graduates simply return to the 'parental safety net' of the familial home after university, at least initially, as it offers them the financial and emotional support they seek during what can be an uncertain time after higher education.

Thirdly, as hinted by Florida's argument, graduates are strongly associated with certain 'knowledge-intensive', high-income professions, particularly those which involve the STEM subjects (**S**cience, **T**echnology, **E**ngineering and **M**athematics),

such as scientists and architects. This has ultimately led to 'graduate jobs' being commonly viewed by policy makers as a 'gold standard' of employment (Tholen 2018: 31). However, the reality is that in today's highly competitive job market, a degree is no longer a rare qualification (Tholen, 2016) and this means that the competition for 'traditional graduate jobs' has greatly increased. As a result, graduates now undertake a whole host of professions, with many of these roles falling well outside of the traditional 'graduate job' remit. This led James and colleagues to endorse Elias and Purcell's (2004) notion that we should refer to the 'jobs that graduates do' rather than 'graduate jobs' per se (James et al. 2013: 954).

Furthermore, just as graduates are commonly assumed to be highly mobile and middle-class occupiers of knowledge-intensive professions, Tholen and colleagues (2016) highlight that there is also:

> a clear set of assumptions about graduate *skills*. Firstly, distinctly graduate skills are assumed to be demanded and therefore needed by employers; second, the skills deployed in work are of a specific type – 'thinking skills'; and third, these skills are, not surprisingly, uniquely acquired in university (Tholen et al. 2016: 511, emphasis added).

Tholen et al.'s (2016) study was an investigation into the real estate profession – a job they identified as undergoing a process of 'graduatisation'. Essentially, it is one of many job roles that were previously thought of as being non-graduate but are now increasingly being occupied by those with degrees, hence exemplifying Elias and Purcell's point about 'the jobs that graduates do' being a more appropriate turn of phrase.

From Tholen and colleagues' research, it became clear that the assumptions about graduate skills listed above were not universally applicable. The increasing cohort of estate agents who have degrees very rarely utilised their subject-specific knowledge from university in their roles. Rather, both the graduates themselves and their employers believed it was a whole host of other 'soft skills', such as 'interpersonal and communications skills, self-management, integrity and confidence' (Tholen et al. 2016: 519), that helped them to succeed in the job, as well as attain the role in the first place. These skills can be acquired and honed at university, but they can also be developed in other situs encountered in everyday life such as the home, school and the workplace, meaning they can also be held by people *without* a university education (James et al. 2013; Tholen et al. 2016). Of

course, there are still many graduates who do work in the 'traditional' graduate professions, like scientists and lawyers, who will be required to develop and draw on their more 'traditional' graduate skills, such as their 'hard' subject knowledge, analytical prowess and critical thinking. However, Tholen and colleagues' research demonstrates that in the newly 'graduatising' professions at least, it is now a difficult task to pinpoint precisely what constitutes a graduate skill set *and* to distinguish this skillset from the attributes of non-graduate workers. Furthermore, 'the jobs that graduates do' are not always reliant on the high order 'thinking' skills commonly associated with graduates, instead having a more practical dimension.

Ultimately, this all led Tholen and colleagues (2016) to question, what actually 'is' a graduate these days and what do they represent? Such a question has important ramifications, as if we cannot determine what a graduate 'is', then how do we accurately assess the need and demand for their skills from employers, regional economies, and even the national economy?

Furthermore, in the graduatising professions or lower skilled job roles, there is a concern that some non-graduates may no longer be able to attain jobs that they could have targeted previously, as some employers are inclined to choose from the increasing number of people with higher educational capital (Tholen et al. 2016). This could be to an employer's detriment however, as James et al. (2013) point out that those graduates who enter so-called 'lower skill' jobs often demonstrate 'lower job satisfaction and organisational commitment . . . compared to graduates in traditional graduate jobs' (James et al. 2013: 955). In their study of estate agents, Tholen et al. (2016) also found little evidence to support the commonly held perception that graduates 'would 'grow'' (pg. 510), or in other words advance, their originally non-graduate roles, as in the real estate profession, more advanced skills were simply not required.

If graduates are displacing non-graduates in certain professions, but are then unhappy, unfulfilled and unable/not required to advance these job roles, then this could be problematic for certain business sectors and even the economy as a whole. It also supports Tholen's (2014) argument that simply retaining as many graduates as possible is not enough to guarantee business productivity, prosperity and regional economic development, despite common narratives to the contrary found in political and media circles. As a graduate myself (with the bias that brings), I believe that graduates are talented people, who possess many valuable skills which

have been honed by their university experience. Tholen (2014) also points out that a university education can of course be a very enriching experience academically, socially and culturally. However, it has also become clear from reading the academic literature that these questions about what graduates 'are' and how they actually contribute to the economy are still important questions to ask.

2.5.2. The importance of extracurricular activities for the graduate C.V.

As mentioned earlier, due to the mass-expansion of higher education, possessing a degree is no longer a rarity (Tholen, 2016). This has meant that obtaining a so-called 'traditional' graduate job is becoming more and more competitive. In fact, some graduates are considered to be 'under-employed' or even struggling to find work at all. Tholen (2014) argues that these difficulties experienced by graduates are primarily interpreted in two main ways by the media, businesses, politicians and the general public: 'graduates as victims' or 'graduates as responsible agents' (Tholen 2014: 7-8). The 'victims' outlook centres around narratives of misfortune – that national and regional economies are not taking advantage of their skills effectively and they are unfairly being denied the chance to shine (Tholen 2014). Conversely, the 'responsible agents' outlook points the finger at graduates instead, arguing that they must accept that certain degrees (typically those in STEM disciplines) make people more coveted and employable than others (often referring to degrees in the arts and humanities subjects) (Tholen 2014). Furthermore, as Tholen puts it, 'other advice usually involves advocating work experience, internship or extracurricular activities' (2014: 8). Essentially, this outlook suggests that simply possessing a degree is no longer a way of distinguishing yourself from the crowd. Instead, the onus is on graduates to also supplement their degree with 'C.V. boosters' such as work experience, charity work and interesting hobbies. Unfortunately, based on my own experience as a job-seeking graduate, there does seem to be some truth in the notion that possessing a degree on its own is simply no longer enough to guarantee employment in your chosen field, and that extracurricular activities are becoming ever more essential.

Interestingly however, Bathmaker and colleagues (2013) have demonstrated that the actual likelihood of a university student participating in these extracurricular activities (ECAs) is very strongly linked to their socio-economic status. Those who are in the middle to upper classes are more likely to have undertaken ECAs compared to their working-class counterparts, as they are generally more aware of

the need to boost their employability with extra skills and distinguish themselves from the rest of the graduate labour pool (Bathmaker et al. 2013). Such knowledge often comes from parents who have also attended university and who have experience of the graduate labour market. Taking a Bourdieusian approach, Bathmaker et al. (2013) argue that middle to elite class parents are subsequently more aware of 'how to play the game' at university and that they consciously and subconsciously impart this knowledge onto their children, to the extent that it becomes encoded in their habitus. Meanwhile, working-class graduates are often more inclined to maintain faith in the meritocratic discourse that working hard for a degree and achieving an excellent grade will result in a good 'graduate level' job when they leave university. This is because they are more likely to be the first in their family to attend university, which in turn means that their knowledge of 'how to play the game' is simply not as comprehensive when compared to that of their middle-class counterparts.

Bathmaker and colleagues' research demonstrates that treating graduates as one homogenous group and putting the onus on them all to supplement their degrees with ECAs is somewhat unfair. Graduates are a heterogenous group of people, who come from a multitude of different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, and it is apparent that those graduates from the middle to upper classes have a greater inherent ability and propensity to 'play the game' and seek out these ECAs. Rather than berating graduates for 'simply expecting opportunities to come to them on a plate' (Tholen 2014: 8 (Quoting the entrepreneur James Caan)), it could well be the case that some graduates – particularly those from working-class backgrounds – were simply not aware that supplementing their degrees with ECAs is now a requirement. Personally, as a working-class student, I was certainly not aware that this was the case when I was at university. Perhaps more support and education on this matter for working-class students, during school lessons for example, could help to bridge the gap which exists between classes and equip more graduates to be competitive and able to distinguish themselves in the job market.

2.5.3. The socially stratified nature of the university experience

The greater propensity of middle-class graduates to seek out ECAs is not the only example of how the university experience can vary depending on a student's socio-economic status. Crozier et al. (2019), along with Reay et al. (2009; 2010), demonstrate how the university experience is still socially stratified in multiple ways.

Higher education may now be available to people from many different backgrounds, but this still does not make it an equal experience for everybody.

The first layer of inequality stems from the fact that there is a university hierarchy, where at the top you have the institutions which are considered to be 'elite' or first class, while near the bottom there are universities which enjoy a much less prestigious, or second-class, reputation. In the U.K., many of the Russell Group universities are considered to be located towards the first-class end of the spectrum, while post-1992 universities are more likely to be located towards the middle to bottom, or second-class, end of the scale (although this is, of course, a generalisation). While all universities (including the 'elite' institutions) are technically open to anybody who displays the required academic aptitude, for Reay et al. (2010) it is in fact the case that 'working-class students, for the most part, end up in universities seen to be "second-class", both by themselves and others' (pg. 121). This trend will have a whole host of contributory factors, including working-class students selecting 'local' universities, as well as choosing institutions which they feel are more representative of their particular cultural milieu (a point I will revisit shortly). Quoting from Bourdieu, the authors capture the essence of what all of this can mean for these working-class graduates:

> as Bourdieu (1999, pg. 423) asserts, 'after an extended school career, which often entails considerable sacrifice, the most culturally disadvantaged run the risk of ending up with a *devalued degree'* (Reay et al. 2010: 121, emphasis added).

At this point, it is important to acknowledge that there are a whole host of different factors which would influence how people would interpret and value a person's degree, including the degree classification, the subject and if the qualification includes any work experience. However, as Reay and colleagues (2010) point out, the reputation of the university is also important, and because working-class graduates are more likely to study at so-called 'second-class' institutions, their degrees are more likely to be devalued as a result, both by potential employers and the graduates themselves. Ultimately, this could place these graduates at a significant disadvantage in what is already a competitive job market.

Of course, some working-class students do attend 'elite' universities. However, whilst attending such an institution may provide the student with a higher form of institutional cultural capital in the form of a degree from a more prestigious

university, it can also prove to be a challenging experience for working-class students, as they 'face not only academic challenge, but considerable identity work, and the discomforts generated when habitus confronts a starkly unfamiliar field' (Reay et al. 2010: 120). Crucially, working-class students enrolling in an elite institution and entering a predominantly middle-class field may be 'confronted with their own difference' (Crozier et al. 2019: 933) for the first time. This was demonstrated by one of Crozier and colleagues' research participants called Amy, who said: 'I thought I was normal until I came here' (2019: 925). The authors cleverly refer to Dubois' book (from 1903) entitled *Souls of Black Folk* to interpret Amy's response. Originally writing about race, he described the process of 'double consciousness', 'only allowing Black people to see themselves through the eyes of "the other world", a sense of "looking at oneself through the eyes of others"' (Dubois 1903. In Crozier et al. 2019: 934). When a working-class student enters a social field that is different to anything they have experienced before, they start to question themselves and they try to interpret how the majority of the field will view their characteristics and actions. I suggest that this was the case for myself, as my university experience at Durham made me far more aware of my 'working-classness'. Overall, Dubois' concept of 'double consciousness' falls in line with the argument that people's habitus are malleable and do allow for *critique* of oneself.

The aim of Crozier et al. (2019) and Reay et al.'s (2010) research was essentially to establish how working-class students react to this process of self-reflection and self-critique. On first reflection, it appears that they have two main options: (1) to attempt to alter their outlook and behaviour to fall in line with their middle-class counterparts so that they 'fit in', or (2) to maintain their original working-class outlook and behaviours, despite the fact that this risks being 'negatively sanctioned' (to use Bourdieu's term), or in other words, makes social integration potentially more difficult. However, both studies found that actually, many working-class students at elite universities opt for what Crozier et al. (2019) refer to as an 'in-between space' (pg. 933), which incorporates socio-cultural elements of both their working-class background and the new middle-class social field. For example, a student may attempt to 'fit in' by attempting to neutralise their working-class accent when they are around middle-class colleagues, but revert to their regional accent when around family members. The authors once again quote from Dubois when they refer to this process as 'managing multiple versions of themselves' simultaneously (Dubois 1903. In Crozier et al. 2019: 934). Negotiating this 'productive tension between

"fitting in" and "standing out"' (Reay et al. 2010), is indeed as laborious as it sounds, with Crozier and colleagues even describing the process as potentially 'disrupting and troubling' (2019: 934). However, they do also argue that on some occasions, the experience can be 'agentic' (Crozier et al. 2019: 934) in a character-building sense, as 'overall, students gained strength and courage' (ibid: 934) from having to adapt to their new surroundings.

The problem is, for some of Crozier and colleagues' research participants, occupying a middle ground was simply not an option, with one student describing her inability to modify her working-class accent, which in turn led to insecurities about how she would be perceived by 'posher' others, such as her lecturer. Furthermore, even if working-class students are able to 'manage multiple versions of themselves', the need to do so is an unjust burden which is being placed exclusively upon them (Crozier et al. 2019) and it is putting them at a disadvantage compared to their middle-class colleagues, whose habitus should already be well adjusted to the social field of the elite university. This ultimately leads Crozier and colleagues to argue that we should not just focus our attention on 'fair access' to university for all students, but also 'fair opportunity' once they are there (2019: 934). For me, it sounds as though the whole process of identity management could detract from the principal reason why students attend university in the first place – to learn and attain academically.

So, does all of this mean that a working-class student would have an easier job fitting in at a university that is not elite, because there will be more working-class students like them? Not necessarily. Firstly, Reay and colleagues (2009) remind us that there is a difference between social class identities and learning identities. In their research paper, they argued that for conscientious and academically gifted working-class students, 'the irony is that they have a greater sense of fitting in as *learners* in elite HE than they had at school surrounded by 'people like them'' (Reay et al. 2009: 1115, emphasis added) in social class terms. This was because within more working-class fields, their academic aptitude is more likely to be subordinate and they would be labelled a 'geek', or called many other unflattering names, as a result. This was also picked up by Reay et al. (2010), who described the fine line working-class students had to walk between being committed enough to achieve their desired grades, without coming across as 'nerdy' (pg. 120) and risk becoming unpopular with fellow students. Therefore, It appears that even at a so-called 'second-class' university which may be seen as a more accessible HE institution for

the working-class, for academically minded working-class graduates there still appears to be a need to 'manage multiple versions of the self' on a daily basis.

Furthermore, for those working-class students who do feel at ease or in their 'comfort zone' at a non-elite university, this may not always be a good thing. Reay and colleagues (2010) argue that there are vast differences in the university experience between elite and so-called 'second-class' universities. They referred to the account of their research participant Jim, who described how the elite university experience 'fills the whole of an individual's life – every aspect of life, both work and social activities, revolve around the university' (Reay et al. 2010: 116). This strikes me as being particularly true for those elite universities who operate a collegiate system like Durham, as students live, work and socialise in smaller, tightly-knit groups for the duration of their time at university. On the contrary, many second-class universities are more likely to feel almost like an extension of college, where students who live locally attend the campus for lectures, but then return home, where they are surrounded by their family and friends. In this case, university is only part of the student's life, rather than their life 'revolving' around the university, and it can be argued that these students largely remain within their comfort zone. Whilst being comfortable and settled can be beneficial in many ways, Reay et al. (2010) also quote Archer and Leathwood's argument that because these students are not fully integrated into university life, they 'go through university rather than university going through them' (Archer and Leathwood 2003, in Reay et al. 2010: 112). Essentially, the university experience may not be as 'agentic' (to use Crozier et al.'s term) or potentially life-changing as attending an elite university, as students can dip in and out of university life and they have their 'comfort zone' at home to fall back on. They are therefore less likely to be required to develop the same levels of personal strength and resilience as the students attending an elite university, even if the pressure to conform to the values of an elite institution is unjust and potentially disconcerting. Such mental strength and endurance could prove beneficial for students in later life, especially in competitive environments such as the workplace.

In this review, I previously highlighted Burke's (2016) reference to Bourdieu's 'out-of-environment experiences' which can disrupt a person's habitus. He illustrated the concept by referring to one of his research subjects Niamh, whose experience working abroad altered her 'subjective expectations' and aspirations for her career in a positive sense (Burke 2016: 70). However, Burke (2016) also highlighted Bourdieu's point that such experiences are rare, as a person's habitus inclines them

to seek out environments where they are already socially and culturally compatible, while their economic, social and cultural capital limits the number of social fields they can enter. After reading the work of Reay et al. (2009; 2010) and Crozier et al. (2019), it appears that for working-class students, the 'elite' university could be one of these rare places where an 'out-of-environment' experience can be found, which could alter their aspirations and educational 'strategies'. While it has already been firmly established that attending an elite university can be an uncomfortable and unfair experience for some working-class students, having this potentially habitus changing experience could also be beneficial in other ways, and not just in the character-building sense mentioned above.

In his study of graduate pathways through school to university and then the job market, Burke (2016) demonstrated the existence of an enduring 'collective working-class habitus' (pg. 114), where working-class graduates exuded 'attitudes and dispositions displaying low levels of aspiration, expectation and confidence. . . demonstrating Bourdieu's often quoted 'not for the likes of me attitude' (pg. 114). In his research, many working-class students were simply content with 'passing' exams and university courses, rather than aiming for top grades and top jobs, which they believed were already out of reach for 'people like them'. Furthermore, Burke highlights that working-class students 'presented quite weak educational strategies' (pg. 105), exemplified by one research participant in particular who was unsure why he had chosen the A-level subjects that he did. There are links to be made here with Bathmaker et al.'s (2013) research, where working-class students were unable to 'play the game' of education as competently as their middle-class counterparts, as they were among the first in their family to follow the pathway into higher education.

For the working-class, attending a university which is more representative of their socio-cultural comfort zone and where they can continue to live at home may be beneficial in terms of feeling happy and settled. However, to what extent will such a university experience – where working-class students remain relatively comfortable and surrounded by 'people like them' - change the enduring low levels of aspiration, expectation and strategy that these students often demonstrated in Burke's research? This question would be especially relevant if the university is also viewed as being 'second-class' by the student themselves, as well as other people in general. On the other hand, the 'elite' university, with its predominantly middle-class cultural milieu and values, may well represent a shock to the system for working-class students in some ways. It is therefore more likely to represent that 'out-of-

environment' experience which could potentially alter the habitus, especially if students are encouraged to go for the top grades and careers by lecturers and are able to absorb knowledge of 'how to play the game' from their middle-class colleagues. In such an environment, the generally low aspiration and self-expectation of the working-class habitus may have more chance of being elevated, which could potentially be transformational for a student's academic attainment, their career, and ultimately their life. Of course, attending *any* university can be a life changing experience - after all, that is the whole point of attending. However, as Crozier and colleagues (2019) stated, the experience at an elite university tends to be particularly 'agentic' for working-class students, meaning that the potential for habitus disruption and a resulting change in attitude may be more likely at these institutions. This is important, as any increase in graduates' aspirations, expectations, and strategical knowhow could place them in a better position in terms of competing in the job market.

2.5.4. Summary of section three so far: a precarious situation for some graduates?

From the hierarchical nature of universities and differences in social class between student cohorts, to the middle-class understanding of 'how to play the game', in this section of the literature review it has become clear that even though higher education is technically open to all, it is still not an *equal experience* for every student. Working-class students tend to be at a disadvantage compared to their middle-class counterparts, as they are generally not as confident at 'playing the game' in terms of seeking out ECAs and other C.V. boosters (Bathmaker et al. 2013). Furthermore, as Burke (2016) argues, the 'collective working-class habitus' (pg. 114) is a one characterised by low levels of aspiration and a lack of strategy, and this is not guaranteed to change during a student's time at university. In fact, any transformation of the habitus may well depend on the nature and hierarchical position of the institution that the student attends, and the extent to which their life is centred around the university. Crucially then, it is clear higher education does not follow a solely meritocratic discourse. It has also become apparent that in many ways, a university education is not always the universal social and geographical mobiliser it is believed to be in policy circles and the public imagination, as working-class graduates emerging from university may find themselves in similar circumstances economically, socially and culturally to when they first embarked on their university experience. Furthermore, one of the key reasons why graduates are

commonly believed to be a geographically mobile group of people is because their knowledge and skills are universally sought after by employers and are viewed as being crucial to business and regional development. However, as I have covered in this section, there now seems to be increasing indeterminacy over what a graduate 'is', what their skillsets look like, and if the 'graduate skills' desired by employers are even unique to graduates in the first place. This often places graduates in quite a precarious situation in the job market. Rather than graduates having their pick of jobs and locations, they now must hope that employers in a favourable location notice them and select them from what is becoming an increasingly large and competitive graduate cohort.

2.5.5. Existing literature on graduate mobility

Despite prevailing narratives to the contrary, geographical mobility for graduates is certainly not a given - especially for those who come from less privileged backgrounds. However, as Alexander (2019) argues, 'with graduate mobility positioned as the "norm" [in society], mobility becomes almost a *moral imperative*, something graduates should possess in order to access the full range of graduate jobs' (pg. 86, emphasis added). Earlier in this review, I highlighted Cresswell's (2010) point that nowadays, there seems to be pressure on everyone in society to be mobile and to seek out their own path in life, even to the extent that such narratives have penetrated our everyday phrases. However, as Alexander's quote implies, this societal pressure felt particularly heavily by graduates. If they are not mobile after university, graduates are often viewed as being the 'responsible agents' (to use Tholen's (2014) term) and it is almost viewed as a failure. However, I hope to highlight further in this section that pointing the finger of blame at graduates for their immobility, and simultaneously treating them as a homogenous group of people with similar levels of privilege, is a rather unfair and misinformed outlook. There are, in fact, external forces at play (based around social class) which operate beyond graduates' control but work to limit their mobility (Alexander, 2019). Furthermore, being immobile or 'local' is not always the disadvantage it is portrayed to be, as remaining in close proximity to friends and family can provide graduates from all backgrounds with important tangible and emotional support (Sage et al. 2013).

Alexander (2019) argues that despite what many people believe, 'research has shown that graduate migration pathways are actually complex, non-linear and precarious' (2019: 86). She also refers to the work of Ball (2015), who demonstrated

that 'only 18% of graduates are in regional locations different from their home or university regions at six months after graduation' (Alexander 2019: 86). This suggests that, at least in the short term, graduates remain considerably more 'localised' than the dominant narrative would suggest. However, is this localisation down to personal choice, or factors which exist beyond their own control? In Alexander's research into graduate mobilities in the Orkney and Shetland Isles, U.K., it was argued that graduates' mobility was being *restricted* in that location due to external factors such as their class background. Even when graduates did leave the islands, they often felt compelled to move to places that were socially and culturally similar, while some suggested they may return to the islands in later life (Alexander 2019). However, concerningly, her research respondents did not seem to realise that they were restricted, instead presenting their immobility as an independently derived, personal decision:

> Students from these island groups are not free from the constraints of space, choosing freely where to live to pursue their careers. . . [however] it is striking that graduates themselves seem to internalise a narrative of mobility, describing themselves as highly mobile. . . students adopt and articulate neo-liberal narratives of personal choice and responsibility, even when their outcomes are heavily influenced by structural factors (e.g. class) (Alexander 2019: 90).

In Orkney and Shetland at least, it appears as though the 'graduates as responsible agents' narrative has penetrated graduates' mindsets, leaving them unable to distinguish between external restriction and personal motivation when it comes to their immobility. As Alexander argues, this 'creates a social justice issue' (2019: 90), as unequal restrictions placed upon graduates' mobility by influences such as their social class background may ultimately remain unrecognised, unproblematised and uncontested. In my research, I aim to determine how class limits (and admittedly sometimes promotes) graduates' mobility. It will also be important to determine if any of my research participants are similar to those in Alexander's study, in the sense that they have 'internalised' (2019: 90) a narrative of mobility and independence despite being restricted by external factors such as their class background.

For Sage et al. (2013), one of the principal reasons why the socio-cultural aspects limiting graduate mobility have not received the attention they warrant is 'the

parochial focus on labour-motivated migration (usually to *first* employment)' (pg. 738, emphasis in original). As we have discovered in this section, graduate mobility is not just limited solely by employment options, while a focus on a graduate's first move fails to capture the many changes in the frequency and extent of a person's mobility which can occur over extended time periods (Sage et al. 2013). Indeed, in the discussion chapter of my thesis, I acknowledge that my own research lacks this temporal aspect to a degree because I interviewed each graduate only once, although I attempted to mitigate this limitation by talking to graduates about their full transition from college to university, and then into the job market.

Back to Sage et al.'s (2013) research, they highlight that if you do focus on a graduate's first move, it is quite likely that it will involve a return to the familial home, regardless of their social and cultural background. The period immediately after university can be an uncertain time in terms of employment for any graduate, as they firm up their plans on what they want to do in their career and then apply for jobs. In the opinion of Sage and colleagues (2013), during this period the family home can be an attractive proposition, as it represents 'a parental safety net' (pg. 738) where graduates can seek refuge. In their study, they found that parents were able to offer their graduate children emotional and financial support to alleviate the stresses and strains of what can be an uncertain time. However, although Sage et al. highlighted that many of the returning graduates did offer to 'pay their way', in their research 99% of the graduates required and received support from their families (2013: 751). The authors almost present this requirement of parents to support their graduate children as a burden, raising their concerns about the stresses and strains this will place on parents' resources. This was particularly true for those parents they labelled as 'the sandwich generation' (Sage et al. 2013: 751), who are required to support both their elderly parents and their adult children. In some ways then, graduates who return to live at home are depicted as being financially and emotionally dependent, and a strain on their parent's lifestyles and resources.

However, as Sage and her colleagues recognise, their research was conducted with a primarily middle-class cohort from the University of Southampton, a Russell Group university. As we now know, although higher education in the U.K. is still a predominantly middle-class field (Reay et al. 2010), graduates do still come from a multitude of different backgrounds, while they attend both traditional 'red-brick' and post-1992 universities. Although it may well be the case that many graduates' first

moves after university are a return to the parental home no matter their socio-economic background, a question I aim to pose in my research is: are all of these graduates returning home for the same reasons – for example, is it down to choice or necessity? Furthermore, in the case of working-class families, can parents afford to support their graduate children, especially if middle-class parents can even feel the strain sometimes as Sage et al. (2013) suggest? In fact, could it even be the other way around at times, with the graduates being the ones required to support their families and having a duty of care? If this is the case, then casting the parental home as 'a safety net' may only be capturing half of the story, especially for some working-class graduates. Whatever graduates' needs and responsibilities are, it certainly appears as though the dynamics of the parental home could be an important factor in either promoting or hindering graduate mobility, both in the present and future.

Throughout this literature review it has become clear that people's social class can be very influential in either promoting or restricting their mobility, whether this is through their endowment of economic, social and cultural capital, or the way they are disposed to think, act and conceptualise the world around them. One author who considers these classed dimensions of (im)mobility, albeit for university *students* rather than graduates, is Kirsty Finn. In her research (2017), she discovered that middle-class students generally had a more mobile attitude and were more disposed to being on the move, compared to their working-class counterparts. However, she also highlights that middle-class mobilties can also be supported by certain 'moorings' and are punctuated by extended periods of stasis (Finn, 2017), a point which appears to slip under the radar in many studies of mobility. This point about middle-class moorings and stasis was illustrated particularly well by one of Finn's research participants Stacey. Whilst she was attending an elite Scottish university, Stacey talked about following regimented 'traditions and very [institutionally specific] ways of doing things' (Finn 2017: 748) and how '[she and her friends] are terrible for just treading a fairly well-worn path around the place' (ibid, pg. 748). Even though Stacey was middle-class and moved away from home to attend a prestigious HE institution, Finn argues that she actually has 'limited physical mobility' (2017: 748) once she is there, as she ends up doing the same things and following the same path as everyone else around her. This demonstrates how students from all backgrounds can at once be mobile *and*

stationary (Finn, 2017), and therefore problematises the idea of presenting mobility and stationarity in a dualistic way, as Bauman does in his writing.

Finn appears to dislike the mobile/immobile dualism a great deal, and she argues that drawing on the mobilities paradigm literature allows her to transcend such dualistic thinking. This is because mobilities literature emphasises the importance of mobility in everyday life and views all travel as meaningful (Cresswell 2010), not just mobility over long distances to particularly important destinations. It also emphasises the importance of affect and emotion whilst we are mobile (Finn 2017), even if this mobility is as simple as the daily commute to work by car. A good example of how the consideration of everyday mobilities, along with the emotion involved, breaks down this mobile/immobile dualism is presented by another one of Finn's (2017) research participants, Mira. Mira continued to live at home during her time at university. Therefore, in some quarters she may have been presented as an immobile 'local' student who was continuing to operate within her comfort zone. However, as Finn points out, there was nothing comfortable about her everyday commute:

> Although studying locally, Mira's experiences were far from cosy or familiar. Her journey to and from university involved two separate train rides and a connecting bus to the out-of-town campus she attended (2017: 750).

Mira's experiences demonstrate that it is indeed important to consider people's everyday mobility, as well as their mobility patterns over larger distances. Her day-to-day reality could be described as anything but static or comfortable, with her local commute still requiring a significant amount of sacrifice in terms of time, effort and emotional endurance. Overall, labelling someone like Mira as 'immobile' or suggesting that they are operating within their 'comfort zone' seems to be rather unfair and inaccurate (Finn, 2017). In my research, if I describe a graduate as being 'immobile', I do so in a relative sense, as I compare them to other graduates who have moved to different regions or travel between their home and university regions frequently. I recognise that even graduates who study locally and live at home will still commute to university and travel for many other reasons on a daily basis, and I do not wish to portray them as being completely rooted to place. Furthermore, even though the main focus of my research is on how social class structures influence graduates' mobility, and I primarily utilise Bourdieu's theoretical tools to do this, I do

recognise that personal emotion can also play an important role in swaying students/graduates migration decisions (Finn, 2017), and I am sure it will feature in my research participants' accounts.

One last point I want to emphasise is that remaining 'local' is not always a negative thing for graduates, and not just in the sense that they have access to material support from parents. As Finn points out in her writing, 'staying close to home is so often understood to be linked to 'tastes of necessity' (Bourdieu 1986)' but it can, in fact, also be linked to what she calls 'tastes of luxury (or freedom)' (Finn 2017: 753). After all, for some people, being at home is where they feel totally 'free' to be themselves and to do the things they enjoy the most. This was exemplified once again by Finn's research respondent Mira, who talked about how much she enjoyed sharing mealtimes with her family, and how she would miss this a lot if she moved out of the familial home (Finn 2017: 750). For graduates, remaining at home is not always down to restriction or a 'last resort' – sometimes it may well be down to choice, as 'home' is where they feel happiest. Overall, this is further evidence that remaining 'local' is not always a bad thing as Bauman would suggest. Of course, where it becomes problematic is when remaining at home is *not* solely the result of personal choice, as I argue was the case for me and I hypothesise will be the case for many other graduates.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will provide a detailed account of the methodology I have employed in my research. My methodology is wholly qualitative and is composed of three main stages: (1) 'snowball' or respondent-driven sampling; (2) open-ended, semi-structured interviews; and (3) the transcription of the interviews and thematic analysis of the data.

In the first section of this methodology chapter, I will discuss my theoretical approach when undertaking this research. I will talk about my ontological and epistemological positioning, and why I selected to draw from Bourdieu's work in particular. I will then move on to discuss each of the three main stages of my methodology in turn. I will describe the methods in each stage clearly and how they were utilised, as well as why I selected them and why I believed they were appropriate for addressing my research questions. Furthermore, I will discuss the limitations of each of my methods and how they were overcome (if possible), as well as taking care to acknowledge the ethical issues which are present in my research.

3.2. My theoretical approach to this research

3.2.1. 'Structuralist Constructivism'

In the literature review, I highlighted Van Hear's (2014) use of Bourdieu's theory to research how people's migration potential was impacted by their social class. In particular, Van Hear's Bourdieusian depiction of class being as being heavily linked to endowments of economic, social and cultural resources or 'capitals', and his accompanying argument that these capitals are crucial in determining the extent of people's mobility, both grasped my attention. This was because these points both resonated strongly with my own experience as a relative immobile, working-class graduate. After all, in the introduction chapter, I described how my relatively low monetary savings, a dearth of influential social contacts and concerns about cultural adaptation all combined to keep me rooted in the North-East. After further consultation of Bourdieu's literature, I also discovered his influential concepts of *Field* (social arenas – with their rules or 'doxa') and *Habitus* (the embodiment of

these social doxa). I found that these concepts could also help me to understand the factors behind my relative immobility at a deeper level, especially when contemplating the cultural clash between my working-class background and the predominantly middle-class field of the Russell Group university (see introduction chapter).

Overall, this concurrence between Bourdieu's theory and my own experience was an important reason why I decided to follow a Bourdieu-inspired theoretical approach to my research. I wanted to 'take myself out of the picture' (to the greatest extent possible when conducting qualitative research) and speak to other graduates, to discover whether or not their accounts also resonated with Bourdieu's theory on habitus, capital and field in a strong way. If they did, this would indicate that social class could be an important factor in graduate mobility more widely, and not just in my own case. Furthermore, I could also demonstrate the value of Bourdieu's theory for research into graduate retention and mobilities.

However, I have drawn extensively from Bourdieu's theory not just because his work chimes with my 'real life' experience, but also because I largely share his theoretical perspective, including my views on ontology (the nature of reality) and epistemology (the nature of knowledge). Ultimately, I would describe myself as a 'structuralist constructivist' (a term used by Gouanvic (2014)). The structuralist element of my approach emanates from my *realist* ontological perspective. As Yucel (2018) describes, a realist ontology 'acknowledges the existence of a mind-independent, *structured* and changing reality' (pg. 414, emphasis added). I also believe that social structure directs human action and can limit people's possibilities (just as I believe that the social class structure played a role in limiting my ability to leave the North-East). However, my theoretical perspective simultaneously has constructivist elements, in the sense that I do not believe that people's actions are wholly dictated by this overarching social structure or 'reality'. In my view, they can question their reality, resist it, and even change the status quo. People's understanding and interpretation of their realities are therefore very important, and this is why I have chosen to use qualitative interviews in my methodology (see page 126). It may be a bridge too far to call my epistemology relativist, since I still approach research from a realist ontological standpoint and I look for evidence of the overriding social structure in what my research participants say. However, to borrow a term from Yucel (2018), my epistemology is certainly not 'fully realist' (pg. 414).

Importantly, Gouanvic (2014) argues that Bourdieu also advocates and follows the 'structuralist constructivist' way of thinking. Firstly, using a direct quote, Gouanvic demonstrates that Bourdieu's theory is structuralist in the sense that:

> . . . there exist, within the social world itself. . . *objective structures* independent of the conscious will of agents, which are capable of guiding and constraining their practices or their representations (Bourdieu, 1989. In Gouanvic 2014: 94, emphasis added).

These 'guiding' and 'objective' structures that Bourdieu describes manifest themselves through the doxa of social 'fields', along with the value systems of 'groups, notably those we ordinarily call the social classes' (Bourdieu, 1989. In Gouanvic 2014: 94). The fact that Bourdieu considers these social structures to be 'independent of the conscious will of agents' also supports Vandenberghe's (1999) assertion that Bourdieu's ontology is *realist*, as he believes in a structured reality which exists outside of the human mind.

However, in other ways, Bourdieu demonstrates more constructivist elements to his thinking. This is particularly evident within his conceptualisation of habitus, where these social structures are *embodied* by individual agents. The habitus concept does allow for individual creativity, especially in the way it can adapt and change over time (for example, during 'habitus-breaking experiences' (Burke, 2016)) and how it can generate resistance or 'critique' (Crossley, 2002: 92) of one's situation. Furthermore, there are certainly constructivist elements within Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, especially in the way it can be embodied and 'consciously acquired' (Bourdieu, 1986). Ultimately, in my reading of Bourdieu, whilst social structure can be 'guiding' or even 'constraining' (to use his words), there is still room for individual interpretation, agency and creativity within this overarching superstructure of societal norms and regulations. People do play a role in constructing and acting out their reality. This section of Bourdieu's theory does therefore have links to the constructivist research paradigm, although as Gouanvic (2014) describes, it is admittedly 'a constructivism in which symbolic power is exercised with the [sometimes subconscious] collaboration of those who are subjected to it' (pg. 99).

There are caveats to this constructivism when we examine Bourdieusian epistemology. The fact that Bourdieu believed in a reality which exists beyond human perception alone has important consequences for his epistemological

positioning. It allowed him to establish an 'epistemological break' between 'the common-sense conception (doxa) [of research participants] and the scientific conception of the social (episteme)' (Vandenberghe, 1999: 41). Vandenberghe explains further that for Bourdieu, this means in simpler terms that 'social life has to be explained not by the conceptions of its participants [per se], but by *structural causes* that escape consciousness and explain and necessitate the observed phenomena' (1999: 42, emphasis added).

This does not mean that Bourdieu was not interested in the intricacies of what his research participants thought, said and did – he was. However, he was interested primarily insofar as these individual thoughts, feelings and actions reflect the 'hidden', complex social structures which ultimately guide and sometimes restrict people's actions. 'True' knowledge (which Bourdieu considered to be the ultimate goal of scientific research) lies within this hidden, structured reality, and not necessarily always in the conscious understanding of people (Vandenberghe, 1999).

For researchers like myself who are using qualitative interviews and drawing from Bourdieu's extensive 'theoretical toolbox' (Burke, 2016), research is therefore primarily a deductive process – we take what our research participants say and we try and explain this in more detail using the existing theory available. As a hypothetical example, within this research a graduate may express reservations about leaving their home region due to having a certain accent. This expression of concern is of course important and interesting in its own right. However, within my research I will be looking at *why* having a particular accent is an issue. Is it simply a matter of being understood? Or, more likely, does it go deeper than that? Does the graduate link their accent to a certain tier on the social class pyramid and have concerns about the cultural legitimacy of their accent? Is the graduate actively aware of prejudices against them, or do the seem to adopt a more subconscious disposition of inferiority compared to other people of different social standing? These are the types of questions I will be asking within my analysis. It will involve looking beyond the 'common-sense' conceptualisations to attain a picture of the underlying structural and relational mechanisms which can guide our thoughts, feelings and actions.

Overall, it is clear that Bourdieusian epistemology does have significant realist and structuralist elements. However, a Bourdieu-inspired analysis (like the one I have

employed in this research) will also acknowledge individual agency in events such as the habitus adapting to new surroundings; people critiquing, resisting and even changing their reality; and people acquiring cultural capital on purpose. These elements all hint that Bourdieu was sympathetic towards more constructivist outlook on knowledge and are therefore the reason why Bourdieu's epistemology cannot be considered to be 'fully realist' (Yucel, 2018: 414).

Ultimately, I believe that my own inclination towards this 'structuralist constructivist' approach (consisting of a realist ontology, but an epistemology that is 'not fully realist') originates primarily from my experiences after my graduation. I have already discussed how my *internal* perspective – such as my concerns over my regional, working-class accent – discouraged me from leaving the North-East to live and work. However, these personal, internal concerns about 'cultural capital' (to use Bourdieu's term) are inextricably linked to the overarching social class *structure*. I therefore believe that when conducting geographical/sociological research – and especially research on the impact of social class on mobility – structuralist constructivism is an insightful position to take. It allows for the consideration of both internalised decision-making and the (sometimes unconscious) influence of external factors which can be outside of an individual's control. Also, more generally, structuralist constructivist approaches like Bourdieu's can help us to understand how we have our own individual perspectives, agency and creativity, yet we still demonstrate cohesiveness as a society in the way we often seem to follow 'unwritten rules' and reproduce social groupings, such as the social class system.

Even though the theoretical base of my research has been heavily influenced by Bourdieu's work, I have also drawn from the writings of other academics. Bauman's (2001) work on 'liquid life' was one of my first ports of call when compiling the literature review. His message about the strong correlation between mobility and success in modern life, but how mobility was a socially stratified resource, is a narrative which resonates strongly throughout this PhD research. Massey's (1995) writing on the relational nature of places was important in preventing me from falling into the sedentarist trap, which is to see places and their residents as closed-off and marooned from the outside world. Moreover, Gustafson's (2001) work which problematised the 'roots versus routes' dualism was also very insightful for my research, as he demonstrated that people can simultaneously value the adventure of travel and the security of a home base. All of the literature discussed in chapter

two – and not just Bourdieu's literature - played an important role in guiding how I approached this research.

3.2.2. Alternative theoretical approaches considered

I could also have taken this research in other theoretical directions. Early on in research design process, I did strongly consider basing the research primarily on the place attachment and identification literature (see Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996 and Scannell and Gifford, 2010). This was because of the consensus that people from the North-East in particular tend to have an especially strong sense of regional identity and attachment (Bailey et al. 2007). Initially, I believed that this identity could play a strong role in why graduates from the North-East chose to remain in their 'home region'. Essentially, the place identity/attachment literature argues that people can become psychologically invested in certain places to the extent that they begin to identify with the place and it becomes incorporated into their 'self-concept' (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996). It also uses Breakwell's (1986) four identity principles (distinctiveness, continuity, self-esteem and self-efficacy) as a framework for the analysis of interview data. Ultimately, if a place helps a person to fulfil these four criteria, then in theory they are more likely to identify with that place.

The main reason why I decided *against* using the place identity/attachment literature as my primary theoretical base was that it was eminently psychological. In my opinion, this primary focus on individual cognition and bodily experience neglected social structuralist elements (such as the social class structure) which operate outside of the human mind and sometimes beyond conscious awareness. Indeed, one of the key themes in this research is that the social class structure plays a key (and sometimes unobvious) role in influencing and limiting human action. Furthermore, in my view, Breckwell's (1986) identity framework is quite restrictive in the sense that all of the research participants' responses (the data) are shoehorned into only four categories of analysis. The resulting analysis is therefore not as rich as that produced when using Bourdieu's multifaceted 'theoretical toolbox' (Burke, 2016: pg. 61).

Another theoretical body of literature that I considered drawing from at an early stage of the research design was Actor-Network Theory (ANT). ANT's main challenge for how we do research in geography and the social sciences is to move away from the tendency to always put the human at the centre of social scientific

accounts (Latour, 1992). Instead, it is argued that we should focus on the *interactions* between both human and non-human actors (Latour, 1992), which can range from animals to machinery, to money.

To an extent, I do admire how ANT acknowledges the role of non-human objects and organisms in altering and even facilitating interactions. For example, Filho and Kamp's (2019) example of how a closed door's 'agency' prohibits instantaneous interaction (and therefore rapport building) between students and lecturers does add a new dimension to the concept of social capital. I also admire how ANT demonstrates how human and non-human entities can be networked to the extent that they mould into one entity, as demonstrated in Watts' (2008) ethnographic and ANT-based study of people during train journeys. For Watts, 'a passenger can be understood as both person and property; a person does not end at the skin but includes clothes, money, jewellery' (2008: 714). These non-humans, such as jewellery, clothes and suitcases, play an important role in determining how the person is judged and interacts with others, as well as how they navigate physical space (Watts, 2008). The similarities between ANT's human assemblage and Bourdieu's (1986) 'objectified cultural capital' are obvious here, hence why I initially found it appealing.

Another similarity between Bourdieu and ANT theorists (such as Latour) is that they operate from a realist and relational ontology. However, this is also where a key divergence can be found; one which ultimately *dissuaded* me from moving forward with ANT as a theoretical base. Bourdieu's ontology is relational in the sense that actors (referring only to people) are judged and compete in relation to each other for status and power, while in ANT an actor's agency (meaning both human and non-human) is solely a product of their *interactions* with other actors (Cordella and Shaikh, 2006). ANT's sole focus on agency from interaction therefore does not allow for a more constructivist viewpoint, which acknowledges the agency that *originates* from the human mind (cognition) and body. Whilst Bourdieu's ontology is also realist, as well as primarily structuralist, there is a constructivist dimension to his overall theory, and in my view this is crucial for my research. Although I believe that social *structure* can be key in guiding human action, the acknowledgement within Bourdieu's writing of the role played by the human body (embodied cultural capital) and mind (dispositions of the habitus) in (re)creating reality and initiating action is also vital. After all, migration is the result of people's decision-making, even if their choices are restricted by factors outside of their control.

In the end, although the concerns I had about both the place identification and ANT literature were important, there was another key reason why I subscribed to Bourdieu's theory. Ultimately, without pre-empting my findings too much here, my research participants' responses during my pilot study and throughout my research spoke to Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and field to a much greater extent than the place attachment or ANT literature. For example, many graduates from the North-East discussed a desire *for* mobility rather than an overwhelming affection/attachment to their hometown or city. This, along with the agreement between Bourdieu's concepts and my own experience and theoretical (ontological and epistemological) positioning, made Bourdieu's 'theoretical toolbox' (Burke, 2016: 61) the resounding choice.

3.3. Recruiting research participants – 'snowball sampling'

To recruit my research participants, I utilised a 'snowball sampling' method. According to Noy (2008), 'a sampling procedure may be defined as snowball sampling when the researcher accesses informants through contact information that is provided by other informants' (pg. 330). In this way, the researcher builds up chains or even networks of contacts, 'hence the evolving 'snowball effect'. . . a metaphor that touches on the central quality of this sampling procedure: its accumulative (diachronic and dynamic) dimension' (Noy 2008: 330).

3.3.1. Snowball sampling stage 1

My approach to snowball sampling closely followed the two-stage method set out by Biernacki and Waldorf (1981). As these authors suggest, during stage one of my snowball sampling, the main aim was to 'simply get started' (ibid: 154). I began by recruiting personal friends and acquaintances who were graduates, much like Waters (2015) utilised her own 'social capital' to commence her research on 'older drug users'. I then asked my participants to recommend other graduates who they believed would be willing and able to take part. Finally, I would follow up these leads and, after building up a level of trust with my new contacts during interviews, I would ask them to recommend further participants for my research. As Waters (2015) advises, each referral 'chain' or 'cycle' created during snowball sampling was 'continued until it either comes to a natural end or reaches saturation point' (pg. 371) – a saturation point being where similar themes were repeated during multiple graduate interviews and no new data of obvious relevance was being obtained.

As Biernacki and Waldorf (1981) proclaim, the first stage of snowball sampling can be quite 'exploratory' (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981) in nature, especially right at the start. This means that there are not too many constraints placed on the participant recruitment process. However, even from the beginning I had to assign three main prerequisites to people's participation, in order to ensure that the data I was collecting remained relevant to my research questions. These three prerequisites remained constant throughout all stages of snowball sampling.

Firstly, all research participants were required to have graduated within the last ten years from the time of the interviews (all interviews were conducted in 2018-19). This was to limit, as much as possible, the impact of varying life stages on mobility propensity. For example, a person who graduated twenty years ago and has a settled job and a family is in a completely different stage of life, compared to a younger person who has just graduated and is still contemplating their career choices. These life stage factors would undoubtedly have a sizeable impact on a graduate's ability and desire to be mobile. However, they also lie outside the main focus of this research, which is to investigate how *social class* impacts graduate mobility.

Secondly, all of my research participants were required to have attended one of four universities from the North-East of England: Sunderland, Northumbria, Newcastle and Durham. My overall aim was to ensure that I obtained at least eight interviews with graduates from each of these four institutions, in order to ensure a 'saturation' of the important issues for graduates at each university. I focused on the universities to such a degree because, as the literature review chapter demonstrates, the type of institution attended (including Russell-Group, post-1992 and collegiate universities) can leave a significant legacy on a graduate's ability and propensity to be mobile in the future. Teesside University is also located in the North-East of England, but I omitted it from my research primarily because that part of the region is covered by a different Local Enterprise Partnership. Moreover, the four universities that do feature in my research are also closer to each other geographically, and yet as a mixture of Russell Group (Durham and Newcastle) and post-1992 (Sunderland and Northumbria) universities they differ quite substantially in terms of the 'local' nature and the social class makeup of their student cohorts. It is an interesting dynamic within my research that these universities are so close in geographical space, only to be potentially distant within *social* space.

The third prerequisite was that all graduates who participated in my research had to be domiciled in the United Kingdom, meaning that there would be no international students within this study. Including international student mobility within my research would have added multiple layers of complexity; I would have had to consider cultural and societal differences between the U.K and the students' countries of origin. These factors could impact the students' ability to settle in the North-East, their attitude towards higher education and employment, amongst many other factors. Ultimately, I believed that researching U.K. and international student mobility together was beyond the scope of one PhD thesis. However, international student mobility is of course a very important and interesting topic, and one I would be very keen to explore in the future.

3.3.2. Stage one pilot study: could I achieve a varied sample using the snowball method?

The first ten graduates I interviewed as part of snowball sampling stage one were participants in my pilot study. Conducting this pilot study allowed me to test and refine my sampling method. Primarily, I wanted to: (1) discover whether interviewed graduates would be willing and able to recommend other graduates to take part; (2) determine whether graduates recommended by others would always fit the three main prerequisites mentioned above; (3) deduce an estimate of how long it would take to recruit the required number of participants; and (4) ascertain whether snowball sampling would allow me to find graduates with varying characteristics for my research (for example, different socio-economic backgrounds, universities, subjects studied and genders).

That last point about snowball sampling's ability to produce a varied sample of graduates was especially important. Firstly, for my research, I was required to interview graduates who occupied *different* social class positions, in order to discover how varying socio-economic status can potentially impact graduates' ability and desire to be mobile. I wanted to listen to both sides of the story – I did not want to focus exclusively on either working-class or middle-class graduates. I have already discussed how the university attended can have a significant impact on a graduate's propensity to be mobile, and how I therefore wanted to interview graduates from Durham, Newcastle, Sunderland and Northumbria universities. However, the subject studied is also an important and related variable which could impact a graduate's mobility. It can affect their potential employability within certain

places/regions, while certain parts of the country may be recognised as 'hubs' for particular industries. For example, the NELEP's strategic economic plan makes it clear that in their view, graduates of STEM subjects are particularly desirable and important for powering the North-East's economic growth moving forward. If all of the graduates I interviewed studied the same/similar subjects, any trends in their relative mobility/immobility could be more of a reflection of employability issues related to those subjects, rather than their socio-economic status. This meant that I wanted to interview graduates who studied a variety of different subjects at university.

A graduate's gender could also potentially be an important variable that influences their ability and propensity to be mobile. First of all, Triventi (2013) declares that there is a big gender pay gap across the continent. He also describes how 'mandated leave policies [such as childcare policies] may increase employer incentives to discriminate against women when hiring' (Blau and Kahn, 2003. In Triventi 2013: 572). This wage gap and hiring discrimination could work to lower women's endowments of economic capital on average, both in the present and over time. As established in the literature review, lower economic capital can often translate into lower social and geographical mobility. Choice of university subject can also have a gendered dimension, with Reay and Ball (2005) pointing out that male students still demonstrate a tendency to opt for STEM subjects (including economics), while 'more girls choose biology, social sciences and art and design' (pg. 4). This is important because, as already discussed, university subject choice can have significant impacts on a graduate's mobility choices.

Furthermore, the way people view their 'life roles' can vary by gender. Cinamon and Rich's (2002) study explores what they call the 'work-family conflict', or, in other words, what is of greatest priority to people: family roles or career aspirations? Although the authors stressed that there was a great deal of 'within-gender variation' (pg. 531), they found that 'women usually reported feeling more [work-family] conflict than men' (pg. 532), and on average women were less likely to prioritise work over family (Cinamon and Rich, 2002). Although these are generalising findings, they could still have important implications when researching people's mobility. If some women do tend to experience greater conflict between work and family, and generally side towards family, this could impact their desire to move away from places where their families are based.

Moreover, there is the potential gendered differences in ease of daily mobility, especially within cities and urban areas. Whitzman (2013) discusses the safety issues women may be more prone to experiencing on public transport, as well as the need to follow certain 'safe' pathways through town. If daily mobility in busy urban locations does not feel easy or safe, then this could impact a person's considerations about their longer term/ longer distance mobility. For example, they may be deterred from living and working in larger cities or other busy urban environments.

When planning my research methodology, my aim was to attain a sample of graduates with a relatively equal mix of genders (understanding that gender is fluid and non-binary). This was because the main focus of my research was on the impacts of *social class* on people's mobility. At the time, I wanted to ensure that any 'findings' were not a product of having a sample of mostly males or females, for example, and were instead primarily a result of the graduates' economic status. However, due to gender's evident importance in terms of people's mobility, I now feel as though it was an oversight (and a missed opportunity) not to consider the influence of gender to a greater extent during my data collection and analysis. After all, Diane Reay argues that people's habitus – which as we know are extensively shaped by people's social class positions – '*interact* with gender' (Reay, 1997: 226, emphasis added) and ultimately it is this interaction that will 'inform and influence everyday practice' (ibid: 226). Despite this, I still have the opportunity to go back and re-analyse my data with a particular focus on how gender-related issues have impacted the graduates' (im)mobility, and I believe that this could be a promising and novel avenue for future research (see chapter 5 and 6 for more details on my future research plans).

I also want to acknowledge that with hindsight I could have given more consideration to racial diversity within my sample of graduates, both during the pilot study and participant recruitment as a whole. A graduate's ethnicity might impact their mobility in multiple ways – one example being what Heath and Cheung (2006) describe as the 'ethnic penalties' (pg. 1) of the U.K. labour market. This is where 'a number of ethnic minority groups. . . continue to experience higher unemployment rates. . . and lower hourly earnings' (Heath and Cheung, 2006: 1) compared to their White British counterparts. Once again, difficulty in finding employment and the associated drop in economic capital can profoundly limit a person's mobility.

Another example is how people's everyday experiences and interactions can be different according to their ethnicity, such as encounters with racism. Reay and Ball (2005) share an account from their research participant Hinal, who, when living in Newcastle, was subjected to what he termed 'racial slurs' (pg. 132) by strangers. As the authors demonstrated, this negative experience had a significant impact on Hinal's migration choices, as it deterred him from attending a university outside of London, where he was now based.

Overall, we can see that ethnicity can potentially influence a person's migration choices significantly and in a variety of complex ways. Moreover, Reay and Ball (2005) point out that in many ways ethnicity is intertwined with *social class*. Within my research, only one graduate explicitly discussed how his ethnicity impacted his migration choices, and I will highlight this in the data analysis chapter.

Overall, to summarise this section, it is evident that in order to be a suitable method of sampling for my research, snowball sampling had to be capable of producing a varied sample of graduates from different socio-economic statuses, universities, subjects and genders. Conducting a pilot study would allow me to gain a sense of whether or not this would be achievable, as well as providing an estimate of how long the participant recruitment process would take.

3.3.3. Pilot study: outcome

Appendix 1 shows snowball stemmata (flow diagrams) which depict the participant recruitment process. The graduates numbered 1 to 10 are those who took part in my pilot study (the numbers represent the order in which the graduates were interviewed). The 'first generation' contacts are my friends and acquaintances (my own social capital) who were the first people to participate in my research, while second, third and fourth generation contacts are graduates who were recommended by previous participants. The colours (see the key included in appendix 1) indicate the research group each graduate was placed in during the data analysis (I will discuss this in much greater detail in section 3.5. of this chapter).

Overall, in terms of participant recruitment, I considered my pilot study to be a success. Appendix 1 shows that all but one of my initial contacts (Lee) in my pilot study were willing and able to recommend at least one more graduate who could take part, with all recommended graduates fitting my three main research criteria. In terms of duration, the pilot study took around two and a half months (from 9/11/18 to 23/01/19). Admittedly, this was slightly longer than I was expecting. However,

with a whole academic year dedicated to data collection, I still felt confident that I would be able to recruit enough graduates for a rigorous analysis and reliable findings using this snowball method. Furthermore, snowball sampling had also yielded research participants of different genders (7 males and 3 females) and graduates who studied different subjects at university.

Despite these successes, there were also some negatives within the sample produced by the pilot study. Firstly, seven of the ten graduates studied at Sunderland university, meaning my sample was heavily skewed towards that institution at this point. Secondly, although the graduates in the pilot sample studied five different subjects between them, the majority were studying humanities subjects, with four of the graduates studying history. Furthermore, all but one of the graduates (Johnny) originated from the North-East. However, at the time, I attributed this skewed nature of my sample to the fact that I was starting with my own social capital, rather than problems with the method. I would class myself as a 'working-class' person from the North-East, and naturally many of my social contacts also possess similar characteristics. Moreover, many of my friends and acquaintances live in the Sunderland area, and it just so happened that the Sunderland graduates tended to be the first to reply to me and grant me an interview. Ultimately, I knew that I still had many contacts from my university days to call upon who originated outside of the North-East. The main reason why they were not included in my pilot study was a simple matter of availability - many of them had left the North-East to live and work, so I would either have to arrange a trip to go and speak to them, or wait for an occasion where they returned to the North-East. Furthermore, I also knew that I had more contacts who had attended Durham, Newcastle and Northumbria universities, and who had graduated in different subjects.

In the end, I made the judgement that the successes of the pilot – and especially the number of graduates recruited in a relatively short period of time – outweighed the negatives, especially since I was confident that the skewed nature of the sample could be addressed. I therefore decided to proceed with the snowball sampling method throughout the rest of my research. As well as allowing me to test the suitability of snowball sampling, the pilot study also helped me to refine my interviewing technique and structure (I will discuss this in section 3.4., which covers the interviewing process). Despite this ongoing refinement, the content of the pilot interviews was so rich and valuable that all ten graduates' accounts could be included in my main sample, which included forty graduates all together.

3.3.4. Snowball sampling stage 2

Once I had interviewed around 19-21 graduates, I then began stage 2 of Biernacki and Waldorf's (1981) snowball method, which is called the 'selective sampling phase' (pg. 155). As the authors recommend, at this stage 'control is exercised [by the researcher] in an attempt to ensure that the sample includes an array of respondents' (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981: 155). In my case, this meant analysing the composition of my sample in terms of the universities the graduates had attended, their genders, subjects studied and their socio-economic status, as well as whether or not they were still living and working in the North-East. If there were any imbalances (for example, many more males than females), then at this stage I would begin to prioritise attaining interviews with graduates who, as much as possible, would help to balance these characteristics. This was done by utilising my own social capital reserves, or by asking other graduates if they could recommend individuals with these characteristics who would be willing to take part. However, I did not want to ask graduates to make judgements on other people's socio-economic status. Instead, I assumed that graduates who had already been interviewed and identified as 'middle class', for example, would be likely to recommend other research participants from a similar class grouping. Judging from Bourdieu's (1986) writings on social capital, this is an acceptable assumption to make (although, of course, it does not always work out that way).

Due to the necessary extra control being exerted by the researcher, stage 2 of snowball sampling is not as open or 'experimental' as stage one. However, as Biernacki and Waldorf (1981) advise, during stage 2 sampling should still remain 'substantive' (pg. 155), even if it is inevitably 'more selective than it was earlier' (pg. 155). I did not want to interfere with how the snowball sampling unfolded too much, as it would lose its advantageous independent and 'dynamic' (Noy 2008: 330) qualities (I will discuss why these qualities can be advantageous in section 3.3.6.). I therefore remained eager to speak to any graduates who at least fulfilled my three principal criteria (detailed in section 3.3.1.), especially during the early phase of stage 2, where I had still only interviewed 21 graduates. Interviews were transcribed (and to a brief extent, analysed) within 2-3 days of the event if possible, so that I could obtain up-to-date information on how my sample was progressing and its overall characteristics (e.g. social class).

Before I began stage 2 of snowball sampling, I had already interviewed graduates from a variety of different subjects (although admittedly many were humanities subjects) and there was also a relatively equal mix of genders (out of the first 21 graduates in the sample, 12 were male and 9 were female). This had happened organically, by letting the snowball sampling take its course. However, as appendix 1 shows, in order to achieve a balanced sample, I still required to speak to more graduates: (1) from Russell Group universities (Durham and Newcastle); (2) who had left the North-East to live and work; (3) who had been domiciled outside of the North-East; and (4) who identified themselves as being something other than working-class. Therefore, throughout stage 2, I directed the snowball sampling process towards finding a greater number of graduates with these characteristics. Later on in the sampling process, I also arranged a longer stay in London so I could speak to more graduates who had grown up outside of the North-East *and* left the North-East to live and work after university.

3.3.5. Final sample

Snowball sampling was judged to be complete when all sample chains of respondents came to a natural end; when the variables within the sample (e.g. gender) were relatively balanced; and after I believed I had achieved saturation of the important issues for graduates from each university, for the social class groups, and for region of domicile. Tables 1 to 4 display the final sample of 40 graduates I obtained for this research. The graduates have been split up into four analytical 'research groups' (I will discuss why this was done in section 3.5, which gives details on the thematic analysis). The tables give a breakdown of graduates according to their alias, university attended and socio-economic status (determined using a combination of self-identity, 'mainstream indicators' and Bourdieusian indicators - more detail in section 3.4. which explains the interview process):

Table 1: Breakdown of research group one participants (domiciled in the North-East and self-identified as working-class)					
Alias	**University attended**	**Self-reported class**	**'Mainstream indicators' of social class**	**Bourdieu's indicators of social class**	**Stayed in the North-East or left post-graduation?**
Jack	Northumbria	Working-class	First person in family to	Self-proclaimed working-	Stayed in the North-East

				class, 'northern' accent	
Sean	Northumbria	Working-class	First person in family to attend university	Relatively low economic capital (especially savings)	Stayed in the North-East
Nate	Northumbria	Working-class	Parents did not attend university; free school meals	Relatively low economic capital (savings); self-proclaimed working-class accent	Stayed in the North-East
Dan	Sunderland	Working-class	Parents did not attend university	Low levels of social capital (especially outside of the North-East)	Stayed in the North-East
Nicola	Sunderland	Working-class	Parents did not attend university	Relatively low economic capital (especially savings); Self-proclaimed working-class accent	Stayed in the North-East
Craig	Sunderland	Working-class	Parents did not attend university	Relatively low economic capital (in terms of savings); family's low economic capital; low levels of social capital (especially outside of the North-East)	Stayed in the North-East

Kate	Sunderland	Working-class	First person in family to attend university; free school meals	Family's low economic capital	Stayed in the North-East
Luke	Sunderland	Working-class	Parents did not attend university	Family's low level of economic capital	Stayed in the North-East
Lee	Sunderland	Working-class	Parents did not attend university	Relatively low level of economic capital (savings); family's low level of economic capital	Originally left the North-East (but has since returned)
Michael	Sunderland	Working-class	Parents did not attend university	Family's relatively low level of economic capital	Left the North-East (but plans to return in the very near future)
Alexandra	Sunderland	Working-class	First in whole family to attend university		Originally left the North-East (but has since returned)
Lauren	Durham	Working-class	First in whole family to attend university	Relatively low levels of economic capital (savings)	Stayed in the North-East
Sian	Durham	Working-class	Parents did not attend university	Relatively low economic capital (savings); self-proclaimed working-class accent	Stayed in the North-East
Chris	Durham	Working-class	Parents did not attend university	Self-proclaimed working-class accent; low levels of social capital (especially	Stayed in the North-East

				outside of the North-East)	
Simon	Newcastle	Working class	Parents did not attend university; free school meals		Stayed in the North-East
Jessie	Newcastle	Working class	Parents did not attend university		Stayed in the North-East
Carl	Newcastle	Working class	Parents did not attend university	Self-proclaimed working-class accent	Stayed in North-East (but is considering a move away)
Andy	Newcastle	Working class	Parents did not attend university	Low economic capital (savings)	Left the North-East

Table 2: Breakdown of research group 2 participants (domiciled in the North-East and self-identified as middle-class)					
Alias	North-East university attended	Self-reported class	'Mainstream indicators' of social class	Bourdieu's indicators of social class	Stayed in the North-East or left post-graduation?
Sarah	Sunderland	Middle class	Both parents attended university	'High-brow' cultural tastes (e.g. expensive dining, designer goods)	Stayed in the North-East
Greg	Northumbria	Middle class	Both parents attended university		Stayed in the North-East
Leanne	Newcastle	Middle class	Both parents and one grandparent attended university	Family's relatively high level of economic capital	Stayed in the North-East
Robert	Newcastle	Middle class	One parent attended university	Relatively high economic capital (personal savings)	Stayed in the North-East

Rachel	Durham	Middle class	Mother attended university	Self-proclaimed high economic capital (especially savings)	Left the North-East
Kirby	Durham	Middle class	Father attended university	Relatively high economic capital (especially savings); 'high-brow' cultural tastes (expensive dining, a liking for big high street names e.g. Harrods)	Left the North-East
Jade	Durham	Middle class	Both parents attended university	Relatively high levels of economic capital; 'high-brow' cultural tastes (especially museums and art galleries)	Left the North-East

Table 3: Breakdown of research group 3 participants (domiciled outside of the North-East and self-identified as working-class)					
Alias	**Region of origin and North-East university attended**	**Self-reported class**	**'Mainstream indicators' of social class**	**Bourdieu's indicators of social class**	**Stayed in the North-East or left post-graduation?**
Gemma	Region of origin: Yorkshire University: Northumbria	Working-class	Mother did attend university, but as mature student at post-1992 institution	Self-proclaimed working-class and 'northern' cultural capital, including accent	Left the North-East
Paul	Region of origin: Derbyshire University: Northumbria	Working-class	Parents did not attend university	Low personal and familial levels of economic capital	Left the North-East
Andrew	Region of origin: Yorkshire	Working-class	First in whole family to		Left the North-East

	University: Newcastle		attend university		
Jason	Region of origin: Lancashire University: Sunderland	Working-class	Parents did not attend university	Self-proclaimed working-class cultural capital, especially accent	Stayed in the North-East

Table 4: Breakdown of research group four participants (domiciled outside of the North-East and self-identified as middle-class)					
Alias	**Region of origin and North-East university attended**	**Self-reported class**	**'Mainstream indicators' of social class**	**Bourdieu's indicators of social class**	**Stayed in the North-East or left post-graduation?**
Stephany	Region of origin: Hertford-shire University: Northumbria	Middle class	Father attended university (Oxford)	Self-proclaimed high economic capital (especially savings)	Stayed in the North-East
Charlotte	Region of origin: London University: Northumbria	Middle class	Both parents and one grandparent attended university	Father owns reasonably large business; High personal and familial economic capital	Left the North-East
Ryan	Region of origin: East Midlands University: Sunderland	Middle class	Father attended university	Parent's high social capital	Left the North-East
Johnny	Region of origin: Hampshire University: Newcastle	Middle class	Both parents attended university	'High-brow' and heterogenous cultural capital	Stayed in the North-East (but intends to leave in the very near future)

Edward	Region of origin: London University: Newcastle	Middle class	Mother attended university		Left the North-East
Olivia	Region of origin: Wrexham (Wales) University: Newcastle	Middle class	Father attended university		Left the North-East
Alice	Region of origin: Yorkshire University: Newcastle	Middle class	Both parents attended university (her father is a professor)	Self-proclaimed high level of economic capital (savings)	Left the North-East
Joe	Region of origin: West Midlands University: Durham	Middle class	Both parents attended university	Preference for 'high-brow' culture (museums, French cuisine)	Left the North-East
Rex	Region of origin: Yorkshire University: Durham	Middle class	Both parents attended university		Left the North-East
Stuart	Region of origin: Norfolk University: Durham	Middle class	Both parents attended university		Left the North-East
Dave	Region of origin: Kent University: Durham	Middle class	Both parents attended university, father has a PhD	Self-proclaimed high level of economic capital	Left the North-East

Out of the 40 graduates in the sample:

- ➢ 22 were male and 18 were female
- ➢ 22 self-identified as working-class and 18 as middle-class

- 11 attended Sunderland University, 8 attended Northumbria, 10 studied at Durham and 11 went to Newcastle
- 25 had been domiciled in the North-East, while 15 had grown up elsewhere in the U.K.
- 21 had remained in the North-East to live and work post-university, while 19 had left the North-East (I term this the 'destination' variable)

Overall, I had achieved a well-balanced sample, with a relatively equal distribution of graduates for the gender, socio-economic status, university, and destination variables. The largest disparity was for the domicile variable, although I would suggest this was somewhat inevitable when using snowball sampling. This was because a large percentage of my social capital is located in the North-East, as well as the logistics (distance, time, cost) of travelling around the U.K. to interview graduates in other regions. In any case, a split of 25 to 15 was still acceptable, and I believe it has still allowed me to answer my research questions.

3.3.6. Advantages and disadvantages of snowball sampling

When utilising snowball sampling, the researcher inevitably surrenders at least some control over the sampling process to their research participants (Noy, 2008). This can be viewed as a drawback of the method, as it can make 'verifying the eligibility of potential respondents' more difficult (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981: 144), and as a result it is also more challenging to ensure the relevance of the interview content to the research questions. The researcher also loses some control over the time the sampling phase takes, as recruitment, at least partly, relies on the promptness and enthusiasm of the research participants. However, within my research, I found that participant eligibility was not an issue. All interviewees that were referred to me by previous participants met the three principal criteria I set out in section 3.3.1. I also had allotted a whole academic year to the sampling and analysis of the data, and so even though snowball sampling can be a lengthy process, I still had enough time to contact and interview 40 graduates overall. I believe this was enough graduates to constitute a balanced sample and also allowed me to reach a saturation of the important issues surrounding graduate mobility.

Although snowball sampling inevitably begins with existing social contacts, because it is a 'respondent-driven' (Noy, 2008: 330) method of sampling I expected that many

of the research participants would have been second, third and fourth generation contacts recommended by other people. This appealed to me, as it would mean that I could not subconsciously 'cherry pick' research respondents, or shoehorn them into certain categories (for example, 'middle-class') before even speaking to them. I believed that this partial distance between myself (as an emotionally involved researcher) and the sampling process was important, as I wanted to limit, as much as practically possible, any potential influence I could have on the narratives generated by this research. However, during snowball sampling, it became clear that this 'distance' between myself (the researcher) and my sampling method would not be as large as I was expecting. This was for two main reasons.

Firstly, as appendix 1 demonstrates, many of my sample chains were relatively short, with 14 of my 18 sample chains yielding 2 or less participants. This ultimately meant that 18 out of 40 research participants were from my own social capital, rather than being recommended by previous interviewees. This serves to reinforce Waters' (2015: 370) point that snowball sampling 'does not inevitably lead to an inexorable growing mass of contacts'. Rather, this method of sampling can prove to be rather laborious, time consuming and occasionally frustrating. I therefore found myself repeatedly falling back on my pre-existing social capital to propagate my sample. To an extent, this does erode the healthy 'distance' between myself as an involved researcher and the recruitment of, and interaction with, my research participants.

The second reason for a lack of independence between the researcher and the participants is related to the first, in that snowball sampling frequently proves not to be the 'self-contained and self-propelled phenomenon' it is often portrayed to be (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981: 144). Instead, the researcher is still often required to intervene at certain points to direct the progression and characteristics of the sample (and hence the data being obtained), so that it does not become skewed or irrelevant to the research questions. This exactly what I was required to do in stage 2 of my snowball sampling. Even though I wanted to allow the sampling to proceed as organically as possible, I was still required to prioritise attaining more graduates who had originated from outside of the North-East, and/or had left the North-East after university to live and work, in order to achieve a balanced sample that could help me answer my research questions.

Overall, during my research it became clear that snowball sampling is not the independent, free-flowing and easy method it is often portrayed to be. Instead, it can

be quite a difficult method which still relies on at least some influence, control and good judgement from the researcher (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981). In particular, the erroneous idea that it is a 'simplistic' or 'informal' method (Noy 2008: 330) stems from the fact that it is often used as a fall-back method within research 'when other contact avenues have dried up' (Noy 2008: 330), or to contact hard-to-reach groups who 'suffer from stigmas and marginalisation' (Noy, 2008: 331), where it appears to be the *only* choice. Yet this viewpoint not only wrongly downplays the amount of skill required from the researcher to utilise the method effectively. It also fails to acknowledge how snowball sampling is not a process which simply helps us to discover knowledge but is also as a method which plays a role in actively *constructing* knowledge (Noy, 2008; Waters, 2015). As Noy (2008: 332) proclaims, snowball sampling is 'essentially social' and the snowball stemmata produced (like those in appendix 1) can provide an excellent visual representation of the nature of research participants' social capital and how they are embedded within certain social networks (Noy, 2008), even before a thorough analysis of interview content. For example, would graduates who self-identified as working-class largely recommend other working-class graduates? Or would they also be linked to graduates from different socio-economic groups? Indeed, this potential insight into social capital that snowball sampling can offer was one of the main reasons why I initially selected the method for my research project. I believe that the method and the snowball stemmata it produces appropriately capture the relational nature of Bourdieu's theory, especially his conceptualisation of social capital.

Unfortunately, a problem within my research was that, as already mentioned, the majority of my snowball sample chains were surprisingly short (consisting of two people). This inevitably limited any conclusions I could make about graduates' social capital from the snowball stemmata alone. Furthermore, the social aspect of snowball sampling can be detrimental in some ways. For example, although it can potentially provide insight into social networks, this can be negative in the sense that I was *limited* to sampling within these networks, while any 'findings' could be particular to these groups of connected individuals (Noy, 2008). Many of my research participants were friends and were therefore often likeminded people with similar capital and life experiences (similar habitus). Overall, this would all impact the claims I would be able to make about the general characteristics and tendencies of university graduates more widely. Moreover, due to its social nature, snowball sampling often neglects the voices of more isolated individuals who are not part of

the social networks being sampled from (Waters 2015). People's endowments of social capital depend not only on the societal status of their contacts, but also the *amount* of social contacts they possess. However, when utilising snowball sampling in my research, recruiting graduates who have very few contacts will inevitably be more difficult, and their voices could therefore remain unheard. This is potentially unfair on these 'isolated' graduates, as some may have wished to participate and tell their stories. It also regrettable for myself as a researcher, as I did not wish to exclude these graduates and their accounts could have produced some important findings.

However, within this research – which is slightly exploratory in nature – I am not trying to determine the experiences of *all* graduates within a particular social class. Rather, I wish to research the experiences of *some* graduates and how they contrast with the generalisations about graduates which frequent the media and circulate within policy (these generalisations typically hold graduates as a heterogenous, highly mobile and middle-class group of people). Therefore, although it is crucial to acknowledge the issues of representation - that in some ways my findings could be quite specific to particular social networks and some graduates' voices may not have been heard – I do not believe that these potential drawbacks of snowball sampling devalue this research project and I can still fulfil my principal research aims.

Typically, when utilising snowball sampling, success in participant recruitment is inevitably linked to the 'quality of the interaction' (Noy 2008: 334) within interviews. If the researcher is unable to build up trust with the interviewees, they were disengaged and/or they cannot see the importance or relevance of the research project, then they are less likely to recommend the research to other potential participants (Noy, 2008). However, based on past experiences with the method, Waters (2015: 376) points out that 'it is not always a given that referrals will follow even from those interactions of high quality'. Indeed, even though I believed most of my interviews for my research were of good quality and the interviewees seemed to be engaged in the topic, some of these interviews did not lead to connections with new participants – hence why many of my sample chains were short. Noy (2008) explains that researchers and research participants will probably hold 'different perceptions concerning the encounter' (pg. 334) and this is because of the 'different ideologies they hold and interests they have'. Ultimately, as a researcher you may feel positive about the encounter and you can do your best to make the participants

comfortable and enthused, but there is no way of absolutely guaranteeing that interviewees will view the encounter in a positive light.

Moreover, Waters (2015) highlights how important the 'personal characteristics' of the researcher can be in influencing both the recruitment of research participants and the quality of the interaction. For example, in Waters' (2015) project, the researcher was 'half the age of potential interviewees' (pg. 375), and this 'age gap may have exacerbated issues of trustworthiness' (pg. 375). In my research, my characteristics as a researcher may not have been as problematic for participants, as in some important ways I was similar to them: I was also a graduate who had attended a university in the North-East, and I was around a similar age to most of my participants, since one of the prerequisites was to have graduated within the last ten years. Furthermore, many of the participants were derived from my pre-existing social capital, with many being considered as friends. To an extent then, to use Waters' (2015) phrasing, I was 'a part of the group being studied'. This can often be beneficial to the snowball sampling process as there can be a sense of kinship which makes it easy to build a rapport and trust with the interviewees, and if the participants can relate to the researcher, this often 'vastly increases the chances of referrals being made and a sizable sample being constructed' (Waters 2015: 376). However, as Waters proclaims, when the 'researcher is part of the group being studied. . . this also raises a number of ethical questions about the researcher's role' (2015: 376), and I will acknowledge these further in this chapter.

3.3.7 Ethics associated with snowball sampling and data collection

At Northumbria University, each research project is assigned an ethical risk level of either low, medium or high. My research was graded at the medium risk level, meaning that my research does have some important ethical implications to consider. However, it was not in the highest bracket because I was working with non-vulnerable adults and handling mostly non-sensitive personal data referring to living individuals. Before my field work (research interviews) could commence, I was required to complete and submit a lengthy and comprehensive form to the Faculty Research Ethics Committee at Northumbria University. When completing the ethics form, I was required to provide:

- ➢ The title, aims and research questions of my research project
- ➢ A detailed description of the research activities and data gathering process including: the use of qualitative interviews; the purpose, location and

average duration of the interviews; how they will be recorded and transcribed; and an estimate of the size of the overall sample (I will discuss these issues in section 3.4. of this chapter)

➢ A statement on whether the research would include any data on living individuals, such as still or moving images (my research did not include any such data)

➢ A description of how I planned to recruit research participants, and if there would be any remuneration (in this research, no remuneration was provided)

➢ Information on obtaining informed consent from research participants, and a copy of the participant consent form (more detail about the form to follow)

➢ An assessment of any researcher or participant safety issues, including physical risks and/or emotional discomfort/distress (In my research, no serious safety issues were envisaged)

➢ Confirmation that I had read and understood the university's health and safety policy

The completed form was reviewed by an independent reviewer appointed by the ethics committee. After this review, the committee was satisfied that I had given due consideration to the ethics related to my research, and I was granted approval to begin my research in October 2018.

Before research participants could take part in the research, I wanted to obtain their full, informed consent. The consent form I provided to the participants included my university contact details, a broad description of the nature of the research, and a description of the involvement expected from the participants. Following Longhurst's (2016: 151) guidelines, on the consent form I assured participants that all data obtained from the interviews would be stored securely either in electronic form on a password-locked computer, or as hard copies in a locked draw. I also guaranteed that the information obtained within this research would be kept strictly confidential and all participants would remain anonymous (for example, they would be assigned an alias within the thesis text). Furthermore, participants are informed that they can ask the researcher questions at any time and that their participation was entirely voluntary. This meant that they could withdraw at any stage of the research without any reasons given and without any judgement.

The consent form was sent to each research participant around 4-5 days before the interview if possible, so that they could review the information and decide if they still wanted to go ahead. A hard copy of the form was also read and signed on the day

of the interview. I then scanned and attached the signed copy to a thank you email within 2 days after participation, which also encouraged the participant to get in touch with myself or Northumbria University business school if they had any queries. Moreover, within this email I also offered the participant a chance to review their interview transcript, as well as a copy of the research upon completion. However, none of the participants have currently taken up this option.

As well as addressing these important issues surrounding data protection and confidentiality, which are crucial to any form of qualitative research involving people (Husband, 2020), there are also some significant ethical implications specific to the use of snowball sampling. This is especially the case when the participants are sourced from the researcher's own social capital, and/or the researcher is 'part of the group being studied' (Waters, 2015), as is the case in my research. Participants who are my friends may have felt a pressure or obligation to take part in the research to 'help out a friend', even if in reality they have some reservations about participating (Waters, 2015). They may have also been reluctant to ask questions, voice any concerns, to ask to review the data collected from the interviews or withdraw from the research at any point, in case I judged them for this and it negatively impacted our social relationship. This could all have led to some of the participants feeling secretly uncomfortable about their participation in the research project. Furthermore, participants who are my friends may have felt obligated to ask other people they know to take part in the research, even if they did not really want to do this. Alternatively, they might be very enthusiastic and even place a lot of pressure on their contacts to participate. This means that the pressure to participate in the research can propagate up the sample chain, from first and second, all the way to third and fourth generation contacts. In an attempt to try and prevent any participants from feeling pressured and obligated to take part, I stressed to each interviewee that their participation was completely voluntary multiple times, including on the consent form *and* at the beginning and end of each interview. However, I recognise it is very difficult to completely eradicate participants' potential feelings of obligation when sampling from my own social capital. After all, as Field (2008) argues, mutual obligation is the cornerstone of social capital – our social networks are a resource precisely because people feel compelled to help us achieve things that we could not do on our own. Snowball sampling from my own social network also has important ethical implications for the questioning, conversation and analysis of the interviews, and I will address these in the next sections of this chapter

(3.4 and 3.5), which cover the semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis respectively.

Maintaining participants full confidentiality can also be difficult when utilising snowball sampling. As I have already mentioned, I assigned each participant an alias which was completely different to their real name, in an attempt to safeguard their identity. However, previous informants will know who they have referred to take part, and upon reading the completed thesis they may be able to recognise details about the people they know within quotes or the analysis. Furthermore, participants who are friends of mine would be aware that I was sampling from my personal social networks and may be able to guess who else I would be asking to take part. Even though I used aliases for each participant and treated data security with the utmost seriousness, this confidentiality issue with snowball sampling is admittedly hard to mitigate and is a definite drawback of the method.

3.4. Qualitative, semi-structured interviews with graduates

3.4.1 Structure of interviews and the use of 'themes'

When speaking to graduates, I opted to utilise qualitative, semi-structured interviews. As McGrath et al. (2019) argue, 'qualitative research interviews are preferrable [compared to other methods] when the researcher strives to understand the interviewee's subjective perspective of a phenomenon' (pg. 1002). This is because the researcher can have a relatively lengthy and in-depth conversational *exchange* with the participant. Earlier in this chapter, I presented the argument that Bourdieu's theory does account for individual interpretation, creativity and agency (or a 'subjective perspective' using McGrath and colleagues' lexicon), especially within his important concept of habitus. I believed that utilising qualitative interviews would be the best research method for tapping into these subjective characteristics, as well as how these seemingly individual traits and ideologies are also reflective of the overarching societal structure which is ingrained within us.

Unlike *structured* interviews which are primarily researcher-led and follow a rigid set of questions (Dunn, 2005), semi-structured interviews should be more 'conversational' in nature, providing the interviewee with a 'chance to explore the issues *they* feel are important' (Longhurst, 2016: 143, emphasis added). As Longhurst (2016) advises, the researcher still prepares for a semi-structured

interview by devising 'a list of themes or questions to ask participants' (pg. 147). These themes or questions guide the conversation, make sure it remains on topic and to help it to flow. However, this initial interview structure does not have to be rigidly followed, both in terms of its order and content (Longhurst, 2016). In fact, because semi-structured interviews take the form of a conversation, the manner in which the interview proceeds should be directed, at least to an extent, by the research participant as well as the researcher. For this research project, an interview method which allows the research participants to play a directing role in the conversation was appealing, as I would be able to get a sense of the topics which were most important to *them*, especially when they reemphasised or repeated certain points. Burke (2016) highlights that when a research participant frequently raises or repeats particular topics and ideas, this can provide an insight into their *habitus* (Burke, 2016) - their deeply ingrained and subconscious dispositions. Of course, habitus is a key Bourdieusian concept within the theoretical base of my research, and one which will inform my interpretation and analysis of the interview transcripts.

For my research interviews, I opted to go for Longhurst's (2016) suggestion of using 'themes' to guide the conversation, rather than a list of more specific questions. As Longhurst describes, as well as the researcher's vocal contribution, conversational semi-structured interviews should be 'about listening. . . it is about creating a comfortable environment for people to share' (Longhurst 2016: 144). It was my judgement that utilising themes would be more open and flexible than a list of questions and the interview would therefore feel more like a natural conversation, rather than a form of interrogation. This would hopefully help to put the research participants at ease, meaning they would feel more comfortable about sharing their experiences with me.

Furthermore, the selection of a more conversational style of interviewing and the utilisation of more 'open' themes rather than questions was also an attempt to overcome my emotional involvement in this research. As a relatively immobile graduate who feels a certain amount of injustice about their predicament after university, I am inevitably emotionally invested in this research project. I have my own ideas and explanations for why post-university migration was difficult for me, and I place a lot of the blame on my self-identified working-class status. However, I wanted to ensure (as much as possible) that these ideas were reserved for the small autobiographical account in the introduction chapter. Instead, my sole focus during

the interviews was on the graduates' experiences and ideas. I believed that a more open and conversational interview format directed by themes rather than questions would limit the extent to which I could subconsciously influence the direction and content of the interviews, as it would hand some control over to the research participant.

As I discussed in section 3.3. of this chapter, the first 10 interviews I conducted were part of a pilot study. Conducting a pilot study was not only important for assessing the effectiveness of snowball sampling. As Cresswell (2009) proclaims, it also proved to be a crucial part of the interviewing process, as it provided me with an opportunity to refine my interviewing technique, as well as the themes I used to direct the interviews. Table 5 displays the six themes of my first ten pilot interviews, alongside the six 'refined' themes used in the thirty subsequent interviews:

Table 5: 'Pilot' interview themes versus 'refined' interview themes	
Pilot themes	**Refined themes**
Ideal place to live	School through to university
Place amenities	Family
Future plans	Future plans
Jobs	Jobs and careers
Hobbies and interests	Cultural tastes
Social ties	Social networks

The pilot themes reflect the more exploratory nature of my pilot study, as I placed more emphasis on elements such as 'place amenities' and 'ideal place to live'. My refined themes, on the other hand, are a more accurate reflection of the issues that were most important to the graduates in the first ten interviews when discussing their mobility. Themes such as 'social networks' and 'cultural tastes' were also more in line with Bourdieu's (1986) social and cultural capital and his 'structuralist constructivist' approach. These are crucial elements of the literature which formed the theoretical basis of my research. Moreover, forming the interview structure around these refined themes based on graduates' accounts was not only important in terms of recognising and accurately representing the issues most important to the

graduates; it also placed further distance between myself as an emotionally involved researcher (with any potential bias or subconscious agenda that can bring) and the line of questioning during the interviews. Overall, I believe these themes allowed me to cover all of the essential lines of enquiry and address my research questions, without driving the narrative too much and clouding the data with my own thoughts and feelings about graduate mobility.

During the interviews, the themes were not always discussed in the order they are presented in table 5. However, the refined theme 'school through to university' almost always came first, as it acted as a good conversation starter. It could also have been labelled the 'tell me a bit about yourself' theme, as the graduates were asked to share some biographical information about their educational history and where they had lived previously. In doing this, I was following the advice of Longhurst (2016) and McGrath et al. (2019), who recommend beginning interviews with easier themes or questions to relax the research participants and encourage them to talk, before moving onto more in-depth topics.

Due to the fact that I was following themes rather than questions and the order was flexible, each interview would proceed in a slightly different way. However, Table 6 provides an overview of the order of how the interviews would typically progress:

Table 6: typical interview schedule (after pilot study)	
Stages	**Description**
1) Informed consent	I would tell the participant a little bit about my backstory, why I am conducting the research, and give them a chance to read and sign the consent form. They would also have the opportunity to ask any questions before we get started.
2) Conversation 'ice-breaker'	Discuss the 'school through to university' theme. Acts as a conversation starter, whilst also providing some insightful background information about the participant's education history (e.g. university subject).
3) Main discussion	Conversation based around the other five themes, not always in the order presented in table 5. If participants want to discuss any other topic that

	was still relevant to my research aims and questions, then this was welcomed.
4) Self-identifying class	Participant was asked if they could self-identify their class status, but they were assured they did not have to do this if they did not want to.
5) Concluding comments	Participant was asked if there was anything else they would like to raise or recap, or any questions they would like to ask about the research or the interview conversation.
6) The goodbye	Participant was informed that I would email their signed consent form back to them, and they were reminded that they could withdraw their participation at any time without reason or prejudice. They were also informed they could request to overview the transcript, and then thanked for their time.
7) Note-taking	As well as some note taking during interview, once participant had left I made notes on my initial reflections on the conversation, and anything that was particularly important or surprising. As Longhurst (2016) rightfully comments, here the analysis of the data had already commenced.

3.4.2. Advantages and disadvantages of utilising semi-structured interviews

Before settling on qualitative, semi-structured interviews as my principal method of data collection, I did review the potential advantages and disadvantages of the method, as well as how I could overcome them. First of all, when conducting interviews, the interviewer should be aware that there will inevitably be 'power relations' between the interviewer and interviewee, which can occur both 'intentionally or unintentionally' (Alshenqeeti, 2014, pg. 41). The researcher will often be in a powerful position (at least initially) as they are the ones who normally establish the overall topic for discussion. They also 'exercise power to generate an atmosphere in which interviewees will experience emotions of rapport that are beneficial for the interview' (Edwards and Holland, 2013: 77). If the balance of power shifts too far in the researcher's favour, then this could make the interview a more

intimidating experience for the interviewee. This is ethically problematic and can also mean that participants feel less willing or able to share their stories. When conducting my research, I attempted to limit any feelings of intimidation or apprehension for the participants by encouraging the participants to choose a venue in which they would feel comfortable. As Hoffman (2007) suggests, this is an effective way of handing some of the power back to the research participants. I also began the interviews by sharing some of my background story and experiences in the hope of showing my 'human side' as a researcher and building a level of trust with my informants. However, I appreciate that any interview can be an intimidating experience no matter how informal or conversational the researcher attempts to make it, with interviewees still sometimes feeling as though they are 'under the spotlight'.

Although the researcher, as interviewer, is typically in a powerful position, there are also instances where the *interviewee* can also exercise power over proceedings. For example, without the interviewee's co-operation and interest in taking part in the conversation and answering the researcher's questions, the interview simply would not work (Hoffman, 2007). Furthermore, Alshenqeeti (2014: 43) points out that in any interview – even those which appear to be open and flowing – 'interviewees will only give what they are prepared to reveal about their perceptions of events or opinions'. This may be due to embarrassment, the wish for privacy, amongst other factors. Ultimately, the informant has the power to decide what to share, and what *not* to divulge to, the researcher. During this chapter, I have discussed how I was willing to sacrifice some of my power and control over the interview in order to ensure I was not leading conversation, as well as the narrative produced, too much. However, when power shifts towards the informants, this can also be a daunting prospect, as there is no guarantee that the interviews will proceed as expected, or that they will even be a success.

Another issue with qualitative interviews is that any interview conversation is likely to contain a certain level of bias (Doody and Noonan, 2013), particularly as the interviewee may have a 'desire to create a good impression' and may therefore 'say what they think. . . the researcher wishes to hear' (Doody and Noonan, 2013: 9). To try and alleviate any concerns interviewees had about appeasing the researcher, I followed Doody and Noonan's (2013: 9) advice and ensured each participant at the beginning of their interview that there are no 'right or wrong answers', and that I was there to listen to what was important to *them*. Furthermore, for many participants,

there will also be the 'tendency to say something rather than nothing' (Doody and Noonan, 2013: 9), even if they do not really understand a question or do not have an opinion on a certain topic. These issues are all drawbacks of using interviews, as the responses given by the participant may not always be an accurate reflection of their actual opinions. During the conversations, I made a concerted effort to respect any silences, so that participants did not feel rushed into saying something and could instead consider their answers. Indeed, these moments of hesitation or long silences can often tell us a lot about how complex or serious the discussion topic is for the participant.

For my research, I have opted for a more conversational style of interviewing and the utilisation of themes rather than questions. This was partly an attempt to overcome my emotional involvement in this research topic by ensuring I was not leading the conversation too much. However, Alsaawi (2014) points out that interviews, no matter how loosely structured, are always a 'co-construction method' (pg. 154). A good interview is always a conversation where 'views may clash, deceive, seduce, enchant' (Schostak, 2006; in Alshenqeeti 2014: 40). It is therefore virtually impossible for any researcher who is conducting interviews to completely detach themselves from the creation of the overall narrative. However, I ensured that the overarching thematic structure I provided for the interviews was based around the themes most commonly discussed by the graduates themselves during the pilot study, rather than what I perceived to be most important. This, at least to an extent, lessens my influence over the narratives produced and also makes for more relevant and insightful research findings. After all, it is the graduates experiences and opinions are of paramount importance to me.

From the introduction of bias to unintentional power shifts, conducting qualitative, semi-structured interviews can be a complex endeavour. However, their more open and conversational nature is what also elevates them above a simple questionnaire, or other, more structured interview formats. When taking part in a conversation, the researcher has the chance to revisit and clarify the ideas being expressed by the research participant (Alshenqueeti, 2014; Doody and Noonan, 2013). Furthermore, interviews allow for the observation of the research participants' body language and facial expressions (Doody and Noonan, 2013). Along with the moments of deliberation and hesitancy mentioned earlier, these can be very revealing aspects of person-to-person interaction that tell us things that spoken words alone (or indeed questionnaires and surveys) simply cannot convey.

Moreover, Doody and Noonan (2013) argue that semi-structured 'interviews can be rewarding for participants as they stimulate self-exploration and discovery' (pg. 10). In a sense, they can be cathartic, as they can provide a forum for research participants to tell their story and vent any frustrations they have about their situation. Indeed, two of my research participants informed me that being able to share their accounts was beneficial for their state of mind. This came as a pleasant surprise, as it was not what I had intended. However, there is also the possibility that this 'self-exploration' (Doody and Noonan, 2013: 10) could also have more negative and unexpected implications, especially if the participants do not like what they discover about themselves. This is an important ethical consideration which I will discuss in more detail in the next section.

Of course, when conducting semi-structured interviews, the researcher will inevitably find that interviewees are not equally perceptive and articulate. Comparing participants' responses and interpreting what some of the participants have to say can therefore be challenging at times. When a participant is not so 'articulate' or telling their story does not come as easy to them, this is where the interviewer's skills will really come into play, especially in semi-structured interviews where there is not a rigid structure to guide and support the conversation. In this situation, it is about getting the balance right between encouraging the participant to share their story, without leading the conversation too much. As a student researcher, I recognise that I am still learning and my interview skills are still developing. However, judging by the amount of relevant and interesting data I have amassed during the interview process, along with some positive feedback received from informants, I do feel as though I have been relatively successful in achieving a good balance between facilitating the conversation and listening to my participants.

3.4.3. Ethical considerations when conducting interviews

In section 3.3.7., I emphasised the importance of attaining informed consent from research participants, so they know exactly what they can expect when taking part. However, Husband (2020) questions the extent to which researchers can attain *fully* informed consent from their respondents, as conducting interviews can often have unforeseen and unpredictable consequences for participants. This was certainly the case with my research, as two graduates divulged that their interviews had provided them with a much-appreciated forum to tell their story about their post-university trials and tribulations. One of the graduates even described how talking about their

situation helped them make sense of why they had found moving away from the North-East difficult, and they had now put in place a 'positive plan of action' to help overcome these obstacles (although they did not go into further detail about this plan). This outcome was completely unexpected. As Husband (2020) comments about his research, my research project 'had been designed to understand the experiences of the respondents and not shape them' (pg. 207). The unforeseen consequences of my research for these two graduates appeared to be relatively positive. However, there is also the possibility that research involving qualitative interviews could also stimulate negative change, especially if the conversations stirred up bad memories, feelings of resentment, or other negative thoughts and feelings. If research has the potential to change a participant's future outlook or life path, either in a positive or negative sense, then this is a profound consequence (Husband, 2020). Husband (2020) even argues that this potential should be acknowledged by researchers on medium such as consent forms if they are to achieve *fully* informed consent. However, it is also very difficult to fully acknowledge the impacts of something that you cannot fully predict. What I did do was ensure the participants that they could contact myself or the Business and Law Research Ethics Committee at Northumbria University any time after their interviews, to discuss the research, ask questions or voice any concerns they had about the whole interviewing process.

Another issue when trying to attain fully informed consent is that even when attempting to be as clear as possible about the aims of the research and how the data will be used, there can still be a discord between what participants think their data is wanted for and what it is actually used for (Hammersley, 2014). As Hammersley (2014: 529) describes, 'informants typically assume that researchers are aiming to document their experiences, feelings, perspectives etc., as features of a collectively shared world', or as a factual, biographical account. However, in reality, in my case I was analysing and representing their stories through a researcher's Bourdieusian theoretical lens, rather than simply recounting them. My research participants would not share this theoretical viewpoint, and it is very difficult to fully explain Bourdieu's concepts to a layperson who is not a social scientist and has not encountered Bourdieu's work before. When informing my participants about the research project, I tried to be as detailed as possible about the theoretical direction I was taking the research, but I also had to be concise. Ultimately, there

was only so far I could go before the detail would become too abstract and confusing for the participants.

In section 3.4.2., I discussed how I had let the respondents choose the location of the interview, as this can help to mitigate any feelings of apprehension or intimidation they may have (Edwards and Holland, 2013). Appendix 1 shows the venues where each interview took place. While some interviews took place within the graduates' homes, the vast majority took place in public venues such as pubs and cafés. These venues largely met Longhurst's (2016) ideal venue criteria in that they are 'neutral, informal. . . and accessible' (pg. 150), even if they could sometimes be a little noisy. However, from an ethical perspective, holding interviews in public spaces erodes the privacy and confidentiality of the conversation to a degree, as people nearby may inadvertently interrupt the interview or hear what is being talked about (Edwards and Holland, 2013). I tried to manage this issue by choosing, in conjunction with my participants, non-peak times in venues such as cafés and pubs and selecting an area of the venue that was quiet and not too close to other people. However, I acknowledge that within public spaces there is always a chance of someone overhearing the conversation. There is also the possibility of other people's voices, who were not participating in the interview, being unwittingly recorded, although I could not discern anyone else's conversations on the recordings I obtained. Moreover, there is, of course, more chance of the participants being seen with the researcher when conducting interviews in public places, which does weaken the confidentiality of the meeting and the data acquired.

Some of the research participants opted to host the interviews in their own homes, rather than public venues. On first consideration, the home would seem like a more private and confidential location to hold an interview, while it is certainly likely to be less noisy than a pub or café. However, as Edwards and Holland (2013: 44) describe:

> the public [often] permeates the private, and the domestic space is
> increasingly linked to public space through the media and the internet in
> a two-way process with the growth of social media.

Often, in this digital world, it can be quite challenging to discern which spaces are truly private. Furthermore, who else in the familial home would be able to hear the conversation? Would participants feel uncomfortable about discussing how their graduate mobility has been influenced by their familial situation, in case their mum

and dad, or their siblings, would overhear? Would family members then divulge any details of the conversation to other people? It is clear then that even in a participant's own home, there are still important privacy issues to consider. In the interests of privacy (as well as reducing background noise), all interviews conducted at people's homes took place in a room only containing the researcher (myself) and the informant, as long as this was agreeable to the participants.

There are also important ethical issues to consider when combining qualitative interviews with snowball sampling from my own social contacts. As Noy (2008) highlights, any 'interview is not a sterile or virgin encounter; rather, earlier dialogues permeate it' (pg. 339). These earlier interactions produce what Noy terms 'reciprocal expectations' (2008: 339) when entering the interview, on the part of both the researcher and the research participants. This is even more likely to be the case when the interviewees are friends or acquaintances of the researcher (as was the case in my research), as friends are likely to have detailed preconceptions about me and what my research is trying to achieve. Reciprocally, I would also have previous preconceptions and knowledge about them. For example, I could already know some quite personal details about their familial situations, along with their academic and professional histories.

If not monitored, any previous knowledge I had about my participants - which was obtained independently from the research - could direct my interview questioning, as well as influence or even infiltrate the analysis of the data (more about this in section 3.5). Of course, if knowledge was not volunteered by the participant through the interview process, then in the interests of privacy it should not really influence the data gathering process or appear in the analysis chapter of the thesis. In order to reduce the possibility of this external knowledge influencing or even permeating the interview conversations, I devised a framework of themes to guide the interviews and I followed a broadly consistent overarching structure to the interviews (see table 6). However, attempting to place too much structure on conversational, semi-structured interviews would change their nature and be somewhat counterproductive. It would shift power further towards the researcher and simultaneously erode that flexibility which allows the participants to share what is important to *them*. Furthermore, after the interviews, all participants were offered the opportunity to review the transcripts and a copy of the finished research, in case there was anything they did not agree with or they did not want to include.

3.5. Data analysis

3.5.1. Transcription of interviews

Before my thematic analysis of the interview data could commence, I was required to transcribe the interview conversations. I did this myself (by typing the conversations up on Microsoft Word) at the nearest opportunity (within two to three days of the event). This was so I became even more familiar with the content of each interview and I could gain a brief and early reflection of the issues/trends which were beginning to emerge. This was especially helpful during the pilot study, as it allowed me to refine my interview themes at an early stage (after ten interviews) and align them more with the issues which were important to the graduates.

As Julia Bailey (2008:127) describes, transcribing interviews into written text initially 'appears to be a straightforward technical task'. However, in reality it is a process which requires the researcher to make complex:

> 'judgements about what level of detail to choose (e.g. omitting non-verbal dimensions of interaction), data interpretation (e.g. distinguishing 'I don't, no' from 'I don't know') and data representation (e.g. representing the verbalisation 'hwarryuhh' as 'how are you?'). (Bailey 2008: 127).

To address the first point about the level of detail, I decided to include non-verbal body language and facial expressions within my research transcripts. For example, I would write 'interviewee shrugs shoulders' or 'rolled eyes' at the corresponding moment on the transcript. I tracked these idiosyncrasies by making notes during the interviews of any notable changes in expressions and body language, and when these occurred (i.e. before, during or after certain utterances, which I would then find on the recording). I wanted to do this because, as Bailey (2008) proclaims: 'verbal and non-verbal interaction *together* shape communicative meaning' (pg. 128, emphasis added). Ultimately, I believed that in order to establish the full meaning behind what the participants were saying, it was essential to make a record of at least some of their body language and which verbal statements it corresponded with. I also made a note of significant verbal idiosyncrasies such as hesitancy, sighing, changes in voice intonation and volume, as well as longer pauses (for which I would also write down their duration, for example 'pause: 6 seconds'). These features of speech can denote changes of emotion or the need for careful contemplation, which may allude to how serious or complex the topic of discussion is for the participant.

Bailey's (2008) second point about the potential for misinterpreting interview data can be a tricky one to overcome, especially if the interviewee has a strong accent, or there is some background noise and/or interference on the recording. In order to interpret the participants' statements as accurately as possible, I listened to the recordings multiple times before and during transcription, especially focusing on moments of potential ambiguity. As Bailey (2008: 127) points out, 'utterances are interpretable through knowledge of their local context (i.e. in relation to what has gone before and what follows)'. Therefore, if there were any statements where their meaning was difficult to interpret accurately, I would listen carefully to what has been said in that particular segment of conversation in the hope of gaining a better understanding.

The third point raised by Bailey (2008) concerning data representation presents a challenging conundrum faced by all transcribers: do we present the interviewee's speech in a more 'naturalistic' way (Oliver et al. 2005: 1279) (as in Bailey's (2008: 127) example of 'hwarryuhh?' presented above), or do we present it in a more 'cleaned up' fashion which uses the spelling and grammar which is typical of U.K. written English (Bailey, 2008)? Oliver and colleagues (2005) describe how researchers who proceed down the 'naturalistic' route do so because it allows them to 'privilege participants' words and avoid *a priori* assumptions' (pg. 1279). However, this style of transcription can also reduce the legibility of the text, while it also 'runs the risk of portraying respondents as inarticulate and /or uneducated' (Bailey 2008: 129). Furthermore, for people with 'accents', naturalistic transcription can also portray the way they talk as an 'exotic' (Oliver et al. 2005: 1279) or non-standard form of speech. Portraying participants in any of these ways was a big negative ethically for me, and because of this, I decided to represent spoken word in a more 'standardised' way, largely following the typical spelling and grammar rules of U.K. English. I certainly did not phonetically spell out phrases such as Bailey's (2008: 127) example of 'hwarryuhh', although I did include colloquialisms such as 'aye', filler words such as 'em' and 'hmm', and contractions such as 'gonna', a these are very recognisable words which feature in multiple accents and they help to demonstrate the tone and flow of the conversation.

A final consideration when transcribing interviews revolves around the issue of confidentiality. As McLellan and colleagues (2003) state will often be the case, some of my research participants did 'mention the names of others' or 'provide. . . information about the lives of others' (pg. 70) during their interviews. In such cases,

I followed these authors' advice and applied aliases to mask these people's identities, while any details of other people's lives which were deemed to erode their confidentiality or invade their privacy were omitted from the transcripts, and certainly not presented in this thesis.

3.5.2. Thematic analysis

Once I had transcribed all forty interviews, I then commenced with a full thematic analysis of the data. As Braun and Clark (2006) describe, essentially 'thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. It. . . organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail' (pg. 79). The basic structure of my thematic analysis was based on that set out by John Paley (2016) and consisted of the following four main sequential steps:

Step 1 - Reading the transcripts: I read through the interview transcript twice, before any coding, to increase my familiarity with its contents. I would also make a note of the interviewee's self-identified class, the university they attended and their place of origin (for example, was the interviewee domiciled in the North-East of England or elsewhere?)

Step 2 - Coding using broad themes: I now began to code the transcript manually using a highlighter pen on a printed hard copy. Here, I used the broad themes which were used to provide an overarching structure to the interviews. This was done using the 'refined' themes which were created from the pilot study data. These were: 'school through to university', 'family', 'future plans', 'jobs and careers', 'cultural tastes' and 'social networks'. I would highlight anything that corresponded to these themes that seemed particularly interesting, important or meaningful.

Step 3 - Coding using 'mini-themes': I reviewed the already highlighted text and commenced with more specific coding. This coding – with what I referred to as 'mini-themes' – was more closely related to the theoretical literature I am drawing from. My five main mini themes were economic, social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986), along with habitus and field (Bourdieu, 1990). For example, I would review a section of the transcript coded with the broad theme of 'social networks' to see if it revealed anything particularly important about that interviewee's social capital. Was it predominantly locally based? What was the general social standing of their social contacts? Did these characteristics seemingly promote or hinder the graduate's mobility?

<u>Step 4 – Comparing the transcripts:</u> Once I had fully coded and analysed a transcript, I would then compare and contrast the transcript with others belonging to similar and different general groupings (those groups mentioned in step 1, for example self-identified working-class and domiciled in the North-East). I would ask questions such as: are there any coherent trends and shared outlooks between graduates in certain groups? Which groups contrast the most with each other? Are there any contradictions within the groups? How do any similarities/differences within or between groups relate to my research questions?

Within step three, along with coding with more specific themes, I also highlighted key words and phrases. In step four, I then looked to see if the same key words or phrases appeared in other transcripts. An example is the word 'savings' and the phrase 'not much saved up' (or similar), which appeared frequently through multiple transcripts in the self-identified working-class group of graduates. Returning to step three, I also looked out for rhetorical devices such as repetition and metaphors, as well as any hesitations, changes in voice intonation (which can denote emotions such as anger) and contradictions in the text. Accounting for repetition in the transcripts was especially important in my research, and not only in the sense that it tends to denote that a certain topic is particularly important to the interviewee. As Burke (2016: 61) points out, the habitus is principally identified in interviewees' accounts by the *repetition* or reemphasis of long-standing beliefs, expectations and aspirations. If I am to make any conclusions about a graduate's habitus, then I had to take the repetition of key ideas into account.

Furthermore, throughout my analysis of the transcripts, I was aware of the need to think about what interviewees did *not* say about certain topics, almost as much as what they do discuss. An example of why this is important comes from Rosie Alexander's work in the Orkney and Shetland Isles, where graduates 'portrayed neoliberal narratives of personal choice' (2019: 90) when talking about their mobility. However, Alexander's further, in-depth analysis actually revealed that 'their outcomes are heavily influenced by structural factors (e.g. class)' (2019:90). The fact that the graduates in Alexander's research were seemingly unaware of how they were being restricted was an interesting and also alarming finding, and one which was not immediately obvious from the graduates' accounts.

3.5.3 Determining graduates' social class

For my research, I decided to utilise a combination of three different criteria to determine the social class of each participant. These three criteria are: (1) self-identified social class, (2) what I term 'mainstream indicators of social class', and (3) Bourdieusian indicators of class. Tables 1 to 4 in this chapter present a breakdown of each of these criteria for every graduate, and groups them all into designated class groupings.

1) Self-identification of social class

Toward the end of the interview, each research participant was asked to 'self-identify' their social class status. I was initially wary of how readily the interviewees would be able to identify their class status and if they would be willing to do so. However, in my research, all of the graduates were able and willing to self-identify, with all of the participants labelling themselves as either working-class or middle-class. I also looked out for participants making reference to their class status more organically, throughout the conversation (for example, one participant told me: 'I'm just your typical working-class lad').

Originally, I did consider a more quantitative approach to determining the socio-economic status of my interviewees that was similar to the one employed by Savage and colleagues (2013), the authors of the Great British Class Survey (GBCS). Interviewees would have been asked to fill in a small questionnaire pre-interview, which inquired about their savings (economic capital); the professions of the people they know (social capital); and their cultural tastes (cultural capital – for example, a preference for either hip-hop or classical music). However, I decided against this approach for numerous reasons. First of all, I believed it was too intrusive, especially when inquiring about someone's economic capital. Secondly, when such an approach was utilised in the GBCS, it was heavily criticised for being too simplistic (Devine and Snee, 2015), selective, and too assumptive about the cultural tastes of certain social classes. Thirdly, it clashed with the qualitative nature of my interviews. Rather than categorising people into certain groups based totally on generalising criteria, I decided that listening to what people tell me about their situation and their class status was more important for my research. Moreover, the idea of self-identified class also links far better with Bourdieu's (1990) concept of habitus. After all, as Reay (1997) argues, habitus is essentially the manifestation of identity.

However, I do acknowledge that my research findings will be primarily linked to class *identity*, rather than any official categorisation of socio-economic status.

2. 'Mainstream indicators' of social class

This mainly involved inquiring whether the graduates' parents or any other family members had attended a university, although some graduates did also mention receiving free school meals during their time at primary and/or secondary school. If one or both of a graduate's parents had attended university, then this would suggest that the graduate was more likely to be middle-class, and vice versa. Meanwhile, receiving free school meals after year 1 and 2 at school can be an indicator of low household income and is commonly interpreted as denoting working-class status. Of course, these are not universal truths. For example, being the first person in the family to attend university or receiving free school meals as a child does not always mean that a person is working class. Therefore, these criteria would not be sufficient on their own to determine the class status of a graduate – they are merely interpreted as a potential indicator.

3. Bourdieusian indicators of social class

These indicators were based on Bourdieu's 'theoretical toolbox' (Burke, 2016: 61) and involved obtaining clues about the graduates' endowments of economic, social and cultural capital from their interview accounts. A detailed description of what certain endowments of these capitals infer about a person's social class can be found in the literature review (chapter 2). However, as an example, if a graduate told me during their interview that they had a high amount of savings (economic capital) and that they enjoyed going to museums and art galleries, then following Bourdieu's logic this combination of capital would be more likely to indicate that the graduate was middle-class. Of course, describing a graduate's class based on their economic, social and cultural capital does involve making generalisations and, at times, subjective judgements. Moreover, making these judgements is becoming more challenging as the class continuum is becoming increasingly 'fuzzy', as demonstrated by how 'popular culture' is progressively permeating the culture typically associated with the middle-class. For example, while Bourdieu might associate a preference for hip-hop music over classical music as a sign of working classness, we know in current times that this is certainly not always the case. Using these capitals in isolation to make judgements about a graduate's social class may not be objective and rigorous enough for a research project. However, when used

in conjunction with the other two indicators I am utilising (self-identified class and mainstream indictors), then I do believe they will help to construct an overall picture of the graduate's class status.

When determining the social class of each graduate, I decided that their self-identified social class would be the indicator which took precedent. This was partly because of the link between self-identification and Bourdieu's habitus (Reay, 1997). However, it was mainly a result of my desire to privilege what the graduates told me about their situation and their class status, rather than subjectively imposing labels upon them. The 'mainstream indicators' and Bourdieusian indicators were viewed as further evidence to support the graduates' self-declaration of class and build up a more complete picture of their situation. Most of the time there was a strong correlation between each of the three indicators. As an example, a graduate would self-identify as middle-class, state that both parents had attended university (more typical of the middle class) and describe how they enjoyed visiting art galleries (an activity which is typically indicates 'high-brow' cultural capital). However, on the rare occasions where the indicators did not match up, then this presented some interesting and insightful contradictions within the graduate's accounts, and I highlight such cases in the analysis chapter.

3.5.4. Advantages and limitations of thematic analysis

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed how I would describe my theoretical approach to this research as 'structuralist constructivist'. My theoretical position is realist, in the sense that I believe social structure can direct human action. However, at the same time it has constructivist elements, in that I do not believe that human action is totally dictated by this overarching social structure and people can question, resist and even change the status quo. In many ways then, my theoretical position is a marriage of perspectives which may initially appear contradictory or even incompatible. The 'flexibility' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 78) of thematic analysis and the fact that it 'is not wedded to any pre-existing theoretical framework' (ibid: 81) are therefore key advantages for me when conducting my research. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe how thematic analysis can be used as 'realist or constructionist method', or how it can even be located somewhere in between the two positions. Overall, the adaptability of the method and its ability to simultaneously compliment two different (but I would argue potentially synergistic) theoretical perspectives were

key reasons why I decided to utilise the method in my structuralist constructivist research project.

However, the adaptability of thematic analysis can also be seen as a limitation. Braun and Clarke (2006: 97) suggest that it has 'no kudos as an analytic method', as there is no universal guide on how it should be implemented and yet it is still used very frequently by researchers from numerous disciplines. Overall, thematic analysis is frequently viewed as informal (much like the arguably unjust criticism commonly aimed at snowball sampling) and also a method lacking focus. To address these criticisms of thematic analysis, I devised and systematically followed a set framework when conducting my analysis, which was based on Paley's (2016) guidelines (see section 3.5.2). This framework provided a guiding structure to my analysis work, which would ensure its consistency, focus and scientific rigour.

Another potential limitation of thematic analysis is that, according to Braun and Clark (2006: 97), it has 'limited interpretive power beyond mere description if it is not used within an existing theoretical framework that anchors the analytic claims that are made'. Of course, my work substantially draws from Bourdieu's theory, while my thematic analysis has been a deductive or largely top-down process where the themes have been driven primarily by Bourdieu's 'theoretical toolbox' (Burke, 2016: 61). This is contrary to inductive or 'bottom-up' thematical analyses, which derive themes primarily from what the participants themselves say. My theoretical and deductive approach to thematic analysis imbues it with the 'theoretical power' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 97) which may not exist within more theoretically light research, or 'bottom-up' approaches.

4. Data Analysis: graduate interviews

4.1. Research Group 1: graduates who originated from the North-East and who identified as working-class.

In this first analytical group, all graduates were domiciled in the North-East of England, attended university in their 'home region', and identified themselves as being working-class. I will begin this section of my analysis chapter by firstly focusing on graduates who attended the post-1992 universities that feature in my study: Northumbria and Sunderland. I will then move on to consider the experiences of graduates from the Russell Group universities of Durham and Newcastle.

4.1.1. Post-1992 university graduates.

This sub-group is composed of three graduates who attended Northumbria University and eight graduates who attended Sunderland University (eleven in total). Eight of these graduates had never lived or worked outside of the North-East. Meanwhile, three of these graduates had lived and worked elsewhere, but two of them had already returned to the North-East after a short spell away. Moreover, the one graduate who was still living outside of the region (in Liverpool) was planning to return in the near future. Generally then, this is a relatively immobile sub-group of graduates who have either always lived in the North-East or have found themselves being drawn back to their 'home region' shortly after leaving. They are evidence that graduates are not always the universally highly mobile group of people they are often portrayed to be in some media, academic and policy arenas. The aim of this chapter is to shed some light on why this is the case.

4.1.1.1. Post-1992 university graduates who remained in the North-East to live and work.

Firstly, I will focus on the graduates in this sub-group who have always remained in the North-East to live and work post-graduation. As we will see, rather than always being down to personal 'choice', some of these graduates have remained in the North-East due to restrictive factors, which can be linked to their socio-economic and familial background.

Place attachment or place weariness?

People from the North-East are generally renowned for having a strong sense of regional identity and attachment (Bailey et al. 2007), as well as being proud of their heritage (Russell, 2004). As a native of the North-East, I can attest that this also applies to myself. Moreover, this certainly influenced my decision to remain in my 'home region' post-graduation. Therefore, although my main focus in this research is to investigate how social class impacts graduates' ability and desire to be mobile, after reading the place identity/attachment literature and reflecting upon my own experience, I did expect positive sentiments of identity and attachment with the North-East to feature in the accounts of many of the graduates in this group.

One graduate who did proclaim his affection for his home region was Jack, a history graduate from Northumbria University. He told me he was "very proud" to be from the North-East, and he also greatly valued what he described as the "old, historic feel" of the region because:

> Jack: That connection we still have with our past is important, you know, as a region we don't forget where we've come from our working-class values, I love the place. . . being here makes me feel connected to my family their history.

From Jack's account, it is clear that he values his 'roots' (Gustafson, 2001) a great deal, and remaining in the North-East was important for a personal sense of continuity and affirmation of his working-class values. This was even to the point where his sense of self and sense of place were becoming intertwined. Jack had remained in the North-East since graduating, and he presented this as his own personal choice, based on a strong affinity for where he comes from.

However, whilst Jack was forthright in declaring his attachment to both the physical and social aspects of the North-East, in this sub-group of graduates he was, rather surprisingly, an exception. Sunderland University graduate Dan did also say that he was attached to the North-East, although as his interview progressed, he made it increasingly clear that it was his close friends and family who he was attached to, rather than the actual locality or any of its physical characteristics:

> Dan: If my family moved down south or something, or my mates, I wouldn't be bothered about staying here at all.

Meanwhile, the views of the remaining nine graduates concerning their 'home region' can be described as a mixture of moderate to light affection, or even indifference, with Sunderland University graduate Nicola's description of the North-East as "nice" and "ok" capturing the general mood affectively. In fact, rather than place attachment, the feelings of Northumbria University graduates Sean and Nate can be described as 'place weariness', with Sean declaring:

> Sean: I'm finding myself doing the same things all the time, it would be good to go somewhere new, to try something new I think.

Nate also expressed similar sentiments, as he described how his daily life "just revolves around work and the gym". Sean and Nate did not say anything negative about the North-East per se, but they seemed to be finding everyday life in the North-East rather tedious and the idea of novelty appealed to them. For Sean, trying something new was equated to moving to "new surroundings". To use Gustafson's (2001) terminology, 'routes' were an exciting prospect for him, and although he has remained in the North-East since graduation, he shared that moving to a new place was "always in the back of my mind".

Another 'place weary' research participant was Craig, although he went much further with his protestations. Not only did he complain that there was "not much to do here", he also maligned his home region for its excessive drinking culture and a perceived lack of "tolerance with other races, sexualities". Craig was the only graduate from this group to share such strongly negative feelings about where he lived, but the potency of his words and his visible anger really struck me. This was a far cry from the sentiments of place attachment and general positivity for daily life in their 'home region' that I had expected to find in the accounts of graduates from the North-East.

Overall, in this sub-group of graduates, the majority did not highlight place attachment as a major reason why they had remained in the North-East. Instead, many of the graduates suggested that the idea of 'routes' – or moving somewhere new – was an appealing prospect. So the main question is: if there was a general openness, or even a desire in some cases, to live and work outside of the North East, then why has this not been acted upon more frequently by these graduates?

Low economic capital? Or an example of Bourdieu's (1984) 'taste for necessity'?

Significantly, almost all of the graduates in this sub-group who had remained in the North-East (except for Dan) highlighted financial constraints as a reason why they deemed a move away to be unfeasible. Moreover, in the case of some graduates, such as criminology graduate Nicola, limited endowments of economic capital were their *principal* reason for staying. Nicola told me that she had recently considered moving to London, but was eventually deterred because she believed:

> Nicola: It's expensive down there especially for property and renting, I would need a job lined up before going, all of our money goes on bills we don't have much saved up, and let's face it even a cup of coffee is like a fiver down there.

Nicola was concerned that a move away from the North-East may mean that she would spend at least a short period in between jobs without a wage, and due to her lack of savings she did not believe this was something she could endure. She was also concerned about being priced out of renting or purchasing property in the capital. However, as well as lamenting her dearth of economic capital, it was also clear that she associated a move to London with frivolous overspending. This was demonstrated by her protestations over the price of coffee, as well as the overall cost of living in general:

> Nicola: Everything there is so expensive, like apparently wages are higher to compensate, but still paying a fiver for a sandwich or something, I would cringe doing that.

Here, Nicola's account links strongly with Bourdieu's argument about the working-class 'taste for necessity' (Bourdieu, 1984: 376), a feature of the working-class habitus which results from a 'deprivation of necessary goods' (ibid: 373). To recap, when people are required to be frugal throughout their lives, Bourdieu argues that this behaviour becomes a disposition of their habitus that they cannot simply just switch off, even if their financial situation ameliorates over time. Nicola told me that her parents had to "balance the books" carefully when she was a child, and even in adulthood she "does not part with her money easily" because of these experiences. Now, even the prospect of a higher wage in London would still not dispel her feeling of guilt arising from paying what she described as "extortionate" prices for everyday

items, such as food and drinks. She also repeatedly emphasised her concerns about the price of accommodation:

> Nicola: Even if you were loaded, why would you pay say a quarter of a million for a flat in London when you could get one at a fraction of that in the North-East? That would be crazy.

Despite Nicola describing London as an 'exciting' and 'glamorous' place, in the end frugality remained her principal concern. As well as the practical worry about not possessing enough economic capital to facilitate a move, the way Nicola was *disposed* to think about and utilise money – her 'taste for necessity' (Bourdieu, 1984: 376) – was clearly also important in prohibiting her potential move away from the North-East.

Another graduate who cited a dearth of economic capital and reluctance to overspend as immobilising factors was Craig. Craig would have welcomed the opportunity to live and work outside of the North-East, but argued that this was not possible because:

> Craig: I couldn't afford to move away to somewhere like London or down the South, it's too expensive for people like us, I don't have that much money coming in.

Craig's idea was clearly based on a similar thought process to Nicola's: that the cost of living in the South of England is much higher than in the North-East, placing the destination beyond their financial constraints. Interestingly, Craig and Nicola had never visited London, and they told me their ideas on the cost of living there were based on secondary sources such as family or television programmes, rather than any personal experience. Furthermore, when I asked the graduates in this sub-group about moving away from the North-East, most of them automatically assumed I was referring to London, even though I did not mention the city as a possible destination. This likely reflects the unequal power relations between the capital and the North of England, with London being generally viewed as a more connected hub for business, middle-class culture and employment, along with political and institutional power (Russell, 2004; Shields, 2013). Such narratives contribute to the South-East also being depicted as an 'escalator region' (Field, 1992), a place where people can further themselves professionally and socially.

Returning to Craig's story, his notion that London was "too expensive" for him because of a dearth of economic capital contrasts curiously with his comments about his recent promotion to line manager in the civil service, which means:

> Craig: I now have extra money to get myself nice things, like my Mini [Car], nice clothes, I can splash out a little bit more now.

Furthermore, his monetary concerns contrasted even more with his story about his recent holiday to New York, USA, where he bought designer clothes in the "classy shops" and how he was planning "more trips to America in the future". Interestingly, there is a clear contradiction between Craig's perceived lack of ability to afford a move to "somewhere like London", and his new-found spending ability when purchasing luxury commodities and holidays. Furthermore, despite talking about his willingness to "splash out", he also shared remarkably similar sentiments to Nicola in terms of *everyday* cost of living in London:

> Craig: It's a hundred quid for a meal out down there, I couldn't afford that, but even something like a sandwich on a lunch break would be too much I wouldn't pay those prices.

Just like Nicola, Craig demonstrates Bourdieu's (1984) 'taste for necessity' – that unwillingness to overpay and a sense of satisfaction from cutting costs and making savings. This is a feature of Craig's habitus which can partially explain the contradictions in his account. Despite being willing to treat himself occasionally with luxury goods, he still displayed a disdain and intolerance for what he believes are unnecessarily high prices for *everyday* essentials, such as a sandwich for lunch. Ultimately, it was the expense of quotidian, mundane items which was deterring Craig from moving to London.

However, in Craig's case, the influence of his habitus on his mobility also transcends a mere 'taste for necessity' (Bourdieu, 1984). In an earlier quote, Craig declared that places like London are "too expensive for people like us". His phrasing was remarkably similar to Bourdieu's wording when he describes how the habitus allows us to decipher what is and is not "for the likes of us" (Bourdieu, 1990: 56). When I asked him to clarify his wording, Craig replied:

> Craig: It would be difficult to live there for us I'd imagine, coming from a working-class background, we don't have as much money as the majority

of people there, there's no family backing with money either, you'd be at a disadvantage from the start.

It was clear that Craig conceptualised London as being a predominantly wealthy social field. He also depicted life in London as a competition, as survival of the fittest (or, in this case, the wealthiest). This is much in the way Bourdieu and Bauman refer to life as a competition or 'game'. Bourdieu also argues that people's habitus compels them to avoid fields in which they may be 'negatively sanctioned' (Bourdieu, 1990: 56), or disadvantaged. In this way, the habitus can be restrictive, as it prevents people from pursuing certain possibilities and entering social fields that they might have done if they were not pre-disposed to be so cautious. Crucially, despite the fact that he had never visited the capital, Craig was pre-disposed to believe that if he entered the 'wealthy' field of London, he would flounder due to his and his family's dearth of economic capital, and this seemingly prevents him from even attempting to move there and compete in the first place. Even his recent promotion and the associated increase in his income was not enough to dispel his preconception that a place like London is too expensive and 'not for the likes of him' (Bourdieu, 1990).

Overall, whether it is a sheer lack of economic capital, a 'taste for necessity' (Bourdieu, 1984), or a fear of being 'negatively sanctioned' (Bourdieu, 1990), Nicola and Craig's stories are particularly clear examples of how for many graduates in this sub-group, the *interaction* between their endowments of economic capital and the dispositions of their habitus proved important in limiting their ability and propensity to leave the North-East.

Is there really a 'parental safety net' for working-class graduates?

In the literature review, I highlighted the work of Sage and colleagues (2013), who argued that the familial home often provides graduates with a 'parental safety net' during the often-uncertain time during the first few years after university. This 'safety net' comes in the form of practical advice, emotional support and financial backing (Sage et al. 2013). However, the authors did acknowledge that their research participants attended a Russell Group university and were predominantly middle-class. For some of the graduates in my research who originated from the North-East and self-identified as working-class, it became clear that they the ones providing economic capital and emotional support for their parents. This was certainly true for

Sunderland University graduate Kate, who delayed moving out of her parental home because:

> Kate: My mam is on like minimum wage, she's just a lot more secure with my financial help, staying at home is a great way of helping mam out with bills and things without it being too obvious.

Kate told me that living in her parental home was the only way she could guarantee her mum's ongoing financial security, as she could disguise her economic support as "board money", rather than it resembling a "charity payment" which her mother may reject out of pride. This was the main reason why Kate could not move out, despite the fact that her fiancé:

> Kate: . . . keeps hinting that he wants us to get our own place, and that would be nice, but I can't right now it's just not the right timing.

It seems that Kate is so dedicated to helping her mum financially that she is prepared to forego her own ambition of moving out and risk the potential discord with her partner. Here, there are links to be made with 'role identity' literature (Davis, 2005; Farmer et al. 2003), which argues that we all possess multiple identities at once – a person can be a mother, daughter and partner simultaneously for example – but we prioritise some roles more than others. In Kate's case, it is clear that her role as a supportive daughter is at the forefront of her priorities, and she associates this role with a responsibility to provide economic support. Furthermore, Kate said that she would 'feel really bad' and 'unsettled' if she moved out. This is a demonstration of Farmer and colleagues' (2003) point that if we violate our prioritised role identities and the associated responsibilities, it can cause a great deal of personal anguish, as we risk compromising our sense of self and purpose. In this way, Kate's decision to remain in the parental home is not just a selfless act to ensure her mother has sufficient economic capital. It is also an act of self-preservation for her own identity and peace of mind.

Kate did stress that living in the parental home was a positive experience for her in many ways. She said she enjoyed spending time with her mum every day and it was great that they could go for a coffee "at the drop of a hat". In this instance, rather than reflecting Bourdieu's 'taste for necessity (1984: 376), Kate's decision to live with her mum was born out of Finn's (2017: 753) 'taste for luxury (or freedom)'. It clearly brought her joy and she was free to do the things she enjoyed most with her mum. However, it was clear that Kate's stasis was also born out of a great deal of

necessity. Ultimately, because of her mum's low levels of economic capital, Kate felt that she was not even in the position to vacate her parental home, let alone leave the North-East.

Another graduate who felt a sense of obligation to stay in the family home was Craig. In an earlier quote, he said that he had "no family backing with money". Later in his interview, he elaborated that he was in fact the one providing financial backing for his parents:

> Craig: They looked after me when I was a kid, they sometimes would go without you know to put food on the table, when you're an adult you have that responsibility to look after them and return the favour, if I moved out and didn't give them money or get the shopping and stuff, it would definitely be more difficult for them.

It is clear that for Craig's parents, managing money has long been a precarious balancing act. Their lack of economic capital meant they often had to make sacrifices so Craig could have the things he needed, and this resonates with Kate's description of how her mum had "put me first all my life", despite enduring times of hardship. For both graduates, witnessing and benefitting from their parents' sacrifice and kindness appeared to be key in generating a strong sense of *duty* to reciprocate and help out, and an important reason why they are disposed to prioritise their roles as a son and daughter to such a great extent.

Financial help can be offered remotely, and it has already been established that Craig was open to leaving the North-East to live and work. Therefore, I asked Craig why he continued to live in his familial home. Whilst he enjoyed his mum and dad's company, he also admitted:

> Craig: I would have liked to move out soon to be honest, but then I would have rent or a mortgage to pay and bills so I wouldn't be able to give them [his parents] as much as I do now, and to be honest they could do with my support at the moment.

Whilst it was clear that the idea of 'routes' (Gustafson, 2001) and moving out appealed to Craig, he believed he had no other option but to live with his mum and dad for the time being. If he did find his own accommodation, his much-needed financial contribution to his parents bills would be diminished. Just like Kate, Craig

felt that he could not even leave the parental home, let alone the North-East, to experience living and working elsewhere.

One Sunderland university graduate who did leave the parental home was Luke. He had decided to find new accommodation with his partner, primarily because they had a baby on the way. However, Luke decided to live in the same village as his mum and other family members, and he said this was to ensure that his family remained close by so they could support the couple with their baby son. In this way, Luke's decision to remain in the village is based on maintaining a support network for his young family and is reflective of his particular life stage. However, Luke also said:

> Luke: When I moved out I did feel guilty in a way, she [his mum] is on her own now you know, she doesn't have loads, so if I'm still in the village I can just pop by with some shopping or just see how everything is, she is so kind to me I just want to return that really.

For Luke, while remaining in his 'home village' meant he could remain within close proximity to his familial social capital, which, as Field (2008) argues, makes it easier to call upon and maintain, his decision was also clearly born from a desire and requirement to support his mum financially and materially, even after he had left the parental home and was starting his own family. Along with Craig and Kate's accounts, Luke's story reflects Field's (2008) argument that a significant feature of social capital is *mutual obligation*. All three graduates highlighted their parent's kindness towards them, and in some ways remaining in or near to their parental home was attributed to a 'taste for luxury' (Finn, 2017). However, the graduates also clearly felt obliged to reciprocate this kindness by providing support for their parents – particularly in a financial sense – even if that meant halting their own ambitions and desires. These accounts support Bourdieu's (1986) notion that whilst social capital can be empowering, it can also be *restrictive*. In these cases, the parents' dearth of economic capital combined with the graduates' sense of obligation to restrict the graduates' ability to become more mobile. In fact, in some cases, this combination was even reducing their capacity to leave the parental home. Contradicting Sage and colleagues' (2013) notion that it is often the graduates that rely on a 'parental safety net' (pg. 1), I would argue that for these self-identified working-class graduates, they were actually the ones providing a 'safety net' for their parents.

Even though not all of the graduates in this subgroup appeared to act as a 'safety net' to Craig, Kate and Luke's extent, it was clear that all those who still lived in the parental home were required to make a substantial financial contribution to their parents. In fact, Northumbria University graduate Nate appeared to resent the sum of money he had to relinquish, as he lamented how it was delaying his ability to move out:

> Nate: I'd really like to move out to get some independence you know, but they [his parents] ask for so much board [money] on top of my car and things I can't save up, so moving out is a long way off.

Earlier, we saw that the idea of 'routes' (Gustafson, 2001) appealed to Nate and he was open to leaving the North-East. However, his personal lack of economic capital (savings) was even hampering his ability to leave his parents' house, let alone move further afield, and his parents' request for a significant financial contribution was preventing him from ameliorating his situation. Similar sentiments were also expressed by fellow Northumbria University graduate Sean. However, he went further and argued that the money he was required to pay his parents was hampering his career plans:

> Sean: I would really like to go fully self-employed as a [golf] coach, but it's proving really difficult to save for equipment when I'm not on a great wage and paying board on top, I got a job [in the civil service] so I could pay board but I'm only coming out with around a grand a month, and I'm not liking it at all, I'm not sure when I'll be able to move out and if I'll ever be a coach.

Sean's account not only demonstrates that his parents' financial demands were reducing his capacity to raise his economic capital (savings), which limited his ability to move out the parental home and achieve his dream occupation. As an important side note, his story also supports Elias and Purcell's (2004) argument that we should be referring to the 'jobs graduates do', rather than 'graduate jobs' per se (quoted in James et al., 2013: 954). Rather than finding himself in a 'traditional' graduate job, Sean occupies a role in a newly 'graduatising' profession (Tholen 2016), from which he derives little job satisfaction and a lower wage than would be traditionally expected for a graduate worker. Furthermore, he was certainly not the only graduate to express his dissatisfaction with his current employment. Craig said he wished his job 'actually needed' his history degree, while Nicola said her job in administration

was "ok" but believed she was "far too underpaid for a graduate". All of this is further evidence to suggest that graduate employment is no longer necessarily the holy grail (Tholen 2014). Some graduates are clearly occupying jobs which leave them feeling unfulfilled, underappreciated, and, crucially, they are certainly not *guaranteed* to earn more economic capital than their non-graduate counterparts.

Back to Sean's account, his current "under-employment" (in his words) was not only limiting his mobility due to the relatively low wage exacerbating his inability to save economic capital. Importantly, it was also impacting how he was *disposed* to evaluate his mobility prospects. He believed that as a golf coach:

> Sean: I could go anywhere, even Spain or Dubai, golf is really popular there, Scotland too it's massive.

However, he also believed that the longer he remained in his current employment, the more his ability to seek out 'routes' was being hampered:

> Sean: Now I'm stuck in an office, earning rubbish money, not much chance of promotion hardly any savings, where am I going to go? It would have been difficult {to move somewhere else] anyway, but now I might as well forget it.

Sean's account demonstrates that researching the changing nature of graduate employment (as Tholen and James and colleagues have) is not only important from a labour studies and regional development standpoint. It can also be crucial from a graduate *mobility* perspective. Here, we can see that Sean's job – which he felt he *had* to attain to pay the 'board' money demanded by his parents – is not only limiting his mobility in a material sense (i.e. a relatively low wage), but it is also greatly impacting what Bourdieu would refer to as his habitus' 'subjective expectations of objective probabilities' in relation to his mobility (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977. In Burke, 2016: 8). From Sean's previous quote, it seems he was always disposed to consider mobility as something which would prove challenging 'for the likes of him'. However, his current financial and employment situation is propagating this disposition to the extent where he now considers leaving the North-East as an entirely unrealistic proposition. Judging by his words, this may prevent him from even attempting to leave in the first place. Ultimately, Sean portrayed himself as the epitome of immobility: he was stuck in his job, stuck in the North-East, and even stuck in the parental home.

Sean and Nate may not have been relied upon by their parents for support to the extent that Craig and Kate were. However, their accounts continue to demonstrate that for this group of working-class graduates from the North-East, the notion of a 'parental safety net' (Sage et al. 2013: 1) they can fall back on after university is problematic. Almost all of the graduates who lived in the parental home were required to support the household financially, and not just menial amounts. In fact, for Sean and Nate, these contributions exacerbated an existing dearth in economic capital (savings) and this ultimately made the parental home feel more like a 'trap' than a safety net. Overall, it was clear that for the graduates in this sub-group, their mobility was not just restricted by their own economic capital. In various ways, it was also being limited by the economic requirements and demands of their families.

The immobilising effects of a dearth of social capital

Van Hear (2014) argues that a migrant's social capital is of vital importance in determining where they can move to. Crucially, all of the graduates in this working-class sub-group demonstrated relatively low levels of social capital, especially in terms of the number and standing of contacts based outside the North-East. This dearth of social capital proved to be important in limiting the graduates' propensity to leave their 'home region', as it restricted their practical ability to become mobile, as well as negatively influencing their mindset about moving away.

As presented earlier, Dan shared that he was considerably attached to his family, who were all based in the North-East. Despite this, he did consider leaving his 'home region' to move to London, as he believed this would improve his employment prospects. However, for Dan, leaving the North-East would mean leaving his family and friends behind to an extent, and this prospect concerned him:

> Dan: I don't know anyone down there, so it would be like starting all over again basically, if I leave for London I might lose touch with some of my friends and might not be as close to my family, so I've decided to stay up here [North East].

Dan's belief that a move to London would "be like starting all over again" resoundingly reflected the sentiments of all the graduates in this sub-group who remained in the North-East to live and work. The statement demonstrates the graduates' awareness that social capital takes time and effort to accumulate, just as Bourdieu (1986) argues is the case. If the graduates moved to a new location like London where they did not know anyone, it would require effort and a significant

amount of time to build up their social network. Therefore, in the interim, the graduates were concerned that they would feel socially isolated, as is reflected by Nicola's statement:

> Nicola: Nobody wants to be somewhere where you don't know anybody, do you? Like where you're on your own, at least at the beginning anyway until you make new friends.

Referring back to Dan's previous quote, his account also reflects Field's (2008) point that social capital not only requires time and effort to accumulate; it also takes a great deal of work to be *maintained*, and that geographical distance between acquaintances only makes this maintenance more difficult. Dan was not only concerned that he may feel socially isolated in a new location, but also that he may begin to *lose* his social capital in the North-East that he clearly values and he has invested so much time and effort (consciously and subconsciously) into building and maintaining. Therefore, for Dan (along with the other graduates in this sub-group), a move away from the North-East represented a great deal of social *risk* – he dreaded being isolated, both in his new location and by becoming detached from his friends and family in his 'home region'.

While Dan was concerned about the pejoration of family bonds and friendships, Craig particularly lamented his lack of social capital at work, especially outside of the North-East, and how this prevented him from attaining a job in London:

> Craig: Outside my office I only know a handful of people, especially down London where all the promotion opportunities are, I don't know any of the higher grades [bosses], why would they get someone like me from the North-East when there's loads wanting promotion down there? They'll probably think what's the point, and they don't let us know about promotion opportunities there anyway.

From Craig's quote, the importance of Lin's (2001: 20) four tenets of social capital – namely 'information', 'influence', 'social credentials' and 'reinforcement' – becomes evident. His lack of social capital in the workplace (especially outside of the North East) meant: (1) he did not receive *information* on promotion opportunities in London readily from colleagues; (2) he could not *influence* his employment situation due to not knowing anybody professionally outside the North East, which also meant that other people were not aware of his *credentials* for the job; and (3) from his rhetorical question 'what's the point'? it became evident that he must not

have received much *reinforcement* from colleagues that such opportunities are available and obtainable 'for the likes of him'. For Craig, the lack of these four tenets meant that he felt trapped in a vicious cycle: his lack of social capital limited his promotion prospects and therefore his mobility as well, which in turn exacerbated his inability to accumulate new social capital even further.

Out of Lin's four tenets, a lack of 'information' and 'influence' was particularly prevalent in the majority of accounts from this graduate sub-group. This was further demonstrated in Nate's interview where he said:

> Nate: Going to London or wherever, where you don't know anyone from Adam is difficult, there might be loads of jobs, but where do you start? How do you find out about them all? And anyway, why would they pick me?

Along with a dearth of social capital, another issue emerged from Craig and Nate's quotes which was also evident for other graduates in this sub-group: a lack of self-confidence. This was particularly evident for Nate when he questioned why employers would choose him, while Craig also repeatedly emphasised his belief that he would struggle to get a job if he moved to the capital, despite it being where "all the promotion opportunities are". As Burke (2016) highlights, for Bourdieu the habitus manifests itself through the re-emphasis of long-standing aspirations and expectations. The repetition of self-doubt in many of the accounts from this graduate sub-group pointed to their habitus, which seemingly pre-disposed them to doubt their ability to gain employment when in direct competition with many other people. This was especially true for jobs outside the North-East, where they believed they lacked the information, influence, credentials and reinforcement that high levels of social capital can bring. Ultimately, the graduates' lack of social capital and disposition of self-doubt combined to produce a fear of being unsuccessful or 'negatively sanctioned' (Bourdieu, 1990: 56) outside of the North-East, and this seemingly prevented the graduates from even attempting the move 'down south' in the first place.

Of course, Bourdieu (1986) argues that a person's social capital cannot solely be judged on the size of their social network. It is also dependent on the social standing of their acquaintances. Craig emphasised that it was specifically the "higher grades" at work that he did not know, and he attributed his dearth of contacts at least in part

to his socio-economic and familial background (with a thinly veiled undertone of resentment):

> Craig: For the well-to-do people down south mummy and daddy will probably know someone high up in a business who can get them the job, but for working-class people from the North-East like us we don't know anyone and it's difficult to get anywhere.

Once again, we can see that Craig conceptualised the South as a universally wealthy field where people are generally more affluent than he is, and he assumed this wealth would mean they would be more connected to other people of high social standing and *influence*. Moreover, Craig was not alone in his stance, with Nicola arguing that "wealthy families down south know many important people" and Sean bemoaning the fact that his "dad is not a lawyer like some of the rich kids from London". Even though most of the graduates in this sub-group had never visited London, through their habitus they were pre-disposed to disregard London and the South-East as a place where they could live and work, as they did not believe they had the sufficient economic and social capital to compete there. They had clearly absorbed the well-established national narrative which depicts the South-East as a connected and wealthy hub of employment, wealth and institutional power (Shields, 2013).

'Restrictive' social capital

In the literature review, I highlighted Bourdieu's (1986) argument that while social capital can be positive in an enabling sense, it can also be *restrictive*. Bourdieu conceptualises social capital as simply membership of a group, and as the following quote from Nate demonstrates, social groups have value systems or 'rules' which must be adhered to if members wish to maintain their associations (Bourdieu, 1986):

> Nate: In London I would probably have to act differently you know, lower my accent and not be such a working-class lad, and my mates would be disgusted with me in all honesty [Nate laughs].

Nate's account clearly demonstrates the links between social capital (group membership) and cultural capital. The rules of social groups often revolve around the governance of members' cultural capital, and in Nate's case he was required to adhere to regulations on embodied cultural capital – his accent. Nate presented his dilemma: he believed that in order to socially integrate successfully in London, he

would have to abandon his 'northern' and 'working-class' accent and other mannerisms, but by doing so he would be abandoning the very form of embodied cultural capital which demarcates him as a member of his social group of 'mates', and he would therefore risk alienating himself from them as a result. Due to being part of a closely-knit friendship group, Nate felt like he had limited autonomy to change his cultural capital. He therefore doubts whether social integration in what he believed to be the 'middle-class' field of London would be possible 'for the likes of him'.

Another graduate who was particularly concerned about adhering to his friendship group's value system was Sean. He said:

> Sean: I've known them [his friends] for years, and I know if I moved away they would be bit offended, questioning my loyalty, as if time counted for nothing.

In Sean's social group, regular contact and close physical proximity were key to their value system, with moving further afield representing an act of abandonment and disloyalty. Just like Nate, Sean believed leaving the North-East would mean becoming alienated from his friends, and this was a risk Sean was reluctant to take, despite him finding a move away appealing in other ways.

Overall, graduates in this sub-group frequently described being caught in a social 'no man's land' if they were to leave the North-East to live and work, especially when moving to the South-East. Leaving their 'home region' was portrayed as a risky and disconcerting move. Not only would they be moving to a place where they did not know anybody at first; some graduates also feared losing contact with their existing social capital (friends and family) in the North-East. Just how detached from friends and family the graduates were afraid of becoming surprised me, especially in an era of modern information and communication technologies.

'Attending' rather than 'living in' the university

Higher education (HE) – especially at university – is generally heralded as being socially mobilising. Entering the predominantly middle-class field of HE (Reay et al. 2010) is also believed to enhance a person's social capital, especially for working-class students as they become acquainted with middle-class counterparts and academics. However, Reay and colleagues (2010) and Crozer and colleagues (2019) both argue that the social field at university varies depending on the type of

institution attended, with post-1992 universities being the most likely destination for working-class students. Indeed, for this sub-group of working-class graduates who attended either Sunderland or Northumbria University (both post-1992 institutions), it was clear that they had spent most of their time at university predominantly surrounded by 'people like them'. This raises questions about their potential for expanding their social capital, becoming more socially mobile, and ultimately becoming potentially more geographically mobile as a result.

For Nicola, it was clear that university had not left a transformative legacy on her social capital. Not only did she primarily socialise with people like herself at university, her social network at her institution was also relatively small:

> Nicola: I'm only in touch with like one or two people now and that's because they live in Chester-le-Street too, I'm still close to Kate we used to sit together all the time, but I don't speak to many other people now.

When I asked Nicola why she believed she had lost contact with people from university, she replied:

> Nicola: Well, I only knew a few people anyway, and I was living at home still, so I just popped in for lectures then came straight back, I didn't see that much of anyone.

Nicola likened her university experience to a continuation of attending college. Her story supports the notion that working-class students studying at post-1992 universities sometimes 'go through university rather than university going through them' (Archer and Leathwood, 2003, in Reay et al. 2010: 112). As Nicola was living at home and only attending university for lectures, she remained detached from many other facets of the university experience and did not become acquainted with many of her fellow students as a result. *All* of the graduates in this working-class sub-group continued to live at home (either their parental home or with partners) whilst attending university, and consistently described this level of detachment from university life. When I asked the graduates why they had decided to live at home rather than in student accommodation or halls of residence, they all cited saving money and/or the reduction of their overall student debts as their primary motivation. For most of the graduates, this appeared to be out of necessity, as they were also required to work part-time to contribute to household bills and extra luxuries. However, I did also get a sense that their decision also often reflected a working-class 'taste for necessity' (Bourdieu, 1984: 376), particularly when they were

concerned about amassing what Nate labelled "unnecessary debts" by living in student accommodation.

Attending university is commonly associated with moving away and meeting new people. However, for the graduates in this sub-group, this was simply not the case. Sean and Nate primarily spent their time at university surrounded by "the lads" (Sean's words), who they had known since sixth form college, while Dan and Craig had shared their university experience with friends from their home villages, who they had known as far back as primary and secondary school. In Nate's interview, I asked him if he had made friends with students from outside the North-East during university, to which he replied:

> Nate: I already had my mates we are a tight group, and no disrespect but when I hear the people from down south on I tend to switch off, I'm not sure what we'd talk about we'd have different interests.

Similar sentiments were also shared by Craig, although he was even more dismissive of his 'southern' counterparts:

> Craig: They'll probably live in a big house back home they won't know how difficult it can be for working-class students, most of them will probably look down their noses at me, we'd have nothing in common, so why get to know them?

From Nate and Craig's accounts, it was clear they were *pre-disposed* to actively avoid graduates from outside of the North-East. Once again, we can see the influence of a perceived North/South cultural divide which exists in the 'national imagination' (Russell, 2004). Due to extensive stereotyping, only encountering mere snippets of 'southern' students' cultural capital (accents and conversation topics) was still enough for Craig and Nate to construct a mental image of what those students would be like – an image which contrasted with themselves and their values. In Craig's case in particular, the dispositions of his habitus compelled him to avoid any student he identified as 'southern' in case they are "snobbish" and call into question his personal world view and what he perceived to be his comparative lack of economic, social and middle-class cultural capital. To use Bourdieu's (1990: 56) terminology, he was avoiding the possibility of being 'negatively sanctioned' by others.

Overall, whether it was because of a certain level of detachment from the university experience, or perceived cultural barriers between themselves and students from outside the North-East which felt insurmountable, it is clear that the self-identified working-class graduates in this sub-group spent their time at university primarily surrounded by 'people like them' and who they had already known for a long time. Therefore, university did not significantly transform their social capital, either in terms of the number of durable contacts they made or the general societal status of their contacts. This contributes (in part) to graduates in this sub-group demonstrating low levels of social capital outside of the North-East, which in turn could make gaining jobs/promotions and leaving the North-East to live and work more difficult.

Perceived differences in cultural capital between North and South

All of the graduates in this sub-group expressed at least some concerns about perceived cultural differences between the North-East and the South of the U.K, and whether they would be capable of 'fitting in' outside of their 'home region'. Even for the graduates who were generally open to leaving the North-East to live and work, these cultural variations still rendered moving away a daunting prospect in some ways, especially if the potential destination was London.

Of all the graduates in this sub-group, Jack was the clearest example of a graduate who was emotionally attached to the North-East and who had little intention of leaving. He repeatedly portrayed his own cultural capital and personality traits as being seamlessly aligned with his 'home region':

> Jack: Everyone in the North-East is really friendly, there's a sincerity and everyone works hard for what they have, I like to think that's what I'm like as a person. . . here I can just be myself wear my Newcastle top and talk like a Geordie no airs and graces, I can just be me.

Jack's account resonates strongly with Bourdieu and Wacquant's argument that 'when the habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it is like a "fish in water"' (1992: 127). Jack clearly felt like he is a 'fish in water' in the North-East, with a flawless alignment between his cultural capital, habitus and the 'social world' of his home region making his daily life and social interactions effortless there. The North-East therefore represented a 'comfort zone' for Jack, and it can, of course, be difficult to leave a comfort zone behind to risk trying (and possibly failing with) something new. Moreover, even the graduates who expressed a willingness or

desire to leave the North-East (with the exception of Craig) described how the region's cultural capital and characteristics were congruent with elements of their own. Nate equated the "down to Earth working-class culture" to his own demeanour, while Sean said that even if he leaves the region, he would still be "a working-class North-East lad at heart". These accounts support Gustafson's (2001) argument that, contrary to Bauman's viewpoint, a person can value and feel an affinity for their 'roots', while simultaneously seeking out the novelty and adventure associated with 'routes'. In Nate and Sean's cases, they are open to leaving the North-East, but this is clearly *not* because the North-East is misaligned with their values and cultural capital. They may not share Jack's place *attachment* and everyday life in the North-East, but they do appear to possess elements of place *identity*.

Returning to Jack's story, although he believed he could be himself in the North-East without judgement, he was clearly worried about his prospects of 'fitting in' outside of the region, especially in the South-East:

> Jack: Down there I'd feel like a little fish in a massive pond, it's very posh down there and I'm not sure I would blend in, it's the posh accent and the words they use, the expensive clothes, the wine bars, it's hard to explain, well I'm anything but posh.

When Jack refers to himself as a 'little fish', this is remarkably similar to Bourdieu and Wacquant's (1992) metaphorical 'fish in water' analogy. Clearly, Jack feels that the 'social world' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 127) of the South-East is not congruent with his dispositions and cultural capital, from his embodied capital in the form of his accent, to his objectified capital such as the clothes he wears and even his preferred beverages. He believes he would be a 'fish *out* of water' in the South-East, and this is why he repeatedly emphasised his reluctance to move there. Moreover, calling himself a 'little fish' denotes a shortage of self-confidence – or even a feeling of inferiority – about his ability to move, adapt and compete in the capital, a trait I also saw in Craig and Nate when they were discussing their chances of success in London's job market.

An especially common concern among this sub-group of graduates was the strength of their regional accent, which is of course a distinctive feature of their embodied cultural capital. This was a preoccupation for Jack and was also exemplified by Nate's belief that he would be required to nullify his 'northern' and 'working-class' accent if he moved to London. Similar concerns were also emphasised by Nicola:

Nicola: Somewhere like London I would have to try and speak properly, because I don't think people would understand me very well, they'd be like what? What? All the time, and I don't think I'd get far in job interviews in honesty.

Nicola's use of the phrase 'speak properly' highlights a recurring theme in the accounts of this sub-group of graduates: a pre-reflexive belief that their mode of speech is illegitimate outside of the North-East. This supports Russell's (2004) argument that working-class people from the North often feel as though their way of speaking is somehow invalid, an idea often influenced by observing people of high standing on television, such as newscasters or politicians, who generally speak 'the Queen's English'. Moreover, Nicola's concern that her accent will hamper her success in job interviews also reinforces Russell's (2004) assertion that Northerners often worry about being taken seriously outside of their 'home region' by influential people, and once again demarcates that recurring dearth of self-confidence which is becoming increasingly apparent among this sub-group of graduates, especially in relation to employment prospects. To reiterate, Bourdieu (1990: 56) argues that people's habitus compel them to avoid situations where they will be 'negatively sanctioned', and it does not get much more negative than not being understood during everyday interactions and being unfairly discredited in job interviews. However, for Nicola, Nate and the other graduates in this sub-group, their concerns run deeper than just being understood. They all also highlighted the 'working-classness' of their accents, and Nate was particularly clear on why he thought this was an issue:

Nate: As soon as we talk they'd [employers outside the North East] be like oh he's a working-class lad from Newcastle, we don't want him he'll just be a loud-mouth party animal [Nate laughs], they want someone more well-spoken, apparently a bit more civilised.

Nate was talking in a jovial manner, but he did have clear concerns about being discriminated against because of his working-class background, which was projected to others primarily by his regional accent. Nate believed he would immediately be dismissed as a person who possessed a host of uncouth and undesirable characteristics (or cultural capital), which would render making friends and finding employment difficult in the South-East. Once again, this supports Russell's (2004) assertion that northerners are often acutely aware of the

unflattering stereotypes that exist about themselves and the North as a geographical area, and this generates their anxieties about being taken seriously and unfairly judged by people outside their home regions.

Nate and Nicola both declared their openness to seeking out 'routes'. Yet, like many of the graduates in this sub-group, they were also clearly concerned that their cultural capital would be viewed as illegitimate outside of their home region. Despite a 'move away' being appealing in some ways, the prospect of not being understood clearly on a daily basis or even being discriminated against did make a move 'down South' in particular an endeavour fraught with risk.

4.1.1.2. Post-1992 university graduates who moved away from the North-East to live and work

Out of the eleven graduates I interviewed who were domiciled in the North-East, attended a post-1992 university in their home region and self-identified as working-class, only *three* had moved away from the North-East to live and work. Furthermore, out of these three graduates (who were all Sunderland University graduates), Lee and Alexandra had already returned to the North-East after only a few years away, while Michael was planning to return in the near future. So the main questions for these graduates were: (1) why did they choose to leave the North-East in the first place? And (2) why were they so eager to return after a relatively short period of time? Overall, while the graduates' moves away were primarily driven by the pursuit of promising career opportunities, their returns were largely the result of strains on their relationships with friends and family (their social capital), which were consequences of the increased geographical distance between themselves and their 'home region'.

Reducing the risks of a 'move away'

ICT graduate Lee moved to Leeds four months after graduation because of two main factors. Firstly, he was "determined to find a job that relied on computer skills", but his applications for ICT based jobs in the North-East were all being turned down. Secondly, but perhaps most importantly, he needed to start earning a wage. He shared that:

> Lee: I'd had four or so months without an income, no real savings behind
> me, and my parents couldn't keep me forever without me helping out, so
> I thought I need to broaden my horizons here. . . I ended up living in a

tiny flat in Leeds, it wasn't exactly luxurious, but at least I was working and earning.

Lee is somewhat of an anomaly in my research. In his case, a personal and familial dearth of economic capital – a key factor in *restricting* the mobility of the working-class graduates in the previous sub-group who remained in the North-East – was in a way promoting Lee's move away from his 'home region'. Lee was required to secure a financial income as quickly as possible, and he believed extending the geographical scope of his job search would be the best way of achieving this, without sacrificing his ambition of working in the ICT sector.

There was still a limit to the geographical extent of Lee's job search, however. One of the key reasons he considered Leeds was its close proximity to the North-East:

> Lee: It isn't too far away from the North-East just a short drive up the motorway so I thought I could go home often, or family and friends could come to me. I didn't want to move really far away you know, I didn't want to lose touch with friends and everyone.

Furthermore, Leeds also appealed to Lee because of its perceived socio-cultural similarity to his 'home region':

> Lee: Leeds is quite similar to the North-East as well the people are quite similar and stuff. In Yorkshire it's not different or snobby like some places in the South can be, so I knew I could settle there ok.

The reasons behind Lee's openness to move to Leeds were remarkably similar to Michael's willingness to move to Liverpool, where he was studying for a PhD in Irish history. He also cited his new location's close geographical proximity to, and cultural similarities with, the North-East as being essential prerequisites of his move there. Overall, it was evident that Lee *and* Michael shared many of the concerns that graduates in the previous sub-group, who had remained in the North-East, had emphasised as key factors determining their immobility. Lee in particular was concerned that his cultural capital would be incongruent with what he labelled "snobby" or elitist locations, which in his view were primarily located in the South of England (once again evidence of the prevailing stereotypes in the UK of a working-class North and elitist South). Moreover, both graduates were clearly worried about weakening their existing social capital in the North-East (bonds with friends and

family) by placing too much geographical distance between themselves and their 'home region'.

The key point here is that Lee and Michael's decision to move away from the North-East was not necessarily born out of a greater propensity and aptitude to being on the move, compared to their comparatively immobile working-class compatriots. Their choice of destinations was still being limited by their socio-economic background, especially as they felt compelled to choose places which would be accepting of their non-elitist social capital and where they were at less *risk* of being 'negatively sanctioned' (Bourdieu, 1990: 56).

Strains placed on migrating graduates' social capital

Lee and Michael both talked positively about their new cities of Leeds and Liverpool, highlighting the friendliness of the people and how they were both excelling professionally. Seemingly, in many ways their moves away had been positive experiences. Yet, Lee had already returned to the North-East after spending just two years in Leeds, while Michael was planning on returning in the near future. So what caused this contradiction?

For both graduates, the principal factor fuelling their desire to return home appeared to be unexpected stress being placed on their existing social capital, as a consequence of living away from the North-East. Lee described how his relationships with friends and family became more distant (literally and figuratively) when he lived in Leeds:

> Lee: For the first few months I had a few friends [from the North-East] visit and mam and dad came down when they could, but as time went on, I was seeing less and less of everyone and I could sense we were losing touch. . . they couldn't afford to keep coming to Leeds and I couldn't afford to keep driving back up.

Similar sentiments were also shared by Michael:

> Michael: I've hardly been visited here [Liverpool] at all by friends despite what they said, they always say they're skint or whatever. . . we'll just be friends on Facebook soon.

Lee and Michael's moves away from the North-East had clearly posed a greater risk to their existing social capital than they had originally anticipated. Their accounts

reflect Field's (2008) point that social capital requires a large investment of time and constant effort to be maintained, especially as geographical distance between people increases. Even though Leeds and Liverpool are relatively close geographically to the North-East, whilst living in those cities the regular contact required to preserve the strength of Lee and Michael's social bonds still required considerably more *economic capital* than before, which both graduates, along with their friends and family, seemingly did not possess. Lee explained his personal insufficiency of economic capital:

> Lee: My job in Leeds paid well, but by the time I paid for the car, the rent, the student loans, most of my wage was gone. I'd just left university, so I didn't have a lot saved up yet. . . for working-class students it's difficult at times, money-wise, even if you work during university.

Throughout his time in Leeds, Lee's wage was being consumed by living expenses. However, just like many of the graduates in the previous sub-group (including Kate and Craig), he also blamed his self-proclaimed working-class status for his mobility-restricting financial situation, especially his lack of savings. Such an awareness is contrary to Alexander's (2019: 90) findings in the Orkney and Shetland Isles, where students 'adopt and articulate liberal narratives of personal choice and responsibility, even when their outcomes are heavily influenced by structural factors (e.g. class)'.

Overall, Lee and Michael's accounts exemplify Bauman's proposal that people in the lower echelons of the social pyramid are not only restricted in how far they can travel. They also have less control over their time - when to be mobile, when to speed up and when to slow down – compared to their loftier counterparts (Harding, 2002). Lee, Michael and their families and friends did not have sufficient endowments of economic capital to gain the desired command over the timing of their mobility, and ultimately their social connections were suffering as a result.

With Lee and Michael's social capital in the North-East beginning to wane, their ability to construct new social networks in their new cities would become even more important. However, Lee in particular also experienced difficulties on that front:

> Lee: I did make friends at work, we'd go out on a Friday night sometimes after work, but at the weekend they already had their friends from the area, so I was stuck in my flat and felt a bit lonely I suppose.

Lee's story offers further support to Bourdieu's (1986) argument that the acquisition of any form of capital – including social capital, is not instantaneous. It requires *time* as well as effort to accumulate. Lee did not possess any pre-existing social capital in Leeds. Furthermore, he had not lived there long enough to establish deep connections with his new acquaintances and integrate with their social groups. Ultimately, Lee's inability to consolidate his social capital in Leeds and the weakening of his social capital in the North-East left him feeling isolated and 'lonely'. This is the manifestation of the very fear that had discouraged so many of the comparatively immobile working-class graduates from attempting to leave the North-East in the first place.

Graduates' varying perceptions of risk

The third graduate in this sub-group, Alexandra, was another anomaly in my research, as she was by far the most mobile of any of the self-identified working-class graduates from the North-East. Her father was in the British armed forces and she moved around with him to live in many different parts of the UK throughout her teenage years, before attending sixth form college and university in Sunderland. Immediately after graduating, Alexandra moved to London to live and work because:

> Alexandra: I wanted to see what it was like, you always hear about London being the place to be, to get on and how there's loads of jobs, so I thought I'd try it. . . I think because I moved around a lot when I was younger it didn't faze me. I've lived in other places and did fine, so why not London?

There are two observations to be made here. Firstly, the prevailing narrative of London being an 'escalator region' (Field, 1992) comes to the fore once again, tempting graduates to the capital with its promise of a greater number and variety of jobs and greater prospects for career progression. Secondly, it was clear that Alexandra was much more accustomed to being on the move, as well as adapting and succeeding in new locations, compared to the other working-class graduates from the North-East. This meant she tended to perceive a move to the South-East as much less of a *risk.* Alexandra's story reminded me of insightful comments made by Dan from the previous sub-group, who argued that:

> Dan: Moving around will be much easier for graduates from the South, who have moved up here [the North-East] to university, they've already cracked that barrier they've already got the experience of moving out of

the way and they've made a go of it, but for graduates like me who have been in the North-East all their lives it's harder because they don't have that experience, it's not what they are used to.

Whilst it is not possible within the main focus or scope of this thesis to go into depth about the psychology of risk perception, Alexandra and Dan's accounts reminded me of Adams' (1995) psychological 'risk thermostat' model. Put simply, Adams argues that our propensity to take risks is based on an evaluation or balancing act between our perception of the potential rewards, and the potential dangers or losses we could experience by taking the risk on. Moreover, our perception of risk is influenced significantly by our experience of rewards and losses incurred in the past. Alexandra may not be from the South like the graduates Dan hypothetically refers to in his quote, but she does have extensive experience of living in new locations, without incurring any significantly negative results. In contrast, graduates from the previous sub-group like Dan have not lived and worked outside of the North-East. As we have seen this immobility was not always by choice, and it can be attributed to a host of economic, social and cultural limitations associated with their working-class background. A move to a new destination is therefore completely 'a move into the unknown' for them, and of course anything which is 'unknown' is inherently perceived to be riskier.

Of course, even Alexandra returned to the North-East to live and work, and this was because:

> Alexandra: I moved around a lot with my parents, but a lot of my family have always lived in the North-East and I want to see them more. My nieces are two and four and I've mostly been a Skype aunty to them through a computer screen. I want to be more than that.

Alexandra may have been a mobile person, but the majority of what she described as her 'working-class family' were not. In the end, Alexandra's desire to return to the North-East originated in much the same way as Lee and Michael's: it was built on concerns about becoming socially detached from comparatively immobile family and/or friends.

An important theme running through all the graduates' accounts covered so far is the inability of ICT, such as video calling or mobile phones, to adequately match face-to-face interaction for maintaining social bonds with friends and family members. Authors such as Bauman (2005) and Castells (2010) argue that we are

living in an increasingly 'networked' society, where the meaning and significance of physical places is being eroded by the eradication of the need for close physical proximity during our social interactions. However, through Alexandra's concerns about being merely a 'Skype aunty', to Michael's worry about becoming only 'Facebook friends', these graduates from the North-East tend to contradict this argument, as many of them clearly believed that a lack of contact in *physical* space would place their social connections with friends and family in jeopardy. For many graduates, this need for face-to-face interaction was a key reason why they were either reluctant to leave the North-East or seeking a prompt return.

4.1.2. Russell Group University graduates

This group of self-identified working-class graduates from the North-East is composed of three graduates who attended Durham University (Lauren, Chris and Sian) and four graduates who studied at Newcastle University (Simon, Carl, Andy and Jessie). Incidentally, this is also the group I would fit into, as I am a self-identified working-class graduate who attended Durham University.

A university education is commonly associated with elevating the extent and overall societal status of student's social capital, along with an increase in cultural capital (especially in the form of educational credentials). This is then expected to translate into higher earnings (economic capital) and an overall increase in social and geographical mobility. You may expect this would be particularly applicable to Russell Group universities like Durham and Newcastle, which tend to have predominantly middle-class cohorts who originate from extensive geographical catchment areas, along with qualifications which often carry a high level of prestige. However, out of the seven graduates in this group who attended a Russell Group institution, only one graduate (Andy) has lived and worked outside the North-East since graduating. Just like those who studied at post-1992 universities in the North-East, this cohort of Russell Group graduates is also relatively immobile, going against the general expectations of policy makers and even some academics. While some of the reasons behind this group's immobility were similar to those who attended post-1992 universities (they were limited by their endowments of economic, social and cultural capital, familial circumstances and dispositions), there were also some unique reasons why these Russell Group graduates have remained

in their 'home region', many of which can be traced back to their experiences at university.

A lack of integration into university life?

All of the graduates in this group were living off-campus and not in student accommodation during their time at university, instead residing in either their parental home or with a partner. This is a particularly surprising revelation in the case of the Durham University graduates, as Durham is a collegiate university famed for its tightly knit college communities of live-in students. Just like the self-identified working-class graduates who attended post-1992 universities, many of the graduates who attended Durham and Newcastle cited their wish to save money as their primary motivation for residing off-campus. This includes Durham graduate Lauren, who said:

> Lauren: The thought of getting thousands of pounds more into debt from living in college when I live close by anyway seemed silly, I could have taken the loan to do it, but that would have been a bit irresponsible when money is already tight.

Similar sentiments were also shared by fellow Durham graduate Sian, who believed it would be "daft to take on all that debt when living nearby", even though "living in college would have been awesome". Once again, we see Bourdieu's 'taste for necessity' (1984: 376) raising its head, a typical feature of the working-class habitus which means that 'non-essential' spending is deemed frivolous and irresponsible. The fact that Lauren and Sian could commute to the university from home meant that 'living in' was immediately deemed a frivolous expense and therefore dismissed as an option, despite the fact that both graduates clearly believed they would have enjoyed the experience. Lauren and Sian could have utilised student finance options (loans) to fund a move into college, but the way they were *disposed* to reject debt and carefully spend money prevented them from doing so.

Saving money was the most prevalent reason for graduates residing off-campus. However, Newcastle University graduate Simon's account is an example of how for some, the wish to remaining close to existing friendship groups closer to home was another important motivation:

> Simon: In the second year of university, some people I knew were looking for a housemate, but like I already had my best friends at home. If I moved

out, I probably wouldn't have seen them much, so I was happy just travelling for lectures.

Simon's main focus at university was completing his lectures and assignments, rather than the social aspects of university life. This was similar to fellow Newcastle graduate Jessie's approach:

> Jessie: I only went into university when I had too. . . I did not socialise with everyone at university that much.

Jessie and Simon's stories exemplified how once again in my research, self-identified working-class graduates from the North-East appeared to 'go through university rather than university going through them' (Archer and Leathwood, 2003, in Reay et al. 2010: 112). The university is simply a place they attend during working hours, rather than an institution which percolates into almost every facet of daily life (Reay et al. 2010). Although Reay and colleagues suggest this is quite a common trait of working-class, post-1992 university students, it is a novel finding that some working-class Russell Group students also attended university in this manner.

Overall, for graduates like Simon, Lauren and Sian, a large proportion of their lives continued to be independent from their university, meaning there was a certain level of *detachment* from the whole university experience, compared to their colleagues who 'live in'. This may help to explain why only one graduate in this group, Carl, said he was still in regular contact with people from university, even though some of the others had only graduated two to three years ago. Graduates still primarily socialised in their pre-existing, 'local' friendship groups, which meant they had less time to forge deep and lasting bonds with fellow students at university and enhance their social capital outside of the North-East in the process. The implications of this for graduate mobility can be significant – the post-1992 university graduate interviews demonstrated that a dearth of social capital outside of a graduate's 'home region' can reduce the potential of a move away, primarily due to a fear of becoming socially isolated in a new location.

'I never knew I was so different!'

Many of the graduates in this group declared their surprise at just how 'middle-class' the social field at their Russell Group university was, and how different this was from what they had always known previously. This was encapsulated well by Durham graduate Chris:

Chris: I knew Durham did attract some posh people. . . being in the North-East I thought there would be lots of locals as well but there wasn't really. I stood out like a sore thumb, I hadn't experienced that feeling before and I didn't really like it. I was thinking, is this what it's like down South? I would feel like being abroad in my own country. I'm a North-East lad born and bred, and I already had my doubts about fitting in down there but my time at Durham just confirmed it. When I got my PhD people would say ah you can go anywhere with that now, the world's your oyster, but I'm very happy where I am, I've got a good job and I'm in my homeland so to speak.

Chris' story resonated strongly with Crozier and colleagues' finding that working-class students enrolling at an elite institution and entering its predominantly middle-class social field may be 'confronted with their own difference' (2019: 933) for the first time. Surrounded by his 'southern' counterparts, this was the first time Chris had really "stood out" socially and culturally to such an extent in an educational setting (perhaps any setting for that matter). It is clear that this was an uneasy experience for him, so much so that it only served to reinforce or even strengthen his pre-existing notion that he would not 'fit in' culturally in the South, as well as his view on what it means to be 'northern'. Chris used territorial language when he suggested that being in the South would be akin to being 'abroad' and referred to the North-East as his 'homeland'. He also described how his identity continued to be intertwined with his home region after leaving university. As Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) would say, he continued to have a strong 'place identity'. Overall, far from being a geographically mobilising experience, Chris' time at university reinforced his belief that the North-East was his hinterland, a place where he *belonged* and where he should stay.

Fellow Durham University graduate Sian also described how she felt 'conspicuous' during her time there. Her concerns were principally related to her accent:

Sian: I went to Van Mildert college [at Durham University] and everyone called it the comp on the swamp, because it had the highest proportion of state educated students or something like that, and it has this big pond in the middle [Sian laughs], but I still felt conspicuous, like I was so surprised I was the only northerner in the whole place. I wondered what they must have thought about my accent, like could they understand me

properly would they joke on about it, I remember trying to tone down my accent to sound more well-spoken, but it really didn't work I just sounded weird. In the end, I just got on with it.

Again, Sian's account is remarkably similar to Crozier and colleagues' (2019) findings, where they described the process by which working-class graduates entering an unfamiliar middle-class field may experience what Dubois referred to as 'double consciousness', or 'a sense of looking at oneself through the eyes of others (Dubois, 1903, in Crozier et al. 2019: 933). Whilst attending Durham University, Sian became particularly conscious of how different her embodied cultural capital – her 'northern' and 'working-class' accent – was compared to everyone else around her, and she became preoccupied with being understood or being taken seriously. Ultimately, she began to question her cultural capital's legitimacy, to the point where she attempted to modify her accent to bring it in line with her counterparts. However, Sian's attempt proved unsuccessful because speaking with a "toned down" accent (as she put it) was not a naturally encoded disposition of her habitus. As Bourdieu argues, any form of capital, including embodied cultural capital such as an accent, requires a great deal of effort and *time* to attain and master. In the end, Sian just had to accept that her accent was different, and she continued to feel uncomfortable about it in the process.

Crucially for my research, it became apparent that Sian's concerns about her accent, which were propagated at university, were having a direct and enduring impact on her propensity to move away from the North-East to live and work:

> Sian: I've always wanted to be a teacher and I would say one of the initial attractions was it's a job you can move around with, you know, literally everywhere needs teachers, but then I hadn't thought about my Geordie accent much. Going down south, now I wonder if the kids would understand me or would they skit me, so I'm just decided to teach here [the North-East].

Bourdieu (1990) argues that our habitus governs our 'subjective expectations of objective probabilities', or in simpler terms, it helps us to decipher what our possibilities are in life for 'someone like us', and what we should expect in the future. In Sian's case, we can see that her experiences in the predominantly middle-class and 'non-northern' field of Durham University had negatively altered her 'subjective expectations' of her ability to succeed as a teacher outside of the North-East. She

continues to possess a 'double consciousness' (Dubois, 1903) about her accent, which generates concerns about being understood and taken seriously by others. Sian's account is similar to Chris' story in some ways. Although he already had low 'subjective expectations' of his ability to socially integrate in the South of England before attending university, his expectations were ratified or even lowered further during his time studying at Durham. For both graduates then, their modified habitus meant they were *disposed* to evaluate their chances at succeeding outside of the North-East in an increasingly pessimistic way, and this was reducing their perceived ability and their desire to leave their 'home region' to live and work.

Transforming perceptions

To add nuance, it is important to stress that university did not leave an immobilising legacy for all of the graduates in this group. This is demonstrated by Newcastle University and English language graduate Andy, who now lives and works in London. Andy's first choice was to remain in the North-East, primarily so he could remain close to his family who he enjoyed spending time with (an example of Finn's (2017: 753) 'taste for luxury'), but also because he was concerned that he did not have enough economic capital saved up to help with his move. However, after experiencing a full year of not being able to attain a job which required his writing skills in his 'home region', he believed he had no choice but to look further afield. Andy eventually attained a job writing promotion material for a charity in London, making him the only graduate in this group who had moved away from the North-East. Contrary to Chris and Sian, he credited his university experience with "broadening his horizons":

> Andy: I was friends with some people from other parts of the country at university. . . I've got to admit it did change my ideas about what to expect, like what people from the South and abroad and places were like, we all came from different backgrounds and cultures and things but that didn't matter, it was a good thing not a bad thing you know, you can learn things from others and it keeps things fresh, but we had a lot in common as well. . . I think if I hadn't met those people at university I don't think I would have had the guts to move to London, I would have worried about being out of place, so it has definitely broadened my horizons for sure.

For Chris and Sian, university served to heighten their sense of their own difference, which ultimately reduced their propensity to leave the North-East. However, for

Andy, university had the opposite effect. Through his habitus, Andy was initially disposed to reject a move away from the North-East, largely due to concerns about being a 'fish out of water' in a new destination and being 'negatively sanctioned' (Bourdieu, 1990: 56) by the people around him as a result. However, making friends at university who were from different places had transformed his previous dispositions. Not only had his sense of 'difference' been lowered, but he also now appeared to *value* any differences which did exist between himself and others, as he found them to be enriching rather than problematic – in Andy's words, difference "keeps things fresh". Feeling culturally 'out of place' outside of the North-East was therefore no longer a major barrier for Andy, meaning he was more willing to expand his job search geographically to include places like London.

Andy was not the only Newcastle University graduate to feel that his time at university 'broadened his horizons'. Newcastle University PhD graduate Carl was still living in the North-East and ideally that is where he would have chosen to remain long term, mainly so he could stay close to friends and family. However, having largely relied on temporary research assistant work in the two years after his graduation, he believed it was time to expand his job search geographically to increase his options. Like Andy, Carl credited making new friends at university with giving him the propensity to contemplate a move away from his 'home region':

> Carl: Before university I only ever saw my future in the North-East, it was all I'd known, but my best friends at university were from North London and Birmingham and we used to talk about where we were from and it showed me the North-East is only a small corner of the world. . . I know we would still meet up if I moved there, that would make settling in those places easier they could help me, show me around.

In Carl's story, his mobility potential has increased because he has expanded his *social capital*. He was still in regular contact with friends from outside of his home region, which gave him a genuine and enduring link to other parts of the U.K. For Carl, a move to London or Birmingham would therefore not represent a leap into the unknown – or Bauman's (2005: 5) 'abyss' – as it would for many of the other working-class graduates from the North-East. Knowing people in these locations had reduced the concerns he had about becoming socially isolated, whilst he has already discussed these cities at length with his friends which also reduces their air of unfamiliarity. Within my research, Carl's case is by far the clearest example of a

working-class graduate from the North-East who has expanded their social capital outside of their home region in an enduring fashion. Moreover, despite not leaving the North-East yet, he exemplifies the potentially mobilising effect social capital gains can have.

4.2. Research Group 2: Graduates who originated from the North-East and who identified as middle-class

In this second analytical group, all graduates were domiciled in the North-East of England, attended university in their 'home region' and identified themselves as being middle-class. Once again, I will begin my analysis for this group by firstly focusing on graduates who attended the post-1992 universities that feature in my research: Northumbria and Sunderland. I will then move on to consider the experiences of graduates from the Russell Group universities of Durham and Newcastle.

4.2.1. Post-1992 university graduates

This sub-group is composed of two graduates: Sarah, who attended Sunderland University, and Greg, who graduated from Northumbria University. Sarah and Greg had never lived and worked outside of the North-East, which at a surface level means they are relatively immobile (at least in terms of labour-motivated migration). However, both of these self-identified middle-class graduates believed they could be successful outside of the North-East and they indicated that their decision to remain in their 'home region' was purely based on personal *choice*, rather than being the result of any restrictions. This contrasted significantly with their working-class counterparts in research group 1, who, for the most part, did not believe they had an equitable *freedom* to choose where to live and work.

'Freedom of movement'

Business graduate Sarah described how she had applied for vacancies throughout the U.K. during her final year of university. At that time, she was "totally open" to moving away from the North-East "if a good job came along". Like many of the graduates from research group 1, she had considered London as a potential destination. However, unlike most of those other graduates, Sarah articulated her belief that she would be able to 'fit in' seamlessly in London:

> Sarah: I would love living there, I'm a city girl and it doesn't get bigger than London. . . it's got everything I love, the designer shops, great bars swanky restaurants, I would fit in there no problems [Sarah laughs]. I've visited a few times and thought yeah, this is a place I would enjoy and where I would settle fine.

When I asked Sarah why she believed adapting to life in London would be so effortless, she replied:

> Sarah: Like I said I'm a city girl you know, cities just feel more alive I like the hustle and bustle. . . anyway, I don't think I have a strong accent or anything that shows I'm from the North-East. It wouldn't be a major issue, but I do think it makes it easier, I mean for being understood and things, and also people won't judge you by your cover as well, because you hear these stupid comments about northerners.

Sarah clearly believes that in many ways, she would be 'a fish in water' (Bourdieu 1992: 127) in the social field of London. She describes how London caters for her rather high-brow cultural taste for "swanky" restaurants (which are likely to be quite expensive) and designer goods. She also cites the neutrality of her accent as an element of her embodied cultural capital which will not only make everyday communication easy, but also help her to blend in socially and prevent her from being prematurely judged, and potentially 'negatively sanctioned' (Bourdieu, 1990: 56), by other people for being a 'northerner'. This resonated with Bauman's (2005) argument about how 'belonging' can be a negative and restrictive state, especially in terms of mobility. To recap, cultural capital such as accents can demarcate a person's belonging to a particular social group, for example 'northerners' or 'the working-class'. In doing so, it also links that individual to a whole host of stereotypes that exist about that group, which can include both positive and negative traits. Sarah believes her relatively neutral accent means she is more likely to be perceived as an 'individual' on her own merits, rather than a 'group member'. In her view, she would not be tethered to any of the negative stereotypes which are sometimes associated with a strong, northern accent, such as 'parochialism' and a 'lack of social graces' (Russell, 2004: 37). With her comments, Sarah is - perhaps subconsciously - questioning the legitimacy of 'northern' cultural capital outside of her homeland, and this once again reflects the common narrative about the uneven

power relations between a 'peripheral' North and the dominant cultural hub in the South/South-East (Shields, 2013).

Sarah also repeatedly emphasised that she was a "city girl" during her interview. Here, there are links to be made with the place identity literature and one of Breckwell's (1986) four identity principles in particular: 'distinctiveness'. Achieving distinction from the crowd, or truly being an 'individual', is becoming a goal which is increasingly strived for in modern life (Bauman, 2005), and Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) argue that the places we choose to live in can help us to achieve this. In her interview, Sarah associates her persona with the vibrancy of a big city like London, and in the process distinguishes herself in a positive sense from other people who live in smaller cities and operate at a slower pace. Of course, the North-East has cities, but admittedly none of them are of a similar geographical scale or national and global prominence as London, and Sarah highlighted this fact:

> Sarah: In the North-East, there isn't anywhere as big or with as much going on as London, that's why it appeals to me. . . I like new places and busier places because I don't like to feel like I'm standing still.

In the last sentence of her quote, Sarah epitomised Bauman and Cresswell's view of the typical mindset in modern day 'liquid life': 'we are always trying to get somewhere. No one wants to be stuck or bogged down' (Cresswell, 2010: 21). Overall, Sarah sounded like a person who would be inclined to follow 'routes', instead of being entwined in her 'roots' (Gustafson, 2001). London was a particular draw for her, not only because of tangible pull-factors such as the variety of "swanky" shops and hospitality establishments on offer, but also because of a perceived synergy between the location and her energetic persona, and the increased prestige that living in such a place could bring.

Of course, the big contradiction in Sarah's account is that despite her inclination to seek out 'routes', she had never lived outside of the North-East, even though she had graduated seven years ago. Moreover, she had recently moved to the former mining village of Willington, which is a far cry from the large, busy places she seemed to prefer. When I enquired about her motivations for moving to Willington, she replied:

> Sarah: Me and [her partner] were wanting a bigger house, and we could have got a good three bedroom one in London but you simply get more

house for your money here [the North-East] and we wanted more than three bedrooms.

Sarah's primary reason for remaining in the North-East was the attractiveness of lower house prices in the region, compared to the capital. Although a move to London was a tantalising prospect for Sarah in many ways, she was simply not currently willing to compromise on her wish to have a larger house. However, she did say that she "certainly wouldn't rule out moving to London" in the not-too-distant future, and the key point is that throughout her story, such a move was described as being very much a realistic prospect.

The other graduate in this sub-group, Greg, also highlighted London as an attractive destination to live and work. Greg was an ICT graduate, and in his opinion:

> Greg: London is the biggest place in the country for tech, software development and things, so I had always thought about moving there after finishing my degree, because it would definitely be a place I could enhance my career.

For Greg, the larger amount and variety of jobs in technological industries was his principal reason for considering a move to London. Moreover, he was not deterred by some of the issues other graduates from the North-East had highlighted as potential drawbacks of a move to the capital. He shared with me that he was "not particularly close to a lot of the family", so being away from them "wouldn't really be a problem". Overall, he was not concerned about the effect increased geographical distance would have on his familial relationships, while his mobility was not being restricted by any sense of obligation to remain in the North-East to look after his parents. Admittedly, this was more a result of issues related to family dynamics, rather than any consequence of his socio-economic status. However, he also said:

> Greg: I know prices for things are higher in London, well the cost of living in general is, but the wages are higher too so that makes up for it, and then there's the benefit of living in such a cool place it would be well worth it.

Unlike some of the self-identified working-class graduates from research group 1, such as Danielle and Craig, middle-class graduate Greg does not demonstrate a 'taste for necessity' (Bourdieu, 1984: 376) – a reluctance to 'overpay' for everyday items and a preoccupation with making savings which often develops after

experiencing times of hardship. Through his habitus, he is not *disposed* to be as cautious with his money, and certainly not to the extent that it would deter him from moving to a "cool place" like London where the general cost of living is higher.

Despite Greg's general openness to leaving the North-East, he was still living in his 'home region' four years after graduation, just like Sarah. In Greg's case, it was his enjoyable job in his chosen industry that convinced him to stay – for now at least:

> Greg: I'm in a good job in app design in Newcastle and I'm loving that, so for now I'm planning to stay here [the North-East]. From being in the ICT industry I've found out that Newcastle is really big with tech and ICT actually, I never knew that before I got this job. There's plenty of jobs here if you have the skills, it's really going places.

Interestingly, it was not until Greg left university and attained his current job in software design that he became aware of the North-East's prowess in technological industries, and fellow ICT graduate Luke (from research group 1) also shared similar sentiments. This is despite the NELEP (2018) highlighting the region as the second most important hub for ICT companies outside of London. As an important side note, this prior lack of awareness may suggest that more could be done to promote the North East's excellence in ICT industries to a greater number of students and graduates. This could prevent technologically minded graduates like Greg from initially viewing a move away from the North-East as the best option for their careers.

4.2.2. Russell Group university graduates

This sub-group is composed of two graduates from Newcastle University (Leanne and Robert) and three graduates from Durham University (Kirby, Rachel and Jade). Interestingly, while the two Newcastle graduates remained in the North-East after university, the three Durham graduates have all left their 'home region' to live and work. The graduates from Durham who had left the North-East primarily cited relatively high levels of social capital outside of their 'home region' and their cultural compatibility with their new locations as being key to their mobility. Meanwhile, the graduates from Newcastle, who had remained in the North-East, did also demonstrate an ability and propensity to be mobile. Their continuing stasis was primarily the result of personal *choice*, rather than restrictions, although difficulties

in navigating the graduate job market did also prove to be an obstacle to a move away.

4.2.2.1. Russell Group graduates who remained in the North-East to live and work

When first leaving university, Newcastle and geography graduate Leanne initially had her sights firmly set on attaining a graduate scheme position:

> Leanne: A grad scheme was a good way of making sure I got an actual graduate job, like with most of them there's a plan for your career progression you can see that, after going through three years of uni that's the level I should be reaching, I know my worth.

Leanne was clearly not willing to settle for anything less than what she believed was a job fitting of a graduate. Her statement, "I know my worth", demonstrates her lofty aspirations and expectations for herself, as well as a high level of self-confidence. This confidence was also evident when she proclaimed:

> Leanne: I would be willing to move to anywhere for the right job, London, Birmingham, Glasgow, bring it on! [Leanne laughs], I've went to assessment centres in all of them.

Leanne did not appear to have any apprehensions about moving away from the North-East to fulfil her aim of attaining a graduate scheme position. Such self-assurance, as well as her high aspirations and expectations, are traits that were often missing for the working-class graduates in research group 1, a point exemplified by Nate when he questioned "why would anyone pick me?" when discussing his chances of attaining employment in London. This concurs with Burke's (2016) findings that in general, middle-class graduates tended to demonstrate a habitus with higher levels of aspiration and self-expectation than their working-class counterparts.

Leanne's determination to achieve 'an actual graduate job', and leave the North-East if necessary to do it, was strongly endorsed – and even inspired - by her parents, especially her father:

> Leanne: Dad always encouraged me to strive for the best, and he's always said the North-East is only a small corner of the world and I should

cast my net further afield because there's some great, exciting places out there.

Compared to some of the working-class graduates in research group 1 like Craig and Kate, who felt a sense of obligation to remain in the North-East to support their parents, Leanne's experience could not be more different. Her father had frequently reiterated the importance of conducting a geographically extensive job search and to embrace the idea of leaving the North-East. Her father's advice had clearly played a role in enhancing what I would describe as her 'mobilising habitus' – the way she was disposed to be positive and confident about leaving her 'home region' for new destinations.

Furthermore, Leanne's parents did not place any financial demands on her, or pressurise her, into finding a job quickly:

> Leanne: Mam and Dad said to take my time, make sure I got the right job in the right place for me, they didn't nag me, they just encouraged me when I didn't get jobs I wanted. . . they never ask for board [money] or anything like that which is really kind of them because they know that travelling for interviews and assessment centres, things like that, gets expensive.

In Leanne's case, her parents were evidently not just an important source of advice, but also financial backing. They had the desire and a sufficient endowment of economic capital to support Leanne's prolonged job search, meaning that she could afford to travel to interviews in different parts of the U.K.

Overall, Leanne's parents' economic support and advice was enabling her to become more mobile, potentially increasing the chance that she would find a job outside of the North-East and leave the region to live and work. This resonated with fellow Newcastle graduate Robert's account, who told me that during his job search after university:

> Robert: My parents aren't asking for money or anything which is good you know, like they want me to keep my money for when I buy a house, or like eventually they say if I do move someplace else like London or somewhere, it will get me started.

The familial support that Leanne and Robert described sounded a lot like Sage and colleagues' (2013: 1) concept of a 'parental safety-net', which they argued was vital

for the middle-class, Russell Group graduates in their study, as they navigated what can be an uncertain time after university. It was also a big contrast with many of the self-identified working-class graduates from research group one, who were frequently required to provide significant amounts of economic capital to maintain the financial security of their household. In fact, in some cases, they sounded more like a 'safety-net' for their parents, and such familial responsibilities often limited their ability to leave the North-East to live and work. However, self-identified middle-class graduates Leanne and Robert did not have such immobilising responsibilities.

Back to Leanne's story, after a year of not being able to attain a 'graduate level' job within or outside of the North-East, she decided to return to Newcastle University to study for a master's degree. She believed this would "increase my chances even further of getting the type of job I'm looking for". However, Leanne's parents' unwavering support since she graduated was clearly altering her thoughts about where she wanted to live and work after her master's degree:

> Leanne: Mam and dad said doing a master's was a great idea, they are so supportive you know, I'm lucky to be surrounded by people that have my back with everything I do, I'll be applying for jobs all over the country to see if I have any luck, but it's made me think, ideally it would be good to stay nearer to home when I'm working.

Initially, Leanne was prevented from leaving the North-East due to her lack of success with her nationwide job search, and her determination to only accept a job she believed was fitting of her graduate-level skills. However, Leanne's *desire* to leave the North-East also appeared to be reducing due to what Finn (2017: 753) describes as 'tastes for luxury (or freedom)'. Leanne clearly enjoyed living with her parents, and this had led to a contradiction between her parents' encouragement and her own conviction to move away from the North-East on one hand, and the enjoyable homelife she had in her 'home region' on the other. Crucially though, Leanne portrayed her decision to either remain in the North-East or leave as being primarily down to her own personal *choice,* with the availability of suitable jobs being the only restriction. This feeling of freedom when deciding where to live was something that many of the graduates in research group one did *not* share.

Performing arts graduate Robert had also considered moving away from the North-East, with London being frequently mentioned as a potential destination. He believed that:

> Robert: London is an excellent place to go if you are an actor or a singer, or in a band, there's so much work down there, it's just such a big city.

However, seven months after graduation, he was still living with his parents in the North-East. When I asked him why, he replied:

> Robert: I did strongly consider London it would be a proper adventure, and I'd enjoy that, but then, well I wouldn't have friends, all my friends and family are here, I enjoy their company and I'd miss them, so that's why I'm still here, well that and in all honesty I haven't found any jobs I'd like elsewhere and that would need my degree.

Robert was clearly not averse to seeking out and following 'routes' (Gustafson, 2001), and this is reaffirmed by one of his quotes earlier, where he made clear that a move to London was still an option. However, it was also evident that most of his social capital (in the form of family and friends) was located in the North-East and moving away from them would be emotionally difficult. On the surface then, it appeared that he had a dearth of social capital outside of his 'home region', a trait he shared with many of the self-identified working-class graduates in research group 1. Along with a lack of success in the job market, the 'local' nature of his social capital was also an important influence on his decision to stay the North-East.

During his interview, Robert revealed a lot about his experience of making friends at university from other parts of the country:

> Robert: Everyone was nice enough, but I can be a bit shy sometimes. . . I've always had a very small select group of friends even in my childhood and at school, most of them are in my band [Robert laughs], it's quality over quantity when it comes to friends I reckon.

Robert's lack of social capital outside of his home region appears to be strongly influenced by his individual personality traits, rather than being significantly linked to his socio-economic status or the student experience at Newcastle University. His 'shyness' made it difficult for him to form enduring friendships with other students at university, including those who live outside of the North-East. Robert's account demonstrates that there is the need to recognise that people's endowments of social capital can reflect their individual propensity to make friends and stay in contact with others, rather than being solely reflective of their social class background.

4.2.2.2. Russell group graduates who moved away from the North-East to live and work

Self-identified middle-class graduates Kirby, Jade and Rachel all shared remarkably similar accounts of their experiences whilst studying at Durham University and of their lives as graduates. For a start, all three graduates spent their first and third years of university living in their colleges, while their second year was spent living in student accommodation in the city (a common pattern of residency for students at Durham). This was in stark contrast to the graduates in research group one, all of whom lived either in their parental home or with a partner and opted to commute daily to the university campus. Rachel did also live within a commutable distance from Durham, but it was clear that for her, living with fellow students was an essential part of the university experience which could not be missed:

> Rachel: Surely going somewhere like Durham uni, that's the whole point really to go and live in the colleges with other students and really get involved in student life? It's important, you get to spend your time with new people who are likeminded you know, and you get that first taste of independence that's how you learn to manage yourself, like balance your work with your social life, it benefits you in later life.

Rachel's comments about 'living in' echoed the thoughts of Kirby and Jade on the matter. It had not even crossed these graduates' minds that staying at home was an option – living in the colleges was simply 'what one does'. Interestingly, it was also viewed as being crucial to the development of transferrable skills, such as time management, with Kirby even saying "it helps to make you a more well-rounded, sociable person". This view of 'living in' as being essential contrasted significantly with the outlooks of the graduates in research group one, who had all decided against living on campus and who's approach to university was more akin to attending a sixth form college. To recap, this was driven by their apprehensions about the cost of accommodation and the potential increase to their student debt (demonstrations of a working-class 'taste for necessity' (Bourdieu, 1984: 376)), as well as a desire to remain strongly connected to their 'local' social capital (family and friendship groups) outside of university. These were all concerns that were not shared by self-identified middle-class graduates Kirby, Rachel and Jade.

Rachel had graduated from Durham five years ago, while Kirby and Jade had graduated as long as nine years ago. However, they all said that they still enjoyed

strong, enduring friendships with people they had met at university. Kirby lives in London and discussed how she travels regularly around the country to see her university friends who she lived with in her college:

> Kirby: I see Sophie a lot because she lives here [London] as well, quite near to me. . . I've seen Luke recently he's living in Norwich at the moment. . . and Jess lives in Edinburgh so that's a fun place to go, I get the train up to see her quite regularly, about four or five times a year, whenever I fancy a break from here, from work and that.

Here, we can see that the experience of 'living in' at university has clearly expanded Kirby's social capital outside of the North-East. The close bonds she shares with her university friends may not have flourished to such an extent, or may not have even materialised in the first place, if Kirby had lived off-campus. Furthermore, when Kirby declares that she can embark on the long train journey from London to Edinburgh "whenever I fancy a break", we can see that she has an enviable control over both the frequency and *timing* of her mobility, qualities that Bauman (2005) highlights as being essential for success in modern-day 'liquid life'. In fact, being on the move appeared to be easy for her, to the extent that it was a habitual act. This is in contrast to self-identified working-class graduates Lee and Michael for example, who despite leaving the North-East to live and work, could not demonstrate as much control over the frequency and timing of their journeys to see family and friends back in their 'home region', which subsequently led to feelings of isolation. To be as freely mobile as Kirby would require a significant amount of economic capital, which Lee and Michael said they simply did not possess.

Although Kirby portrayed herself as being the most mobile graduate within this middle-class sub-group, Rachel and Jade did also describe how they journeyed frequently to visit friends and family throughout the country, while all three graduates had departed the North-East and now lived in London. For Jade, her move to London was principally motivated by a wish to follow people she had made friends with at university:

> Jade: Before going to university, I didn't have the goal of leaving the North-East to be honest, not at all, but my housemates kept on going on at me to move closer to them in the South and eventually I gave in. . . Of course I'm now engaged to Anthony and I work for his dad and I enjoy it, and he pays well I've got to say [Jade laughs]. . . I'm well and truly settled

in London now we are surrounded by all our friends, I can't see myself moving back to the North-East now.

In Jade's story, the new friends she made at university not only played a significant role in persuading her to leave the North-East for London. They were also crucial in keeping her in the capital - especially former housemate Anthony, who has since become Jade's partner. In fact, the social capital Jade acquired at university has even yielded a source of employment, which in turn has provided her with high levels of economic capital. Jade's account is a standout example of how 'living in' at university can expand a student's social capital, and how transformative this can be for their migration potential. Before university, she had not considered leaving the North-East. Now, she cannot see herself returning.

Confidence and competence when on the move

Kirby, Jade and Rachel had all visited London numerous times, and as Kirby demonstrated, this meant that they were already familiar with the city:

> Kirby: I've been to London loads, I know it very well. . . when I moved there, there was no settling in period for me really, I knew I would like it straight away.

For these graduates, a move to London did not represent a move into the unknown – and therefore an inherently risky endeavour – in the way it did for the vast majority of graduates in research group one. Furthermore, for Rachel, a move to London also further enhanced her self-confidence in her ability to be mobile and live in different destinations:

> Rachel: As a family, we've always went on lots of holidays and I think that helps I'm used to going places and travelling, but my move to London has been a big deal for me, I'm loving it and I'm happy there, but it's shown me that if I enjoy living in a capital city like London, then why not other places, maybe even abroad?

Earlier in this chapter, Dan, a graduate from research group one, suggested that mobility after university would come much easier for graduates who have "already cracked that barrier", in terms of leaving the parental home and moving away for university. I also linked Dan's idea to Adams' (1995) 'risk thermostat model', which essentially suggests that the more we carry out an action (in the context of my research, the act of migration) and are rewarded for it, without experiencing any

negative consequences, the greater our propensity will be to keep doing it. Rachel, Kirby and Jade may not have left their home region for university, but they had already taken that first step of moving out of the parental home, while they had all travelled frequently with their parents to destinations throughout the U.K. and even abroad. Ultimately, this has seemingly minimised the perceived risk of moving away for these graduates, as they all portrayed their mobility as habitual and effortless. Moreover, in Rachel's case, we can see that her perception of the risks involved with living in different destinations continued to be diminished further by her positive experience in the global city that is London. She believed that if she can settle in such a large, busy city as London, then she could effectively settle anywhere. Conversely, due to limitations linked to their economic, social and cultural capital, the majority of graduates in research group one were not as accustomed to being on the move compared to Rachel, Kirby and Jade. They were therefore more disposed to view a move away from their home region as an unpalatable risk, meaning that there was little prospect of them "cracking that barrier" – in Dan's words – in the near future.

Cultural synergy

Just like fellow research group two graduate Sarah, Kirby, Jade and Rachel all believed that they would be culturally suited to living in London. Rachel highlighted the shops in places such as Oxford Street as a particular attraction, while Jade argued that London catered to her typically middle-class cultural interests to a greater extent than the cities in the North-East:

> Jade: I'm one of those nerdy people who really likes museums [Jade laughs]. . . I'm partial to a good art gallery as well because painting and art is like one of my biggest hobbies. . . there's art galleries in the North-East like the Baltic and places, but naturally there's just not the variety of galleries to visit.

Jade recognised that the North-East does boast a number of typically middle-class cultural venues such as museums and art galleries, but believed that London "would always have more" because of its larger geographical scale and its status as a capital city. Meanwhile, Kirby's account was remarkably similar to Sarah's, as she not only highlighted London's array of "posh restaurants" and the "massive high street names like Harrods" as important pull-factors, but also how the relative

192

neutrality of her accent – an important element of her embodied cultural capital – made settling in London easier:

> Kirby: I have a bit of a northern twang, and I'm proud of that don't get me wrong, but when I'm down here [London] I'm glad it's not too strong, there was another lad who worked in our office for a bit and he used to get teased relentlessly for how Geordie he was. . . and yeah it was all a joke but it would get on your nerves after a while and wasn't very nice really.

Kirby acknowledged the jovial nature of the comments that her colleague had to endure, but also how such treatment by others can still become tedious and even hurtful, and how this could have made settling in London difficult for her if she had endured this level of teasing. She also believed:

> Kirby: After a bit, even if it's meant as a joke, it does start getting into your head, I mean I could tell he was trying to speak differently around them, and I thought that was a shame he felt he had to do that.

Kirby's story about her teased colleague describes the manifestation of the concerns many of the graduates in research group one had about 'standing out' outside of their 'home region' because of their distinguishable cultural capital, especially their northern, working-class accent. They were concerned about being treated differently, or 'negatively sanctioned' (Bourdieu 1990: 56), and resultantly feeling like a 'fish out of water' (Bourdieu, 1992). It also echoes Sian's account, where even jovial comments made by other students still made her more conscious about the way she talked, and ultimately more aware of her own difference (Dubois, 1903). Kirby expressed her relief that, due to her less distinguishable cultural capital – especially her relatively neutral accent – she did not experience such teasing. Her similarity to the people around her made her everyday experience of living and working in London easier. This reflects Bauman's (2005) postulation about one of the main ironies of modern life – that everyone is striving to be an 'individual', and yet 'standing out' from the crowd often proves disadvantageous, particularly from a mobility sense. This is because distinguishable characteristics like a strong accent can often indicate *belonging* rather than individuality, and for Bauman, if a person belongs, they do not have as much '*freedom* to move, freedom to choose' (Bauman, 2005: 5, emphasis added), as well as the freedom to reinvent themselves (or adapt) which, as we have seen, is often thought to be crucial for 'fitting in' when travelling to a new destination.

4.3. Research Group 3: Graduates who originated from outside the North-East and who identified as working-class

This third analytical group signals a shift in my research, as I will now be focusing on graduates who were domiciled *outside* of the North-East for the first time. The graduates in this group also attended a university in the North-East and self-identified as being working-class. Research group three is the smallest analytical group, as it consists of four graduates: Paul, Gemma and Jason, who all attended the post-1992 universities of Northumbria and Sunderland, and Andrew, who attended Newcastle University, a Russell Group institution. Normally, for analytical clarity, I have divided my research groups into two sections: post-1992 university graduates and Russell Group graduates. However, because there is only one graduate who attended a Russell Group institution, I have decided to group them together in this instance.

In research group three, only Sunderland University graduate Jason remained in the North-East to live and work, citing the conversion of a work placement in the region into permanent employment after graduation as the key reason. Meanwhile, for Paul, Gemma and Andrew, relatively low endowments of economic capital, which were sometimes accompanied with a lack of what Burke (2016: 95) refers to as 'strategy' in terms of their education and career trajectory, were the principal reasons why they were once again residing in their region of domicile.

A lack of direction – literally and figuratively

Both Gemma and Andrew cited non-academic reasons why they chose to study in the North-East. Andrew, who was from Leeds, acknowledged that Newcastle is "a good uni", but said that he mainly came to the North-East to study because of Newcastle's "buzzing nightlife, everyone goes on about it being one of the best places to be a student". Meanwhile, Gemma had moved from her home city of Hull to study at Northumbria University because:

> Gemma: I wanted to move away from home, put some proper distance between me and Hull, and see how it feels to be independent. . . I knew student life would be good in the North-East, and I'd much rather stay up north than go anywhere posh, I don't think it would work for me anywhere like that [Gemma laughs].

From Gemma's quote, the implication is that anywhere outside of the North is 'posh' or middle-class. When I asked her why it 'would not work' for her in a "posh" environment, she said (with notable venom):

> Gemma: I just prefer people who are down to Earth, they'd probably look down their noses at someone like me, a northern lass, look at me, I'm not posh am I.

Even though Gemma had moved away from her 'home region', she obviously believed that her choice of study destinations was being strongly limited by her "northern" cultural capital. Just like in fellow working-class graduate Craig's account, Gemma's use of the phrase "someone like me" is remarkably similar to Bourdieu's wording when he describes how the habitus allows us to decipher 'what is and is not for us' (Bourdieu, 1990: 56). Gemma's habitus is compelling her to avoid any place that boasts 'posh' collective cultural capital in case she is looked down upon, or in Bourdieu's terms 'negatively sanctioned' (Bourdieu 1990: 56) by the people around her. She is therefore only able to consider moving to study destinations which are located in the North of England.

Fellow Northumbria university graduate Paul's motivation for leaving his home city of Derby to study in the North-East was more related to his subject preference and academic attainment, rather than the nightlife or the North-East's collective cultural capital. In his opinion:

> Paul: Northumbria's business school really sounded like it was going places, business studies was by far my best subject at college, so that was why [he chose Northumbria University].

However, Paul's account was similar to Andrew and Gemma's in the sense that he had no clear plan about what jobs or careers he was going to pursue after university, or where he wanted to live:

> Paul: I just picked it [business] because it was my favourite subject and I thought it would open up a lot of doors but it hasn't which surprises me, you know, I've never had a specific job in mind. . . I thought I might as well just move back home, because at home yeah I would have to work and contribute [financially] but it would be cheaper than renting in Newcastle, at least I had a roof over my head.

Paul's reasoning for returning back to his 'home' in Derby after university denotes a lack of what Burke (2016) would refer to as 'strategy'. Paul had seemingly chosen to study business at university without much thought about what he wanted to do with his business degree, and with no job lined up after university (and even no idea about the type of job he would like). In the end, this left him with little choice but to return back to his familial home. In a sense, he was moving back to the 'parental safety net' (Sage et al. 2013: 1), although I use the term reluctantly because he still had to provide economic capital to cover household bills. Andrew also demonstrated a lack of 'strategy':

> Andrew: I didn't work hard enough to be honest and I got a 2:2, and even though it's from Newcastle it hasn't improved my prospects much, you need a 2:1 at least, so I was always going to end up back home so I could think about what to do next.

For Burke, the lack of strategy demonstrated by Paul and Andrew is a typical trait of the 'collective working-class habitus' (2016: 114). In Paul's case in particular, his belief that his business degree would automatically 'open a lot of doors', and his bewilderment when this was not the case, reminds me of my own experience. It demonstrates Bathmaker's (2013) point that working-class students/graduates often lack the knowledge of 'how to play the game' at university, or that there is even a game to play in the first place. They are less likely to seek out extra-curricular activities to add value to their degrees (Bathmaker, 2013), instead following the meritocratic discourse that working hard and attaining a degree will be rewarded with a good job after graduation. For Paul, when this idealist scenario did not play out, he was at a loss for what to do next – and his refuge was his parental home in Derby. Andrew also painted a picture of his family home as a type of 'retreat', where he could settle down and contemplate his next move.

When I asked Paul what he was currently doing for a living, he told me that he was working in a shop selling sports clothing and equipment. He also said that his job:

> Paul: makes zero use of my degree, but it was needs must I had to take it, even though it's not the best paid job and it isn't what I want to be doing.

He also partially blamed his low wage for reducing his chance of moving away from Derby:

> Paul: I would consider moving somewhere else, but with my current wage, by the time I've paid the bills, had a few nights out and that sort of thing there's not much else, so at the moment I won't be leaving Derby.

Paul's scenario was very similar to fellow working-class graduate Sean's account. To recap, Sean felt he could not leave the North-East due to being stuck in a job he did not enjoy and the relatively low wage it provided, along with the large financial contribution he had to make to his parents. Ultimately, for both graduates, struggles in the job market and their relative dearth of economic capital – which was also exacerbated by the need to give a financial contribution to their parents - prevented them from becoming mobile and leaving their home regions to live and work.

Forming connections with the North-East

Sunderland University business graduate Jason was the only person in this research group who stayed in the North-East to live and work after university. For him, his internship during his second year of university was a key reason why he did not return to his hometown of Blackburn:

> Jason: I did an internship at [an ICT company], it was in marketing. . . I really enjoyed it and I must have done well, I got my foot in the door, they offered me a job for when I finished university and I was over the moon, to go back somewhere I knew the management and had made friends, it was a no brainer.

For Jason, we can see that not only did his exemplary performance during his internship lead to an offer of a full-time job; the experience had also expanded his social capital in the North-East. Crucially, his social capital was elevated because he now knows more people *and* because he has a good relationship with the management of the business, showing that his acquaintances are of a *high standing* in society. This is important because, as Field (2008) and Bourdieu (1986) point out, people of a higher standing tend to be more influential. In Jason's case, the managers of the business were undoubtedly influential in securing him the job and, in the process, keeping him in the North-East.

However, it was not just social capital that was important in influencing Jason's decision to stay in Sunderland. He also believed that his cultural capital and ethos was similar to the collective cultural capital and outlook of the North-East, and the city of Sunderland in particular:

> Jason: In Sunderland everyone is really friendly, no one is a snob or anything like that, there's just the same old fashioned, working-class approach as in my town of Blackburn and that I like to think I have. . . you don't have to sound like you are on the BBC to get a job, people judge you by your performance in the role, that's the main thing, but it's not like that everywhere unfortunately.

To use Bourdieu's terminology, it is clear that Jason felt like a 'fish in water' when he is in the North-East, in both a cultural and social sense. However, he also did not believe that this would be the case everywhere, as he suggested that in places which did not share his "working-class approach", he might be less successful in finding employment, particularly because of his accent. Throughout this research, it has become clear that being superficially judged because of an accent is a very common concern among the self-identified working-class graduates, and it has a significant impact on where they believe they can live and work.

For many of the working-class graduates from the North-East, moving away from their home region was simply too much of a risk. However, conversely, Jason's internship had reduced the risk of staying in the North-East after university: he had attained employment which he said provided him with a relatively high economic capital; he had created a social network in the North-East, containing both professional and friendship contacts, which reduced the risk of becoming socially isolated; and he believed his cultural capital and outlook was congruent with his new region. Despite only being one graduate account, Jason's story does highlight the potential impact internships can have in connecting and integrating students who come from other parts of the U.K. to the North-East, which ultimately could mean they are more likely to stay after their graduation.

4.4. Research Group 4: graduates who originated from outside the North-East and identified as middle-class

In this fourth analytical group, all graduates were domiciled outside of the North-East of England and identified themselves as middle-class. Reverting back to my original format, I will begin my analysis for this group by firstly focusing on graduates who attended the post-1992 universities that feature in my research: Northumbria and Sunderland. I will then move on to consider the experiences of graduates from the Russell Group universities of Durham and Newcastle.

4.4.1 Post-1992 university graduates

This sub-group is composed of three graduates: Ryan, who attended Sunderland University, and Charlotte and Stephany, who both graduated from Northumbria University. Stephany chose to remain in the North-East after university and, like Jason from the previous sub-group, she described how a spell of work experience during her third year was key to her decision. Meanwhile, Charlotte and Ryan described how their families' social contacts helped them to gain employment in their region of domicile, while Charlotte in particular discussed how remaining in the North-East to live and work was never really a likely prospect.

The potential importance of work experience in fostering ties to the North-East

Northumbria University graduate Stephany embarked on a work experience placement in marketing during her third year of university, which was related to the work she was doing for her dissertation. Even though she had only spent a 'short time' on the work placement, it clearly had a significant influence on her attitudes towards pursuing a career in the North-East:

> Stephany: To be honest I originally intended to work in London because I thought that was the place I would stand the best chance of getting a job, but my spell of work experience changed that, it was a great experience everyone was so nice and the company even said they would keep me in mind when hiring in the future, it made me think, London is competitive for jobs, maybe I would stand more chance in the North-East. . . I don't work for them but I've got a good job in marketing at [another firm in the North-East].

In the previous research group, we saw that in Jason's case, his internship had expanded his social capital and that was ultimately what kept him in the North-East. However, for Stephany, it was more about a change of mentality. In her quote, it is evident that when she first moved to the North-East to study, she believed (like many other graduates in this research) in the common narrative about London being an 'escalator region' (Fielding, 1992) for young professionals and a hub for business and employment (Shields, 2013), and this made it an attractive destination. However, her positive experience working for a company in the North-East, along with their promise to consider employing her in the future, meant that she also began to contemplate staying in the North-East to live and work. Of course, living in the

North-East meant that Stephany would become geographically detached from her family in Watford. However, it was evident that this was not going to be a major issue for her:

> Stephany: I travel down [to Watford] a lot during my time off, and they've [my parents and sister] come up here lots of times, they really like coming to Newcastle and staying over a few nights, my sister wants to study up here now too, so I might be seeing a lot more of her in a year or so's time.

Unlike self-identified working-class graduates Lee and Michael from research group 1, who felt isolated from friends and family when leaving their 'home region', it was clear that both Stephany and her family had sufficient economic capital to gain a large amount control over the frequency and timing of their mobility, despite having to regularly cover what is a relatively large geographical distance between the North-East and Watford. Of course, Bauman (2005) argues that such control over mobility is almost exclusively reserved for those in the middle to upper classes and this matches with her self-identified middle-class status. As an important side note, Stephany's story also demonstrates some of the potential benefits of retaining graduates in the North-East from other parts of the country, and not just from a talent perspective. Her family in Watford are now connected to the North-East and have a motivation for visiting the region that did not exist before, while her sister has enjoyed her visits so much she now wants to study at one of the North-East's universities. Although this is only one case study, it does demonstrate how retaining graduates could help to link the North-East to other regions of the U.K.

Unlike Stephany, the other two graduates in this sub-group, Ryan (who was from the East-Midlands) and Charlotte (who was from London), both returned to their home regions to live and work after university. For both of these graduates, their familial social capital was a crucial factor in this decision. History graduate Ryan told me that:

> Ryan: My dad's friend is a manager in a museum and he let me know that there were a few jobs going there, and I was fortunate enough to get one, I think he put a word in to be honest, I was really happy because besides maybe working in archives, working in a museum is ideal and I can actually use my knowledge from my degree. . . I won't be leaving anytime soon!

From Ryan's quote, it is evident that his dad's high-ranking friend at the museum has provided Ryan with two of Lin's (2001: 20) crucial tenets of social capital: (1) *'information* about the job vacancy, and (2) potentially some *influence* over the recruitment process. Furthermore, the information and influence his family's social capital provided has clearly played a crucial role in keeping him in his 'home region', as he really enjoys the job he attained and does not want to relinquish it, at least in the near future.

Meanwhile, English Language graduate Charlotte's familial social capital played a very direct role in her motivation for both returning to London, and remaining there to live and work:

> Charlotte: My dad owns his own consultancy business, and he always wanted to involve me in the business you know, for it to be a family effort, but he wanted to make sure it's what I want, so he encouraged me to go to uni, leave London see a new place and see if there's anything else I want to do. . . really in my mind I was always just going to work for dad.

Charlotte obviously had very influential social capital in the form of her own dad, who offered her the chance to work for the family business. Studying in the North-East was almost portrayed as an adventure and an experiment, during which she could work out what she wanted to do with her future. Unlike many of the working-class graduates in this research she did not appear to have any concerns about travelling so far away from home to study, or 'fitting in' socially and culturally in a new location. During her interview, she did describe the North-East as a "really cool place" and heaped praise on its beautiful coastline. Nevertheless, it was clear that Charlotte was keen to honour her dad's wish of working for the family business, and this meant that no matter how positive her experience in the North-East was, there was always a sense of inevitability about her return to London.

4.4.2. Russell Group graduates

This sub-group is composed of eight graduates: four of whom studied at Durham University and four who attended Newcastle University. Interestingly, seven out of the eight graduates in this sub-group left the North-East after university to live and work. Johnny was the only one who stayed to do a master's and then a PhD at Newcastle University, but he was planning to promptly move to London as soon as

he had finished his studies. These graduates expressed numerous different reasons for wanting to leave the North-East, ranging from the region's perceived cultural homogeneity, to simply wanting to follow in the footsteps of university friends who intended to move to London, or seeking jobs which were considered to be more prevalent in the capital.

An attraction to multi-cultural places

Geography PhD student Johnny was originally from Portsmouth, but opted to continue his studies in the North-East because:

> Johnny: I had a look around at different universities that specialised in my topic, of gentrification, but staying at Newcastle [university] was the best option, it's of a high calibre and [a member of academic staff] was very enthusiastic about my research proposal.

As highlighted in the introduction chapter, one of the areas where the North-East is excelling is in the quality of its higher education institutions, and in Johnny's case his excellent experience at Newcastle University had undoubtedly played a large role in his decision to stay in the region to continue his academic career. However, Johnny also made it clear that he was planning to move away from the North-East as soon as he had finished his PhD. One of the main reasons was because he had his sights set on a particular job in parliament, and as Johnny stated, "if I want to get that job then obviously I have to move to London". However, there were two other important reasons why he wanted to leave the North-East, with the first being related to what he called the region's "cultural offering".

Throughout his interview, Johnny discussed how he had an eclectic range of cultural tastes, from enjoying Brazilian and Thai food, to listening to Samba and Afrobeat music and frequently visiting art galleries. He even described himself as a "man of the world". In this way, Johnny was the epitome of what Bauman (2005) would describe as a 'cultural hybrid', a person with a multi-faceted and interchangeable identity and a heterogenous cultural capital. For Bauman, such an identity means that a person is not distinguishable as 'belonging' to one particular place, and they are therefore not burdened with the cultural stereotypes associated with particular groups (Bauman, 2005). They can move relatively freely from place to place, and this concurs with Johnny's descriptions of how he enjoyed doing a three-month-long road trip through South America, or how he went backpacking through Europe. It is clear that travelling and mobility – even in far-flung destinations around the globe -

did not faze him at all, and that he had the economic resources to fund such high levels of mobility.

In Johnny's opinion, the capital city of London was the only place geographically large and socially diverse enough to match and cater for his incredibly varied, and in some cases niche, cultural tastes:

> Johnny: Newcastle certainly isn't the monochromatic, post-industrial wasteland that a lot of people imagine it to be, it's a cosmopolitan city, and you do have good art galleries, museums, it does have pretty much everything. . . the problem is variety, there's only so many different restaurants you can go to, or so many art galleries, and within them the exhibitions don't change all that often, I feel like I've been there and bought the t-shirt as far as Newcastle's cultural offering goes, whereas in London there are new exhibitions all the time, in art, in museums.

Johnny's quote once again hints to the prevailing stereotypes about the North which exist in the 'national imagination' (Russell, 2004), of a bleak landscape still sporting the scars of its industrial decline. This is not exactly the most attractive image, and certainly not one which would normally be conducive to attracting people to live and work in the region. In fact, Johnny said the only reason he could look past this stereotype before studying in the North-East is because his grandparents were from the region, meaning he already had a connection and had visited before. Moreover, Johnny's quote highlighted another problem for the North-East: the issue of geographical scale and connectedness. Being the capital city, London is simply a larger and more internationally connected city than any of the cities in the North-East, and therefore it is inherently going to boast a greater cultural variety. Newcastle simply could not compete with Johnny's insatiable appetite for international culture – from art to music, to food and museum exhibitions.

Newcastle University graduate Edward and Durham graduate Joe both expressed similar sentiments, lamenting the North East's lack of cultural variety. Edward from London spoke positively about his time studying in Newcastle, but said that he wanted to return home because:

> Edward: I'm from Caribbean decent and in Newcastle, yeah there's elements of Caribbean culture there's a couple of restaurants in the city, things like that, but that's nothing compared to where I live. . . I feel like in Newcastle it's all one thing.

Meanwhile, Joe, who was from Birmingham, used an almost identical phrase to Johnny when describing why he left the North-East:

> Joe: 'I've been there done it and bought the t-shirt, Durham is so small, it makes for a good university town because it is compact, but I don't think there's enough to sustain living there, it's all just pubs and coffee shops [Joe laughs].

Both Edward and Joe emphasised a lack of variety in terms of culture and amenities as being the key reason why they wanted to leave the North-East, despite enjoying their time studying in the region. It is worth highlighting that both graduates originated from large cities, and this probably exacerbated the perception of Newcastle and Durham being relatively geographically small and culturally homogenous.

Going back to Johnny's interview, his account was particularly interesting as it contained an element of contradiction. On the one hand, he was a very culturally heterogenous and mobile person who relished the prospect of 'routes' (Gustafson, 2001) and enjoyed experiencing new places. Yet, on the other hand, his third major reason for leaving the North-East was to be closer to his family who lived in Portsmouth and his girlfriend's family who lived in North London. I questioned him about this element of contradiction in his story, and he replied:

> Johnny: Yeah I see what you mean, but I think everyone needs a hinterland you know, where you know your neighbours, you have your family and there's that sense of belonging, even the most avid traveller needs a base to come back to.

Johnny may portray himself as "a man of the world", but in a sense, a move to London was in fact a move back to his comfort zone and a steady base. Living in London would not only give Johnny the opportunity to satisfy his eclectic cultural tastes, but it would also mean he would be closer to many of his friends and family members. Johnny's story resonates with Gustafson's (2001) argument that contra Bauman's views, 'routes' and 'roots' are not always mutually exclusive but can in fact be complementary. Possessing a solid base to retreat to is often what gives people the confidence to be mobile in the first place, as they have a familiar 'safety-net' to fall back on.

Following friends and 'the well-worn path' (Finn, 2017: 748)

For Durham University graduates Rex and Stuart, it was evident that the social dynamics of the collegiate system, which in terms of North-East universities is unique to that institution, played a significant role in motivating them to leave the North-East after graduation. Starting with Rex's account, he painted an especially clear picture of just how tightly knit Durham University's college communities are:

> Rex: Seriously it's crazy, you do everything together, go for meals together, go to lectures together, the college bar together, you get the picture, then all of a sudden you've finished uni and everyone leaves, we all become so close during that time. . . all of my friends were moving to London and I wanted to go with them, not be stuck on my own in Beedale.

Rex enjoyed the time he spent living with his university friends so much that he had a self-confessed "fear that I would miss out massively" if he did not follow them to London. His bonds with his university friends were evidently his principal motivation for moving to the capital. This demonstrates the potentially mobilising impact of 'living in' at university, and this is an experience that the self-identified working-class graduates from research group 1, who all lived away from campus primarily due to financial concerns, did not have.

Once again, London was the destination of choice for Rex and all of his mobile friends, just as it has been for many of the other graduates in my research. This trend reflects Cresswell's (2010: 24) argument that 'mobility is channelled into acceptable conduits' and is very rarely freeform. Throughout my research, graduates that have moved to London or expressed a desire to move there have portrayed the move as being almost a necessity, and the self-identified middle-class graduates in this research group are no different. Durham University graduate Dave, who is originally from Kent, believed that:

> Dave: The North-East has a low glass ceiling, if I want to stand a good chance of promotions in the future I *have* to go to London, I swear that place is like a black hole it just sucks you in, it's unavoidable.

Notice the emphasis on the word 'have' in Dave's quote, as well as his description of how London 'sucks you in' as if it is almost against your will – all of this does not denote a great deal of *choice*. Newcastle graduates Olivia and Alice also expressed similar sentiments to Dave, with Olivia describing London as "the *only* place" for her,

if she was to pursue her dream of working with a particular charity that was based there, while Alice insisted:

> Alice: You *must* consider London after university really, because it broadens your horizons massively, if you don't you are severely limiting the number of jobs you can apply for.

From Dave, Olivia and Alice's quotes, we can see that they almost felt compelled to leave the North-East after graduation and move to London, in order to maximise the potential of having a successful career in a job of their choice. In a sense, their mobility is being restricted, or at least 'channelled'. Admittedly, the frequency and timing of their journeys and the distances they can travel are not being restricted – all three graduates depicted themselves as being highly mobile in terms of holiday travel and journeying to see their families during their time at university. However, when it comes to choosing a place to live and work, they do believe that there is only one specific route they can follow, and that is the route that leads to the capital. As a result, even the self-identified middle-class graduates in my research often follow 'a fairly well-worn path around the place' (Finn, 2017: 748). Furthermore, as an important side note, environmental consultant Dave's notion that the North-East has a "low glass ceiling" for promotion would undoubtedly concern organisations such as the NELEP, who want to encourage the retention of talent in the region.

Returning back to the unique dynamics of Durham University's collegiate system, I asked geography graduate Stuart why he and all of his friendship group – which was predominantly the same as Rex's – had left the North-East for London after graduation. His response demonstrates how some Durham University students, particularly those who have come to the North-East from elsewhere in the U.K., can remain somewhat disconnected from their host city and region:

> Stuart: I guess we just didn't know anyone in the North-East, we just all socialised with each other. . . when you are at Durham Uni, you are very much in this self-contained bubble, like you can do everything there you barely have to venture into town, only for the essentials like groceries and beer, to be honest you rarely bump into the locals.

Stuart's quote shows how students who live in Durham University's colleges predominantly spend their time surrounded by people like themselves, many of whom originate from outside of the North-East. I asked Stuart to further contemplate

why he did not get to know anyone from the North-East during his time in Durham, and he replied:

> Stuart: To be honest, I just don't think many people go to Durham with the intention of staying and making a life there, they go because the uni has a great reputation, it's one of the only universities alongside Oxbridge that has colleges and it's far away from their parents, but they won't intend to stay, and I don't think the uni intends you to either, the careers fairs and things are all multinational corporations or based in London, not the North-East. . . I don't think people feel the need to get to know anyone outside of university because they aren't going to stay.

From his quote, it was clear that Stuart had not even considered staying in the North-East, and he believed most of his friends felt the same. In the literature review, I emphasised that even though social capital can be conceptualised as a type of resource, most of the time I did not think people made social contacts in a calculating way, for personal gain. However, there is an element of this idea in Stuart's story. He questions why a person would expend the effort required to forge and maintain social capital – and in doing so put down some roots – in a place where they have no intention of remaining? Furthermore, his comments about the careers fair are also interesting and concur with my own experience as a student at Durham. Companies from outside of the North-East did seem to enjoy a disproportionately high representation at these events. Perhaps one of the reasons why Dave and his friends had not even considered remaining in the North-East to live and work was because they were not made aware of the North-East's flourishing industrial sectors (see introduction chapter) and the careers opportunities that are available in the region. This is certainly something that Durham University's career services and fair organisers, along with local organisations such as the NELEP, should give further consideration to.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1. Introduction

In the introduction chapter of this thesis, I described how even though the North-East finds itself in a challenging economic, social and political climate, the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (NELEP) have identified four industrial areas in which the region is currently excelling and also have the potential for significant future growth. These were: (1) digital industries revolving around information and communication technologies; (2) advanced manufacturing of products such as cars and medicines; (3) health and life sciences; and (4) energy technologies – especially renewable energy. When reading the NELEP's Strategic Economic Plan (2017) and their online blog, it quickly becomes clear that they believe graduates (especially those who studied STEM subjects at university) will be key in powering these industrial sectors going forward. On the aforementioned blog, the NELEP (2019) even posed the question: 'How can we encourage more graduates to live, work and stay in the North East?' This statement is reflective of two common and prevailing assumptions made about graduates: (1) that having more graduates in a place almost automatically equals greater prospects for a place's economy and regional output, and (2) that graduates are universally a very highly mobile group of people who have their choice of locations, and it is up to places to either entice them in or encourage them to stay. Of course, from my own experience, I realised that this was not always the case – I was a relatively immobile graduate who had initially endured an extended and disheartening period of unemployment. Furthermore, I believed this was largely because I did not have the sufficient economic capital, social contacts and cultural adaptability to extend my job search beyond my 'home region' of the North-East. In my judgement, my experience had undeniable links to my social class status. It also linked very well with Bauman's description of mobility being an unequally accessed resource within society, and especially Bourdieu's 'theoretical toolbox' (Burke, 2016), including his concepts of economic, social and cultural capital.

With this research, I wanted to discover whether other graduates had endured similar experiences of immobility to myself after graduation, and whether this could also be linked to their class status and explained through this Bourdieusian lens. If

this proved to be the case, then these findings would certainly problematise the narrative that graduates are a homogenous, mobile group of people.

At the forefront of my research project were two principal research questions:

1) To what extent does a graduate's socio-economic status impact their ability and propensity to be mobile?

And

2) What implications do my research findings have for current academic understandings and regional policies on graduate mobility and retention?

In this chapter, I will highlight my most important findings from my analysis, and I will discuss the academic, theoretical and practical (policy) implications they could have. The discussion will initially refer to each research group (1-4) in turn, before bringing all of this content together to address my research questions. Finally, I will acknowledge some of the limitations of my research, as well as suggesting areas for future research, which have been inspired by this project.

5.2. Discussion for Research Group 1 (RG1): graduates who originated from the North-East and identified as working-class

RG1 Post-1992 university graduates who *stayed* in the North-East post-graduation: the *risk* of moving away.

Contrary to my initial expectations, the majority of graduates in this sub-group did express an openness or even a desire to move away from the North-East to live and work. This came as a surprise to me, as people from the North-East are renowned for their strong sense of regional (place) identity. As the place identity literature (e.g. Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996) suggests, holding a strong place identity often indicates a sense of contentedness or even happiness in a place, which transfers into a desire to remain in that location. However, for these graduates, this was not always the case, with Jack being the *only* graduate to talk extensively about his affinity for his 'home region'.

Despite most graduates in this group being open to moving away, from their accounts it quickly became clear that leaving the North-East, especially to go to the South-East of England, would present a great deal of *risk* for them. The South-East of England was typically conceptualised as a predominantly wealthy, middle-class

social field. This affirms Shields' (2013) argument about the existence of a 'space myth' (Shields, 2013:245) that permeates the 'national imagination' (to use Russell's (2004) term), which depicts the South-East of the U.K (and especially London) as a connected hub for middle-class culture, business and institutional and political power. The graduates in this sub-group repeatedly doubted their capacity to integrate and compete in the 'game of life' (to use Bauman *and* Bourdieu's metaphor) in the South-East's 'middle-class' field, due to what they perceived to be their lack of economic capital and sparse social networks outside of the North-East - which especially lacked people of influence, such as managers, who could provide them with the 'information' and 'influence' (Lin, 2001: 20) needed to attain jobs. Graduates also had strong concerns about being understood and taken seriously outside of their home region because of their 'northern', working-class accents. After compiling all of these concerns together, it is clear why graduates would consider a move away from the North-East, and especially to the South-East, to be a risky endeavour.

Overall, these graduates tended to believe that a move to the South-East in particular was 'not for the likes of them' (Burke, 2016: 114). This was synonymous with the lack of confidence they generally demonstrated throughout their interviews. Nate's account comes to mind here, when he questioned why any employers in London would choose him over all of the other applicants, citing his 'northern' accent as being a particular deterrent for employers. Within these findings, there are clear parallels with Burke' (2016: 114) notion of a 'collective working-class habitus', where working-class graduates demonstrate 'attitudes and dispositions displaying low levels of aspiration, expectation and confidence'. I would argue that a habitus with these particular characteristics is an 'immobilising habitus', especially in the way it deters graduates from extending the geographical scale of their job searches beyond the North-East.

An interesting and important revelation from this graduate sub-group was that in some cases, a 'move away' was not only risky for the graduate personally, but also for their *family's* ongoing financial security and overall well-being. Sage et al. (2013) discussed how graduates often rely on the 'parental safety net' in the often-uncertain time after graduation. In fact, these authors appeared to lament this, as they argued that it was putting a burden onto parents. Sage and colleagues labelled these parents as the 'sandwich generation' (2013: 751) – people who had to unfairly shoulder the burden of looking after both their adult graduate children and their own

elderly parents. However, my research demonstrated that for some *working-class* graduates, it was actually their role (or 'responsibility') to look after their parents (especially financially). For graduates like Craig and Kate, this emotional and financial responsibility was limiting their ability to leave the parental home, never mind the North-East, as they prioritised their role as caring adult children over their own ambitions to purchase and move into their own homes. In these cases, it was not that the graduates were using the parental home as a refuge, as Sage and colleagues (2013) suggest is typically the case. The authors do acknowledge that the graduates within their research would all be considered to be 'middle-class'. However, they do also seem to fall into the common trap of assuming that graduates are a rather homogenous group of people, and that their 'middle-class' graduate sample would be generally representative of the graduate cohort as a whole.

Furthermore, a number of graduates in this sub-group informed me that they felt discontent and unfulfilled in their current job roles - many of which were not what would be traditionally considered as 'graduate jobs'. Some graduates felt this way because they believed they were not receiving an income fitting of a graduate. For graduates like Sean, this contributed to their dearth of economic capital which made moving away from the North-East to pursue a career as a golf coach an unrealistic prospect. Others lamented the fact that their jobs did not require them to utilise the subject knowledge they acquired at university, which reduced their interest in the role. This supports Tholen and colleagues' (2016) evidence about the general lack of requirement for subject knowledge in so called 'graduatising professions' or other job roles that are not traditionally occupied by graduates. Many graduates do not occupy traditional 'graduate jobs', and this can certainly be said for those graduates in research group one. Rather, we should be talking about the 'jobs graduates do' (Elias and Purcell, 2004; in James et al. 2010: 954). As Tholen (2016) also makes clear, this can actually be concerning not just for the graduates, but also non-degree holders who struggle under the weight of competition from graduates for lower-paid work. Ultimately, this evidence provides a further riposte to the common notion of 'the more graduates in a place, the better'. This assumption has even appeared on the NELEP's internet blog – an organisation that sets the Strategic Economic Plan in the North-East.

RG1 post-1992 university graduates who left the North-East post-graduation: 'people make places'

Even though all three graduates in this sub-group - Lee, Michael and Alexandra – had left the North-East to live and work after university, it was clear that moving away from their 'home-region' (even to cities relatively close by in national terms) had still proved to be a risky and, in some ways, daunting undertaking. For all three graduates, the greatest risk was to their existing social capital in the North-East, with their connections to friends and family (who were relatively immobile and based in their 'home region') becoming increasingly distant, both literally and figuratively. For Lee and Michael especially, the pressures of geographical distance on their social capital were compounded by the lack of control they had over the *timing* of their mobility, which would require a larger endowment of economic capital than they had at their disposal. As Bauman (2005) suggests, it is those people who are positioned nearer the *top* of the social pyramid (i.e. middle to upper-class) who are more likely to be able to afford the economic expense of mobility and this also provides them with more control over *time* – when to be mobile, when to speed up and when to slow down (Harding, 2002).

ICT gadgetry, such as video-calling and social media, proved incapable of compensating for a lack of face-to-face interaction in physical space with friends and family. This suggests that Field's (2008) argument - that increasing the geographic distance between social contacts makes them significantly more likely to weaken - can still be salient even in an age of high-speed internet and advanced communication technologies. The graduates in this sub-group also found that building up new social connections in their novel locations proved to be a slow process, reaffirming Bourdieu's (1986) assertion that any form of capital, including social capital, takes time to accumulate. Overall, taking all of these factors together, it is clear to see how the graduates began to feel somewhat isolated in their new cities. Ultimately, it was mainly this feeling of isolation which was fuelling the desire of all three of these graduates to return to the North-East. In this way, they realised the fears of many of the comparatively immobile graduates in the previous sub-group (post-1992 graduates who *stayed* in the North-East after graduation – like Dan), who were deterred from moving away from the North-East exactly because of a fear of becoming detached from their existing social networks. Already in this research, it is becoming clear that a dearth of social capital, especially outside of

212

the North-East, is proving to be a significant factor limiting working-class graduates' ability to leave their home region or sustain themselves outside of it.

RG1 Russell Group university graduates: 'attending' rather than 'living' university

For this group of self-identified, working-class graduates, the extent to which they could engage with the 'full' university experience as a student was a key factor in determining their mobility after graduation. In Andy and Carl's cases, attending a Russell Group university did prove to be geographically mobilising. In particular, Andy describes how he made friends with other people from other parts of the country, and this changed his (originally seemingly negative) ideas about what people from the South of the U.K. were like. He described how this 'broadened his horizons' and gave him the courage to apply for jobs in London.

However, accounts like Andy's were the exception in this sub-group of graduates. In the literature review chapter, I highlighted Bourdieu and Wacquant's argument about 'times of crises' (1992: 131), events where people find themselves completely outside of their familiar social field. These are also termed 'out-of-environment experiences' by Burke (2016: 73), and when they occur, people's 'subjective expectations' are no longer in accordance with the 'objective probabilities' on offer (Crossley, 2002). In the case of Burke's (2016: 70) research participant Niamh, her 'out-of-environment' experience occurred when she worked abroad, and it disrupted her habitus in a 'positive' sense by raising her aspirations and expectations (Burke, 2016: 73) in terms of her career trajectory. For the working-class graduates in my research, attending Russell Group universities – with their predominantly middle-class cohorts – certainly provided an 'out of environment experience'. However, contrary to Niamh's story where spending time in an unfamiliar field had a mobilising influence (in a professional, social and potentially even geographic sense), for graduates like Chris and Sian in my research, it only served to accentuate their 'sense of their own difference' (Dubois, 1903). In turn, this fed already-existing insecurities about their ability to succeed outside of their home region, both socially and professionally. Sian was particularly concerned about how her North-East accent (an element of her embodied, *working*-class cultural capital) could make teaching outside of her home region more daunting, as she had reservations about whether or not she would be taken seriously. For these graduates, attending a Russell Group university was far from being a transformative and geographically

mobilising experience. Instead, it reinforced their social and cultural concerns and further deterred them from leaving their home region. In a theoretical sense, these graduate accounts support Bourdieu's notion that even though the habitus can change over time, it tends to be very durable, even when it finds itself within a location that is rather alien and does not match its existing 'subjective expectations' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; in Burke, 2016: 8).

Meanwhile, for other working-class graduates in this sub-group like Lauren and Simon, attending a Russell Group university was not a mobilising experience mainly because it did not elevate their social capital. These graduates did not 'live in' during their time at university. For Durham graduate Lauren, this made her somewhat of an anomaly at her collegiate university where the general custom is to live in college, at least during the first academic year. She lived locally and therefore believed that 'living-in' would be an unwarranted expense, as she could easily commute to lectures. Her case demonstrated what Bourdieu terms 'a taste for necessity' (Bourdieu 1984: 376), a typical feature of the working-class habitus which means that non-essential spending is deemed frivolous and irresponsible, even if the person does actually have the economic capital to spend. She shared this 'taste for necessity' with fellow working-class graduates Craig and Nicola (graduates from post-1992 universities who remained in the North-East), who even resented paying what they viewed as being extortionate prices for everyday essentials, such as a sandwich, in places like London.

The fact that Lauren and Simon only attended university for lectures and had limited interaction with the social facets of university life meant that they still possessed limited endowments of social capital outside of the North-East after their graduation. Interestingly, these accounts are very reminiscent of Archer and Leathwood's observation that working-class students tend to 'go through university rather than the university going through them' (Archer and Leathwood, 2003; in Reay et al. 2010: 112). However, these authors were making an observation primarily about working-class students who were attending *post-1992* institutions, not Russell Group or collegiate universities, as in Lauren and Simon's cases. The fact that some working-class graduates also tend to just 'go through' a Russell Group university like it is an extension of college, and do not enhance their social capital as a result, is a novel finding which has emerged from my research.

Overall, for the majority of Russell Group university graduates in this sub-group, a move away from their 'home region' after obtaining their degree continued to represent a risky venture into the unknown, or a jump into Bauman's (2005: 5) 'abyss into which only a few would muster the courage to leap of their own free will'. Attending a Russell Group university was not always the transformative, and in some ways premier, experience it is heralded to be. Indeed, many of these graduates raised very similar concerns about their economic, social and cultural capital when compared with their post-1992 university counterparts.

5.3. Discussion for Research Group 2 (RG2): graduates who were domiciled in the North-East and self-identified as middle-class

RG2 post-1992 university graduates: still living in the North-East – but for how long?

Despite the fact that the two self-identified *middle-class* graduates in this sub-group, Sarah and Greg, had never lived and worked outside of the North-East, they were clearly open to leaving their 'home region', especially for London. Both graduates demonstrated a confidence about their ability to succeed in life outside of the North-East at a professional, social and/or cultural level. Sarah even described how she would feel like 'a fish in water' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 127) in London, as it would cater for all of her rather 'high-brow' cultural tastes, such as top-class restaurants and shopping for designer goods. As we have seen, such self-confidence and assuredness were not traits that were often shared by the self-identified working-class graduates in research group one, who demonstrated the possession of a rather immobilising habitus. Sarah and Greg also presented their decision to remain in their home region as being primarily down to the freedom of personal *choice* and a predominantly rational analysis, rather than being the result of any financial restrictions, or a perceived cultural incompatibility with places and people outside of the North-East. Again, this contrasts with the majority of graduates in research group one, who frequently cited their limited endowments of economic capital, a lack of social capital outside of the North-East, and what they perceived to be their illegitimate cultural capital (amongst other factors), as being important in restricting their ability to leave their 'home region'. Overall, although Sarah and Greg were both living and working in the North-East at the time of their interviews, it seemed entirely possible that they could move away from the region in the future.

RG2 Russell Group graduates who *remained* in the North-East: stories of contradiction

Overall, the accounts of the two graduates in this sub-group, Leanne and Robert, were quite complex. Both graduates described their confidence and ability to seek out 'routes' on one hand, but an increasing inclination to remain in their 'home region' and stay with their 'roots' on the other. Their accounts were supportive of Gustafson's (2001) assertion that people can simultaneously value 'routes' (adventure) and roots (familiarity). Crucially, where these two graduates diverged from many of those in research group one (but were also similar to fellow middle-class graduates Sarah and Greg in the previous sub-group) was in the way they portrayed their relative immobility as their own personal *choice*, rather than it being forced upon them by external social and structural factors. In particular, Leanne and Robert seemingly possessed enough economic capital to facilitate a move away from the North-East.

Instead, their choice to stay in their 'home region' was much more reflective of Finn's (2017: 753) 'taste for luxury (or freedom)', as they enjoyed being around their family and friends and they were understandably reluctant to leave them behind. Leanne described how her dad was especially supportive and had even encouraged her to leave the North-East if this meant she could fulfil her ambition of achieving what she termed "an actual graduate job". In this sense, her father was a potentially mobilising influence. This contrasts massively with the stories of some of the working-class graduates from research group one, like Craig and Kate, whose families required them to remain in the North-East, or even the parental home, to provide financial and emotional support. Furthermore, Leanne's ambition of achieving a (traditional) 'graduate job' and her statement "I know my worth" reflected a high level of self-confidence and assuredness. Again, these were traits that were not shared by many of the working-class graduates in research group one. Instead, and as Burke (2016) argues, characteristics such as higher levels of aspiration and self-expectation are characteristics more commonly associated with a 'middle-class' habitus.

However, despite what I would term their 'mobilising habitus' (their willingness to move away) and their sufficient endowments of economic capital, Leanne and Robert's mobility was still restricted by today's competitive 'graduate job' market. Their nationwide job searches for roles they believed were fitting of their qualifications and skills had proven fruitless. Their stories are yet another reminder

of Tholen's (2016; 2018) point that a degree is no longer a rare qualification. It is therefore not necessarily a pathway into a 'gold standard' of employment (Tholen, 2018: 31), or a golden ticket that guarantees mobility – even for middle-class graduates who are expected to have a greater 'practical mastery' (Burke, 2016: 16) over the fields of higher education and the job market.

As a theoretical side note, I would like to raise Robert's story of how his self-confessed 'shyness' has limited his social capital. He only had a small group of friends and by his own admission he was not the best social mixer. This may be only one graduate's story, but it is a poignant example of how low endowments of social capital (and potentially illegitimate cultural capital too) may be the result of individual personality traits, rather than being totally reflective of an individual's social class status. The influence of idiosyncratic characteristics does not seem to be given much consideration within Bourdieu's literature, or research which applies Bourdieu's theory. Yet, Robert's relative dearth of social capital – which was largely a product of his shyness – played a significant role in his decision to remain in the North-East, as he said he would not have any friends in a new location. In other words, for Robert it was primarily his *shyness* that was immobilising.

RG2 Russell Group university graduates who moved away from the North-East: an enviable control over distance and timing of mobility

Overall, the three middle-class graduates in this sub-group, Kirby, Jade and Rachel, were some of the most highly mobile graduates who featured in my research. They were all disposed to view travelling and migration as positive, natural and rewarding processes, rather than being fraught with risk and doubt like some of their working-class counterparts in research group one. Their experiences of 'living in' at the uniquely collegiate Durham University proved to be particularly influential in promoting their moves away from the North-East to live and work, as it provided them with increased social capital (university friends) outside of their 'home region', which would help to combat any concerns (if they ever existed) about becoming isolated. Moreover, any such concerns would also be mitigated by the fact that the graduates also had sufficient endowments of economic capital to stay connected with their other friends and family members who lived in the North-East, or other parts of the U.K. Ultimately, Kirby, Jade and Rachel not only had enviable control over the distance they travelled, but also the *timing* of their mobility, a quality Bauman (2005) argues is essential for elevating and mobilising oneself in modern

life, and is the preserve of those located in the higher echelons of the social power pyramid. Indeed, Kirby, Rachel and Jade's mastery over their mobility was something that the vast majority of the working-class graduates in research group one – including Lee and Michael who had moved away from the North-East - simply could not match.

5.4. Discussion for Research Group 3 (RG3): graduates who originated from outside of the North-East and identified as working-class

The four self-identified working-class graduates in research group three had initially become mobile when leaving their 'home region' to study in the North-East, attracted to the region primarily by the quality of its higher education institutions and Newcastle's reputation for nightlife. However, despite this initial mobility, it was evident that concerns about their economic, social and cultural capital were still limiting where they believed they could move to, both to study and after graduation. Through her habitus, Gemma was disposed to immediately reject anywhere that was not 'northern' as a study destination, as she was afraid of being prematurely judged by people when she was outside of the North. She believed that anywhere outside of the North was "posh" or predominantly middle-class, a description that she made clear was the complete opposite to herself. This adds further support to Shields' (2013: 245) argument about the existence of a 'space-myth' of the South/South-East, depicting it as a homogenous land of middle-class culture and institutional power. Through her habitus, Gemma was clearly disposed to believe she would be a 'fish out of water' outside of the North, and once again this indicates a lack of self-confidence and assuredness which is symptomatic of the working-class habitus (Burke, 2016).

Meanwhile, for Andrew and Paul, a lack of 'strategy' (Burke, 2016: 95) and planning in terms of their academic and professional careers left them with little option but to return to their 'home region' and their parental homes in order to contemplate their next moves. This supports Burke's (2016) finding, within his study of graduate career paths, that such a lack of academic and professional strategy was more common amongst the working-class graduates in his sample.

Even Jason, the only graduate in this research group to actually *remain* in the North-East to live and work, had reservations about how successful he would be in a place which did not share his self-proclaimed working-class capital and ethos. Jason

believed his values matched up well what he described as Sunderland's "working-class, old fashioned" approach. This meant that he felt like a 'fish in water' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 127) in the city, and this was a key reason why he felt comfortable enough to stay. Interestingly, Jason also strongly believed that an internship he completed during his time at university, at an ICT company near Sunderland, was also a crucial reason why he decided to remain in the North-East. He performed well in the role, became well acquainted with the managers, and was subsequently offered a job at the company after university. From a regional and professional development standpoint, Jason's story demonstrates the potential value of university-led internships/work-experience for helping to retain graduates in the North-East, who had come from other regions of the U.K. to study there. In Jason's case, he forged new social capital (business managers) in the North-East and as a result attained a 'graduate-level' job immediately after university. In the end, as Jason himself described, remaining in the North-East to live and work therefore became a "no-brainer".

In some ways, Jason's account can be considered a 'success story'. Ultimately, however, the accounts of all the graduates in research group three – including Jason's - have once again illustrated that the majority of self-identified working-class graduates in my research do not enjoy *complete* freedom to choose where to live and work. They seemingly always have to consider whether they have the finances, social connections and the cultural 'legitimacy' (Bourdieu, 1986) to succeed in a new destination.

5.5. Discussion for Research Group 4 (RG4): graduates who originated from outside of the North-East and identified as middle-class

RG4 post-1992 university graduates: the importance of being connected

For self-identified middle-class graduates Charlotte and Ryan, it was clear that their high-ranking social capital was particularly important in pulling them away from the North-East and then keeping them in their 'home regions'. For history graduate Ryan, his social capital was crucial in the sense that it provided him with the 'information' and 'influence' (Lin, 2001: 20) required to obtain his 'ideal' job in a museum, which actually required his university subject knowledge. Meanwhile, in Charlotte's case, it was her dad who owned a business and he wanted her to be a part of it. While both graduates expressed that they had enjoyed their time in the

North-East, ultimately the opportunities presented to them in their 'home regions' through their influential social capital, were simply too good to turn down. Meanwhile, Stephany *did* choose to stay in the North-East, and much like Jason in research group three, this was influenced by a successful period of work experience at a local company. Like many graduates (including some in this research), Stephany originally believed in the common narratives of London being an 'escalator region' (Fielding, 1992) for young professionals and a hub for business and employment (Shields, 2013). This made the capital an attractive destination for her. However, her positive experience working for a company in the North-East, along with their promise to consider employing her in the future, meant that she also began to contemplate remaining in the North-East to live and work. For Jason, his internship was transformational for his social capital in the North-East, while for Stephany, the primary transformation occurred within her mindset about the graduate job market in the region.

Moreover, Stephany's account demonstrated how retaining graduates who originate from outside of the North-East can link the region to other areas of the U.K., as it encourages family members to visit and holiday in the region, or in the case of Stephany's sister, even encourages younger siblings to follow in their brother/sister's footsteps and study in the North-East. This account will undoubtedly be of interest to the NewcastleGateshead Initiative, who as a Destination Management Organisation (DMO) are involved in marketing their destination as an excellent tourist (or holiday) destination, and also have 'an inward investment remit too' (Mordue, 2020: 108). They aim to attract and welcome more visitors and students to the North-East from all over the U.K. and retaining more graduates like Stephany could help the organisation to achieve this goal.

RG4 Russell Group university graduates: seeking out cultural variety and following friends

From the interviews, it quickly became clear that for the North-East, retaining this group of self-identified middle-class graduates who originated from elsewhere in the U.K. was always going to be a challenge. For Johnny, Edward and Joe, the cities of the North-East were simply too small and did not provide enough variety in terms of culture and amenities. Johnny in particular also possessed multi-faceted cultural capital, even describing himself as a "man of the world" due to his liking of Brazilian and Thai food, as well as Afrobeat music. His varied cultural capital with

multinational influences meant he felt capable of settling in many different places and did not have to be concerned about being burdened with one particular stereotype and being prematurely judged as a result. This was unlike many of the working-class graduates in research group one, who were concerned about being 'negatively sanctioned' (Bourdieu, 1990: 56), especially in the South where they were worried about being judged because of their northern, working-class accents. However, just because Johnny had multiple cultural influences and enjoyed travel did not mean he epitomised Bauman's description of the most mobile people in society, those who are 'at home in many places but not one in particular' (2005: 3). On the contrary, he made it clear that "everyone needs a hinterland" they can retreat to, and one of his main motivations for planning a move back "down south" was to be closer to his friends and family. This links to a key point for this section: that even though the graduates in this sub-group demonstrated an enviable control over the frequency, timing and distance of their mobility – all qualities that the majority of working-class graduates in this research did not possess – their mobility was still being 'channelled' (Cresswell, 2010), and in a different sense, restricted. Whether it was to be closer to family, to follow university friends or to achieve a particular job, in the end these graduates tended to follow the same 'well-worn path' (Finn, 2017: 748) that leads them away from the North-East and takes them to London.

5.6. Addressing my research questions

The first research question in my research asks: **'to what extent does a graduate's socio-economic status impact their ability and propensity to be mobile?'** After conducting my analysis and compiling this discussion, my short answer would be, 'it impacts their mobility a great deal'.

In the literature review chapter, I introduced Van Hear's (2014) research on migration, and how his approach was heavily influenced by Bourdieu's theory. In particular, he described how 'holding combinations of. . . capitals shapes the routes would-be migrants can take, the channels they can follow, the destinations they can reach, and their life chances afterwards' (ibid: 102). From my analysis and discussion, it has become clear that endowments of economic, social and cultural capital have played a key role in either promoting or limiting graduates' mobility, as Van Hear's research suggests. In general, for the working-class graduates in my research, low levels of economic capital in terms of savings, a dearth of social capital

(especially outside of their 'home regions') and concerns about the compatibility of their cultural capital (particularly embodied cultural capital in the form of accents) have rendered them relatively immobile compared to the majority of their middle-class counterparts. However, what has also become strikingly clear throughout my research is the importance of the graduates' *habitus* in determining their mobility. On many occasions throughout this discussion chapter, I have referred to Bourdieu and Wacquant's (1992: 127) use of the phrase 'a fish in water', which describes how it feels when a person's habitus is emersed in a social field that is congruent with its dispositions and 'subjective expectations' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; in Burke, 2016: 8). However, when the habitus finds itself in an unfamiliar field, people can be left feeling very much out of place and even conspicuous. They may also appear this way to the people around them, and can be 'negatively sanctioned' (Bourdieu, 1990: 56) as a result. As we saw for working-class graduates, like Jack and Gemma, this fear of being 'negatively sanctioned' was one of the primary reasons why they were disposed to reject a move away from the North of England to the South/South-East.

Van Hear (2014) does not really discuss the impact of habitus in great detail in his research, instead emphasising the undoubtedly important role economic, social and cultural capital play in determining a person's mobility potential. However, after conducting this research, I argue that Bourdieu's habitus concept *must* be included in any research and analysis of the influences of class on (im)mobility, in order to gain a more complete picture. In my project, the habitus of the working-class graduates has proven to be rather immobilising, and this was primarily due to three main factors:

1) A 'not for the likes of me' (Burke, 2016: 114) attitude: Contrary to Alexander's (2019) findings, most of the working-class graduates in my research were very aware of their class status and the restrictions this places upon them. They almost appeared conditioned to accept that certain professions, or locations that were viewed as being predominantly middle-class culturally, were simply not available to the 'likes of them'. Often, this prevented them from even trying to obtain a job or moving to a new location in the first place.

2) A lack of self-confidence: This is a trait that is closely linked to a 'not for the likes of me' attitude and, as Burke (2016) argues, it is quite typical of the working-class habitus. Working-class graduates often demonstrated a lack of confidence in their ability to attain desirable job roles, or jobs outside of their

home region. Nate's account was a particularly poignant example of this trait, especially when he questioned why any employer in London would want him when the job market was so competitive, and suggested they would want someone more "refined". This lack of self-confidence related to their working-class habitus prevented many working-class graduates from even attempting to extend the geographical scope of their job searches, meaning they were much more likely to remain in their 'home regions' to live and work.

3) A 'taste for necessity' (Bourdieu, 1984: 376): again, this is a common feature of the working-class habitus which results from a previous 'deprivation of necessary goods' (ibid: 373). Bourdieu argues that when people are required to be frugal throughout their lives, this becomes a disposition that they cannot just switch off, even if their financial situation improves over time. 'Overspending' therefore generates feelings of guilt. This prevented some graduates from the North-East from moving to London, as they believed it was a generally more expensive place, even for everyday items such as a coffee.

Overall, the majority of working-class graduates in my research possessed a habitus which incorporated at least one, if not a combination, of the three immobilising traits detailed above. As a result, they possessed what I will term an 'immobilising working-class habitus'.

On the other hand, the majority of the middle-class graduates in this study appeared to possess what I would call a more 'mobilising' habitus. They generally did not display any of the three habitus traits described above, instead demonstrating an assuredness and belief that they could settle in multiple location throughout the country. When middle-class graduates did choose to either remain or return to their home region, this was very much depicted as being down to personal *choice*, or a 'taste for luxury' (Finn, 2017: 753), rather than any class-related restrictions being placed upon them. Ultimately, within my research, mobility did tend to come more easily to the middle-class graduates, compared to their working-class counterparts. However, I would point out that the middle-class graduates' mobility was often 'channelled' into what Cresswell (2010: 24) refers to as 'acceptable conduits' or legitimate pathways. Furthermore, many of these 'well-worn paths' (Finn, 2017: 748) lead to the South-East and London. The South-East region truly did prove to be the "black hole. . . sucking everything in" as research participant Dave described. As Cresswell (2010) argues, when mobility is channelled, it is still being restricted in a

sense, although admittedly it is a completely different (and less severe) type of restriction compared to that experienced by the working-class graduates in this research.

My second research question asked: **'what implications does my research have for current understandings and regional policies on graduate mobility and retention?'** In terms of this study's academic contribution, this has largely been covered already. I have argued that the habitus is an essential concept which *must* be considered alongside economic, social and cultural capital to gain a true picture of how social class impacts a person's mobility. Furthermore, I have demonstrated the existence of an 'immobilising working-class habitus'. However, my findings do also have some potential practical or policy implications.

Firstly, universities are frequently ranked by 'graduate employment' or graduate 'employability', and these rankings in newspapers such as the Times can be used by prospective students to judge which university will offer them the best prospects for employment after their degree. However, my research suggests that graduate 'employability' (when measured by 'graduate jobs' attained or number of graduates in employment) is linked to graduate mobility, as many of the graduates in my research who were relatively immobile appeared to find that attaining jobs (especially roles in their chosen sectors related to their degrees) difficult. In turn, we have seen how this mobility is linked to socio-economic status, which is somewhat beyond the graduates' control. For universities like post-1992 institutions, who are on average more likely to have a larger number of students who live local or are working-class (Reay et al. 2010), is judging them by their 'employability' a fair measure of their quality? Their graduates could obtain an excellent education and possess a variety of desirable hard and soft skills, and yet their limited geographical and social mobility may still limit their employment prospects. In cases where graduate 'employability' is measured purely in terms of number of graduates in work, or the industrial sectors they are employed in, I would argue this is a problematic way to measure how a university prepares its students for their future careers. It may not truly reflect the quality of the teaching and research which is happening at these higher education institutions.

The difficulty of many of the working-class graduates in this research to attain what are currently viewed as 'traditional graduate jobs' or jobs in their chosen sectors should also be of concern to the NELEP. From their Strategic Economic Plan

document and their online blog, it is clear that they are placing a lot of importance on the role graduates will play in powering the North-East's four main areas of economic opportunity. On their blog, they also praise the fact that the North-East's graduate retention is already relatively high, but also enquire as to how the region can retain even more graduates in the future. The underlying message here appears to be the more graduates the better. However, if graduates endure long spells of unemployment, or are 'under-employed' in low-paying professions not typically held by graduates, then is retaining more graduates truly a good thing?

Actually, it can be negative for a region's economic development, especially when graduates occupy jobs they are 'overqualified' for and 'block' non-degree holders from obtaining these lower-salary roles (Tholen, 2014). Such a circumstance can also be negative for the graduate personally, as the low income may further reduce their professional, social and geographic mobility prospects as well as being psychologically frustrating or even depressing, especially if they feel unfulfilled in their work. In my research, working-class graduate Sean's story epitomised the circumstances described above – he felt completely dissatisfied with his current job and he shared that it was getting him down psychologically. Furthermore, in his opinion, there was little prospect of him improving his situation.

In my research, one way graduates seemed more likely to obtain the 'graduate jobs' they wanted was through completing internships or other work experience during university. The graduates who did this (like Stephany) 'got their foot in the door', so to speak. They became acquainted with the managers (or in Bourdieusian terminology, increased their social capital) as well as proving that they were able to perform at a high standard in the company. Internships during university are already quite common, but perhaps they could be promoted even more enthusiastically in the future. Interestingly, the graduates who carried out work experience during university also remained in the North-East. This is because they had developed their social capital in the region, which provided them with the 'influence' (Lin, 2001: 20) required to attain a good job there.

In Stephany's case, her family, who were from elsewhere in the U.K., travelled up to the North-East regularly to see her, and even had holidays in the region. Furthermore, Stephany's younger sister even wanted to follow in her footsteps and study at Newcastle university. This story will be 'music to the ears' of the NewcastleGateshead Initiative (NGI), who aim to encourage more people from

outside the North-East to visit and study in the region. However, for many of the other graduates who originated from outside of the North-East, I received the impression that staying in the North-East was never a realistic consideration or possibility. Some graduates, such as Dave, blamed this on what they perceived to be the 'low glass ceiling' which exists in the region, in terms of salaries and promotion. Other graduates, like Stuart, described how the careers fair at Durham University was predominantly attended by multinational corporations based in London, and he therefore lacked awareness about the different industries, companies and job roles which exist and thrive in the North-East. If organisations such as the NELEP and NGI want to retain graduates from elsewhere within the North-East, then work needs to be done to challenge these common and enduring perceptions of the Nort-East as a region with a low glass ceiling. Also, more could be done to promote the region's industrial areas of expertise and its companies. I suggest that it would be beneficial to increase the presence of North-East based companies at university careers fairs, while company representatives, or even staff from organisations such as the NELEP, could deliver dedicated presentations/talks to university students, informing of the potential career pathways that exist in the North-East.

5.7. Addressing the limitations of my research

Although I believe that I have successfully addressed my research questions, I do acknowledge that my research has some limitations. Firstly, my findings cannot be generalised to 'all' working-class or 'middle-class' graduates, as they are highly qualitative. With this research, I am not trying to claim that all working-class graduates are relatively immobile, while all middle-class graduates are highly mobile people. My findings are also primarily based on the graduates' class *identity* rather than an official, objectively designated class, although I do supplement the graduates' self-identification with the Bourdieusian indicators (economic, social and cultural capital) and what I termed 'mainstream indicators' (receiving free school meals, or whether or not parents attended university). In the methodology chapter, I discuss why I have opted to ascertain the graduates' class status in this way. However, overall, I still believe my findings are enough to disprove the common narrative that *all* graduates are a homogenous group who are universally mobile.

Another limitation is that one-off interviews only highlight graduates' circumstances at one specific point in time. For this research topic, a more longitudinal study involving numerous sequential interviews with the same respondents over time, or ethnography, could be beneficial for demonstrating how the graduates' mobility and careers develop over time. The graduates' situations will often be fluid, and periods of stasis may only be temporary. This is demonstrated by Sage and colleagues (2013) work on the parental safety-net. Despite the fact that I have critiqued their paper in terms of the assumptions they make about *why* graduates often reside in the parental home after graduation, it does demonstrate how this was often a *temporary* solution, during which graduates would reflect and plan for the future. However, a longitudinal study was simply not an option when carrying out PhD research, as typically one academic year is allotted for the collection of data.

A third potential limitation is the fact that I am an emotionally involved researcher. After all, my own disheartening experience as a relatively immobile, working-class graduate actually inspired this research. My primary focus was absolutely on the graduates' stories, but if I was not careful, elements of my own story could seep into the research narratives and cloud the data. As mentioned in the methodology, I have taken steps to place some distance between myself and the data gathering process. I selected semi-structured interviews which utilised themes rather than questions, which transferred some of the control over the interview discussion topics to the graduates. This was so I could not lead the topic of the conversation too much. My thematic analysis was also guided by a systematic framework which ensured I followed the same analytical steps for each graduate respondent. However, I do acknowledge that my own personal experience could have a bearing on the way I interpret the data and present the research narratives, despite my rigorous efforts to ensure that my influence was as minimal as possible.

5.8. Potential topics for future research

The findings from this research into graduate mobilities have sparked numerous ideas for future research, which will expand upon some of the ideas I have discussed during the analysis and discussion chapters. These include:

- **Research which combines the place identity literature with Bourdieu's theory:** In the methodology chapter, I discussed how I decided against

delving deeper into the place identity literature for this research project because it was predominantly psychological. In my opinion, it placed too much emphasis on bodily experience or individual cognition and neglected the equal importance of socio-structuralist elements (such as social class) which exist outside of the human mind. However, after conducting this research, I do believe that there is a potentially fruitful overlap between this place identity literature and Bourdieu's 'theoretical toolbox' (Burke, 2016). An example is the link between Bourdieu's conceptualisation of social capital and Twigger-Ross and Uzzell's (1996) 'self-efficacy' (see literature review). In summary, self-efficacy covers whether a place allows a person to achieve their goals, whether this be professional aims or rather mundane tasks, such as being able to buy a loaf of bread. Crucially, the social capital a person possesses within a certain location is also crucial for realising their goals, an example being the ability of influential social contacts helping the person to attain the job they desire. As far as I am aware, this potential overlap between place identity literature and Bourdieu's theory has not yet been explored by other researchers. Importantly, I believe Bourdieu's literature could add the socio-structuralist element and theoretical weight that the place identity literature is currently lacking.

- **A longitudinal study of graduates' mobility:** As I have discussed, one of my current study's limitations is that it uses one-off interviews with respondents. I believe it would be very interesting to 'track' how a graduate's mobility changes or stays the same over time, and how increases in mobility or cases of persisting stasis are related to graduates' socio-economic status, including their economic, social and cultural capital and their habitus. This type of research may also be able to detect when and how 'habitus-breaking experiences' (Bourdieu, 1990) occur and how they alter a graduate's mobility potential.

- **Further research involving the NELEP and NGI:** In the future, I would like to talk to multiple members of staff at these organisations and get a real sense of their strategy in terms of retaining graduates. Do the narratives in these 'expert interviews' reflect the narratives which are present in their published material, such as the Strategic Economic Plan and their online blog? Is there a particular type of graduate they would like the region to retain

more successfully, such as STEM graduates, or perhaps middle-class graduates?

- **Greater focus on the role of the family in limiting graduate mobility:** One of the most interesting revelations from my research was the potential influence of family on graduates' mobility. This could be examined further, with a greater focus on the role identity literature (e.g. Farmer and colleagues, 2003), while risk literature could also be insightful.

- **Research into how graduates' gender can impact their mobility:** In the methodology chapter, I discussed how gender can impact graduates' mobility in multiple ways and I expressed my regret that I had not factored this variable into my analysis to a greater extent. However, after completing my PhD, I intend to go back and re-analyse my existing data through the lens of gender. In particular, I believe some of the data I have collected could be very insightful for debates on gendered role identities (linked to the research idea mentioned above) and what Cinamon and Rich (2002) term 'the work-family conflict'. These authors argued that 'women usually reported feeling more [work-family] conflict than men' (pg. 532) and on average women were less likely to prioritise work over family. Yet, my male research participant Craig clearly prioritised his family over most other things – not just his professional ambitions, but also his desire to move out of the family home. I definitely believe that this contradiction to the common narrative on how gender can influence the work-family conflict is worth further exploration. I would also like to conduct research investigating some of the other ways gender can impact graduate mobility, including: (1) if male students in the North-East do tend to study STEM subjects over others, and why; (2) the difference graduates' gender can make to their experiences whilst studying in urban areas (for example, the need to take the 'safe route' through town (Whitzman, 2013)) and how this informs their migration decisions post-graduation; and (3) how graduates' habitus combines with their gender to inform their everyday experiences (Reay, 1997), and how this impacts their decisions on where to live and work. For these research projects, I could utilise the data from this PhD as a starting point. I could then add to this by conducting further interviews with both my existing research participants and new interviewees.

- **The impact of internships and work experience on graduate mobility:** Two graduates in my research mentioned how work experience during their

time at university embedded them in the North-East by increasing their social capital in the region and increasing their job prospects. I definitely feel the impact of internships on graduates' migration decisions could be explored further.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1. A recap of my research questions and aims

This research project had two main research questions:

1) **To what extent does a graduate's socio-economic status impact their ability and propensity to be mobile?**

And

2) **What implications do my research findings have for current academic understandings and regional policies on graduate mobility and retention?**

These research questions were supplemented with four research aims:

1. To discover some of the reasons why graduates either stay in the North-East to live and work, or leave, with a strong focus on social class-related impacts but also highlighting other 'practical' issues such as the competitiveness of the graduate job market.

2. To problematise prevalent notions, particularly within policy arenas, that graduates are a universally highly mobile group of people.

3. To demonstrate the utility of Bourdieu's theory for gaining an in-depth understanding of the mechanisms behind graduate migration (and migration in general) (A theoretical contribution).

And:

4. To produce findings which can help organisations such as the NELEP further understand the complex drivers of graduate mobilities and immobilities, and potentially influence their future policies/action.

To conclude this thesis, I will pinpoint seven key findings from my research, highlight which questions and aims these findings address, and then outline the implications they could have for policy in the North-East. I will then acknowledge the limitations of my research, before highlighting areas for future research and my plans for publishing papers.

6.2. The seven key findings from this research project

1. Overall, within my research, self-identified working-class graduates did find geographical mobility/migration more challenging than their middle-class counterparts. In general, working-class graduates displayed low levels of economic capital (especially in terms of savings), a dearth of social capital (particularly outside of their home regions) and a strong concern about the compatibility of their cultural capital in what they perceived to be places of predominantly middle-class culture (London was a frequent place of reference here). Ultimately, this overall dearth of capital rendered any move away from their home region a *risky* endeavour. Many working-class graduates expressed their frustration with their relative immobility. This was especially the case with working-class graduates from the North-East, who did not demonstrate the levels of place identity and attachment that I had initially expected, and instead declared their openness or even desire to leave the North-East for pastures new. [This key finding addresses research question 1 and research aims 1 and 2].

2. Working-class graduates from the North-East were often relied upon by their families for support, especially financially. In some cases, the demands that parents placed upon their graduate children for 'board money', which in a way is like paying rent to a landlord, helped to create and/or sustain the graduates' stasis, as it prevented them from saving up enough money to move out of the parental home. For these graduates, higher education certainly was not the social, geographical and professional mobiliser it is often portrayed to be. Instead, their levels of economic, social and cultural capital were often very similar to what they were before they attended university. [This key finding addresses question 1 and research aims 1 and 2].

3. Some of the immobile, working-class graduates in my research blamed their immobility for restricting their professional horizons. In particular, their dearth of economic capital limited the geographical extent of their post-university job searches, as they could not afford to travel far to graduate assessment centres or for interviews, without the guarantee of a reward (a job) at the end. Many working-class graduates from the North-East also described how they occupied relatively low-paying jobs which would not typically be described as 'graduate jobs'. This was negative for the graduates in both an economic and psychological sense, as many of these graduates discussed their sense of unfulfillment and frustration with their

work. Furthermore, as Tholen (2016) argues, when many graduates in a certain region occupy jobs which they are 'over-qualified' for, they can 'block' non-degree holders from obtaining these lower-salary roles.

These findings have consequences firstly for measurements of university graduate 'employability'. As I highlighted in the discussion chapter, universities are often assessed by their 'employability' by prospective students, and this can be measured by the number of a university's graduates who are in employment or the number of graduates who are working in typical 'graduate' professions. However, post-1992 universities are likely to have a more 'local' or working-class cohort of graduates (Reay et al. 2010), and we have seen how working-class graduates' job searches can be made more challenging by their relative lack of mobility. Within my research, they were more likely to have experienced longer periods of unemployment and found it more difficult to attain a job they believed was fitting of a graduate. I would therefore argue that it is perhaps not fair to judge post-1992 universities on 'graduate employability' alone, as this measure may not be an accurate reflection of the quality of their teaching and research, and how they prepare their students for employment.

Within this key point there are also consequences for regional development. It is clear from my research that graduates do not always enter what would typically considered to be 'graduate employment'. If they do not enter these professions, they will not be helping to power STEM industries, including those within the NELEP's four areas of economic opportunity for the North-East. Combine this fact with the disheartenment for graduates that 'underemployment' can cause and the blocking of non-degree holders from attaining typically non-graduate jobs, and it becomes clear that it is not always a case of 'the more graduates in a place, the better'. This is a finding of importance for the NELEP, as throughout their Strategic Economic Plan – and especially on their blog – it is clear that they would like to see the North-East retain more graduates both now and in the future. [This key point addresses research question 2 and research aim 4].

4. Meanwhile, the middle-class graduates in my research were more mobile on the whole compared to their working-class counterparts, both actually (in terms of the frequency and duration of their travel) and in terms of mentality (movement was more habitual to them – they possessed a mobilising habitus). In general, the middle-class graduates possessed a higher number of social contacts of greater social standing and influence. They also possessed a more varied set of cultural

capital, which allowed them to feel like a 'fish in water' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 127) in a number of different social and cultural settings (or fields). Finally, they had the economic capital required to gain mastery over the timing of their mobility – when to speed up and when to slow down. Not all of the middle-class graduates in my study were *constantly* on the move, but when they did stay still this was mostly portrayed as a personal *choice*, rather than the result of any socio-structural (class-related) restrictions. [This key point addresses research question 1 and research aim 3].

5. However, many of the middle-class graduates in my research who were originally from outside of the North-East opted to move to London after studying in the North-East, and this was for a multitude of reasons. Whether it was following university friends, moving closer to pre-university friends and family, pursuing a particular job opportunity (for example, Johnny's wish to work in parliament), or its perceived 'high professional glass ceiling' or status as an 'escalator region' (Fielding, 1992), London really did appear to be the "black hole. . . sucking everything [or everyone] up" as Dave described. This all means that in a sense, even the mobility of the middle-class graduates was restricted, as their movement was channelled and they followed the 'well-worn path around the place' (Finn, 2017: 748), which very often leads to London. However, admittedly, this is a very different (and less socially unjust) restriction of mobility compared to that experienced by many working-class graduates in my study. [This key finding primarily addresses research aim 1].

6. Overall, perceptions of the North-East were generally positive from the graduates who originated from elsewhere in the U.K. As Johnny (a middle-class graduate from research group 4) proclaimed, the North-East "isn't the monochromatic, post-industrial wasteland that a lot of people imagine it to be". However, many of the graduates from elsewhere in the U.K. (and especially the middle-class graduates from elsewhere) did believe there was a relatively low 'glass ceiling' in the North-East in terms of job grades, promotion prospects and wages. Furthermore, the more culturally eclectic middle-class graduates in my research (Johnny again being a prime example) considered the 'cultural offering' in cities like Durham and Newcastle to be more limited and less diverse than that of bigger cities in the U.K., and especially the capital. Such perceptions will have to change if the North-East desires to retain these graduates from elsewhere in the U.K., who have a ravenous appetite for culture and high professional aspirations. As described in the discussions section, the annual careers fair at Durham University appeared to be predominantly

frequented by multinational corporations who were based in the South. This could be changed to include more local companies, or a separate event could be held to give North-East companies and industries more exposure amongst the student population. This may help to change the seemingly commonly held perception that the North-East is a region with a 'low glass ceiling' and limited professional opportunity.

7. My final key point provides a theoretical contribution. In the literature review chapter, I introduced Van Hear's (2014) work on migration, and his description of how 'holding combinations of. . . capitals shapes the routes would-be migrants can take, the channels they can follow, and their life chances afterwards (ibid: 102). Throughout my research, it has become clear that endowments of economic, social and cultural capital have played a key role in either promoting or limiting a graduate's mobility, as Van Hear's research suggests. However, what has also become abundantly clear throughout my research is the importance of a graduate's *habitus* in determining their mobility. Van Hear (2014) does not really discuss the impact of habitus in great detail. However, after conducting this research, I argue that Bourdieu's habitus concept *must* be included in any Bourdieu-inspired research and analysis of the influences of class on (im)mobility, in order to gain a more complete picture of all the mechanisms at play.

In my research, the working-class habitus appeared to be rather immobilising, and I have identified that this was primarily due to three main traits (please see discussion chapter for more detail):

- A 'not for the likes of me attitude' (Burke, 2016: 114)
- A lack of self-confidence (a trait typical of the working-class habitus); and
- A 'taste for necessity' (Bourdieu, 1984: 376): essentially a feeling of guilt brought about by perceived 'over-expenditure' of economic capital.

The majority of working-class graduates in my research possessed a habitus which included at least one, if not all, of these three immobilising traits listed above. As a result, they possessed what I term an 'immobilising working-class habitus'.

Overall, this should demonstrate how significant graduates' habitus can be in determining how mobile or immobile they are. Not only is habitus influential on its own, but it has a big impact on how capitals are utilised and transferred. The 'taste for necessity' (Bourdieu, 1984: 376) demonstrates this point effectively, as it

determines how people are disposed to spend or save their economic capital. After conducting this research, I cannot imagine conducting an investigation into how social class impacts a person's mobility without incorporating habitus into the analysis. [This key point addresses research question one and research aim three].

Although my research has been focusing on graduates who have studied in the North-East, I do believe that many of my findings would also be applicable in a wider context. This is especially the case for the argument to incorporate habitus when conducting research into graduate mobilities, and people's mobility in general. I also believe it is possible that some working-class graduates in other regions will face similar predicaments – that they will have limited endowments of economic, social and cultural capital, and also an immobilising working-class habitus. However, a research project which compares graduates in the North-East with other graduates in another region of the U.K., for example the North-West of England, could be insightful and further demonstrate the wider relevance of this current research project.

6.3. The key message for policy makers in the North-East

Bringing all of these seven key points together, what consequences do they have for policy?

In the introduction chapter, I highlighted a blog entry by the NELEP promoting their 'Live, Work and Stay' campaign, which is aimed primarily at graduates. The blog entry acknowledged the North-East's already relatively high graduate retention figures, but also asked: 'How can we encourage more graduates to live, work and stay in the North-East?' Here, the dominant assumption appeared to be that the more graduates who live and work in the region, the more prosperous it will be, and therefore the North-East must work hard to attract and retain as many graduates as possible.

However, my research has demonstrated that there are two primary misconceptions underpinning these ideas. The first misconception is that graduates are a universally highly mobile group of people. This research has demonstrated that this is certainly not the case, with many of the self-identified working-class graduates in particular still lacking the economic resources, social ties (especially outside of their 'home' region) and cultural capital which are required to facilitate their geographical

mobility. A second and linked misconception is that all of the graduates who remain in the North-East do so purely out of personal choice. In fact, some of the graduates in my study who originated from the North-East would have welcomed the chance to live and work in a different part of the U.K., but they felt they had *no choice* but to remain in their 'home' region. This was especially true of a number of working-class graduates who believed they had a responsibility to support their families emotionally and financially. These graduates' sense of stasis was often accompanied by a feeling of dissatisfaction with their professional careers, with some graduates believing they were 'underemployed' or not in a profession of their choosing. Crucially for the NELEP, in many cases, graduates did not occupy jobs within the STEM-intensive industries that the organisation places so much importance upon for powering the North-East's economic growth, both now and in the future.

To summarise then, it seems clear that within the policy arena (in this case policy in the North-East), there is a prevalent misunderstanding about what it means to be a graduate in contemporary times (an argument also made by Tholen (2016)). If it is not commonly recognised within policy circles that graduates are not universally highly mobile and middle-class, and that they occupy a multitude of job roles outside of those traditionally earmarked as 'graduate jobs' (Tholen, 2016), then how will their talents be effectively mobilised and utilised to bolster regional economies? The North-East's graduate retention is already relatively high compared to other regions of the U.K. Perhaps the focus could be at least partially shifted away from attracting and retaining more graduates, and centred more on understanding and empowering the graduate talent that the North-East already has at its disposal. Even if a better understanding and focus on the graduates' needs within policy ultimately means that a higher proportion of the North-East's 'local' graduate talent does feel empowered to become more mobile, and resultingly leaves the region to live and work, this may not always be a negative thing either. These graduates may return to the North-East in the future, potentially adorned with new professional and life experiences/knowledge, new social capital from other parts of the U.K. (although admittedly this can be difficult and time-intensive to accumulate) and overall a fresh perspective.

It would be correct to say that for many of the self-identified working-class graduates in my research, a relative dearth of economic capital (especially monetary savings) did reduce the amount of *control* the graduates had over their mobility, both in terms

of how far they could travel and how frequently. However, my research also demonstrates that simply providing these graduates with monetary grants, for example, would not be sufficient on its own to empower them and increase their geographical and social mobility. Firstly, it would not ameliorate the parents' financial situation for those graduates who had to support their parents economically. It would also do little to address the dearth of social connections that many of the working-class graduates in my research described, which rendered leaving their 'home' region to live and work such a risky and potentially socially isolating endeavour. Most significantly, it would not transform one of the key prohibitors of graduate mobility found within my research – their habitus (or mentality). As I have already highlighted in this conclusion chapter, many of the working-class graduates in my study demonstrated a lack of self-confidence, whether this was in their ability to attain high-level 'graduate' jobs, or in their ability to be socially accepted outside of their home region. Graduates' worries about social acceptance centred around their cultural capital, with the potential stigma attached to their working-class accents being a particular area for concern. Overall, for these working-class graduates, such feelings of self-doubt are very serious, as they often prevented them from even attempting a move away from their home regions and/or apply for higher level jobs in the first place. The graduates were automatically disposed to believe that such a move would not be 'for the likes of them' (Burke, 2016: 114).

From this research, I recommend that if policy makers in the North-East wish to empower these working-class graduates, increase their geographical and social mobility and harness their talent more effectively, then introducing policy initiatives which address this general lack of self-confidence and 'not for the likes of me' disposition will be key. Perhaps this could be achieved through the education system (from secondary schools through to sixth form colleges and universities), which already undoubtedly plays a role in helping to instil self-belief and raise aspirations among its students. Initiatives that also help working-class students and graduates to become more socially and culturally connected to the rest of their country would also be very beneficial for graduate mobility, as this would help to reduce the amount of personal *risk* associated with a move away from 'home'.

Meanwhile, the self-identified middle-class graduates in my research did generally find geographical mobility easier and more habitual than their working-class counterparts. However, as already highlighted in this conclusion, these graduates

still frequently followed the 'well-worn path' (Finn, 2017: 748) which led either to their 'home region' where the majority of their family was based, or to London/South-East of England. If policy makers in the North-East do still believe that more of these middle-class graduates originating from elsewhere in the U.K. must be retained to foster regional economic growth, then my research suggests that a key notion they will have to dispel is the idea of a proverbial 'glass ceiling' in the North-East in terms of career progression. Furthermore, there seemed to be a general lack of knowledge about the types of jobs and careers that are available in the region. As a result of this, many of these graduates had not even considered staying in the North-East to live and work. Instead, the region was simply viewed as a university destination.

To transform this perception, the North-East may need to promote (for example, through advertising campaigns) its industrial areas of expertise and the career opportunities they offer more vociferously, persistently and on a wider scale nationally. As already discussed in this chapter, ensuring strong representation from locally based businesses at university careers fairs could also help in this regard.

6.4. A recap of the limitations of my research

Moving on to discuss the limitations of my research, the first limitation of this project I will acknowledge is that I have only conducted one interview with each graduate, meaning they will only provide an insight into the graduates' circumstances at that particular point in time. For this research topic, a more longitudinal study involving numerous interviews with each graduate over a longer period of time, or possibly an ethnography, would be insightful and demonstrate how graduates' mobility and careers develop over a number of years. However, I did try to incorporate a longitudinal element into the interviews by asking the graduates about their academic careers from school through to university. Also, a longitudinal study was simply not an option when conducting a PhD, as there is only one academic year dedicated fully to data collection and analysis.

Secondly, I acknowledge that my findings cannot be generalised as applicable to all 'working-class' or 'middle-class' graduates. My research methodology is highly qualitative, while my analysis delves into people's individual dispositions and outlooks. However, the very fact that *some* graduates have experienced immobility and frustrations in the job market is enough to disprove the common narrative that

graduates are a homogenous and *universally* highly mobile group of people, who have their pick of jobs and places to live and work in.

Thirdly, as I have covered in the methodology and discussion chapters, I recognise that I am an emotionally involved researcher. This is inevitable when it was my own personal experience as a frustrated, immobile graduate that inspired me to undertake this research project. My focus in this project was fully on the stories and experiences of the graduates, and not to retell my own story in a different guise. I have also taken steps in my methodological approach to limit my personal input as much as possible. This includes the use of open themes rather than questions, which hand some of the control (and power) back to the participant, so they can guide the conversation more. However, I do acknowledge that my own personal experience could have a subconscious bearing on the way I interpret the data and present the research narratives, despite my thorough efforts to ensure that my influence on the data and the findings was as minimal as possible.

6.5. Areas for future research and potential research papers

As highlighted in the discussion chapter, the findings from this research have generated numerous ideas for further research. However, five projects that I believe have the most potential are:

➢ <u>Research combining the place identity literature with Bourdieu's theory</u>: I believe there is an unexplored compatibility between Bourdieu's theory and the place identity literature (e.g. Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996) (please see discussion chapter for more detail). I do not believe that this potential compatibility has been explored by other researchers. I also believe that Bourdieu's literature could add the socio-structural element and the strong theoretical background that I currently believe the place identity literature is lacking.

➢ <u>A more longitudinal study of graduate mobilities:</u> It would be very interesting to 'track' how graduates' mobility changes or stays the same over time. Such a temporal element was not present within this current research project.

➢ <u>A comparative study of graduate retention in other regions of the U.K.:</u> In this research, I have emphasised that there are three primary traits of the working-class immobilising habitus: a 'taste for necessity' (Bourdieu, 1984: 376), a 'not

for the likes of me attitude' (Burke, 2016: 114) and a lack of self-confidence. Bourdieu argues that these three habitus traits, along with the possession of lower endowments of economic, social and cultural capital, are typical of the working-class *in general*. It would therefore make sense to suggest that working-class graduates in other regions of the U.K., outside of the North-East, would possess similar habitus and capitals, and overall these could work to limit the graduates' geographical and social mobility. However, without conducting detailed research on the topic in other regions, this remains an assumption. A study which takes the findings from this research on graduates in the North-East and compares them to the experiences of graduates in other regions of the U.K. would therefore be very beneficial. Do working-class graduates in other regions *actually* demonstrate a similar immobilising habitus and capital endowments? Or are there region-specific dynamics at play which are important in influencing graduate mobility, but were not immediately obvious when focusing on graduates in the North-East alone? Ultimately, such a study would help to ascertain whether the policy recommendations I made for the North-East could also be applicable to other regions, or whether different approaches would be required. Two candidate regions in England that immediately come to mind are: (1) the North-West (due to it having relatively high graduate retention figures like the North-East and being a 'northern' setting, but also containing Manchester which, unlike the North-East, has been one of the central focuses of the 'Northern Powerhouse' policy agenda), and (2) the South-West (a 'southern' setting which makes for an interesting geographical and cultural comparison with the North-East, but which is also located away from the country's cultural and political centre in the South-East and London).

➢ Detailed research into the *role* of the family in determining their graduate children's mobility: This could be examined further, with a greater focus on the role identity literature. Graduates in my research, such as Craig and Kate, demonstrated a 'role identity' as caring adult children, but it was beyond the scope of this current research project to focus on this interesting revelation substantially.

➢ Research into how graduates *gender* can impact their mobility: As mentioned in the discussion chapter, it would be especially interesting to focus on how gender

can influence the graduate role identities mentioned above. Do female graduates seem generally more likely to prioritise family roles over work, as Cinamon and Rich (2002) suggest? How does this impact their migration options and choices post-university? There are other promising avenues for research into the influence of gender on graduate migration as well. For example, how does gender make a difference to a graduates' everyday experience when studying in urban areas? Whitzman's (2013) example of women having to follow certain 'safe pathways' through town comes to mind here. Ultimately, do these experiences deter them from moving to certain locations to live and work?

As well as these ideas for future research, I also believe there are four research papers which could be generated from the existing data from my PhD research:

1. A paper that addresses the relative immobility of working-class graduates compared to middle-class graduates in the North-East, demonstrating this difference using Bourdieu's theory (economic, social and cultural capital, habitus and field). In my study the working-class graduates were aware of how their socio-economic status was limiting their mobility and this caused a emotional distress and a sense of misjustice. The paper would also emphasise the role that family capital endowments can play in limiting graduates geographical and social mobility, even after completing university. In some cases, this even caused a certain amount of resentment within the graduates. This paper could be aimed at the *mobilties* journal.

2. A paper which focuses on the regional development impacts that differential graduate mobility can have, and how graduates' professional goals are often limited by immobility. This also prevents the region from being more greatly 'linked' to the rest of the U.K. socially and culturally. The paper will argue that more graduates may not always be the answer for powering the region's burgeoning areas of economic opportunity. Finally, it will highlight the potential benefits of internships for tying graduates to the North-East region.

3. A linked paper which enquires if middle-class graduates are the 'preferred' graduate. After all, in theory they are the more mobile and culturally adaptable graduates and they are also likely to have more confidence professionally. These graduates can also help to boost universities' 'employability' figures and rankings, as they can extend their job searches further geographically. For this paper, I could supplement my existing data by interviewing staff from

organisations such as the NGI and NELEP. I could target the *Work, Employment and Society* journal for papers 2 and 3.

4. A more theoretical paper which argues for the essential inclusion of habitus and field, alongside economic, social and cultural capital, when researching class-related impacts of mobility. This paper could be aimed at the *Sociological Theory* journal.

As well as producing papers, I also intend to communicate my findings to the NELEP and NGI. I have already spoken to high-ranking members of staff from each organisation and I have promised them a copy of my research thesis. I would also be happy to report my findings to both organisations personally.

6.6 Closing statement

When embarking on this research, one of my key goals was to disprove the commonly held notion within policy and even some academic circles that graduates are a rather homogenous, universally mobile group of people who have their pick of jobs and locations in which to live and work. In the end, I believe that this research has well and truly disproved this notion.

Reference list

Adams, J. (1995) *Risk*. London: UCL Press.

Alexander, R. (2019) Geography, mobility and graduate career development. In Burke and Christie (eds) *Graduate careers in context: research, policy and practice*. London: Routledge.

Alsaawi, A. (2014) A critical review of qualitative interviews. *European Journal of Business and Social Sciences*, 3(4), 149-156.

Alshenqeeti, H. (2014) Interviewing as a Data Collection Method: A Critical Review. *English Linguistics Research*, 3(1), 39-45.

Archer, M. (2003) *Structure, agency and the internal conversation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bailey, C., Miles, S. and Stark, P. (2004) Culture-led urban regeneration and the revitalisation of identities in Newcastle, Gateshead and the North East of England. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 10(1), 47-65.

Bailey, J. (2008) First steps in qualitative data analysis: Transcribing. *Family Practice*, 25, 127-131.

Bathmaker, A-M, Ingham, N. and Waller, R. (2013) Higher education, social class and the mobilisation of capitals: recognising and playing the game. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 34(5-6), 723-743.

Bauman, Z. (1998) *Globalization: The Human Consequences*. Cambridge: Polity.

Bauman, Z. (2005) *Liquid Life*. Cambridge: Polity.

Bauman, Z. (2007) *Liquid Times: Living in an age of uncertainty.* Cambridge: Polity.

Beck, U. (1992) *Risk Society: towards a new modernity*. London: Sage.

Biernacki, P. and Waldorf, D. (1981) Snowball sampling: problems and techniques of chain referral sampling. *Sociological Methods and Research*, 10(2), 141-163.

Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Bourdieu, P. (1986) The forms of capital. In Richardson, J. (Ed) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education.* New York: Greenwood. 241-258.

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

Bourdieu, P. and Passeron, J.C. (1977/1990) *Reproduction in education, society and culture.* London: Sage.

Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2022) Conceptual and Design Thinking for Thematic Analysis*. Qualitative Psychology*, 9(1), 3-26.

Breakwell, G. M. (1986) *Coping with Threatened Identities*. London: Methuen.

Browne, K. (2005) Snowball sampling: using social networks to research non-heterosexual women. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 8(1), 47-60.

Burke, C. (2016) *Culture, Capitals and Graduate Futures*. New York: Routledge.

Cabras, I. (2020) Developing a post-Brexit economy: Challenges for the North East of England. In Shutt, J. and Liddle, J. (Eds) *The North East after Brexit: Impact and Policy*. Bingley: Emerald Publishing.

Castells, M. (1989) *The informational City: information technology, economic restructuring, and the urban-regional process.* Oxford: Basil-Blackwell.

Castells, M. (2010) *The Rise of the Network Society.* Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Cinamon, R.G. and Rich, Y. (2002) Gender differences in the importance of work and family roles: Implications for work-family conflict. *Sex Roles*, 47(11/12).

Charles, D. (2020) Industrial strategies and the North: Will a local industrial strategy deliver something new? In Shutt, J. and Liddle, J. (eds) *The North East after Brexit: Impact and Policy*. Bingley: Emerald Publishing.

Corcoran, J. and Faggian, A. (2017) Graduate migration and regional development: an international perspective. In Corcoran, J. and Faggian, A. (Eds) *Graduate*

migration and economic development: an international perspective. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Cordella, A. and Shaikh, M. (2006) *From epistemology to ontology: Challenging the constructed truth of ANT*. Working paper.

Cresswell, J. (2009) Mapping the Field of Mixed Methods Research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 3(2), 95-108.

Cresswell, T. (2004) *Place: a short introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Cresswell, T. (2010) Towards a Politics of Mobility. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space.* 28(1). 17-31.

Crossley, N. (2001) The phenomenological habitus and its construction. *Theory and Society*, 30(1), 81-120.

Crozier, G., Reay, D. and Clayton, J. (2019) Working the borderlands: working-class students constructing hybrid identities and asserting their place in higher education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 40(7), 922-937.

Davis, M. (2008) Bauman on Globalisation: The Human Consequences of a Liquid World. In Jacobsen, M.H. and Poder, P. (Eds) *The Sociology of Zygmunt Bauman*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Davis, J. (2015) The impact of role identity on student expectations. *Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning*, 5(1), 42-52.

Devine, F. and Snee, H. (2015) Doing the Great British Class Survey. *The Sociological Review*, 63(2), 240-258.

Doody, O. and Noonan, M. (2013) Preparing and conducting interviews to collect data. *Nurse Researcher*, 20(5), 28-32.

Dorling, D. (2013) *What class are you? Statistic Views.* [Online]. [Date Accessed: 18/07/2018]. Available from: www.statisticviews.com

Droseltis, O. and Vignoles, V.L. (2010) Towards an integrated model of place identification: Dimensionality and predictors of intra-personal level place preferences. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 30, 23-34.

Dubois, W.E.B. (1903) *The souls of Black folk*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Dunn, K. (2005) Interviewing. In Hay, I. (ed) *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography (2ⁿᵈ edition)*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

Edwards, R. and Holland, J. (2013) *What is qualitative interviewing?* London: Bloomsbury.

Elder-Vass, D. (2007) Reconciling Archer and Bourdieu in an emergentist Theory of Action. *Sociological Theory*, (25(4), pg. 325-346.

Elias, P. and Purcell, K. (2004) Is Mass Higher Education Working? Evidence from the Labour Market Experiences of Recent Graduates. *National Institute Economic Review.* 190, 60-74.

Farmer, S.M., Tierney, P. and Kung-McIntyre, K. (2003) Employee Creativity in Taiwan: An Application of Role Identity Theory. *Academy of Management Journal*, 46(5), 618-630.

Field, J. (2008) *Social Capital*. New York: Routledge.

Fielding, A.J. (1992) Migration and social mobility: South East England as an Escalator Region. *Regional Studies,* 26(1), pg. 1-15.

Filho, A.S. and Kamp, A. (2019) Performing mundane materiality: actor-network theory, global student mobility and a re/formation of social capital. *Discourse: Studies in the cultural politics of education*, 40(1), 122-135.

Finn, K. (2017) Multiple, relational and emotional mobilities: understanding student mobilities in higher education as more than 'staying local' and 'going away', *British Educational Research Journal*, 43(3), 743-758.

Florida, R. (2008) *Who's Your City? How the creative economy is making where to live the most important decision of your life.* New York: Basic Books.

Florida, R. (2014) *The Rise of the Creative Class Revisited*. New York: Basic Books.

Fogle, N. and Theiner, G. (2019) The ontological complicity of habitus and field: Bourdieu as an externalist. In Pritchard, D. et al. *Socially Extended Epistemology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Glaesser, J. and Cooper, B. (2014) Using Rational Action Theory and Bourdieu's habitus theory together to account for educational decision-making in England and Germany. *Sociology*, 48(3), 463-481.

Gouanvic, J-M. (2014) A model of structuralist constructivism in translation studies. In Hermans, T. (ed) *Crosscultural Transgressions*: *Research Models in Translation Studies*. London: Routledge.

Gormley, A. (2019) *The Angel of the North*. [Online] [Date accessed: 05/01/2019]. Available from www.antonygormley.com.

Gupta, A. and Ferguson, J. (1992) Beyond "Culture": Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference*. Cultural Anthropology*, 7(1), 6-23.

Gupta, A. and Ferguson, J. (2002) Spatialising states: toward an ethnography of Neoliberal Governmentality. *American Ethnologist*, 29(4), 981-1002.

Gustafson, P. (2001a) Meanings of place: Everyday experience and theoretical conceptions. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 21(1), 5-16.

Gustafson, P. (2001b) Roots and routes: Exploring the relationship between place attachment and mobility. *Environment and Behaviour*, 33(5), 667-686.

Hammersley, M. (2014) On the ethics of interviewing for discourse analysis. *Qualitative Research*, 14(5), 529-541.

Hannam, K., Sheller, M. and Urry, J. (2006) Editorial: Mobilities, Immobilities and Moorings. *Mobilities.* 1(1). 1-22.

Harding, R. (2002) Book review: Zygmunt Bauman: Globalisation: The Human Consequences. *Administrative Theory and Praxis*, 24(3), 613-625.

Harvey, D. (1989) *The Condition of Postmodernity: an enquiry into the origins of cultural change*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Headlam, N. (2020) An underpowered Northern Powerhouse: infrastructure in the ungovernable North. In Shutt, J. and Liddle, J. (eds) *The North East after Brexit: Impact and Policy*. Bingley: Emerald Publishing.

Heath, A. and Cheung, Y. (2006) *Ethnic penalties in the labour market: employers and discrimination*. Department for Work and Pensions Research Paper, 341.

HESA (2017) *Graduate Destinations*. [Online]. [Accessed 15th August 2017]. Available from https://www.hesa.ac.uk

Hoffman, E.A. (2007) Open-Ended Interviews, Power, and Emotional Labor. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 36(3), 318-346.

Husband, G. (2020) Ethical data collection and recognising the impact of semi-structured interviews on research respondents. *Educational Sciences*, 10(8), 206-218.

Invest North East England (2019) *Education and Training*. [Online] [Accessed 12/01/2019]. Available from www.investnortheastengland.co.uk.

James, S., Warhurst, C., Tholen, G. and Commander, J. (2013) What we know and what we need to know about graduate skills. *Work, Employment and Society*, 27(6), 952-963.

Jenkins, R. (2002) *Pierre Bourdieu.* London: Routledge.

Latour, B. (1992) Where are the missing masses? The sociology of a few mundane artifacts. In Bijker, W.E. and Law, J. (eds) *Shaping Technology/Building Society*: *Studies in Sociotechnical Change*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Lee, N. (2017) Powerhouse of cards? Understanding the Northern Powerhouse. *Regional Studies*, 51(3), 478-489.

Lin, N. (2001) *Social capital: a theory of structure and action*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Longhurst, R. (2016) Semi-structured interviews and focus groups. In Clifford, N.J. (ed) *Key Methods in Geography*. London: Sage.

Marginson, S. (2017) Limitations of human capital theory. *Studies in Higher Education.*

Massey, D. (1995) The conceptualisation of place. In Massey, D. and Jess, P. (Eds.) *A Place in the World? Places, Cultures and Globalisation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Massey, D. and Jess, P. (1995) Places and cultures in an uneven world. In Massey, D. and Jess, P. (Eds.) *A Place in the World? Places, Cultures and Globalisation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

McGrath, C., Palmgren, P.G., and Liliedahl, M. (2019) Twelve tips for conducting qualitative research interviews. *Medical Teacher*, 41(9), 1002-1006.

McLellan, E., MacQueen, K.M., and Neidig J.L. (2003) Beyond the qualitative interview: Data preparation and transcribing. *Field Methods,* 15(1), 63-84.

Mellor, M. and Stephenson, C. (2005) The Durham Miners' Gala and the Spirit of Community. *Community Development Journal*, 40(3), 343-351.

Miles, S. (2005) 'Our Tyne': Iconic Regeneration and the Revitalisation of Identity in NewcastleGateshead. *Urban Studies*, 42(5/6), 913-926.

Minton, A. (2003) *Northern Soul: Culture, Creativity and Quality of Place in Newcastle and Gateshead.* London: DEMOS.

Mordue, T. (2020) The North East as a Tourist Destination: A Hidden Gem? In Shutt, J. and Liddle, J. (Eds) *The North East after Brexit: Impact and Policy*. Bingley: Emerald Publishing.

Noy, C. (2008) Sampling Knowledge: The Hermeneutics of Snowball Sampling in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 11(4), 327-344.

Oliver, D.G., Serovich, J.M. and Mason, T.L. (2005) Constraints and opportunities with interview transcription: towards reflection in qualitative research. *Social Forces*, 84(2), 1273-1289.

Oltmann, S. (2016) Qualitative Interviews: A Methodological Discussion of the Interviewer and Respondent Contexts. *Qualitative Social Research*, 17(2).

Paley, J. (2016) *Phenomenology as Qualitative Research*. London: Routledge.

Philo, C. and Kearns, G, (1993) Culture, History, Capital: A Critical Introduction to the Selling of Places. In Kearns, G. and Philo, C. (Eds.) *Selling Places: The City as Cultural Capital, Past and Present*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Pocock, D.C.D. and Hudson, R. (1978) *Images of the Urban Environment*. London: Macmillan.

Reay, D. (1997) Feminist theory, habitus and social class: disrupting notions of classlessness. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 20(2), 225-233.

Reay, D. (2004) It's all becoming a habitus: beyond the habitual use of habitus in educational research. *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* 25(4), 431-444.

Reay, D., Crozier, G. and Clayton, J. (2009) Strangers in paradise? Working-class students in elite universities. *Sociology*, 43(6), 1103-1121.

Reay, D., Crozier, G. and Clayton, J. (2010) 'Fitting in' or 'standing out': working-class students in UK higher education. *British Educational Research Journal*, 36(1), 107-124.

Rose, G. (1995) Place and identity: a sense of place. In Massey, D. and Jess, P. (Eds.) *A Place in the World: Places, Cultures and Globalisation.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Russell, D. (2004) *Looking North: Northern England and the National Imagination.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Sage, J., Evandrou, M. and Falkingham, J. (2013) Onwards or homewards? Complex graduate migration pathways, well-being, and the parental safety net. *Population, Space and Place*, 19, 738-755.

Savage, M., Devine, F., Cunningham, N., Taylor, M., Li, Y., Hjellbrekke, J., Le Roux, B., Friedman, S. and Miles, A. (2013) A New Model of Social Class? Findings from the BBC's Great British Class Survey Experiment. *Sociology*, 47(2), 219-250.

Sayer, A. (2004) *The Moral Significance of Class.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Scannell, L. and Gifford, R. (2010) Defining place attachment: A tripartite framework. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 30(1), 1-10.

Sheller, M. and Urry, J. (2006) The New Mobilities Paradigm. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 38(2), 207-226.

Shields, R. (2013) *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity.* Florence: Taylor and Francis.

Smith, D.P., Finney, N., Halfacree, K. and Walford, N. (2015) Introduction: 'On the Move' in the Twenty-first Century and Contemporary Internal Migration in the UK. In Smith, D.P., Finney, N., Halfacree, K. and Walford, N. (Eds.) *Internal Migration: Geographical Perspectives and Processes.* Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.

Tholen, G. (2014) *The Changing Nature of the Graduate Labour Market: Media, Policy and Political Discourses in the UK.* London: Palgrave Pivot.

Tholen, G. (2016) Symbolic closure: Towards a renewed sociological perspective on the relationship between Higher Education, credentials, and the graduate labour market. *Sociology*, 51(5), 1067-1083.

Tholen, G. (2018) There is no necessary economic benefit to expanding universities. *Times Higher Education.* P.31.

Tholen, G., Relly, S.J., Warhurst, C. and Commander, J. (2016) Higher education, graduate skills and the skills of graduates: The case of graduates as residential sales estate agents. *British Educational Research Journal*, 42(3), 508-523.

Triventi, M. (2013) The gender wage gap and its institutional context: a comparative analysis of European graduates. *Work, Employment and Society*, 27(4), 563-580.

Twigger-Ross, C.L. and Uzzell, D.L. (1996) Place and Identity Processes. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 16, 205-220.

Vandenberghe, F. (1999) The real is relational: an epistemological analysis of Pierre Bourdieu's great generative structuralism. *Sociological Theory*, 17(1), 32-67.

Van Hear, N. (2014) Reconsidering Migration and Class. *The International Migration Review*. 48. 100-121.

Walford, N. and Stockdale, A. (2015) Lifestyle and Internal Migration. In Smith, D.P., Finney, N., Halfacree, K. and Walford, N. (Eds.) *Internal Migration: Geographical Perspectives and Processes.* Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.

Waters, J. (2015) Snowball Sampling: A Cautionary Tail Involving a Study of Older Drug Users. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 18(4), 367-380.

Whitzman, C. (2013) Women's safety and everyday mobility. In Whitzman, C, Legacy, C. and Andrew, C (eds) *Building Inclusive Cities: Women's Safety and the Right to the City.* London: Routledge.

Yucel, R. (2018) Scientists' ontological and epistemological views about science from the perspective of critical realism. *Science and Education*, 27, 407-433.

Zukin, S. (1991) *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World.* (London: University of California Press).

Appendix 1: Snowball stemmata showing the participant recruitment process

	1st Generation contacts	2nd Generation contacts	3rd Generation contacts	4th Generation contacts

1. Craig

Gender: Male

Subject: History

Interview Date: 09/11/2018

Venue: Pub in Durham (NE)

→

4. Luke

Gender: Male

Subject: ICT

Interview Date: 06/12/2018

Venue: Café in Durham (NE)

→

7. Alexandra

Gender: Female

Subject: Psychology

Interview Date: 18/01/2019

Venue: Café in Newcastle (NE)

2. Dan

Gender: Male

Subject: History

Interview Date: 17/11/2018

Venue: Participant's home (NE)

→

8. Michael

Gender: Male

Subject: History

Interview Date: 19/01/2019

Venue: Pub in Sunderland (NE)

3. Nicola

Gender: Female

Subject: Criminology and law

Interview Date: 27/11/2018

Venue: Participant's home (NE)

→

11. Kate

Gender: Female

Subject: Law

Interview Date: 10/03/2019

Venue: Pub in Chester-le-Street (NE)

5. Lee

Gender: Male

Subject: ICT

Interview Date: 14/12/2018

Venue: Pub in Durham (NE)

	1st Generation contacts	2nd Generation contacts	3rd Generation contacts	4th Generation contacts

6. Johnny

Gender: Male

Subject: Geography

Interview Date: 15/01/2019

Venue: Café in Newcastle (NE)

32. Edward

Gender: Male

Subject: Economics

Interview Date: 13/09/2019

Venue: Bar in London

9. Jack

Gender: Male

Subject: History

Interview Date: 21/01/2019

Venue: Café in Durham (NE)

13. Gemma

Gender: Female

Subject: Health + social care

Interview Date: 19/03/2019

Venue: Pub in Durham (NE)

14. Paul

Gender: Male

Subject: Business

Interview Date: 19/03/2019

Venue: Pub in Durham (UK)

37. Jason

Gender: Male

Subject: Business

Interview Date:25/09/2019

Venue: Café in Sunderland

10. Kirby

Gender: Female

Subject: Business

Interview Date: 23/01/2019

Venue: Café in Durham (UK)

12. Leanne

Gender: Female

Subject: Geography

Interview Date: 13/03/2019

Venue: Café in Durham (UK)

15. Sean

Gender: Male

Subject: Sports coaching

Interview Date: 25/03/2019

Venue: Participant's home (NE)

16. Nate

Gender: Male

Subject: Sports Science

Interview Date: 01/04/2019

Venue: Pub in Durham (NE)

| | 1st Generation contacts | 2nd Generation contacts | 3rd Generation contacts | 4th Generation contacts |

1st Generation contacts

17. Chris

Gender: Male

Subject: ICT

Interview Date: 13/04/2019

Venue: Participant's home (NE)

18. Jade

Gender: Female

Subject: Geography

Interview Date: 03/05/2019

Venue: Café in London

→

2nd Generation contacts

19. Rachel

Gender: Female

Subject: Business
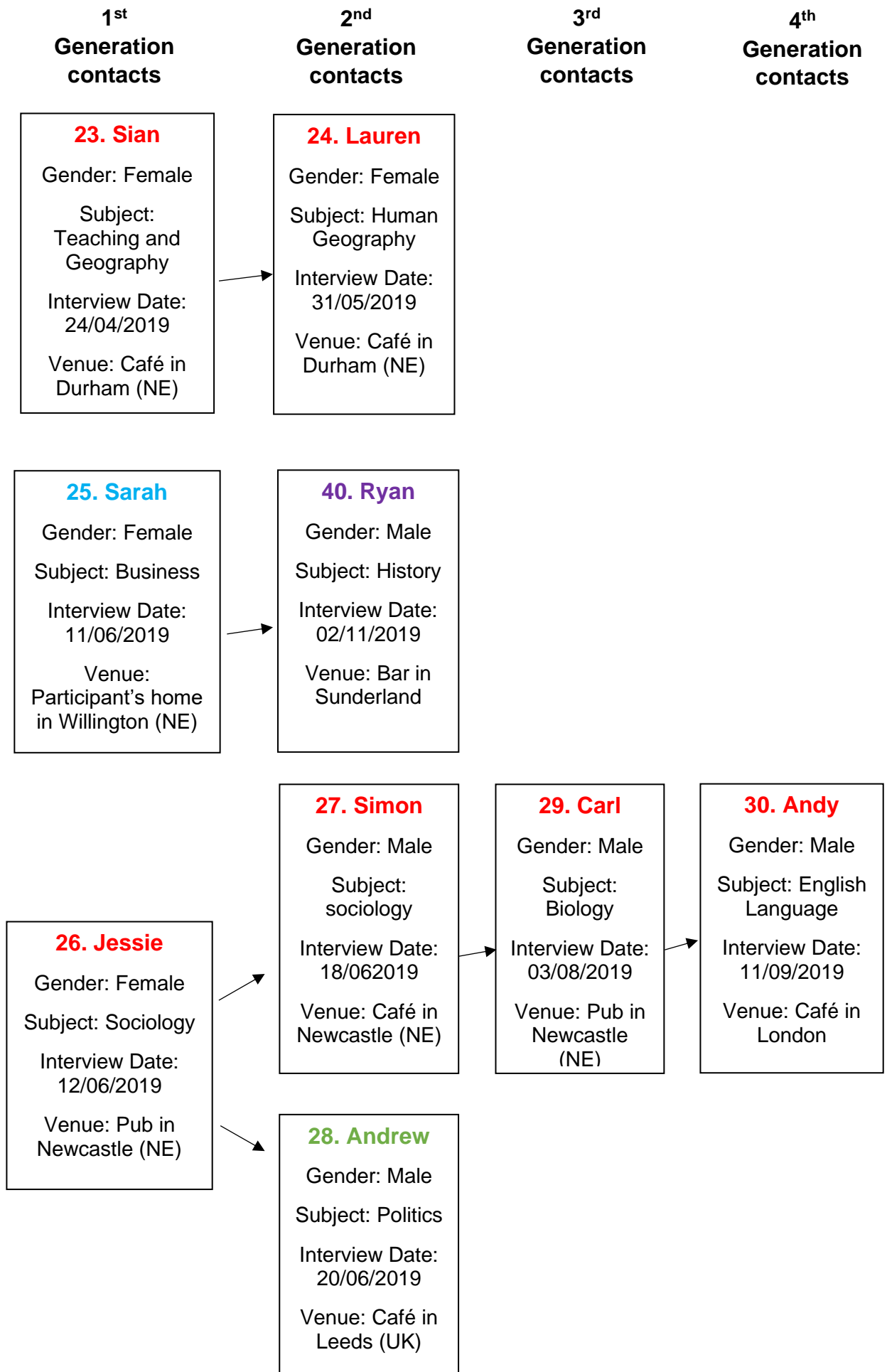
Interview Date: 03/05/2019

Venue: Café in London

20. Dave

Gender: Male

Subject: Physical Geography

Interview Date: 04/05/2019

Venue: Pub in London

21. Charlotte

Gender: Female

Subject: English Language

Interview Date: 05/05/2019

Venue: Participant's home in London

→

22. Stephany

Gender: Female

Subject: Business

Interview Date: 07/09/2019

Venue: Café in Newcastle

	1st Generation contacts	2nd Generation contacts	3rd Generation contacts	4th Generation contacts

23. Sian

Gender: Female

Subject: Teaching and Geography

Interview Date: 24/04/2019

Venue: Café in Durham (NE)

→

24. Lauren

Gender: Female

Subject: Human Geography

Interview Date: 31/05/2019

Venue: Café in Durham (NE)

25. Sarah

Gender: Female

Subject: Business

Interview Date: 11/06/2019

Venue: Participant's home in Willington (NE)

→

40. Ryan

Gender: Male

Subject: History

Interview Date: 02/11/2019

Venue: Bar in Sunderland

26. Jessie

Gender: Female

Subject: Sociology

Interview Date: 12/06/2019

Venue: Pub in Newcastle (NE)

→

27. Simon

Gender: Male

Subject: sociology

Interview Date: 18/062019

Venue: Café in Newcastle (NE)

→

29. Carl

Gender: Male

Subject: Biology

Interview Date: 03/08/2019

Venue: Pub in Newcastle (NE)

→

30. Andy

Gender: Male

Subject: English Language

Interview Date: 11/09/2019

Venue: Café in London

→

28. Andrew

Gender: Male

Subject: Politics

Interview Date: 20/06/2019

Venue: Café in Leeds (UK)

| | 1st Generation contacts | 2nd Generation contacts | 3rd Generation contacts | 4th Generation contacts |

1st Generation contacts

2nd Generation contacts

3rd Generation contacts

4th Generation contacts

33. Stuart

Gender: Male

Subject: Human Geography

Interview Date: 15/09/2019

Venue: Bar in London

31. Rex

Gender: Male

Subject: Physical Geography

Interview Date: 12/09/2019

Venue: Bar in London

34. Joe

Gender: Male

Subject: Physics

Interview Date: 15/09/2019

Venue: Bar in London

35. Olivia

Gender: Female

Subject: Geography and sociology

Interview Date: 16/09/2019

Venue: Café in London

36. Alice

Gender: Female

Subject: Modern languages (French)

Interview Date: 16/09/2019

Venue: Café in London

38. Robert

Gender: Male

Subject: Performing arts

Interview Date: 13/10/2019

Venue: Bar in Newcastle

39. Greg

Gender: Male

Subject: ICT

Interview Date: 18/10/2019

Venue: Café in Newcastle

Key

Research Group 1

Research Group 2

Research Group 3

Research Group 4

257