Square pegs in round holes
A study around student aspiration in a high performing international school environment

Doctorate in Education

Institute of Education

John Knight

December 2021

Acknowledgements

I would like to give my sincere thanks to my supervisor Dr Billy Wong for his wonderful guidance, support and excellent advice throughout my journey. I am very grateful for the help he has given along with the additional advice given by Dr Marc Jacobs to support me.

Thank you to Ann for your patience, kind support and for believing in me. Thank you to Jack, George and Alice who have kept me balanced and provided a distraction from my studies.

Declaration of original authorship

I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

John Knight

Abstract

This thesis explores the very high attendance rates at university by students from international schools in comparison to national figures in United Kingdom (UK) schools. It seeks to understand the factors around the student decision making process and how students make sense of these factors when deciding what to do after leaving school and when considering future career pathways.

The research followed an interpretive paradigm and uses both quantitative data in the form of a questionnaire to students from Years 5 to Year 13 (age 9-18) and then qualitative data in the form of focus groups with one group per year in the same age groups in one international school situated on mainland Europe with a primary and secondary section. The questionnaires explored student attitudes towards different career and study pathways while the focus groups then explored the responses to gain a deeper insight into student views.

The main conclusions of the study are that students in primary school see a variety of career options open to them on leaving school while this changes as the students' progress through the school until, by Year 13, almost all students consider a professional career after attending university as the next step with many students inferring that university was their only option. Students in the study reported feelings of stress and anxiety due to the narrow options they felt were open to them and the fear of downward social mobility if they failed to achieve the goal of university attendance. Where students considered more than one option for their future career pathways this built in back up plans with these students reporting reduced feelings of anxiety.

This research suggests a new approach to Higher Education (HE) advice that would encourage a wider range of careers being promoted in international schools, particularly in more modern or arts related careers and at the same time developing transferable skills with students. Students should be encouraged to consider themselves progressing into different careers to prepare them for the changing nature of future careers and reduce fears around maintaining social position by offering several Higher Education and career pathways.

Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction to Chapter one

> *A student was in tears talking to their tutor as they felt under pressure to attend university the following year despite preferring to leave school and start work. She felt it was expected of her from parents, friends and the school to go to university and that this was the only acceptable pathway yet felt happy with an offer she had received to start work at a hair salon. With the end of her A-level courses approaching she felt forced to make a choice between the future she preferred and that which was expected of her. The following Autumn she attended university in England for six months before dropping out.*

Having a career aspiration that is counter to family and cultural expectations was portrayed in the *Monty Python* sketch penned in 1970, 'a working-class playwright' which told the story of the son Ken returning home having started a job as a coalminer much to the disgust of his middle-class father. The scene concluded with Ken shouting at his father 'One day you'll realise there's more to life than culture. There's dirt, and smoke, and good honest sweat!' to which his father replied 'Get out! Get out! Get OUT! You ... labourer!'.

This sketch was poking fun at the desire in individuals to move up the social ladder and the tension this created which could be seen as an act of betrayal from those close to them, that would then be of a different social status. The irony of the situation created by the Monty Python team is that they felt no-one would want to move down in social status and this would cause similar upset to their family as upward social movement. This supposedly fictional situation is one that is the real experience for students in the context of high aspiring educational settings (e.g., an international school) where the norm is to attend university and taking a career path with lower perceived status would create discomfort and tension for them.

1.2 My motivation for the present study

In my current role as Head of Secondary in an international school, I have become used to the expectation that students will go on to attend university as a natural progression after leaving school at age 18. For students in the UK around 30% go on to attend university at age 18 (UCAS, 2019) whereas more than 90% of students in international schools go on to attend university at that age (ISCResearch, 2020). In my school based in mainland Europe, the figure is over 95% year on year with the remaining handful of students mainly taking gap years to travel or conduct military service before attending university the following year.

Choosing not to attend university in my school is rare, though expressing the desire to follow an alternative pathway is common with students often then choosing to go along with what is expected of them despite considering an alternative. As the school is non-selective this creates a culture where students who may have skills and interests better suited to an alternative pathway feel compelled to go with the crowd and attend university anyway, thus the title for this study of 'square-pegs in round holes'. I am interested in the student perspective on this one-size fits all approach to see if it really is the best approach for all students.

Having been in the same international school for a decade and a half, the growth of the international school sector in that time has seen the significance of international education increase with a fourfold rise in the number of international schools operating globally from 2,584 in 2000 up to 10,937 schools in 2019 (ISCResearch, 2020). This suggests the situation I am seeing in my school is likely to be replicated across thousands of other schools with the 10% not attending university being a significant number of students neglected by the HE pathway currently recommended as the standard route for all students.

The university and future career pathways of the vast majority of students in international schools who will be part of the 90% going to university are also important to consider. The aspiration of parents for their children in my current school are for them to follow a very traditional university and career pathway with the aspiration to become doctors and engineers frequently cited by parents as the most desirable futures. In the first half of

my career, when working in Comprehensive schools in the UK, the career aspirations of students were often from the more technical careers such as mechanics and builders to more academic routes such as lawyers and doctors while also often hearing of a student hoping to be in a celebrity style career such as becoming a footballer or film star. The nature of student aspiration in the three UK Comprehensive schools I worked in was similar to each other though very different to the student and parent aspiration to be found in the international school setting.

In the second half of my career, I have heard the phrase 'jobs that do not exist yet' used with increasing frequency as an acknowledgement that the job market is changing. This change has largely come as a result of the advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI), Automation, social media as well as software and application development. This has created new jobs as well as a new approach to careers with Handy (1991) terming a new notion of portfolio careers where he predicted the disappearance of the dominance of lifelong, full-time jobs with employees now being trained on the job rather than requiring a degree to start. As a result of automation, the types of careers available to school and university leavers has changed and in America '7000 occupations disappeared while 8000 new occupations were added.' (Liu & Chen, 2013, p. 85).

To consider whether the current post-18 pathways and careers advice for international students are the most appropriate I am using the research of Arthur and Rousseau (1996) who explored the difference between traditional careers and 'boundaryless' careers, which is their term for the modern phenomenon of a career which is more flexible moving across companies and across occupations, sometimes employed in more than one part-time role to accumulate a salary. This move away from the lifelong career in one company is seen in reports in the US from 1993 showing the median employment tenure to be around four and a half years with the average job tenure in Silicon Valley being just two years in the 1980's (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996).

Within my current school the title of the careers advisor changed to that of HE advisor. This reflects the situation within the school that students, often it would seem encouraged by parents, see university as the automatic next step at age 18 and they can either choose a course that leads directly into a more traditional

career or delay the decision over a potential career for three or more years until they finish university. This one size fits all approach raises the possibility that the current advice is outdated and while suiting many of the students, it fails to highlight the variety of options that would prepare students for a more flexible work landscape that awaits them.

1.3 Personal and professional background

When describing the context of this research in the next section it is important to give my background which helps explain the ways in which I may have been influenced in relation to this study as well as my own context and experiences.

After studying for my bachelor's degree in education with the University of Exeter I spent the first ten years of my career working in three different state comprehensive schools in the South of England. Each of them were situated in catchment areas where families came from a mix of working-class and middle-class backgrounds. In the third school my role was as Deputy Head where I had a pastoral responsibility where the school had a large cohort of traveller students as well as a high proportion attending from the local council estate and it was common for students to leave education aged 16 to work in routine or technical occupations. Under half of the students would continue on to college education from age 16-18 and less still had an aspiration to attend university. The number of students going on to attend university was well below the national average of 30% and this meant that raising university aspiration in students seemed an appropriate aim.

After leaving UK state education I moved to mainland Europe to teach in a British style international school. The school has over 1,300 students from around 70 nationalities and during my time in the school I have had the roles of International Baccalaureate (IB) coordinator, Deputy Head and then became the Head of Secondary school. Since joining the school in 2006 and more recently in my role as Head I have come to assume that all students will want to go to university at the age of 18. This is based on the figures each year of around 95% of students following this pathway with the rest tending to delay this decision for a year. The

school culture I then became immersed in had an assumption that students would want to go on to university, so I feel I have become somewhat blinkered in my expectations for students upon leaving the school.

Having line managed the pastoral team of Heads of Years and School Counsellors for several years I found the team grappling increasingly with the issues of stress and self-esteem with students in years 11-13 in particular who were managing the parental desire of wanting their child to go to a prestigious university. This weight of expectation seemed to be a major factor in the pressure causing unhappiness in our older students.

My three young children attend the primary section of the school where I work, so my curiosity around the expectations on students in the school and the potential issues of well-being this may cause may also have a personal dimension for me. My oldest son has talked from around the age of eight about wanting to follow a less academic career pathway such as being a youtuber or a game designer and this has caused me to consider what response a student higher up the school would get if they expressed a desire to be a game designer. This has given me an interest in exploring the social environment of an international school and whether a student with an aspiration to become a game designer would receive a similar response to Ken in the Monty Python sketch from parents and what part the school plays in reinforcing this message.

1.4 Context to the research

A change in attitude towards post-16 and post-18 education can be seen in the UK beginning with the education reform act of 1988 which was followed in 1992 by the change to university designation in the UK which led to increased participation in full-time education for both these age groups. According to the DFES (2001 as cited in Archer & Yamashita, 2003, p. 53), the UK government policy in 2001 was to 'end the culture of leaving education at 16' with the effect that by the mid-1990s more than double the number of students stayed in full-time education compared to the figure 20 years previous. In 1999 the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, set a target for 50% of young people to attend Higher Education before they were thirty, and when looking at the longer term growth since the Robbins Report of 1963 the number of students participating in HE

at some point before age 30 has increased from 5% to just over 50% of young people (Brink, 2018). The widening participation agenda has seen an increase in HE participation year on year for the past 20 years with the numbers attending rising every year over that period. This agenda brings a benefit to the individual with the social and economic benefit this gives them and secondly, and perhaps the main reason the government has pushed this agenda, the belief that higher levels of skill in the workforce will lead to higher national economic growth (Kersh & Juul, 2015).

With university fees of £1000 introduced in 1998 which then increased to £9000 in 2012, universities have increasingly seen themselves as being in the marketplace, with league tables a key performance indicator and recruiting tool with students seen as 'active consumers' (Brooks, 2013). The pressure on universities to focus on league table criteria means they will prioritise courses that lead to a good position in the league tables rather than prioritising skills for future careers. With the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) scheme having two out of six metrics based around student's destination in terms of employment and earnings (Brink, 2018) this encourages universities to favour courses leading to high employment and wage prospects when they leave university to gain higher rankings for the university, rather than offering new courses that could lead to jobs that have not yet been created due to the risk of them not materialising and graduates being less employable.

The way the league tables are compiled and the algorithms used have a 'bias towards research rather than teaching or other university functions, the bias within research is towards the natural sciences and medicine, away from the social sciences' (Brink, 2018, p. 95) which encourages universities to regard the natural sciences more highly, though in contrast, we see that creative and social skills are judged to be the more important skills for careers in the future (Frey & Osborne, 2017). This is seen in relation to changes in careers as a result of automation and artificial intelligence with studies finding that 'recent research suggests that computer technologies are least likely to substitute for creative and social skills, there is a strong case for investing not only in technical skills with most future challenges likely to require fusion skills- that is, a combination of entrepreneurial, creative and technical skills.' (Berger & Frey, 2015, p. 30). This leads us to question whether the round hole of university education being encouraged for a 15-year-old will adequately

prepare them for the workplace they will find when they graduate seven or more years in the future and the changes to the workplace that will then follow as they go through their career.

As an alternative to HE for students wishing to gain skills for the workplace, the Vocational Educational and Training (VET) pathway is a way of gaining skills and qualifications before starting work that is offered throughout Europe. While the opportunities for HE and VET study have many similarities across Europe the esteem in which they are held and uptake from students varies greatly. This was found to be the case in a comparative study between England and Denmark (Kersh & Juul, 2015) with the VET pathway having much lower esteem amongst students in England than in Denmark. This is in part historical with a confusion created in England due to a large number of different VET qualifications that were created with the result that 'employers have little confidence – or indeed knowledge – of the awards whose main purpose is to prepare young people for entry to their businesses. In addition… the wage returns for many of these qualifications were negative.' (Kersh & Juul, 2015, p. 10). Another contributing factor is the cost of study with HE in England being expensive with students therefore choosing a VET route due to cost and economic background whereas this was not the case in Denmark with both HE and VET being free.

1.5 The International School Context

Over 100,000 applicants came to UK universities from outside of the UK in 2018 (UCAS, 2019) and over 5.6 million students were studying in international schools globally in 2019 (ISCResearch, 2020). This would give a pool of around 400,000 or more students in the final year of Secondary with 90% of them attending university at age 18 which gives a significant number of students, around 360,000 each year, leaving international schools to attend a university around the world.

As the number of students attending university from international schools is very high and has grown in recent years, this suggests an area that is significant, and which has been neglected in research. International schools

come in different forms, with the oldest among them being formed 'largely in response to the needs of globally mobile politicians, diplomats, missionaries and volunteers.' (Hayden, 2011, p. 214). In the past two decades the increase has mainly come from the wealthy local population, with 2019 figures showing that 80% of students come from local families as a proportion of students attending international schools which is up from just 20% of students in 1989 (ISCResearch, 2020).

In the majority of international schools, admission requirements are based on the ability of parents, or the company they work for, to pay the school fees rather than for the student to pass an admissions test. International schools are similar to private schools in the UK where parents or companies pay the school fees and as the school is not funded by the government this gives more autonomy in the running of the school. A small, but growing number of franchise schools from UK independent schools require students to pass an entrance exam to be able to attend (Hayden & Thompson, 2019). The school where I work is one of the older international schools with 30% of students from the UK and the rest coming from around 70 different countries with no selection criteria for entry. This means the school is fairly representative of the older international schools while having a more diverse student body than many of the newer schools which serve mainly local families.

The main curriculum that international schools tend to follow is the International Baccalaureate (IB) programme, with 5,715 schools using this curriculum (IBO, 2020). Schools who class themselves as international but are not IB schools will usually follow a UK or US curriculum model. As I have been working in a school offering the IB, A levels and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) exams since 2006, I am familiar with the curriculums offered in the majority of international schools.

The huge growth in international schools has resulted in many cities having multiple international schools giving increased choice for families. These schools aim to differentiate themselves with the ability to help students get into prestigious universities being a strong selling point (Bridge & Wilson, 2015). This perpetuates the cycle with schools setting themselves up as a route to university thus being less likely to

encourage students to consider alternatives as this would diminish their appeal to prospective families. International schools, with the 90% university attendance figures, seem locked in a 'one size fits all' model of student career advice which is certainly a challenge for the 10% of students not fitting in with the large majority but may also suggest many of the 90% are going with the crowd rather than considering all options post-18.

1.6 Higher Education and Social Mobility

In her speech of July 2005 entitled 'education and social progress' the Secretary of State for Education asserted that HE enabled social movement within society and that the changes the government was making would ensure 'ability flows to the top irrespective of an individual's background.' (Kelly, 2005, p. 2). This aimed to build on previous agendas to widen participation in HE so that higher numbers of students would enrol in education and training at age 18 and older. Kelly claimed that education has the purpose of allowing everyone to achieve their life goals based on ability rather than family background.

According to Diane Reay (2006) the government was not only failing to achieve the increase in educational opportunities for those from poorer backgrounds but found that in fact 'the education gap between rich and poor children has grown.' (Reay, 2006, p. 290). While the numbers of young people attending university has grown year on year this has been more down to the improved opportunity to attend university for the middle-class rather than opportunities for poorer students according to both Kelly and Reay. This growth is seen globally with a 'doubling of university enrolments around the world' (Brown & Lauder, 2012, P. 42).

International education has grown along with the rise of the middle class in many countries and the United Nations Development Programme (2013) identified this growth and 'predicts a four to five-fold increase of such a middle class of the south [which will] open up a large new segment of society to international education.' (Gardner-McTaggart, 2016, p. 3). This shows a similar situation in international schools to that

which has happened in the UK in recent decades with education cementing positions within society rather than increasing mobility.

As international schools are predominately fee paying we see the transfer of economic capital for social and cultural capital as described by Bourdieu (1977). In his research into the IB programme, Gardner-McTaggart states that 'social reproduction is fundamental to the middle-classes' (Gardner-McTaggart, 2016, p.6) which reinforces the idea that international school parents will nurture aspiration to attend university in their children as a way of gaining institutionalised cultural capital in the form of a university degree, the social capital of the network gained while at university and embodied cultural capital in the self-assurance gained from attendance at an academic institution. This will be discussed further in chapter two.

The aim of increasing the educational opportunities in the hope of enhancing social mobility makes the assumption that higher education is good for the individual as well as assuming that moving social class to a higher group is also beneficial. While a correlation can be found between qualifications and levels of earnings the link between education and happiness is more difficult to see, with some low earning jobs being classified as giving highest satisfaction (Léné, 2019). Scott (2008) goes beyond the economic benefits of education and asserts that it has the purpose of developing 'certain virtues or experiences that children should have in order to lead a fulfilled life.' And is concerned with 'the development of dispositions that allow them to lead the good life.' The challenge that Scott then identifies is establishing what the 'good life' is (Scott, 2008, p. 16).

To help understand what the 'good life' could look like, Scott draws on the work of John White (White, 1973) who used the theme of autonomous well-being and asserted that education can enable this to be realised. White includes work in his definition of a good life but also goes beyond work as a measure and an outcome to add justice, altruism, lifelong learning and community. While attending university may in many cases increase autonomy, if that is the only route on offer for students aged 18 it may limit opportunities from this wider definition of living a good life through autonomy and choice. This suggests not just one route to a good life

but 'a variety of good lives, which are different for different people and groups of people, all of which in combination comprise an end-point of what society is trying to achieve' (Scott, 2008, p. 126).

This raises two fundamental questions for the school where I work. Firstly, with almost all students attending university this poses the question of whether this is always the best thing for every student, and secondly, does this increased competition for HE places and need for middle-class families to maintain social status cause high stress where 'students from middle-class backgrounds would need to run faster to stand still' (Brown, 2013, p. 685). Kelly in her speech talked of students being rescued from poorer backgrounds and of ladders of opportunity giving the perception of climbing up to a better situation. This suggests that while some students may be able to climb ladders of opportunity, for international students from high socio-economic backgrounds they would see risk from the 'snakes' of alternative pathways presenting downward mobility.

Class and associated cultural norms could be seen as persistent in determining a person's life course (Fuller, 2009) with this central issue crossing generations and maintaining differences in higher educational aspiration and achievement.

> This herding together of individuals bonded by strong social similarities generates a shared culture that is legitimized through practice. Class imposes its own boundaries and horizons which, when applied to education, can be viewed as highly influential in the shaping of a student's ambitions and aspirations for themselves. (Fuller, 2009, p. 7).

The shared culture of university being the only real option for students has been formed in my current school which, supported by the ISC research figures, would seem common across international schools. The 'herding together' of students with strong similarities of being part of an expat community in an international school is influential on students ambition to attend university and the question I wish to explore is whether this is a negative or positive situation for every student?

The shared ambition from a high and increasing number of students wanting to maintain social status is described by Brown (2013) as social congestion as he identifies middle-class families as being in a 'positional struggle – increasing expensive in time, effort and money – with little certainty of reproducing their class location' (Brown, 2013, p. 686). A solution to this challenge is identified by Farrugia (2020) who sees geographic mobility and willingness to move globally as a possible way to maintain social status.

'The imperative towards cosmopolitanism was strongest for young people from relatively affluent or middle-class backgrounds who either aspired to mobility of had experiences of successful migration. (Farrugia, 2020, p. 246).'

Globally mobile international school families will see their physical mobility as a way to protect themselves against downward social mobility. Mobility has become associated with notions of adulthood and independence with migration 'intertwined' with class (Farrugia, 2020) as a way of protecting against downward social mobility for students.

1.7 Student well-being and aspiration

Secondary school is a time of change for children as they go through the teenage years to adulthood. This brings many challenges both socially and emotionally. For the students I work with, a counselling service is available for students to use through a self-referral system. In years 7-10 the student numbers seeing the counsellors are very low each year, though we see a large spike for years 11-13. While some of this can be associated with general teenage issues, the counsellors report that a significant number of students see them due to stress around identity, academic anxiety and future career expectations.

Work around student mental health has become far more common over the past decade (Mansfield, Humphrey, & Patalay, 2021) in schools in the UK and internationally, with proactive measures put in place such as mindfulness in schools. Much of the stress experienced by students comes directly from the school through pressure of exams and experiencing failure at different stages of school life.

Figures from the World Health Organization indicate that as many as half the world's population are affected with mental health problems at some point in their lives with the severity of student mental health problems increasing with issues such as depression seen to double over a 13 year period since the late 1990's (Storrie, Ahern, & Tuckett, 2010). Studies put the number of students with mental health problems at around 20% of secondary age students (Bock, 2021) rising to as high as 47% of university students (Storrie et al., 2010).

Key causes of stress in adolescents include the demands of school with this being a 'central stressor' with stress related to education rising as 'modern knowledge societies put a greater emphasis on education which entails several stressors... most notable is the increased pressure to perform in school' (Högberg, Strandh, & Hagquist, 2020, p. 2). This pressure can be compounded on students where parents place their own anxiety to achieve a narrow definition of success onto their children (Duffy, 2019) causing some students to follow 'trajectories that generate considerable damage to their mental wellbeing.' (Bowers-Brown, Ingram, & Burke, 2019, p. 212) though this is more likely to be the experience of students from middle-class families as working-class parents are likely to be more relaxed in this regard (Lareau, 2011). The main factor causing anxiety in students according to Morgan (2014) was around exams and how their performance would affect their future chances.

The pressure on students to pursue HE pathways and professional careers as a way of maintaining the social status of their family is exacerbated by the growth in the numbers of graduates outstripping the demand for graduates which has led to 'continuous over-qualification' (Brown & Tholen, 2017, p. 8). This increase in the numbers attending university had made higher education 'a necessity to stay ahead of the competition' (Brown & Souto-Otero, p. 111). This will cause anxiety in students who feel that a degree is a necessity to prevent

21

downward social mobility with an added pressure that even with a university degree they may end up with a qualification that has 'little market worth and [represents] poor value for money' (Brown, 2020, p. 495).

Students will be faced with the feeling they have no choice except to aim for a degree course but have the added stress that this does not then guarantee a career that will maintain their social status. As this makes attendance at university the requirement for many students this brings an added pressure on needing to meet the requirements for attendance at university.

In a large number of international schools, the IB curriculum is taught which is a very rigorous and demanding curriculum. For the final two years, students enrol on the diploma programme with just half of all candidates going on to achieve the IB diploma while the rest will pass some certificates but, in many contexts be deemed to have failed the diploma. This discrepancy between the 50% of students getting the diploma while 90% of students in international schools go on to university would suggest that a large number of students are going on to university despite finding a traditional approach to academic study difficult.

In addition to the stress faced by all adolescents around their developing identity along with academic performance, additional factors causing stress have been identified in international students at university which include 'anxiety related to the unknown' (Levine, Stock, & Prieto-Welch, 2016, p. 53) and unfamiliarity with a new country and education system while typical concerns around 'academic pressure, financial concerns, concerns related to relationships, and feelings of isolation' will be present for all students but may be more challenging for international students (Levine et al., 2016, p. 54).

While at school the desire to fit in to a social group and find acceptance within it, along with the need to construct a 'coherent' identity, has been compounded by an increasing use of social media by adolescents (Weinstein & Selman, 2016) and this is a further cause for anxiety in students. Where students feel the need to present different identities in different contexts, both physically and online, this adds to their feelings of

anxiety (Duffy, 2019). Literature around stress and anxiety in students is wide ranging and this covers key areas of potential stress in students.

1.8 Aims and objectives of the research

The aim of this research is to explore the international student experience when considering future careers and HE or VET options with a view to improving this experience. I have decided to focus on student aspiration and the influences and expectations placed on international students and where these come from. My argument is that international schools, through the culture created by parents, teachers and students, are a major influence on the decision making of students and this places high levels of pressure on students to aim for top end HE options. This pressure, I suggest, causes some students to apply for courses that would not be their own preference causing emotional stresses for the student to meet the expectations placed on them.

Previous research around student HE intentions has focussed on low aspiration environments so the contribution to knowledge of this research is around student experience of career pathways in a high aspiration setting. This will help understand the student experience and pressures faced in the context of an international school setting which is a fast-growing sector of education.

In addition to this, another objective is to give an opportunity for student voice in the way schools should approach post-18 support and advice. This is an area in international schools that currently has a very fixed approach based on a consumer model of appealing to parent aspirations of traditional university pathways. In hearing student views on their future hopes and fears and the pressures they feel are placed on them the school can reflect on the ways we can best support them.

1.9 Outline of the thesis

The thesis is organised into the following chapters. Chapter two reviews the literature around HE and influences on student identity formation. It goes on to explore the culture of international schools and stress that comes from studying in a high aspiration culture coupled with anxiety around the changing nature of careers in the future. The chapter defines key terms and concludes by outlining the current model for careers advice present in many international schools and the possible challenges arising from this.

Chapter three identifies the methodological approach used to discuss the research questions and sets out the methods used for data collection and analysis in detail. Chapters four and five present the findings from the quantitative and qualitative data while chapter six discusses the findings in greater detail pulling together common aspects of both.

Finally, I conclude the thesis by summarising the findings in chapter seven which suggests recommendations to improve the current approach to careers advice whilst also suggesting possible areas for future research arising from the findings from this study.

1.10   Summary

By exploring aspirations in more depth, I aim to find out if it really is the case that students feel like square pegs pushed into round holes. Taking the analogy of the children's game of pushing pegs into different shaped holes as a way of viewing students' suitability for different pathways at age 18, I asked what different shapes of holes are available to students on leaving an international school and are the students firmly formed into a particular shape of peg.

It could be argued that the current international school system is set up to give all students, whatever shape of peg they may be, the ability to fit through the round hole of university at the end of their school studies. So, is there another way? Is it possible to equip students with the skills and choices to decide what kind of peg they wish to be and for them to have the confidence to choose from a variety of different shaped holes for their future? With this in mind, this thesis sets out to explore the following research questions.

- What factors influence international school students' choice making about their future education and careers?

Sub-questions include:

- How do international school students make sense of their multi-faceted academic, social and cultural identities when making these decisions?
- What are the main challenges and opportunities international school students face when considering future careers?

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the construction of identity and aspiration by students in international schools and the literature review will begin with a focus on the different Post-18 routes available for students and the benefits of going to university compared to alternative pathways. When examining the educational pathway of attending university, this will be evaluated by looking at potential future careers and the necessary skills required in these jobs to analyse how well universities equip students for this and to assess the benefits of this pathway for students.

Having analysed the potential pathways open to students leaving international schools at the age of 18, the factors influencing the decisions they make will be explored, leading to the literature review considering the way in which identity is formed for the students who are internationally schooled and the factors affecting their aspirations. Ideas from the literature review will then be brought together to help address the question of why such a high proportion of international school students see university as the best pathway for them and will summarise key factors behind this decision process.

2.2 The purpose of Universities and different Post-18 routes

The key function of universities as described by Newman (1886) was to teach universal knowledge. In addition to the purpose of the university as an institution to teach knowledge, the second simultaneous purpose is that of conducting research (Humboldt, Brandes, & Humboldt, 2016). These two views of the purposes of universities date back to the early European universities, some of the oldest being founded in the 12th and 13th centuries with teaching being seen as the predominant purpose for the next 700 years until the middle of the 20th century when research was seen as a more important aspect (Brink, 2018).

In the 1960's and 70's in the UK, universities expanded, with three main reasons given behind the surge in university growth and the emphasis on research:

First, it was the time of the cold war, which, from the moment President Kennedy promised to put a man on the moon, put a lot of money and incentive into scientific research. Second, it was the beginning of the computer age… And, third, it was in the UK, the time of the welfare state, when you could go to university for free. (Brink, 2018, p. 30).

The new universities in the twentieth century, and particularly at this time, are often referred to as red brick universities, with a select group of 17 universities made of older universities focussed on research collaborating to form the Russell Group in 1994. This established the dual purpose of universities as a combination of teaching and research. For this study the focus on teaching will feature more predominately as students aged 18 will be studying for a first degree, though the distinction of universities involved in research and the prestige associated also factors into ideas of aspiration and of universities having a hierarchy of esteem.

A key change to higher education in the United Kingdom (UK) came in 1992 when the binary classifications of universities and polytechnics ended and 35 polytechnics were given the title of university (Further and Higher Education Act 1992, 2009). The original purpose of polytechnics had been on vocational degrees with the change in 1992 leading to a discussion often repeated in universities about what is useful and what is useless in tertiary education (Collini, 2012).

Moving beyond the notion that universities have the purpose of imparting or advancing knowledge for its own sake, the purpose of a university can be understood through the aspects given value in ranking systems. Universities are now ranked using different metrics with the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) from the UK being an example. This uses six measures with the first three being on student ratings around quality and the fourth on retention rates through the course. These make good sense when considering the cost of attending university and the financial investment students are making. The final two measures are on student destination after leaving university in terms of employment or future study. A main purpose of a university degree is therefore to help graduating students secure employment, Brink (2018) state:

The reason why parents are so anxious for the children to go to a 'good school' and then on to a 'good university' are essentially utilitarian: it will serve them well in having a 'good career' which is a euphemism for earning more money (Brink, 2018, p. 216)

This desire of parents is born out in the data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report of 2017 which showed that adults aged 25-64 with a university degree earn on average 56% more than those with only a high school qualification (Education at a glance 2017: OECD indicators, 2017). This shows that one purpose of universities is to enable students to enter higher earning careers which the data shows is something they are successful in achieving and the data supports the perception among students that having a degree will prevent them 'having to take a low skilled job' (Brooks, Gupta, Jayadeva, & Abrahams, 2020, p. 6). Research from the Sutton Trust shows that earnings differ according to which university students attended, with graduates from Oxford and Cambridge having starting salaries which are approximately 42% higher than students from post-1992 universities (de Vries, 2014).

The desirability of HE to increase earnings can be seen at governmental level with it being common for governments to see a link between a high proportion of young people completing university degrees and competitiveness in the economy (Adnett, 2015). With numbers attending university increasing year on year, the government has supported attempts to encourage more students to attend university by targeting those from disadvantaged backgrounds. This is often known as the widening participation agenda which has its origins in the Dearing report of 1997 (Hoare & Johnston, 2011). This highlights two potential purposes of universities at the macro level, namely improving the economy through professionalising the workforce and improving social mobility by encouraging wider participation, Hoare and Johnston (2011) state:

> An increasing proportion of graduates in the national labour force results in faster productivity growth and hence faster economic growth… In addition it has been claimed that a more educated workforce leads to a higher labour force participation rate and lower unemployment, which again directly raises economic growth. (Hoare & Johnston, 2011, p. 215)

The issue around social mobility stems from the participation rates, with data showing that students from lower socioeconomic groups are under-represented proportionally in university attendance statistics (Chowdry, Crawford, Dearden, Goodman, & Vignoles, 2013) which fits the international school comparison where around

90% of students go on to attend university at the age of 18 compared to a figure of around 30% in the UK with international schools being fee-paying and representing families from a high socio-economic group.

A key factor behind this disparity in university attendance could be economic due to the cost of university attendance, though it is also down to social factors, where many children in the lower socio-economic groups will have parents who themselves have not attended university so they are unfamiliar with the application process and do not display 'what the university regards as confidence' (Donnelly & Evans, 2018, p. 3). Therefore, any aims of universities to increase social mobility have challenges around cost and understanding of the system which in the context of international schools does not seem to be an issue, with families having both the financial capital to support university attendance as well as confidence to navigate the application system leading to the current high levels of university attendance.

The current situation is that students from high income families are disproportionately represented at top universities though if early intervention strategies have the success that has been seen in early pilot studies (Heckman, 2013) along with funding incentives from the government to take more disadvantaged students (Hoare & Johnston, 2011) this could redistribute the university places more equitably which could further reduce the places available in top UK universities for students from international schools.

As this study focuses on the micro level of international schools, a key purpose for students attending university can be seen as gaining knowledge and skills which leads to greater employability and earning potential. An additional benefit that comes through attending university is the 'social advantage, such as personal confidence and valuable networks.' (Brink, 2018, p. 215) which leads to the situation of those families in more affluent socio-economic groups having the 'confidence' to attend university which then increases their confidence and will create the next generation with the familiar understanding of university attendance allowing the cycle to continue. Families in international schools will therefore see a key purpose of university attendance as a way to prevent downward social mobility, a concept referred to as the glass floor (Johnston, 2015).

While universities may see their key purpose as teaching and research, we find those attending, as well as their families, will be looking to gain career and financial advancement as well as gaining a valuable network (Redmond, 2010) which can be developed through university societies (Rook, 2013). Where both groups are in agreement is that education has value and that it has 'intrinsic importance in that being educated is a valuable achievement in itself, for its own sake.' (Walker, 2008, p. 270).

2.3 The good life and Higher Education progression

This issue of what makes a 'good life' is explored by Scott (2008) who identifies the problem of 'establishing what the good life is' (Scott, 2008, p. 16) and then looks at how schools can give students suitable experiences that will develop the dispositions required to live the good life when they grow up. As the features that constitute a good life will look different to different people, White (1973) argues that the common requirement for students to be able to have this good life is developing autonomy and being able to make choices which creates the possibility of leading a good life.

University attendance has been out of reach for most students from disadvantaged backgrounds for economic reasons as well as due to attending poor performing schools. The government focus on raising attendance at university has been for economic reasons, though this should perhaps be viewed more around individuals and their freedoms and opportunities as currently opportunity is not distributed evenly with many students not given 'the freedom to choose from genuine options' (Walker, 2008, p. 270).

With the vast majority of international school students following the pathway of university attendance, this suggests that these students are not presented with genuine options of alternative pathways to choose from and assumes that 'HE is the desired outcome of aspiration' (Bowers-Brown et al., 2019, p. 207) . Students are given the illusion of choice as they choose between universities and which country they will move to for

university. The traditional HE and careers advice approach used by most schools can be described as a 'matching' process (Sampson, 2009) which creates a 'linear imagining of the future' (Alexander, Loewenthal, & Butt, 2020, p. 123) and this is unhelpful for students as the school takes the lead on making the decision for the individual:

> Individuals need to learn how to make their own decisions if they are to remain employable because lifetime employment is no longer the norm. Matching has also been criticized for stressing a simplistic, point-in-time approach that ignores intuition, the developmental nature of career choice, and the influence of social context on decision making (Sampson, 2009, p. 92).

Sampson suggests that matching should be a process rather than an event with information being available for students from multiple sources to generate options. This becomes an evolutionary process where matches can be made and later evaluated being discarded or kept, becoming part of an ongoing choice. This flexible approach will involve students coming to a better understanding of self and identity to better prepare them for future frustrations arising from redundancy and unemployment in an increasingly unpredictable jobs market (Coetzee, 2012) with this approach being referred to as career construction theory where 'individuals make choices that express their self-concepts and substantiate their goals in the social reality of life (Coetzee, 2012, p. 693)

Within the UK, university degrees are given equally but were referred to by Charles Clarke as being Gold, Silver and Bronze standard with the difference in level being 'the great research universities, the outstanding teaching universities and those that make a dynamic, dramatic contribution to their regional and local economies' (Ainley, 2003, p. 5). This stratification would make acceptance in a silver or bronze level of university seem less prestigious with students tending to 'differentiate between older and newer institutions' (Brooks, Gupta, & Jayadeva, 2021, p. 8) and this can lead to a sense of disappointment for students enrolling in a newer institution having failed to achieve theirs and their parents' aspirations. An additional perceived difference in esteem can be found within university courses as Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) courses are held in high regard by families with high socio-economic status with lower value being given to Arts related degrees (Brooks et al., 2021).

A possible reason for students from independent schools applying for universities that are more of a reach is likely to be financial as students from a 'low socioeconomic background will, because of the family's limited financial resources, choose strategies for educational and occupational achievement with low probability of failure. Young people from families with high socioeconomic status do not experience the same financial limitations, and tend to choose less safe options.' (Gjerustad & von Soest, 2012, p. 892)

The stratification of university choice by socio-economic status of the family the student is from has been identified by Hoskins (2012) who identified two tiers of university with a higher status tier dominated in attendance by students from more affluent backgrounds and this adds an extra pressure on students from an international school to join their peers in attending more prestigious universities, Hoskins (2012) state:

> Since participation has widened, pre-1992 institutions tend to recruit students from more privileged economic families while post-1992 institutions are 'associated most strongly with recruiting students from traditionally under-represented and "diverse" backgrounds' (Burke, 2012, p.21). Thus, the process of widening participation has contributed to the maintenance of a system that directs particular students to particular forms of higher education and consequently maintains an unequal status quo between social class groups. (Hoskins, 2012, p. 237)

This choice between tier of university is largely artificial with entry gained due to the grades achieved rather than another measure of suitability to the university and course. For students making choices on their future educational and career pathways a false autonomy may be present, where if the capacity to make autonomous choices are not sufficiently developed, they may not be able to distinguish between different options before them to decide what will help lead a fulfilled life and may be guided by others into decisions. The student may then be unable to 'distinguish between actions which have been motivated by conformity to an arbitrary authority and actions that have genuinely resulted from the exercise of autonomy' (Scott, 2008, p. 124).

One challenge around this standardisation of aspiration is that the number of students attending university has gone up leading to a 'rise of graduates over-qualified for their jobs so that one in three graduates are in a job that does not require a degree' (Walker, 2008, p. 274). Students could therefore be encouraged into a pathway

that has a large financial cost and time commitment but does not lead to the high level of job anticipated, resulting in disappointment later in life. In addition, this relies on the assumption that being employed in a higher paying job will lead to a happier life, which is disputed in studies by economists (Strauss, 2008).

Even at the application stage, students are likely to miss out on their preferred university choice as 'places on many popular courses are oversubscribed by a factor of 10 or more' (Hoare & Johnston, 2011, p. 24).   Failure to achieve a desired goal will lead to a person feeling sad or disappointed (Bock, 2021; Duffy, 2019). This disappointment of not gaining a place on the course they aspire to or the career they want could even be faced by the more successful students who do go on to their desired course and the career they hope for, when in times of high unemployment careers become unstable. Gardner (1983) proposed the theory of multiple intelligences which is similar to the theory of three types of intelligence (Sternberg, 1988) which suggests students have different strengths which may make more academic pathways more suitable for students with strengths in mathematical or linguistic areas but less so for students with strengths in other areas. The link between stress and academic performance has been identified (Denovan & Macaskill, 2017) with high stress levels linked to lower academic achievement.

The narrow view of the pathways appropriate for international school students may be detrimental to well-being and happiness with expanding genuine choices an important aim. Narrowing choices too early may lead to students making the wrong choice with studies in the US finding that one third of students changed their major at least once through their degree studies (Selingo, 2017) and this would create an issue for students intending to study in the UK which has less opportunity to change courses. The opposite of being too fixed on a single course can also be a problem as students who have no idea what to do in the future are more likely to experience anxiety (Yilmaz & Gunduz, 2018). A balance is therefore needed of empowering students to feel they can choose from legitimate options without feeling they have no idea what to do which leaves them with feelings of increased anxiety.

Linking the earlier concept of the good life with the career aspirations students will have for their future leads to a consideration of success within the individuals career, which can be defined as 'the accomplishment of desirable work-related outcomes at any point in a person's work experiences over time' (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005, p. 179). Career success can be described as objective career success, which is defined by external perspectives such as income and job level and the official job title or can be described as subjective career success which has a focus on the internal evaluation by the individual of what is important to them.

Rather than seeing these positions as mutually exclusive a duality can be considered where the individual may look for a balance between the two, sometimes described as a work-life balance, through the interdependence between the two positions which enables the individual to focus on individual identity within their career alongside institutional expectations within a career. This interdependence occurs over time and the individual can measure success with differing emphasis on objective and subjective factors at different stages of their career (Arthur et al., 2005). Modern careers can therefore be considered as a life story (Tinsley-Myerscough & Seabi, 2012) which changes through time, with individuals needing to be adaptable in their career journey and considerations of success in an unstable future job market.

2.4 The changing nature of careers

Through the literature review a theme has emerged of parents seeing continuation in education as a way of maintaining social status (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) through future careers that require a university degree as the institutionalised cultural capital that will pave their way to a high status career. This view has some validity with high school leavers without a degree finding it hard to gain employment in times of economic difficulty such as in Spain where youth unemployment rose as high as 50% around 2012 (Barner, Donnelly, & Rizvi, 2013). This is not the case universally with figures showing higher unemployment rates (25%) with university leavers in the UK in 2011 than for those seeking employment straight out of school (20%) while average earnings of degree holders in the US fell by 14.7% between 2000 and 2012 (Barner et al., 2013).

A possible challenge with this traditional approach is the view that traditional careers are changing and the job for life no longer exists as careers are now far more flexible with a person likely to change careers through their life. This can be described as having portfolio careers (Handy, 1991) which can mean the transitioning through careers as well as taking on more roles than one at a given time but shows a change to typical career pathways.

These changes to career pathways have come about through changes in technology, as well as the rise in the service industry (Arthur, 1994) and are also described as boundaryless careers due to the removal of traditional boundaries around careers. With boundaryless careers come a change to the traditional structure and hierarchy being described as having 'no boundaries of age, economic status or social status that precludes the possibility of a new beginning' (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996, p. 29).

This gives the opportunity of starting a career at age 18 and studying for a degree at a later point in the persons career with the possibility of that person's career having several cycles rather than rising through a single organisation. The statistic for median employment in the US in 1993 was just four and a half years (Arthur, 1994) showing that the view of job security and being able to join one company and stay there throughout a career is a precarious notion.

> The days of going to college for four years and working afterwards is changing. Students now have jobs before college or in parallel to college. They therefore have a different perspective on education than the traditional cohort of 20 years ago. (Barner et al., 2013, p. 29)

Job security has long been an issue with improvements in technology replacing the need for skilled workers who previously held that role. The industrial revolution and changes to nineteenth century manufacturing was largely deskilling of workers (Frey & Osborne, 2017) with tasks being simplified. This continued in the early twentieth century with developments like the Ford car assembly line which 'was specifically designed for machinery to be operated by unskilled workers.' (Frey & Osborne, 2017, p. 257). Further developments in the

twentieth century saw computerisation of roles replacing clerical roles and telephone operators. Current advancements in robotics and Artificial Intelligence (AI) have led to the latest developments being termed the fourth industrial revolution with the main difference to previous technological advancements being the speed of change happening at a much faster pace (Schwab, 2016).

Due to the improvements in technology, workers have been required to improve their technical skills with workers using a computer earning around 15% more than those who don't use them (Krueger, 1993). More recent studies show that the supply of educated workers has grown due to increasing student numbers at university with the increase outpacing the need for skilled workers creating a polarisation of high-income jobs for some and low-income manual or service jobs for the rest which has been described as a 'hollowing out of the middle' (Goos & Manning, 2007). This often leads to highly qualified graduates only finding work in positions that don't require a university degree.

In a study based on data from 2010, an analysis was conducted of how susceptible different jobs are to being made redundant by computers through AI or robotics. Careers likely to be affected were split into non-routine cognitive tasks and non-routine manual tasks with previously safe jobs in medicine, law, policing, education, finance and even programming likely to be at risk in some form while manual jobs in machine maintenance, transportation and construction are also susceptible (Frey & Osborne, 2017).

The skills most likely to be in demand for careers in the future were those of perception and manipulation, creative tasks and social intelligence tasks as these are areas that cannot be replicated by computers in the coming decades. These changes could lead to around 47% of US employment being under threat of automation, while educational attainment is strongly correlated to a job being less at risk the 'tasks that are non-susceptible to computerisation – i.e., tasks requiring creative and social intelligence.' (Frey & Osborne, 2017, p. 269). Due to the instability present in careers an ability to adapt would be a key component in leading the 'good life' (Scott, 2008). Future occupations could include nanotechnology engineers, solar energy engineers and biostatisticians while an aging population will increase the demand for care workers. Related

skills involving social perceptiveness and emotional intelligence will become more important along with 'fusion skills' which are defined as a 'combination of entrepreneurial, creative and technical skills' (Berger & Frey, 2015, p. 30).

Another term for these skills is transferable skills which includes 'communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, organisation, creativity, digital/information and communications technology (ICT), numeracy/ data analysis, independent learning, adaptability and resilience.' (Hill et al., 2020, p. 2). A key way in which students have been able to develop these skills is by taking part in extra-curricular school activities (Pellegrino et al., 2012) as well as through volunteering (Collins-Nelsen et al., 2021) which was shown to develop adaptability in students along with growth in leadership and communication skills.

Past technological advancements have led to significant changes in workforce deployment, for example, in the US at the beginning of the 19th Century around 90% of the workforce had jobs that involved working on the land whereas now just 2% of the workforce accounts for these jobs (Schwab, 2016). Future changes that are predicted include the first robotic pharmacist by 2025 and an estimate that 30% of corporate audits will be performed using AI by the same year. Research suggests that almost a half of employment in the US is at risk over the next two decades with new jobs emerging at a similar pace (Schwab, 2016).

Where changes would most affect students in international schools who typically attend university in high numbers with the intention of gaining positions in high status professions, is any change to professional roles in the future. This is an area that could be impacted by improvements in AI being increasingly used by companies with a prediction that 'increasingly capable machines, operating on their own or with non-specialist users, will take on many of the tasks that have been the historic reserve of the professions… this will lead eventually to a dismantling of the traditional professions.' (Susskind & Susskind, 2015, p. 2).

As well as the economic reasons for students aspiring to a professional role, they can also be seen as a 'labour of love' that leads to status and prestige giving pride to that persons family (Susskind & Susskind, 2015). Students in international schools choosing to attend university in high numbers will do so with the aim of securing a career in a profession, bringing economic and social benefits as well as the happiness associated with being in a vocation, though this may be a false expectation if the nature and even existence of these roles is likely to change in the future and 'the notion of a single job for life will be regarded as quaint, if not misconceived.' (Susskind & Susskind, 2015, p. 263). With the expectation that the nature of careers will change, employers value transferable skills (Heap, 2014) with literature around careers advice suggesting that students should not 'limit yourself to just one job idea… new roles are developing all the time.' (Mullins, 2013, p. 8)

These changes within professions in the future will require the workforce to continually have their knowledge updated (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) and the close links to education are likely to change the nature of recruitment into jobs with businesses 'increasingly attracting school leavers at age 18, believing that they can offer a more bespoke education than if the young people had gone off to university. We will see more professions and companies in the future setting up their own higher and further education branches.' (Seldon & Abidoye, 2018, p. 27).

As well as a change in the skills being taught, we may also see a change in the way education is delivered. The move to online learning has been increasing with 25 percent of university lectures being recorded in 2018, a figure that was expected to exceed 50% by 2023 before the rapid increase in online learning due to Covid-19 restrictions on students attending lectures on campus. With so much of the learning delivered through technology, the future and purpose of universities could come into question. A key benefit in favour of physical universities continuing is their ability to provide networking opportunities for young adults as well as being a place where they can 'grow up socially and learn how to become an adult' (Seldon & Abidoye, 2018, p. 217). This opportunity to grow up socially is seen by Seldon as a key 21st Century skill with social

intelligence being a key attribute that won't be replicable by AI in the coming thirty years coupled with creativity as skills that can be the focus of education to prepare students for jobs of the future.

2.5 Identity formation

Concepts of a person's self or self-image have been put forward by a variety of different theorists with different facets often described, frequently defining two selves, the kind of person an individual believes themselves to be and the kind of person others see them as (Higgins, 1987). These distinctions have been given in various ways including distinguishing between the spiritual and social self (James, 1948), as well as the distinction between the ideal self (that the person would like to be) and the ought self of how others see them (Rogers, 1995). Common to the different views on identity is the perspective that the identity formed by an individual is a social construct with the sense of self being derived in the way they believe others view them, described as the mirror-effect or the looking-glass self (Cooley, 1983).

Higgins (1987) identifies three domains when describing self, and defines the actual self, which is the way you (or others) believe yourself to be, the ideal self, which is the way you would like to be (which includes the hopes of others) and the ought self, while similar to the ideal self is more about the attributes you should possess which includes the idea of duty and obligation. Where these selves are in conflict it can then cause an impact on that person and their mental well-being with the difference between their 'selves' described by Higgins as self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987).

> Conflicts between future selves, both those determined by an individual and those determined by important people in that individual's life, are thought to result in diminished happiness and satisfaction. (Rutherford, 2013, p. 80)

Higgins identifies impact on the well-being of a person where a discrepancy is present between their different selves. Where the actual and ideal self are not aligned this leaves the person vulnerable to disappointment, dissatisfaction and frustration that their desires are unfulfilled. In the context of a students HE or career

aspiration this could be the disappointment of not achieving the required grades to go on to their desired course. This also leads to negative emotions where the actual self is in conflict with the ideal self as perceived by others and can lead to emotions of shame and embarrassment. The same context for student's aspiration would be failing to meet the expectations of others such as parents, peers and teachers. A study into the reasons why students chose a university course that they did not like studying cited the influence of parents as the main reason for choosing this way, and in some cases 'parents use their children to realize their own unfulfilled dreams' (Toprak & Tosten, 2017, p.129).

A different approach in considering identity is the way in which we fit the perception associated with us and the way in which we want to be perceived by others. This can be both intentional or unconscious to fit the traditions and expectations of the group who in turn see the performance in line with expectations and support the persons act as being reality (Goffman, 1990).

> The individual projects a definition of the situation when he appears before others, we must also see that the others, however passive their role may seem to be, will themselves effectively project a definition of the situation by virtue of their response to the individual. (Goffman, 1990, p. 20)

This explanation from Goffman creates a similar issue of self-discrepancy to the theory from Higgins when the reality being projected by the individual is discredited by those they interact with and can cause confusion, embarrassment and shame for the individual. The two extremes put forward are that the performer fully believes their own act, and this is reinforced by their audience considering it to be the reality or the other extreme is that the performers act is not believed by the performer or audience. Where the performer does not believe their own role they are described by Goffman as being 'cynical' though this is not always in a negative sense as 'an individual may delude his audience for what he considers to be their own good.' (Goffman, 1990, p. 29). The tension between a student's individual aspiration and the influence on them from others creates in them a 'compound of individual aspirations, parental aspirations, expectations based on financial investment and broader expectations' (Bowers-Brown et al., 2019, p. 211).

For the students in this study who are in an environment where they feel the expectation is to apply to university, they may feel unhappy if they are acting in a way which they feel is not achievable. The second tension is where the audience is not convinced by the performance leading to feelings of shame and hostility. In the context of students in an international school this could be the case where they express a desire not to go to university which does not then match the performance expected from those around them leading to anger and disappointment. This can also have an impact on their parents as 'white middle-class families making counter-intuitive choices have to deal with the psychic costs and tensions of having different notions of *the best* for their child' (Reay et al., 2011, p. 101).

These roles and performances are social constructions and when the individual takes on a role that has been established they find that the way of performing 'tends to become institutionalized in terms of the abstract stereotyped expectations to which it gives rise.' (Goffman, 1990, p. 37). International school students, where 90% of them and their peers will be attending university at age 18, will be in a highly institutionalised context where the way of behaving and acting has been constructed for them to follow and is then hard for the student to break away from and perform a different, preferred role.

2.6 Aspirations and self-efficacy

Aspiration refers to the desire from the student to achieve career and educational goals, with educational aspirations being formed quite early in a student's life, while self-efficacy is the belief of the student that they can successfully attain the desired goals. Educational aspiration of students is seen as 'the most significant variable that has influence on their subsequent educational and occupational attainment.' (Ahuja, 2016, p. 277). Self-efficacy is seen as a 'reliable predictor' of the future performance of a student, increasing accomplishments and student well-being (Ahuja, 2016).

This forms something of a paradox where high aspiration can lead to higher performance yet failing to meet the high aspiration would lead to disappointment. The challenge then is how far the gap from aspiration and likely attainment should be to enable strong self-efficacy resulting in the aspiration being realised. Aspiration should therefore be achievable, as having students 'reach for schools that are not likely to admit them can heighten their anxiety about college admission and lower their self-esteem' (Schneider & Stevenson, 1999, p. 133).

To help mitigate these concerns Schneider and Stevenson advocate an approach where students' educational goals are achievable and desirable to the student, something they term as having aligned ambitions. Students who have aligned ambitions can then be helped form a plan to help achieve these ambitions rather than focussing on gaining entrance to a gold university purely for the prestige and parental satisfaction. Having an aligned ambition helps student motivation as they can see career and educational goals are purposeful and should be achievable.

Considering ambitions rather than a singular ambition is also helpful as 'adolescence is a period for trying out different roles and imagining different futures' (Schneider & Stevenson, 1999, p. 106). By imagining different routes and considering the educational requirements and commitments attached to following that route, the student can make a motivated decision on the aligned ambition they commit to. This is only possible where a variety of pathways are considered, as narrower curriculums lead to fewer choices and can foster misaligned ambitions. Where students have unrealistic occupational goals this is likely to be due to being unaware of viable alternatives open to them (Schneider & Stevenson, 1999).

A risk of failure associated with very specific goals makes them fragile (Oakes & Griffin, 2017) with the traditional school approach of encouraging students to identify one career to have as a goal being problematic. An alternative approach advocated by Oakes and Griffin (2017) is to instead have students commit to a 'vision of the future' and to 'commit to a problem that you want to solve' (Oakes & Griffin, 2017, p. 37) as this allows students, when hitting an obstacle, to not consider their career pathway blocked but to find a different route to 'solving the problem that fascinates them' (Oakes & Griffin, 2017, p. 41).

To help overcome the challenges of misaligned ambitions, Schnieder and Stevenson advocated students taking internships as a way of gaining meaningful experience of a career to help understand what they would like to do in the future. Internships and other work experience are important in developing employability skills (Redmond, 2010) and while this can be a challenge for international schools where students may need to be proficient in a local language to be considered for an internship, volunteering is seen as a useful alternative for gaining practical skills and confidence (Rook, 2013).

The importance of aligning and then achieving ambition helps address the earlier highlighted concern of student well-being when considering aspiration and disappointment of then failing to meet aspiration. A study on occupational aspirations and mental health found the participants who had achieved their aspirations had lower levels of depressive symptoms and also reported a greater sense of purpose in life (Gjerustad & von Soest, 2012). This was not true of those surpassing ambitions in relation to those who just achieved ambitions which highlights the importance of having achievable ambitions rather than highly over-ambitious ones.

As participation stems from an ambition to continue in education a key factor in ambition will be academic performance, with students achieving higher grades more likely to have ambitions to attend university. Longitudinal studies on student intention across time found consistency in students who intended to attend university at aged 14 to then go to university 'with 72 per cent of those who actually stayed on and 38 per cent of those who left having 'always' intended to do so' (Croll, 2009, p. 402) while similar studies showed students aged 11 had started thinking about educational futures. This suggests that ambition is formed at an earlier point and that student are more likely to change their ambition downwards and away from attending university, where academic performance suggests this will not be achievable, rather than ambition being modified upwards.

2.7 Bourdieu and forms of capital

Through the literature review we have seen a connection between identity formation, ambition and socio-economic status, with students from more affluent backgrounds having higher attendance rates at university. This can be explained through the concept of social and cultural reproduction as described by Bourdieu who 'argues that the more privileged in society are capable of transmitting and legitimising the dominant culture thus maintaining their advantages' (Azaola, 2012, p. 83).

The Bordieuan concept of capital is useful when understanding inequality in the education system within international schools. Three forms of capital are described by Bourdieu being economic capital, social capital that would be based on connections and thirdly of cultural capital. Cultural capital is then divided into three forms which are denoted as embodied, objectified and institutionalised. Included within embodied capital is aspects such as skill, accents or tastes while objectified capital is made up of possessions that have cultural significance. Institutionalised cultural capital is the main output from international schools and includes symbols of cultural competence such as academic qualifications (Bourdieu, 1977).

To further consider the concept of capital in student future intentions, we must also use the concepts of habitus and field which go alongside it (Bourdieu, 1977). Bourdieu uses habitus to describe the permanent dispositions that a person acquires based on experiences the person finds themselves in. This concept will be useful when considering the high numbers of international students attending university as 'middle-class actors are more likely to consider university education as a 'natural' step, as part of their inheritance. When at university they are more likely to feel at home' (Grenfell, 2008, p. 57).

The notion of field is used by Bourdieu as a way of understanding and describing the social field under consideration and is closest in translation to the idea of a battlefield, football field or a field of knowledge than a farmers field (Bourdieu, 1977). The analogy of a football field gives the idea of a marked boundary and is played according to rules which helps us appreciate the habitus international students bring to the field of

university education. A field, defined by Bourdieu, can be seen as 'a social arena within which struggles or manoeuvres take place over specific resources or stakes and access to them' (Jenkins, 1992, p. 84) The 'stakes' include education, employment, prestige and so on which makes the field of the university as well as that of school relevant for consideration.

When evaluating the challenges faced by students from lower socioeconomic groups when attending university, Walker (2008) saw the lack of cultural capital as a major challenge with 'classroom cultures in which being confident and middle class is the norm against which all students are judged by each other and by lecturers.' (Walker, 2008, p. 273). The interactions of habitus and capital will shape students perceptions around whether university is a 'taken-for-granted assumption or as not for the likes of us' (Archer, DeWitt, & Wong, 2014, p. 59) with students in international schools more likely to experience the former based on the social and cultural capital they experience.

Another way capital can be seen being used is in secondary education, where an aim of free schooling for all children is to increase social mobility, when in fact 'elites paid for their children to have a privileged education or ensured they secured places in academic, high-powered state schools' (Seldon & Abidoye, 2018, p. 55) and thus economic capital is transferred into cultural and institutional capital.

The view of Bourdieu is that social and cultural status is transferred from parents along with economic capital and is referred to as cultural and social reproduction (Brown, 1974) with 'the middle-classes [having] a very long history of successfully securing their cultural reproduction by ensuring that their children get the best kind of education' (Reay et al., 2011, p. 19). The occurrence of social reproduction described by Bourdieu is supported statistically with the disproportionate amount of international school students going on to university attendance. This goes with the interpretation of Bourdieu that 'all forms of capital are subject to conversion, real capital to cultural capital to social capital and so on' (Nash, 2006, p. 432) with the families of international schools ability to use economic capital to pay school and university fees converting to cultural and institutional capital by attending university.

Along with parents enabling social reproduction, this is also facilitated by schools as 'according to Bourdieu, schools endow individuals with educational aspirations tailored to their position in the social hierarchy, thus helping schools to perpetuate and legitimise inequalities' (Azaola, 2012, p. 84) thus students are socialised by both the family and school to aspire to an educational pathway that will maintain the social status of their family.

Social reproduction represents an often unconsidered challenge for international school students who will find difficulty fitting in to alternative pathways to university attendance. This challenge is usually highlighted for students from a working class background who consider not just the cost/benefit of university attendance but also whether they will 'fit in' (Nash, 2006) and can also be an issue for international school students who would feel they do not fit into alternative pathways and therefore they join the 'herd' in applying to university.

> One of the fundamental effects of the orchestration of habitus is the production of a common-sense world endowed with the objectivity secured by consensus on the meaning of practices and the world, in other words a harmonization of the agents' experiences and the continuous reinforcement that each of them receives….The objective homogenizing of group or class habitus which results from the homogeneity of the conditions of existence is what enables practices to be objectively harmonized without any intentional calculation. (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 80)

The influences affecting the habitus of students in the international school will be primarily the parents and 'the family's socioeconomic status [which] is positively related to adolescent occupational identity' (Xu & Lee, 2019, p. 220) with school being a secondary influence. An additional influence identified by Xu and Lee was 'the reality of society' as some cultures which had 'strong authoritarian culture… [along with the] economic structure limited the range of career possibilities' (Xu & Lee, 2019, p. 221) could make the culture of the host country of the international school an important factor where the student body is predominately from the host country.

Where the habitus of the student is generated within two fields that may be incompatible such as the family background and the school culture this can create a 'habitus tug' (Ingram, 2011) and if this leads to a conflicted

habitus then Ingram (2011) describes this as a 'disjunctive habitus' which has parallels to Higgins (1987) use of self-discrepancy theory and the concept of unaligned ambition (Schneider & Stevenson, 1999) and this can have a negative impact on student mental health.

A possible limitation to the forms of capital defined by Bourdieu is given by Yosso (2005) who critiqued his theory of cultural capital as valuing 'white, middle class culture as the standard, and therefore all other forms and expressions of 'culture' are judged in comparison to this 'norm' (Yosso, 2005, p. 76). To counter this potential limitation, Yosso suggests as a solution to include additional forms of capital such as aspirational and linguistic capital which could be applied due to the context of the diverse student body in an international school setting.

2.8 Influences on student choice making

When considering aspiration within the international school setting, it is relevant to question what is informing the decision making in any aspiration, and if the aspiration is primarily that of the student or reflects more closely the aspirations of those around them. In making choices, students need to filter the pressures around them as according to Bernstein (2000) to know whose voice is speaking helps find one's own voice and one's own power.

Key factors influencing aspiration can be seen as gender, socioeconomic status, ethnic background and home location, while parental expectation and the educational plans of peers can also have an important influence on aspiration (Pavlova & Pavlova, 2017). Their study, which looked at students in an international context found that 66% of parents viewed university as the only destination possible for their child. This demonstrates that the influences of parents will be directed towards university attendance and that 'middle-class parents, ambitious for their children… are confident in how they envisage their children's future trajectories and how to ensure these' (Reay, Crozier, & James, 2011, p. 124) which is in contrast to working class students in the UK

where the process of applying to university can be seen as a solitary one without parental support (Donnelly, 2014). The influence of parents and peers can overlap in schools and are themselves a major influence on student aspiration which was examined in a 2018 study finding that:

> After controlling for levels of prior attainment and some key socioeconomic characteristics, there are significant differences in the probability of going to university depending on which school a young person attended (Taylor et al., 2018, p. 591)

International schools are an influence on student aspiration which supports and reinforces the parental ambition, creating a common pathway for a cohort of students and a further herding together with parents from similar backgrounds and occupations choosing the same schooling option, causing a narrowing of aspirational direction. In early teenage years children may adopt the aspirational beliefs and goals of their parents and prior research has found that most middle-class parents want their child to attend university making this the most likely aspiration that will be conveyed to the student (Rutherford, 2013) with university attendance then seen as the 'obvious next step after school' (Brooks et al., 2020, p. 4).

A categorisation from a 2004 study of six schools labelled the HE advice in three ways as 'thrusting, trying and trusting schools' with the private schools placed in the thrusting category as they actively steered students to apply for universities as a ranking activity (Pugsley, 2004) which is in contrast to trusting schools that were state schools in a disadvantaged area where little HE advice was given and the local university was seen as providing direction for interested students. The influence of being in an international school with a thrusting approach to HE advice will be an important factor into the way students are influenced over future aspiration.

The work of Donnelly (2014) goes further on the level of influence posed by the school and uses the concept of framing as the way in which the messages students receive about post-school destinations are received and reproduced. In thrusting schools, when giving advice at HE events 'No other post-school destinations might be mentioned in such strongly framed contexts, making explicit that you should progress to university.'

(Donnelly, 2014, p. 1084). The study went on to describe that in strongly framed contexts, the application process will be laid out in such a way that the timing and pace of university applications leaves the students without a sense of choice in the process (Donnelly, 2014). Combining the influence of parents and schools the student choices become limited as:

> Choices are bound by the framework of opportunities and constraints a person finds herself in, her external circumstances… she is also circumscribed by an internalised framework which makes some possibilities inconceivable, others impossible and a limited range acceptable (Reay, David, & Ball, 2005, p. 27)

This idea of having one goal to work towards to improve your chance for success is supported in some research (Ericsson & Pool, 2017) with the analogy of aiming for the peak of a mountain used as a way of goal setting with the peak of the mountain achieved by those who are able to put in the most hours of practice. This suggests a very narrow HE goal will be achieved by any student who works hard enough for it, making narrow choices more desirable rather than promoting the idea of having a wide set of choices. This is supported in literature advising students who are aiming for highly selective courses and suggesting that 'the most unifying feature of successful applicants is a genuine desire to succeed. You have to want it.' (Stourton, 2007, p. 1) as well as advising that they should have very rigid choices as 'firm decision making… [is] the cornerstone to an excellent Oxbridge application.' (See, 2012, p. 13).

The message to students that 'you can be anything' is seen by Morse (2019) as being flawed with students often 'convinced that self-belief alone can make a dream reality' (Morse, 2019, p. 8) and that due to the Dunning-Kruger effect it is low ability students that are most likely to over-estimate their abilities. Instead of a single lofty aspiration, it may be more helpful to consider setting career goals as a continuous process (Yuen et al., 2020).

Effective choice making is made up of three characteristics (Scott, 2008) starting with a good understanding from the student of the present situation including the constraints and advantages upon them. Secondly, they

need to understand themselves and their qualities and characteristics so that they can imagine themselves in the future, and thirdly they need to be able to judge the consequences of their actions which will be interwoven with the choices and opinions of others.

Students in international schools may have limited experience of possible careers as school children notice the occupations prevalent among the adults in the community around them (McDevitt, Hess, Leesatayakun, Sheehan, & Kaufeld, 2013) with these likely to be limited for expat families. These interactions are likely to form early career aspirations which are gradually adapted based on personal interests and abilities towards careers which may be realistic for the student.

For students in international schools to be autonomous decision makers over their future education and career direction, schools must develop capacity for self-reflection in the students and the ability to understand themselves in their possible futures along with the consequences this is likely to bring for themselves and for others. The tension for students will then be where their preferred future is different to those around them and how to manage this tension and the emotional challenges it presents.

2.9 The culture of international schools

Over five million students globally are educated in international schools and this is a sector which has seen huge growth over the last 40 years as 'individual wealth increases, access to international education is seen to provide incalculable opportunities for participation in global commerce through the medium of English' (ISCResearch, 2020, p. 6). The common feature of international schools around the world is therefore the delivery of education in English in countries where this is not the home language. International schools will base their curriculum on a national or international education system where English is the language of instruction leading to the schools taking on cultural characteristics of the curriculum they adopt.

The nature of international schools will give status to 'western' cultural capital (Erel, 2010) with schools either connecting themselves to a national system through the American High school system or through English qualifications of the GCSE's or Advanced Levels (A-levels). The schools which follow a more broadly international route will take the International Baccalaureate examinations though these are predominately delivered in English with the US and the UK having the majority of IB schools. Rather than being truly international the schools will reinforce the status of 'western' cultural capital making the continuation to a western university seen as more desirable (Erel, 2010) while the international demographic of the school will also develop multicultural capital (Reay et al., 2011).

The growth of the middle-class in developing countries and the desire to turn this economic capital into other forms of capital fits the theories of Bourdieu with foreign qualifications seen as advantageous in gaining 'positional advantage in the local or international labour market… the possession of a foreign qualification can make international students distinct in a competitive labour marker' (Tran, 2015, p. 1277). The international school itself adds to the development of habitus within the student which is formed in the family setting (Azaola, 2012) and shapes the sense of agency and possibility within the individual (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014).

The habitus-field congruence in the international school setting means that students who achieve a level of academic success in school and who exhibit the dispositions expected of them will have their expectation of continuing to higher education reinforced (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014) which makes them feel like a 'fish in water' or using the analogy of the peg game played by children they would feel like a square peg in a square hole. This accounts for the 90% attendance at university for international schools as the field they are in and the habitus created in both the school and at home makes them feel it is the natural pathway for them, making students who may have the disposition to be 'round pegs' feel they are in fact square pegs through the social and cultural reproduction they are influenced by (Bourdieu, 1977).

The culture of international schools will have a basis in social class with families coming from middle-class backgrounds as they are able to afford the school fees and will also have a cultural aspect with 57% of international schools located in Asia (ISC Research) the cultural influence of the school community will also have an impact. In the UK research conducted by Wong (2015) around British Chinese and Indian students, the high educational aspiration of parents was seen to facilitate student success and students were regarded by teachers as being hard workers and high achievers. As well as bringing academic advantages this culture also presented a challenge for some students as 'expectations of continuous success can exert fears of never being good enough' (Wong, 2015, P.738) and as many international students will have similar cultural backgrounds, we are likely to see similar advantages and challenges with students in international schools.

When students go from international schools to university, the top three destinations by country are the USA, UK and Canada, enabling students to continue their studies in English with the number one reason given as a factor influencing their choice being the advice and guidance they received from the school (ISCResearch, 2020). The ISC research of student destinations found that of the top 35 courses chosen by school leavers in 2018, studying economics/accounting, engineering, computing and medicine (including veterinary, dentistry and biological sciences) accounted for 75% of all choices. The next ranked courses in popularity which made up the top ten most popular courses included psychology, politics, art and law making up another 17% which leaves just 8% of students applying for a wide range of courses such as performing arts, sociology, media studies, development studies, sports related subjects and history. This shows that not only is the herd direction headed for university but they will focus on a small number of courses perceived as more prestigious in a handful of countries (ISCResearch, 2020)

2.9.1 Third Culture Kids

An additional dimension of the culture of international schools with predominately expat students is the identity of the students with them living outside of their home culture and that of the host country in the international school environment. These students are termed a Third Culture Kid (TCK) by Pollock, Van Reken and Pollock (2017) who define them as:

A person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents' culture. The Third Culture Kid (TCK) builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. (Pollock, Van Reken, & Pollock, 2017, p. 15)

This creates a shared culture for those who are in internationally mobile families (Pieh Jones, 2018) which is explained by Ruth Van Reken (Pollock et al., 2017) using a model where the international school would be represented by the middle circle explaining the unique habitus of the international school community as shown in figure 2.1. below:

Figure 2. 1 The Third Culture Kid
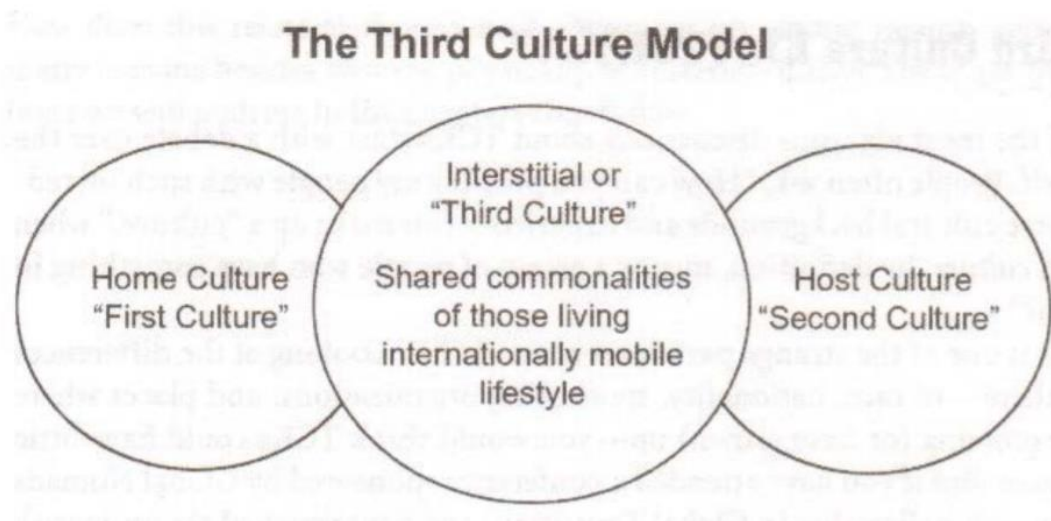
A key characteristic of the TCK is that they are used to moving around the world making mobility something they experience throughout their developmental years with the expectation of repatriation after the parents short term posting comes to an end (Pieh Jones, 2018). This, along with the students often having different passports from their parents or multiple passports, creates a fluid national identity in TCKs as they move between their home country, host country and the international school community (Miller, Wiggins, & Feather, 2020). As part of their identity the TCK will perceive themselves as having a high status as their parents will usually be 'part of an elitist community' (Pollock et al., 2017, p. 21). This creates a challenge when the parents posting comes to an end with the potential for a resulting loss in status (Pollock et al., 2017).

Being a TCK brings many benefits such as having 'a global perspective, adaptability, cultural fluency, resourcefulness, independence and self-reliance (Pieh Jones, 2018, p. 99) as well as giving the opportunity for high linguistic skills and becoming bilingual and multilingual and these advantages and the 'different from identity has a certain arrogance to it' (Pollock et al., 2017, p. 163). TCK students find mobility to be normal which positions them for an international career (Pollock et al., 2017) which can help maintain their social status.

The disadvantages of being a TCK are around a possible lack of identity as the student is presented with many cultures and identities but does not feal they fully belong to any of them or any place, and the transient nature of the TCK means they experience a sense of grieving at friends leaving for their own repatriation on a regular basis. As the TCK student is likely to themselves move in the future this creates many opportunities which they may not be able to see through to completion such as rehearsing for the school production but then moving before they are able to perform in it which is termed the delusion of choice by Pollock (2017).

In early years the TCK will mature more quickly gaining independence through their mobility and confidence through their language fluency meaning they feel more at ease communicating with diverse groups. In contrast, as they get older the TCK will experience a delayed adolescence as the changes in culture through childhood require extended compliance to cultural rules while TCK students will not find themselves as free as their friends from the home country to make decisions over where they go and what they do. (Useem & Cottrell, 1996). This is summed up as a diagram by Knuckles (2008) via Pollock (2017) in figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2 Uneven maturity for TCKs
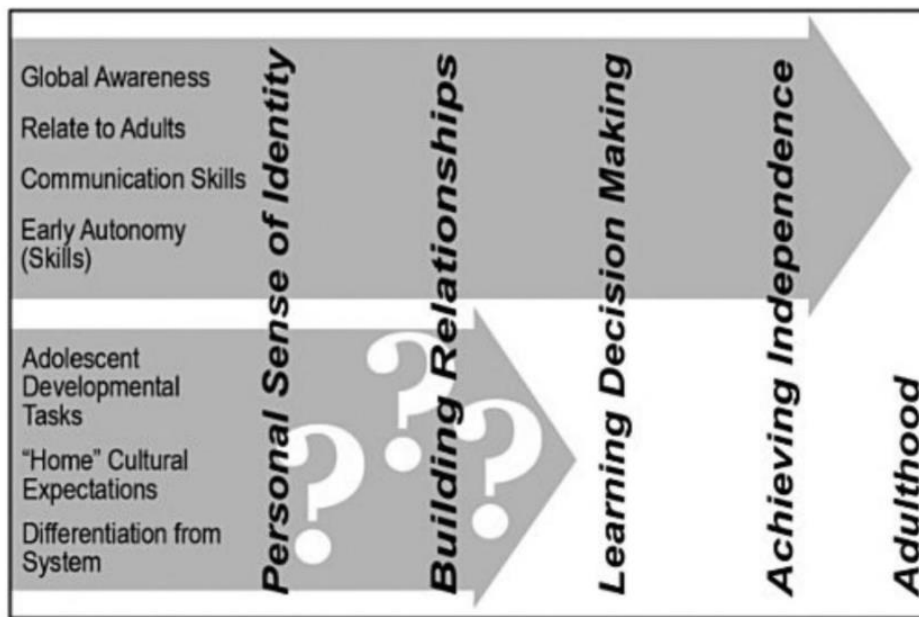
A key area of anxiety identified (Pisarik, Rowell, & Thompson, 2017) was fear of being regretful over the

career decisions that were made. This study found high levels of pressure related to career decisions and

questioned whether students were too young to be making these decisions as they had to 'grapple with career

choices against the backdrop of their parent's desires… and last year they had to raise their hand to ask to go to

the bathroom' (Pisarik et al., 2017, p. 344) with the delayed adolescence for third culture kids suggesting that

leaving decision making to a later stage may be preferable.

2.10 Chapter summary and literature links to research design

The current international school model of careers advice is based on the parents' desire for their children to go

to university to enable them to secure a high earning career. While the key purpose of universities has a focus

around teaching and research, a likely aim for parents in encouraging university attendance in their child is to

secure qualifications that can lead to better wages and improved life chances, a process termed 'social

reproduction' by Bourdieu (1977). As higher ranked universities are shown to enable higher earnings along

with specific courses such as medicine and engineering, this makes not only attending university highly

desirable, but also to attend a highly ranked university on courses that lead to careers with high earning

potential. This view is predicated on the belief that a 'good life' is dependent on the ability to earn economic capital which can in turn be traded for social and cultural capital.

Concerns over this 'one size fits all' approach stem from considerations over the good life and whether this would always constitute the best version of a 'good life' for every student. The notion of choice is given to the student by presenting them with various tiers of university to choose from, though this is largely an illusion as the choice between levels of university is decided by their academic credentials rather than their preference. As the pathway of attending university is so dominant in the school and parent dialogue students do not consider alternatives leading them to consider attending university to be their choice. As they have not been encouraged to consider other options this makes it a narrow choice of which university and course to follow rather than a choice between a variety of future pathways.

This narrow choice where attendance at a top university on a course which is more acceptable to their parents is so clearly identified as the successful option that it leads to dissatisfaction for students who do not have the academic ability or the desire to follow this pathway. Students more suited to alternative pathways will be conditioned to attend lower ranked universities and may then feel they are a failure in doing so. This causes a habitus tug (Ingram, 2011) which can impact on the mental well-being of the student. As students are encouraged to aim high as a way of maintaining social position, this creates a need for many students to over-achieve to meet these aspirations which has an impact on the mental well-being of many young people.

A possible solution to this tension between the students actual and ought selves (Higgins, 1987) along with the challenge identified in highlighting certain universities and courses to be higher status is to encourage students to consider ambitions in the plural and have a variety of futures laid out for them to try on for size to help come to an aligned ambition where the actual and ought self are in harmony. Considering several futures and ambitions also helps with the challenge of future careers and the likelihood that career paths will change to a more 'boundaryless' form. Students will need to be flexible through their careers and considering several pathways helps prepare for this.

The key theories that are used to frame this study are therefore the theories of capital and of social and cultural reproduction along with the concept of habitus which were theorised by Bourdieu (1977). To understand the place of the individual student and the way they form their identity the theories of identity from Higgins (1987) and Cooley (1983) are followed. When considering the internal and external influences the students face in the context of a high performing school environment the theories of ambition (Schneider & Stevenson, 1999) are used to better understand the challenges of unaligned ambitions on a students emotional well-being.

To consider the pathways for students leaving school at age 18 and the thinking behind the decision making of international school students, it is helpful to categorise the different options open to them. In the introduction the distinction was made between HE and VTE as pathways of continuing education at university or in other settings. Another description which has similarities but is not exactly the same is to consider the alternative educational route to university as Further Education (FE) defined as offering 'a series of diplomas and certificates to allow students to progress on to HE or to give them a dedicated education to start a career' (Seldon & Abidoye, 2018, p. 27). Other options would include taking a gap year, starting an internship, starting a job to gain real life experience, or perhaps remaining unemployed for reasons including parenting or marrying. The list of options that will be used when considering the decision-making process with students will be:

- University (HE)
- VET, FE and Apprenticeships
- Internships
- Gap years
- Employment
- Unemployment

When considering student preparation for careers in international schools the literature has highlighted a potential gap in provision as to whether genuine options of different pathways are presented to students. When investigating the provision for students', consideration can also be given to how this will fit with changes in HE with possible specialisms by universities replacing the traditional tiered categorisations perceived by students and parents. A second gap highlighted in the literature is the way students are prepared for future careers and whether the fusion skills focusing on entrepreneurship, creativity, and technical ability along with development of social skills are properly taught to students in international schools. A challenge faced by international school students when considering alternative pathways, is that the habitus of the international school prepares them for the field of a university but less well for other career and educational pathways. Therefore, the way that international schools prepare students who may not attend university is an important area for further research.

Chapter 3 Methodology and Methods

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will explain the methodological approach taken to answer the research questions with the first part

of the chapter presenting the ontological and epistemological position of the study along with the methods used

in collecting and analysing data. To answer the research questions the study used a mixed-methods approach in

two stages (Bryman, 2008) which is explained in the second part of the chapter.

The lack of research into the pathways from international schools into HE and careers was evident from the

literature review (see chapter two) and when researching this topic my research questions are set out in the

table below.

Table 3.1: Research Questions

Main RQ:	What factors influence international school students' choice making about their future education and careers?
Sub-RQ1:	How do international school students make sense of their multi-faceted academic, social and cultural identities when making these decisions?
Sub-RQ2:	What are the main challenges and opportunities international school students face when considering future careers?

3.2 Research Paradigms

> The term 'ontology' may be used to refer to the fundamental nature of the world and what it means to
> exist in that world… For example, one may perceive the world as being made up of entities which
> exist in the world, independently of human existence and of human thought. Alternatively, one may
> consider the world as being basically a function of human thought, analysis and perception. (Oliver,
> 2008, p. 24)

When conducting social research, the first step is to consider the ontological stance of the study (Silverman,

2010). In doing this we are asking whether social reality is 'external to individuals – imposing itself on their

consciousness from without – or is it the product of individual consciousness?' (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 7)

When considering the ontological standpoint, two main paradigms are the scientific paradigm which 'believes in an objective reality' and the constructivist paradigm which 'denying this, says that reality is a social construction of the mind' (Pring, 2000, p. 47).

Throughout the research conducted, I am trying to discover the attitudes and perceptions of individuals, and therefore a constructivist paradigm is being used. This is consistent with the consideration in the literature review of Bourdieu and the concept of field and habitus. As this study is concerned with the lived experience of students in the context of their social surroundings, an important part of the study is to place the 'student voice' at the centre of the study.

> Epistemology, in philosophical terms, is the study of the grounds on which we claim to know something about the world. (Oliver, 2008, p. 24)

The set of assumptions that follow from the ontological view of the world form the epistemological position concerning the bases of knowledge, how it is formed, how it can be acquired and how it can be communicated to others. Where the researcher believes knowledge to be tangible and objective they will be an observer using the methods of natural science whereas seeing knowledge as subjective and personal requires the researcher to have an involvement with their subjects, the former subscribing to a positivist position and the latter to an interpretivist position (Cohen et al., 2007).

As this study subscribes to the constructivist paradigm, and as I wished to interpret the social situation from the view of students', I am following an interpretivist epistemological position. Within this position I also realise that my background and the perceived reality I have of the situation impacts the decisions I make about

research design and conclusions drawn from the data. When considering the evidence available through an interpretive paradigm, reality is subjective and differs from person to person so that our own values affect our description of facts and reality (Pring, 2000). Awareness of this subjectivity and the required control of bias is necessary to maintain objectivity in both the research process and the conclusions that are drawn (Kumar, 2005).

Working from this standpoint, it is not the aim of the researcher to eliminate bias but rather to be aware of their perceptions and values to understand the bias this brings. As research in the interpretivist paradigm cannot be value free, the researcher has already used their values in deciding what should be researched and how it will be conducted and then interpreted (Garrick, 1999). The interpretivist paradigm enables the data to be constructed collaboratively with those in the study, while the researcher brings an existing understanding of the context under study with useful assumptions and expectations.

A potential weakness associated with the interpretive approach is that, because of its subjective nature, there can be too much of a focus on the experience and interpretation of the researcher who cannot know everything about the area of study (Cohen et al., 2007). Another weakness associated with this approach is that while the findings can be internally generalised, they cannot be externally generalised in the same way results from a positivist approach can be (Mills, 2007) so the findings will not be easily transferable to other educational institutions. This research will therefore have most impact on the practice of the school under study and will have limitations associated with the interpretive approach though will still have the potential for valuable impact on the experience of students in the school.

3.3 Methodology

The quantitative and qualitative approaches to research share much in common but also have important differences. Quantitative research is mainly used for the testing of theories though it can also be used for

generating hypothesis. Qualitative research is favoured for theory generation though can be used for testing hypothesis (Punch, 1998).

Each approach has different strengths with quantitative data allowing for statistical comparisons and standardisation of results whereas qualitative methods are more flexible, looking into meanings and answering the questions around why the situation happens enabling it to be used in a wider range of situations (Punch, 1998). Justification can be given for bringing these two methods together (Bryman, 1988) which capitalises on the strengths of the two approaches and compensates for their weaknesses and can have the effect of nullifying any 'biases inherent in any single method' (Creswell, 2003). When using a mixed-methods approach these two methods can be combined in different ways with a simplified set of three possibilities described as a two-phase design, a dominant/less-dominant design and a mixed methodology design (Creswell, 1994).

For this study I have used a two-phase design where a quantitative approach is initially used which is then followed by a qualitative approach. The advantage this brings is that it offers a way to give all students the chance to have their voices heard through a questionnaire which can then be analysed for themes and also identify students for the qualitative phase which allows the qualitative researcher to consider the phenomenon from the group and individual perspective. This also helps to identify a majority view to highlight students at any age who may have an interesting aspiration outside of the intentions of the majority of students.

The qualitative phase may include case studies, phenomenology and ethnography. Methods used within this approach tend to include open-ended interviews, focus groups and open-ended questionnaires. In my qualitative phase I have used focus groups to hear the student opinion being discussed between them. Topics for discussion were developed beforehand as a result of the questionnaire analysis and then specific discussion points emerged naturally from the conversations (Kumar, 2005).

The research is cross-sectional rather than longitudinal as this has enabled the views of different age groups to be captured during the same moment in time where external influences such as the economy, the Covid-19 pandemic and feelings around job security were the same for all participants. Using a cross-sectional study design is useful in obtaining an overall picture at the time of the study (Kumar, 2005) and the study is cross-sectional both in the sample of students studied which come from across years 5-13 but also with regard to the timing of the study. The use of focus group interviews was to enable a better understanding of the influence's students consider important on their future choices, and by working with students through the complexities and challenges they face, this sits within a constructivist approach.

3.4 Research Design

The study used a two-phase design with a quantitative approach initially used through a questionnaire given to all students who chose to complete it from Years 5-13 and this was followed with focus groups made up of students from the same year groups who had self-identified as willing to join a focus group at a later point.

3.4.1 Questionnaire

Through the questionnaire, quantitative questions have been set which has given numerical data that can be analysed more easily for patterns, while more open-ended questions allowed students views to be expressed more fully. When answering the questionnaire, students had the option of remaining anonymous or of identifying their name and willingness to join a focus group for a discussion around future aspirations and influences. As all students in school have a laptop this ensured accessibility was not an issue in data collection.

The use of a questionnaire has the advantage of enabling all members of the student population to answer the questions posed to them to have results from the whole school. Possible disadvantages to this method are around the reliance on respondents answering honestly and correctly where questionnaires can be completed quickly and with participants putting in little thought (Gillham, 2000), while a second problem with validity

can be around whether the participants who chose not to respond would have given the same answers as those who responded (Cohen et al., 2007) which is an issue referred to as volunteer bias (Belson, 1986). The advantages which counter these issues are that the results tend to be more reliable as they are given anonymously and that a high response rate was possible ensuring enough data available to counter the issues of volunteer bias (Salkind, 2010).

Quantitative data from the questionnaire includes gender, nationality, academic grades, intended study and career pathways, perceived likelihood of achieving ambitions, views on parental support and views on factors influencing career decisions (appendix 3). These different sets of data will enable analysis by age group to identify student views at different ages to consider any patterns and differences between them which are discussed in chapter four.

3.4.2 Focus Groups

The dynamic of the focus group allowed the interview to be collaboratively built with the interviewer providing prompts and bringing all members of the focus group into the discussion to ensure all participants felt able to contribute and to bring agreement or contradicting opinions to any views expressed. With this approach it is the interaction of the group that allows data to emerge through the focus group (Cohen et al., 2007). With a semi-structured approach the researcher can follow up answers and ask for clarification yet still follow a schedule which 'guarantees consistency of treatment across a set of interviews' (Drever, 1995, p. 18). This allows the meanings to be cooperatively built up by the participants in a spontaneous, yet structured way which is then received, interpreted and recorded by the interviewer (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). A focus group approach was used rather than individual student interviews to allow the group dynamic and peer influence to be present within the process as the concept of aspirational alignment considers students identity and the expectation they feel is placed on them by others (Schneider & Stevenson, 1999) so a focus group will explore influences from others organically within discussions.

A key advantage of the focus-group approach is that it makes 'explicit use of the group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group' (D. L. Morgan, 1988, p. 12). The problems with this approach can be around group dynamics and ensuring equal participation is achieved within the group interactions without any members dominating discussions (Punch, 1998).

A disadvantage to the focus group approach is that it is difficult to have a big enough sample of participants involved as a proportion of the population being studied meaning the results will be too small to be seen as statistically significant (Drever, 1995) and in addition the results cannot be generalised (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). For this study the ability to generalise is not required as the focus is on the lived experience of students at the school and ways to improve the support given.

3.4.3 Participants

This study is concerned with hearing the voice of students to better understand their experience when considering future occupations and the influences they feel are placed on them. The participants will therefore be students in the international school under study. It is of interest to consider the student perception of expectations on them at different stages of school so students from several year groups will be included.

Conducting the questionnaire across nine different year groups (Year 5-13) enables an analysis of whole cohort data from all respondents to identify themes and patterns in the answers. When selecting the students for the focus groups, this came from the students who self-identified as being willing to take part and then the demographic factors of the students were considered such as gender, nationality and grade profile to ensure balance across the group where possible so the focus group would avoid being taken from just one demographic group where enough students had agreed to take part (appendix 7). In some year groups just five students indicated that they were willing to participate in the focus group so for these years all five students were invited to take part.

Due to safety considerations around Covid-19, students in primary were selected from the same class to avoid the need to mix groups, with the class having the highest number of students who identified themselves as willing to take part being used. In Years 12, five students from the IB cohort identified as being willing to join the focus group while in Year 13, six students identified as willing to join so to avoid mixing A-level and IB students, in line with school protocol, just the IB students were used. When students were invited to join the focus groups some declined the invitation to join meaning in several year groups, particularly with older students, the five or six students who joined the focus group ended up as the only available students from the year group who self-identified as willing to join. With younger year groups, students needed to be in the same class bubble and in these cases the class with enough students identifying as being willing to join was the one used.

Participants were given the opportunity to opt out of the study at any point including after the focus group has taken place. Student names were anonymised with any identifiable details about them or others outside of the group, including parents and teachers, were changed to ensure anonymity for anyone named or identifiable.

3.5 Situating the study

The research was conducted in an international school located on North-western Europe with an enrolment of over 1300 students aged 1-18 years old. The school is fee-paying with a fee structure similar to higher priced independent schools in the UK at annual fees of over £32,000 a year for the oldest students in 2020. The majority of students have fees paid by companies or organisations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the European Union (EU) with a small minority of around 10% of students having fees paid directly by parents.

To ensure confidentiality, the school will be referred to during the study by the pseudonym the British International School in Europe (BISE) and identifying features such as staff or student names will be replaced. BISE follows a British style curriculum and students in Year 11 take GCSE examinations while students in

Year 13 can choose between the IB Diploma, A Levels or Business and Technology Council (BTEC) Diplomas. The school has a comprehensive intake with entrance into the IB or A-level pathway based on achieving five passing GCSE grades and final results in all three systems are very high with the school having a strong academic reputation.

The school is accredited by the Council of International Schools (CIS) as well as the Council of British International Schools (COBIS) and is also accredited by the IB. Historically the school has had a majority of students with British nationality though this has reduced to 30% of students being British as of 2020.

BISE students going on to Higher Education predominately do so in the UK despite changes to fee status of non-British students, with over 78% of students attending university doing so in the UK while the Netherlands accounted for 10% of students, the US for 4% and the rest attending university in Canada, elsewhere in Europe, South Africa and Australia. In all, 98% of students in 2020 went to university after completing Year 13, with the remaining 2% stating that they were taking gap years and intended to go to university the following year. Out of the students studying in the UK over half (52%) secured places in Russell Group Universities.

The school has students from age 1 to 18 on a shared campus so it is possible for students to remain in the school for their entire compulsory education. The average stay at the school is around 3 years as many parents are on short-term contracts and typically around 10% of students remain at the school from Reception all the way through to Year 13. Careers education begins formally in Year 9 through the PSHE programme to coincide with students making GCSE option choices and students have further careers advice in Year 11 including the use of Morissby Online aptitude testing and feedback. Since 2019 an additional programme of careers roundtables has been developed to give students a greater understanding of career pathways with talks provided by alumni and parents around their Higher Education and career progression.

The overall aim of this study was to consider the contrast in university attendance in international schools to the much lower national figure in the UK to see what impact this has on students who consider an alternative pathway to the vast majority who follow the well-trodden path from Year 13 directly to university. Returning to the main research question to understand the factors that influence international school student's choice making about their future education and careers, the study aims to understand the reason behind the choices made through a discussion of student experiences. As the school has students of all ages the study will consider views based across different key-stages to identify any ages that may show a change in direction of student aspiration.

As student career aspiration is formed, the study looks at the influences on a student's ambition and where this may be aligned or in conflict with the desired career pathway. Four areas that will be considered as possible areas of non-alignment are around parent expectation, school expectation, student self-perception and student academic potential to explore the themes of habitus and capital identified in the literature review (see Chapter 2). Where the ambition is the same in each of these areas, they will have aligned ambition though where one or more of these factors show non-alignment this identifies students as potential square pegs who are under pressure to compromise their ambition. By considering students across a number of age groups and comparing to usual HE destinations it will be apparent at which stage students begin to conform to an excepted post-18 route though this may be unconscious from students believing it to be solely their choice.

3.6 Data Collection

The school has students from age 1 to 18 with the youngest students in the Early Childhood Centre (ECC) and the classes then labelled Kindergarten, Reception and then Years 1 to 13. All students from Year 5 to Year 13 were invited to fill in the questionnaire with completion rates seen on table 3.1, while a simplified version of the job ranking activity was conducted with Year 2 students. Conducting the questionnaire with all students enabled comparisons to be made for students who may be considered as both square pegs and those considered round pegs according to the title of this thesis rather than limiting the questionnaire to a subset of students.

The focus groups took place face-to-face, and a standard set of prompt questions was used to give consistency across the interviews. Focus groups were made up of five to six students per group from Year 5 to Year 13 to give nine different groups in total to elicit the story of the student experience going through the secondary school.

3.6.1 The Pilot Study

The pilot study was conducted in the autumn of 2020 with the aim of trialling and refining the quantitative data collection of the study through a questionnaire. The purpose of the pilot was to ensure the language used in the questionnaire was understood by different age groups and if necessary, it could then be adapted for different year groups whilst also ensuring the questions would elicit useful responses.

The pilot was conducted with a Year 7 tutor group and also with a Year 13 tutor group. Both took place in the same week during tutor time, and I was able to be present in the room while the students completed the survey online to take feedback from them as they answered the questions. From the Year 7 group, 15 out of 19 students in the group completed the survey and in the Year 13 group, 12 out of 14 students completed the survey.

The questionnaire had 17 questions in total which were designed to answer the research questions and were adapted after conducting a pilot questionnaire. They were sent to the students' school email addresses through the website SurveyMonkey (appendix 3). The first six questions in the survey were to ascertain key student demographics and asked questions around gender, nationality, perceived academic ability, course of study and a question around extra-curricular participation to give a measure of student engagement with the wider school life.

Following on from the initial demographical questions were questions around career aspiration with students asked to identify the job they hoped to be doing at different points in the future as well as asking how likely they felt it was they would do this job, and if they felt they would receive parental approval to pursue this career. These questions were closed and asked for the career to be stated, and a Likert scale was then used to allow the student to rate likelihoods of achieving these goals, and level of support from parents, which would make cohort analysis possible. These closed questions had open follow-on questions where respondents were able to state why they gave the answer on likelihood of doing this suggested career, and why they felt their parents would or wouldn't support them.

To identify potential pathways they intend following at age 18, students were asked to choose one option from the following:

- To university
- To college or other training course
- I would like to take a gap year before deciding
- I would like to start an internship
- I would like to join the armed forces
- I would like to go straight to work
- Don't know

The responses to this question could identify students who have alternative plans than going directly to university and in addition, as the study is cross-sectional, it would highlight any differences in intentions that come as students mature.

The penultimate question on the survey asks the student to rank a selection of eight careers from best to worst in their opinion. The question is deliberately vague in defining what 'best' may mean to allow the student to define what they consider would make a job the best. The careers were chosen from a socio-economic

classification of jobs (McDonald & Dunbar, 2012) which used seven classifications of careers with the jobs chosen as follows:

Higher Professional – Architect and Doctor

Lower Professional – Web designer

Intermediate – Paramedic

Small employer/ Self-employed – Salon manager

Technical – Carpenter

Semi-routine – Postal worker

Routine – Bus driver

Through the pilot study process the questionnaire was improved for clarity with typos removed and clarifications made such as a question which asked students to comment on an earlier answer where adding the question number made this clearer for students to follow.

From the Year 7 group, students were unclear about their intentions for study pathways if they stayed in the school to Year 12 so a *don't know* option was added. Where students were asked for their academic standing, this question would be adapted for each year group so that the grades matched those used to be fully understood by the participants. When asked about aspects that would motivate them in job choice the Year 7 students were unsure what was meant by career satisfaction, so this was replaced with 'high job satisfaction and career happiness' to make the question more easily understood for younger students.

When working through the question around job rankings the students in Year 7 were unsure what a paramedic was, so pictures were used to make the question more accessible to younger students as well as those who do not have English as their first language. These pictures would have both a male and female version to help

avoid any gender bias in the answers. As two careers had been chosen in the higher professional category, one was removed so that the ranking activity had one career for each category with the careers chosen to be those most easily understood by students of different ages and also where the jobs had less of a gender bias in the way they would be perceived. The final seven careers selected were presented with the images in figure 3.1:

Higher Professional – Doctor

Lower Professional – Teacher

Intermediate – Police officer

Small employer/ Self-employed – Photographer

Technical – Chef

Semi-routine – Postal worker

Routine – Waiter / Waitress

Figure 3.1 Job sorting activity
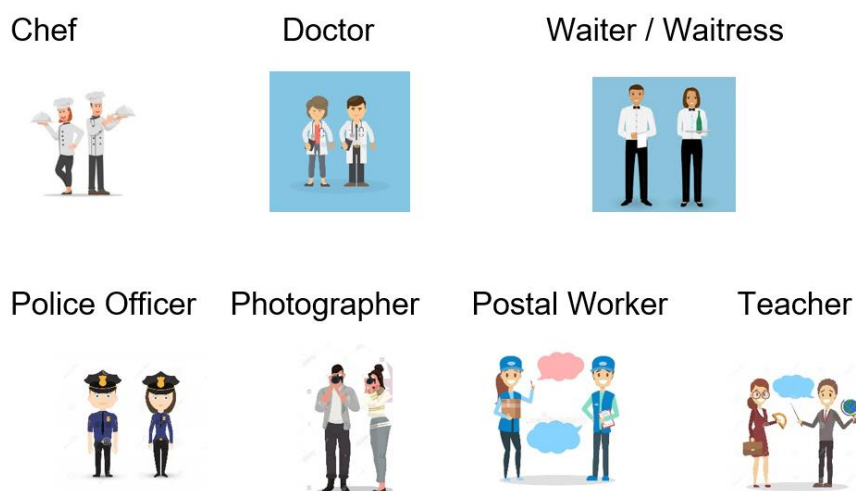
The questionnaire provided informative results around student future career and study intention as well as identifying possible non-alignment with parents' aspirations for them or their own perceptions around their potential to achieve their ambitions. The rating question where students gave scores to the importance of

different factors in their career intentions was useful in comparing different ages as well as identifying students who may be outliers while the ranking activity was useful in seeing if the perception of status of jobs changed with age.

In the open questions a small number of students identified having more unusual career aspirations to those common at the BISE and some commented on their parents having different aspirations for them. The student rankings of seven jobs and the ratings they gave to the importance of different factors in selecting a career can also be analysed on the individual level.

A pilot focus group was conducted with five students in Year 13 and from this I found that it took around one hour to complete and that students felt able to talk around all the topics raised, while the format enabled students to question their own thinking and build on their answers. The main research question on factors influencing students in the decision-making process was answered throughout in several of the questions with this leading to comments around the challenges this meant for students thus answering sub-research question two. The questions towards the end of the focus group led to discussions around additional support that could be offered by the school and potential changes to the Higher Education and careers support offered by the school.

3.6.2 Timings of Data Collection

The pilot study was conducted during the start of the Autumn term in 2020 with two tutor groups surveyed and asked for feedback. During 2020 the school was under lockdown restrictions due to Covid-19 for the second half of the spring term and all the summer term and again for two weeks of the autumn term in 2020. The questionnaire was adapted based on the feedback and students in Years 5 to 13 were asked to anonymously complete the survey in a tutor time at the end of the Autumn term 2020. Students in Year 2 were asked to work through a simplified version of the job ranking activity at the same time with explanations given by the class teacher to help then complete it.

Because of the Covid-19 restrictions that were in place, it was not possible to get whole year groups together to complete the survey. For other school data collection such as aptitude tests and attitude to school surveys completed annually in the school it is possible and efficient to get a whole year group of students together in the exam hall to ensure a 100% completion of the survey. This was not possible for the questionnaire as students were not allowed in larger gatherings so instead were sent the survey by email to complete it one morning in registration. This, along with the option to opt out, prevented a full return on the questionnaires.

The focus groups were conducted throughout the Spring term of 2021 with students taken out of tutor lessons for a focus group discussion around future aspirations. Conducting these at a similar point in the school year ensured consistency and relevance as this time period immediately follows the options process in the school calendar, so students had experienced the school delivered programme currently in place around HE and careers choices to give meaningful thoughts on their experiences.

When the focus groups were being arranged, I had considered mixed year groups, though this was not possible due to restrictions in place for Covid-19 in the school which prevented year groups mixing. Otherwise, the restrictions around Covid-19 had minimal impact on the study though the impact of Covid-19 on different sectors of industry may have been considered by students around preferable jobs with careers in sectors such as the aviation industry being impacted by the pandemic at the time of data collection.

3.6.3 Conducting the Questionnaire Survey

The survey was carried out at the end of November and start of December 2020 for three weeks. During this time a separate version of the survey was sent to each year group from Year 5 up to Year 13 through the data collection website, SurveyMonkey. The period where the survey was conducted came during the Covid-19 pandemic and shortly after the school was in a 2-week lockdown in early November.

The questions were kept the same for each year group though some were removed for younger students as they would be more difficult for them to answer. To help ensure the younger students understood the questions I was able to give a brief explanation of each question to Year 5 and 6 students during an assembly on the day the survey was launched.

In total 994 students were sent a survey by email, and tutors were asked to give students the opportunity to complete the survey in one morning registration as the pilot questionnaire took on average 8 minutes to complete and registration lasted 20 minutes giving a suitable amount of time to complete the questionnaire. After two weeks had passed, I sent the survey email to those who had not responded a second time as a reminder and after a further week I closed the survey to ensure that any analysis would not later be out of date if late results came in at a future point. 71% of students completed the survey with 705 respondents out of 994 who had been sent the survey by email which is a good response rate with anything above 50% being satisfactory (Cohen et al., 2007).

Table 3.2: Response rate by Year Group

	Responses	Total	Percentage
Year 13	80	112	71.4%
Year 12	96	130	73.8%
Year 11	73	115	63.5%
Year 10	79	112	70.5%
Year 9	84	118	71.2%
Year 8	89	117	76.1%
Year 7	91	116	78.4%
Year 6	52	85	61.2%
Year 5	61	89	68.5%
Totals	705	994	70.9%

3.6.4 Focus group data collection

The process of a research interview works best when questions are well formulated and the interviewer creates an atmosphere which is conducive to open communication which is undistorted between the interviewer and respondent (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). The focus groups were conducted in a private location on the school grounds using a classroom as a venue to enable students to feel confident in replying without being overheard by anyone external to the focus group.

The focus groups, with five or six students in each, met for approximately one hour per group to discuss a structured set of questions. In total 47 students took part in the focus groups from Year five to Year thirteen with 29 being female and 18 being male which was because more female students answered on the questionnaire that they were willing to take part in the focus groups (Appendix 7).

To set the scene with the participants on the reason for the study and its importance, the interviews started with an explanation of the purpose for the study (O'Reilly, 2009). This helped show the participants that their contributions could lead to an improvement in future student experience to help them invest in the process. Along with this explanation, a reminder was given that the students could withdraw from the focus group at any point including after it has been completed, with their contribution then being removed from the analysis.

Focus group interviews were conducted using an active interview approach starting from prompt questions with students encouraged to elaborate on any points they made to ensure they gave deep answers (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). Consideration was given to any influence I may bring to the focus groups by my presence in asking the prompt questions though the group dynamic of students would mitigate any potential bias this would bring as students would be answering questions with their peers as the main audience.

The focus group schedule (Appendix 5) enabled a discussion around careers within each focus group, with prompt questions ensuring careers were discussed in a consistent way across groups making comparisons and analysis possible. The questions around factors that were important in career choice from the questionnaire were used as codes because these were referred to in the focus group schedule meaning they were likely to be discussed. Additional codes were added where they emerged from the focus groups, such as the importance of jobs to society as a career factor as well as the way in which the job was safe from future developments in technology (Appendix 10).

During the focus groups I asked follow up questions to explore any interesting points in more depth. To start the focus group conversation the purpose of the study was explained, and a starter activity was given of sorting the seven careers from best to worst in the questionnaire activity as a group which linked the focus group to a question asked in the questionnaire.

Any discussion and disagreement arising from this was explored and students were asked why they have ranked it that way and what in their view makes a *good job*. The focus group was then asked to consider what response they would get from parents, friends and at school if they expressed an interest in the *best* job and then in the *worst* job. Students were then shown figure 4.1 and asked for their thoughts around the factors' students selected as important to career choices in light of the first activity discussion. After this the students were asked for any further comments they would like to make around factors influencing career aspirations on students at the school. Through this approach the answers found in the questionnaires to the research questions could be verified as well as gaining insight from students into possibilities around suggestions on future developments to the school careers programme.

Students in the focus groups for Year 10 up to Year 13 were given figure 4.2 and 4.3 showing the change seen around student choice of emotion as they go through secondary and asked what they think might be behind this increase in stress and decrease in happiness. Based on ethical considerations the younger students were not asked this question as it may cause them to worry about higher levels of stress reported by older students.

The next prompt came from figure 4.4 with students shown the increase in the number of students planning to go to university and asked for their views on why this change should happen along with figure 4.6 to discuss why they thought plans around future careers change as students get older.

As a final discussion starter, students were shown a list of the ten most popular choices for careers from all students completing the questionnaire as well as a list of ten less common career choices that represented

careers that were more technical or careers that were more modern. This was to ask where students felt they got information about these different jobs and to discuss what the school already does well and what they could do to improve the advice and support given to students. Finally, students were asked if they have any additional thoughts or comments about careers and HE support at the school and were thanked for their time and help.

The focus groups were recorded and transcribed to enable the data emerging from them to be analysed. The transcriptions were uploaded to NVivo 12 and codes were derived which were originally based on the questions from the questionnaire which were then adapted according to the themes which emerged from the coding.

In analysing the coded transcripts through NVivo the codes that were used most often were seen as the more popular responses in the analysis that followed (appendix 6). Using the NVivo query function a matrix coding analysis was used that analysed which codes were used in combination most often to see where student responses were connected to different themes. The query function was also used to conduct a word frequency count of words of five letters or longer (appendix 9) while using a coding matrix to compare codes to year groups enabled an analysis of when these topics were of importance to students by age (appendix 10).

3.7 Data Analysis

The data in this study followed a two-phase mixed methods approach with a quantitative approach used in stage one in the form of a questionnaire. Once this had identified themes and differences in the different demographic groups, a qualitative approach was used in stage two through focus groups with nine different year groups. This process worked well with initial observations presented concurrently and forming follow-up questions for summary conclusions to be made. For both methods of data collection, the data analysis used an inductive approach looking for patterns in the data from which to come to an understanding.

These results were analysed by comparing the proportion of respondents giving each answer in the different demographic groups. The results were presented in tables to enable comparisons to be made or in line graphs to allow for a visual analysis. Where demographic groups were compared, figures were analysed by percentage to help compare different group sizes while a chi-squared test for independence was used to compare the response rates to different answers which was a valuable method to use when testing for statistical significance (Bohrnstedt & Knoke, 1988). Where a participant left an answer blank, they were not included in the analysis of that individual question though would be included for other question analysis where they had given an answer.

To help analyse the focus groups, the questions were designed with the research questions in mind. The pilot focus group was recorded and transcribed which enabled me to listen back to the student dialogue while reading the transcription to create descriptive codes that could be collated under themes (Richards, 2009). These themes and codes were the basis for coding all of the focus groups with attention given to ensuring these made meaningful categories (Cohen et al., 2007). Examples of the themes that emerged included intrinsic aspects and motivations, societal expectations as well as practical considerations in decision making.

Using the elements that were of interest from the pilot focus group, a set of codes emerged responsively from this data that would be used for the main focus groups (Cohen et al., 2007) as a predetermined set of codes. These codes were grouped by theme with these labelled as nodes to simplify the code analysis conducted on the main focus group transcripts (Appendix 5).

A second cycle of coding followed using qualitative data analysis software, NVivo. This cycle of coding was to ensure the process went beyond the counting of occurrences to examine and process patterns emerging from the data (O'Reilly, 2009). The patterns identified could be within a focus group as well as across different age groups while answers that did not fit the general pattern were also of interest to show the views of individuals or small groups which is in keeping with the premise of the study around identifying outliers from the group.

3.8 Validity, Reliability and Credibility

Validity can be described as whether the findings really show what they appear to be about, generalisability is whether the findings would be replicated across similar contexts and situations which is linked to reliability which is concerned with stability and consistency of the results (Robson, 2002). As this study follows an interpretivist position, the research is conducted with the researcher interpreting it from their own viewpoint which means that we would not expect someone else to make all the same interpretations (Thomas, 2009).

The notion of validity has historically been linked in research with numerical research, though as more types of qualitative research became popular in the late 1970's and early 1980's it has become common for this research to also be justified in terms of validity (Mills, 2007) and as claims are made within the context of the setting where the study is carried out, a measure of validity can be considered as the extent to which the findings are acted on by the institution being studied.

While a positive paradigm can be seen to give more reliable results (Punch, 1998), this research has the advantage of being conducted by an insider researcher using a mixed methods approach and having a strong awareness of the context of the study. The methodological approach is appropriate for an ethnographical study using standard techniques to ensure the data gathered is rich and conclusions can be reliably made.

With the quantitative aspect of the study through the questionnaire design, collection and analysis, a survey was created with a Likert scale used to create questions that were easy for participants to answer and allowed for analysis that would give numerical answers leading to measurable comparisons and reliable conclusions. As the response rate was over 70% this gives a majority opinion to base conclusions on. When analysing results to make conclusions the Chi-squared test for independence was used to make value free judgements on whether the results were important or not.

As qualitative data was used in the study it is important to ensure the data that has been analysed is credible and trustworthy. The questions used with focus groups arose from the research questions so were applied consistently and by recording these and transcribing them verbatim it ensured the precise conversations were analysed. This avoided just using the notes taken at the time which could have enabled unconscious bias on what stood out at the time of interview. The coding was completed on Nvivo which ensured the storage of data through the coding process was accurate and systematic making the results credible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A relationship of trust was created in the focus groups which was aided by ensuring confidentiality to participants and the openness of students in the groups suggests they felt able to express honest views.

When conducting the focus groups for Year 5-13 students, a semi-structured approach was used starting with the job ranking activity and having some prompt questions to follow up. This gave a similar framework to each focus group to give consistency. As the research has used a mixed methods approach with quantitative data arising from the questionnaire and qualitative data being found in both open-ended questions in the questionnaire as well as in the focus group interviews, this helped ensure the data is trustworthy as it overlaps and can be compared to each other for consistency and credibility (Mills, 2007).

The study had some limitations as the focus groups contained students who had self-identified as being willing to take part rather than identifying students by data such as school grades. Using grades as a basis for focus group selection would have allowed a study with focus groups using students with a similar academic status in the school to understand the pressures they faced in career choice when limited by their academic profile, though due to ethical considerations I decided to focus on students who volunteered to take part in the study.

A further limitation can be seen around the researchers position as an insider to the establishment which brings challenges along with many benefits. When analysing data derived from the study the results must be considered on this basis and any questions around aspiration could be discussed from the viewpoint that responses around questions on aspiration 'reflect a framework of influences including… that they are being

asked what their aspirations are by a particular person in a particular setting' (St Clair & Benjamin, 2011, p. 504).

3.9 Ethical considerations

All social research involves the collection of data from people and about people, therefore all social research will involve ethical issues (Punch, 1998). Ethical considerations are important in research as they are concerned with morals and what is the right and wrong thing to do. Educational research requires researchers to follow agreed rules to ensure the findings of the research can be defended with regards to the acquisition of the data used in the study (Pring, 2000).

Before starting any research, ethical approval was applied for with the university approving body (appendix 1) as necessary for any student research. As the study was with school students, an outline of the research was shared with the school Principal who gave consent for students to be part of the study. Each student taking part in the focus group was given a consent form for completion by both the student and their parent (appendix 2) while assurances were given over anonymity for those taking part (Oliver, 2008). In addition to ensuring anonymity for participants the issue of internal confidentiality was considered (Floyd & Arthur, 2012) and therefore any staff or parents mentioned in the focus groups were also anonymised along with subjects being studied so that teachers could not be identified.

At the start of each focus group interview some ground rules were explained around confidentiality within the group around anything said by anyone in the room, so participants would feel safe to discuss their own situation. Participants were offered a one-to-one follow up after the focus group had taken place if they wished in case any discussion around pressures and expectations caused a participant any distress which they wished to talk through before re-joining any lessons though no student took up this offer.

A key consideration following an interpretivist paradigm is the involvement of the researcher and having an awareness that this inserts the researcher into the situation as a participant in the process. Rather than this being unethical it is useful to enable meaningful conclusions to be made that are context rich and based on the researcher experience of the culture prevalent in the setting (Richards, 2009).

3.9.1 Role of the Researcher

Through the study into the international school student experience in the BISE, I am placed as an insider researcher which is in keeping with my epistemological position of interpretivism (Cohen et al., 2007) with constructivists asserting that value free knowledge is not possible and therefore I must consider my own positionality and views and the possible bias this brings to the research. As a Head of secondary school, I tried to be consciously aware of any ways my role could impact on the findings of the study throughout my research.

The situation of being an insider researcher is advantageous in coming to a shared understanding of the issues (Richards, 2009) and I found this to be the case as it gave me a unique understanding of the culture being studied. I conducted the focus groups in a classroom rather than using the Headteachers office which may have created a power imbalance. The focus groups were given a clear rationale for the study at the start so that students were invested in the issues being researched and could see me as an interested partner with them.

The disadvantages I had to be mindful of were that I could be too close to the study and have pre-judged the topic and would then attempt to make the data fit the conclusions I expected. It is important that insider researchers are aware of this possibility and to avoid the potential for bias must revisit the possibility of these influences at each stage of the study (Yin, 2009).

I believe that being an insider researcher was beneficial as it gave me a level of access that would otherwise not have been possible. The questionnaires could be sent to students in both the primary and secondary school which I was able to follow up with tutors in secondary and class teachers in primary where year groups had a low response rate to encourage them to ask the students to complete the questionnaire. I was able to meet with focus groups in a tutor lesson which would have been more difficult for an outsider to arrange.

Before starting the research, I do not believe I had any pre-conceived outcomes in mind and was curious to find out the students views at different stages and was often surprised at the answers arising from the data which showed an openness to the answers that arose. Having the first stage as an anonymous survey meant the data could be given by students in an honest way which led to a set of follow-up questions for discussion with the focus groups that were genuine for the situation being studied. As an insider researcher, I could pose the discussion questions in a way that was culturally understood by the students to garner high quality responses.

3.10 Summary

This chapter set out the methodological approach of the study which followed a constructivist paradigm with the epistemological position of interpretivism followed. The second part presented the two-phase approach to data collection with a quantitative approach used first through a questionnaire which was followed by a qualitative approach using focus groups to discuss the initial findings for a better understanding. The practical considerations in collecting and analysing the data were explained at the end of the chapter along with considerations of the validity and reliability of the data.

Chapter 4 Findings on student views through quantitative data

The survey was comprised of 17 questions which included both open and closed questions. The initial questions asked for demographic data about the student, while later questions asked for the student opinion about future career options using a sorting activity, Likert scale responses and open responses. Each year group from Year 5 up to Year 13 was sent a separate version of the survey with some questions simplified or removed for younger students and therefore they were grouped by year when the results came in.

The results from the survey have been analysed in three different ways. Firstly, grouping results by year group and analysing by comparing the year groups for similarities and differences. The second stage looked at each completed questionnaire to see how the student responded to all the questions to ensure the story each student was telling could be considered. The last stage was to analyse different demographic responses by year group to see if any other considerations should be given to the careers and HE support at the school for particular sub-groups of students. In the next section I will explore the student responses to different questions around career and HE intentions in the future.

4.1 Survey analysis by question

Initially the survey was analysed by question comparing answers across year groups. The survey results were analysed in excel so that calculations and comparisons could be made more efficiently. After the initial analysis was conducted, I then read through each of the 705 responses one at a time to look for any interesting responses as well as to identify any patterns from other demographic data. The final analysis was conducted by analysing the responses looking at various demographic groupings such as gender rather than by year group to see if any other factor led to similarities or differences in results.

4.1.1 Analysis of question on factors influencing career choice

The first question that was analysed asked students to 'rate the importance of the following factors in your choice of career'. The students were given six factors to choose from, and for each they needed to rate them, choosing from no importance, little importance, quite important or very important. The neutral answer of 'neither important or unimportant' was not included to make students choose either way. The six factors were selected based on consideration of forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1977) including economic, cultural, social and symbolic forms of capital, the factors being:

- Having a high salary

- High job satisfaction and career happiness

- High job status

- Parental approval of career

- Ease of entry to career (I think I could achieve the qualifications required)

- Job security

The response rates for each year group were aggregated with five points being allocated to the answer of very important, four to the answer of quite important and then two and one to little and no importance. The scores for each year group in response to the six factors can be seen in the graph in figure 4.1:

Figure 4.1: Factors Behind Career Choice
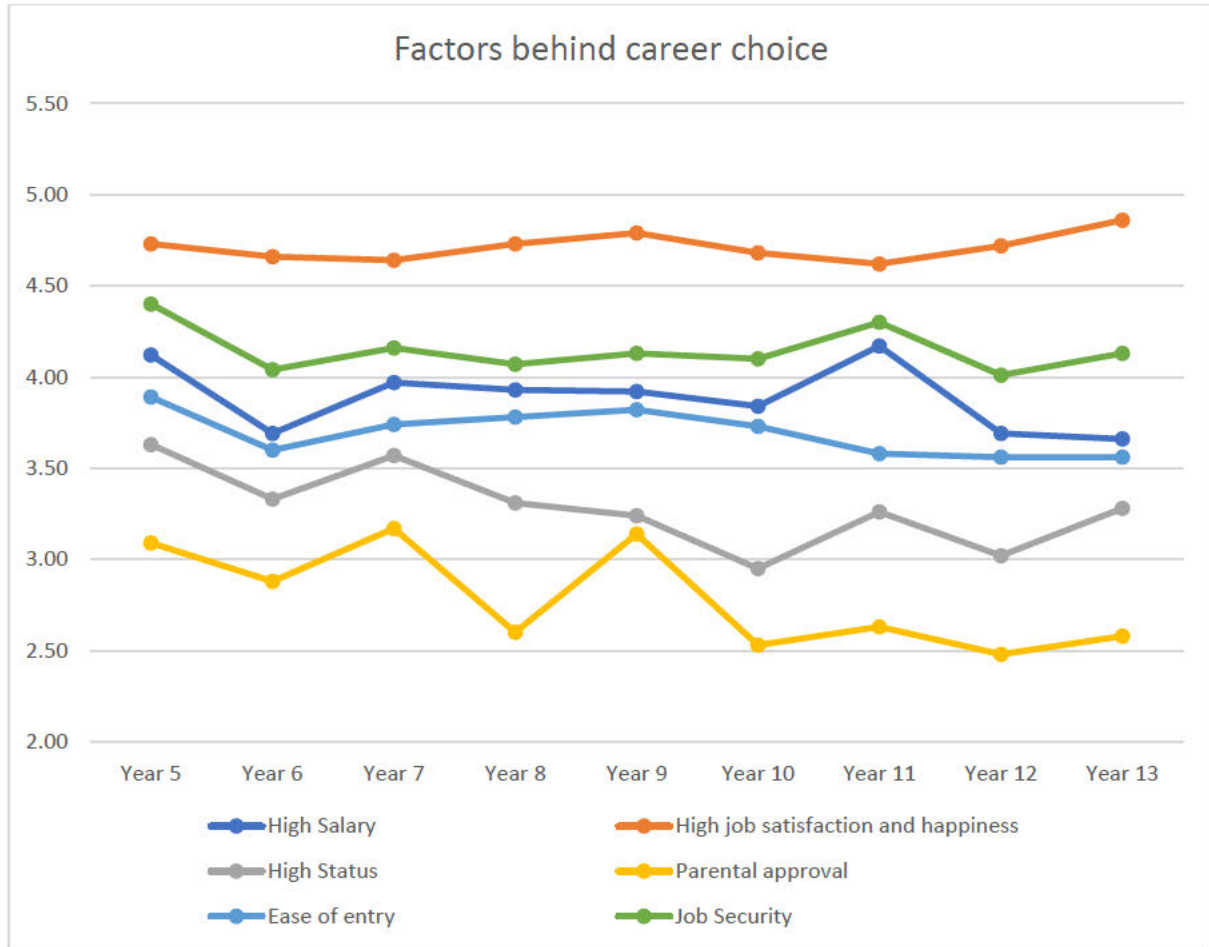
Based on the scoring system an average score of three for a year group would be a neutral response making the factor neither important nor unimportant. From this I find that high job satisfaction and happiness is consistently scoring an average of above 4.5 with an overall average of 4.71 making this a very important factor for all students with it peaking for Year 13 students at an average of 4.86.

The least important factor for all year groups was parental approval with an average across all students of 2.79 making it the lowest factor in the judgement of students. As shown in the graph above the rankings of the factors by importance was the same for every year group despite the ages ranging from 9-year-olds up to 18-year-olds.

Three factors had an average close to four so were on average seen as quite important to students across all year groups. These were job security with an average of 4.15, high salary with an average of 3.89 and ease of entry with an average of 3.70. High status had an average across all students of 3.29 so was closest to neither important nor unimportant.

In summary I can see that job satisfaction and career happiness is very important to students at every age in the survey while job security, salary and ease of entry are quite important. Status and parental approval are neither important nor unimportant. This is contrary to the findings of the literature review (Chapter 2) and in particular the theory of cultural and social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1977) where the high status of parents is expected to be replicated in the ambitions of their children though this could be due to students fitting in with the perception expected of them (Goffman, 1990)

4.1.2 Analysis of question on feelings around their career future

The second question I have analysed asked students 'which words best describe your feelings about your future career' with students asked to tick as many as applied. Students had to choose from the following words:

- Excited

- Unhappy

- Uncertain

- Clear

- Scared

- Relaxed

- Stressed

The graph in figure 4.2 shows the proportion of students who selected each word as a percentage of the year group.

Figure 4.2: Emotions Selected by Students when considering Future Careers
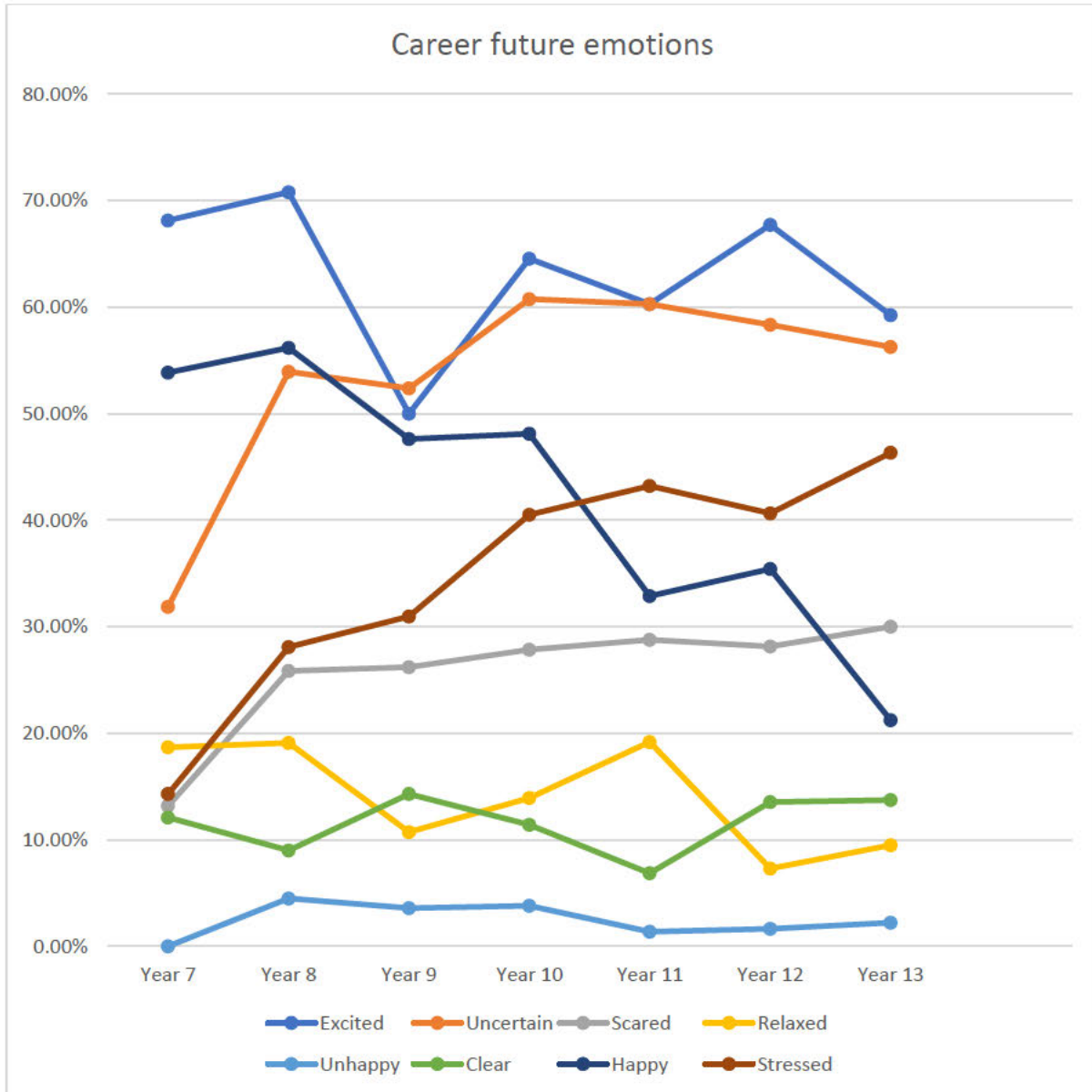
From this graph (fig. 4.2) I can see some words such as excited which were selected by a large number of students in every year group while other words such as unhappy were selected by very few students.

Where I see the biggest change in both percentage of students selecting the word, as well as the ranking position of the word, is between the words *happy* and the word *stressed*. The word *happy* is a high choice with younger students with 54% choosing it in Year 7 but this decreases to 21% by Year 13 while it goes from second choice to fifth choice in the rankings. The word *stressed* increases in percentage from 14% in Year 7 to

46% in Year 13 which is more than triple the starting amount. The changes in selection of these words can be seen as a graph in figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3: Student Selection of Emotions Happy and Stressed
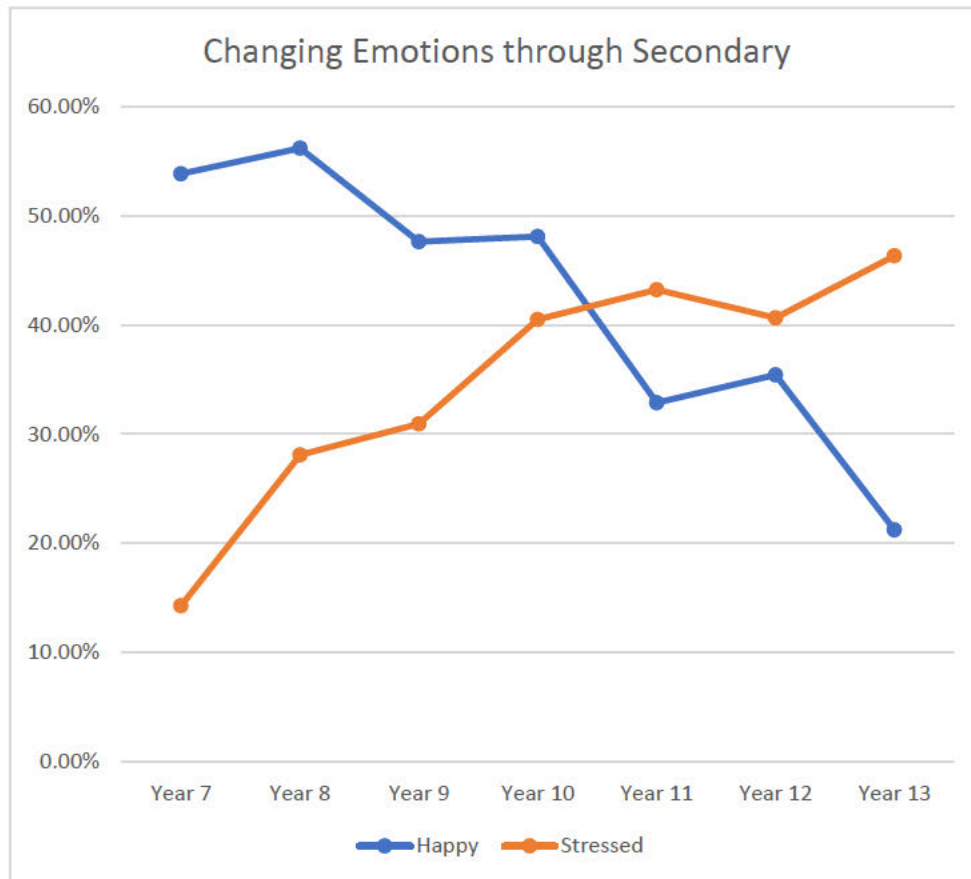
In summary, while the analysis of students by year group has the word *excited* as the highest word from Year 7 through to Year 13 I see a decreasing response to the selection of the word *happy* regarding feelings about future careers with a large increase in the selection of the word *stressed* as students go through secondary school. This is in keeping with the findings of the literature review (Chapter 2) where we find that students with high ambitions will have increased anxiety and this will be most prevalent in the final years of secondary (Schneider & Stevenson, 1999).

4.1.3 Analysis of question on intentions after completing Year 13

Students were asked to select from possible options for what they would do when they finished Year 13. The following options were available to them and they were only able to select one choice:

- University

- College or other 1-year training course

- Taking a gap year before deciding

- Starting an internship

- Joining the armed forces

- Going straight to work

- Don't know

The responses to these as a percentage of each year group are shown in table 4.1 and table 4.2.

Table 4.1: Intentions after Year 13

	University	College	Gap Year	Internship	Armed Forces	Work	Don't know
Year 5	44.3%	16.4%	13.1%	1.6%	4.9%	3.3%	16.4%
Year 6	59.6%	5.8%	9.6%	0.0%	3.9%	7.7%	13.5%
Year 7	58.2%	7.7%	6.6%	1.1%	5.5%	2.2%	18.7%
Year 8	70.8%	6.7%	9.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%	12.4%
Year 9	69.1%	6.0%	6.0%	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%	15.5%
Year 10	76.0%	2.5%	2.5%	1.3%	2.5%	0.0%	15.2%
Year 11	89.0%	0.0%	4.1%	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%	5.5%
Year 12	87.1%	0.0%	7.3%	0.0%	2.1%	0.0%	3.1%
Year 13	90.0%	3.8%	5.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%

The results have been summarised as a graph shown in figure 4.4 to help identify any patterns.

Figure 4.4: Intentions after Year 13
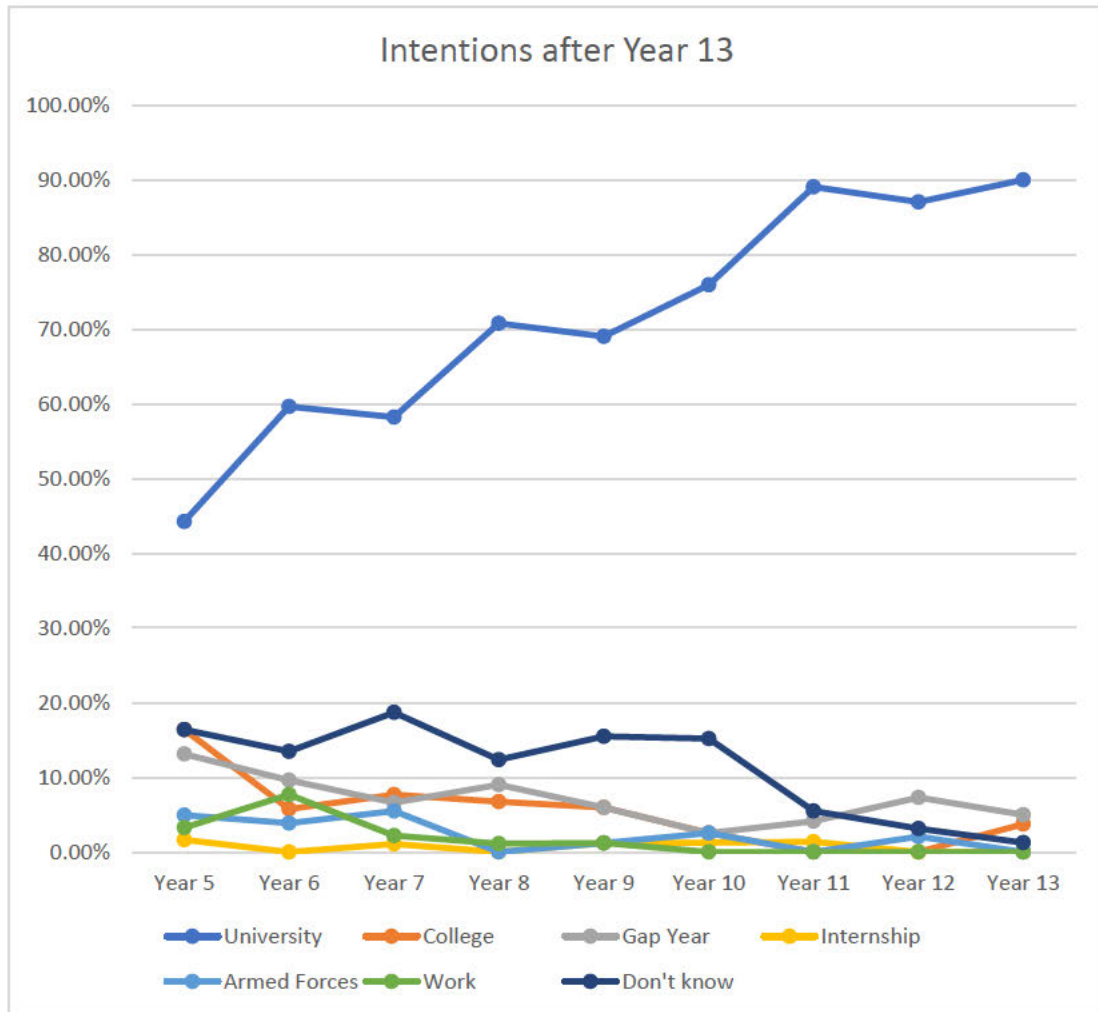
From these results I find that the answer *don't know* decreases from a peak of 19% in Year 7 going down to 1% in Year 13. This suggests students become clearer about their career intentions as they go through the school with 90% of students planning to go to university (figure 4.5) fitting the worldwide averages for international schools (ISCResearch, 2020).

A key feature of this data is the number of students who have the intention of going to university rising from 44% in Year 5 up to 90% in Year 13. In case younger students were confused with the college distinction and mistook this for university, the data from these two choices can be combined to give a percentage of all students intending to go to any form of higher education. Here the figures rise from 60% in Year 5 to 94% in

Year 13. The remaining students in Year 13 intend taking a gap year (5%) or don't know (1% or 1 student).

No student in Year 13 stated that they intend taking an alternate route (such as, job, internship, armed forces).

Table 4.2: Choosing any Post-18 Education

	University	College	Education Post-18
Year 5	44.3%	16.4%	60.7%
Year 6	59.6%	5.8%	65.4%
Year 7	58.2%	7.7%	65.9%
Year 8	70.8%	6.7%	77.5%
Year 9	69.1%	6.0%	75.0%
Year 10	76.0%	2.5%	78.5%
Year 11	89.0%	0.0%	89.0%
Year 12	87.1%	0.0%	87.1%
Year 13	90.0%	3.8%	93.8%

Figure 4.5: Total Post-18 Education
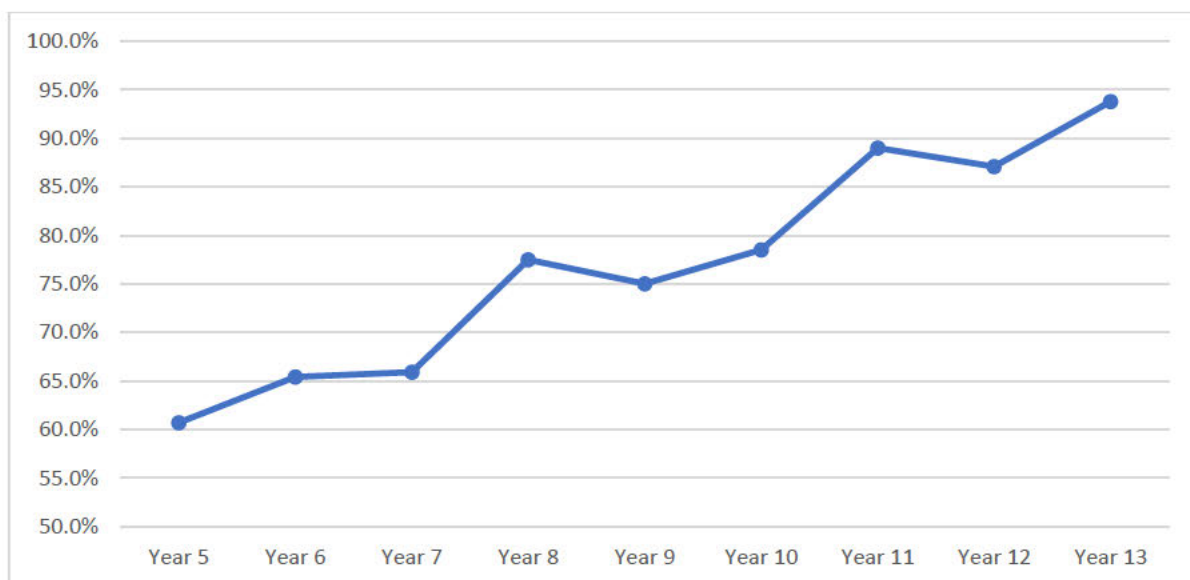
4.1.4 Analysis of question on student career intentions

The survey asked students what job they hoped they would be doing at age 28 which meant it would be at least 10 years in the future for all students. This question was on all the surveys from Year 5 up to Year 13 with a space for the students to write any answer they chose. Once the surveys were closed the data was tidied so that spellings were correct and similar responses such as *don't know* were written in the same way.

Initially the list of jobs was analysed for common jobs with many traditional professional jobs such as doctor and engineer included as well as aspirational careers such as professional footballer. Using the standard occupational classifications of 2010 as a basis and grouping careers around professional, technical and routine classifications the seven groupings used earlier were combined to make three main classifications shown in table 4.3:

Table 4.3: Career Classifications

Standard Occupational Classifications	Simplified Classifications
Higher Professional Lower Professional Intermediate	Professional
Self-employed Technical	Technical
Semi-Routine Routine	Routine

As many answers were around celebrity careers including professional sportsperson, actor and singer these were combined under the classification 'celebrity'. Some career choices were very recently created jobs such as influencer, working in sustainability or Artificial Intelligence (AI) researcher, these were classified as 21st Century Careers. As several students wrote *don't know* in the free choice space this will also be included as an option, the six groupings were therefore:

- Professional

- Technical

- Routine

- Celebrity

- 21st Century Careers

- Don't know

The results across all year groups can be seen in the graph shown in figure 4.6:

Figure 4.6: Preferred Career Percentages
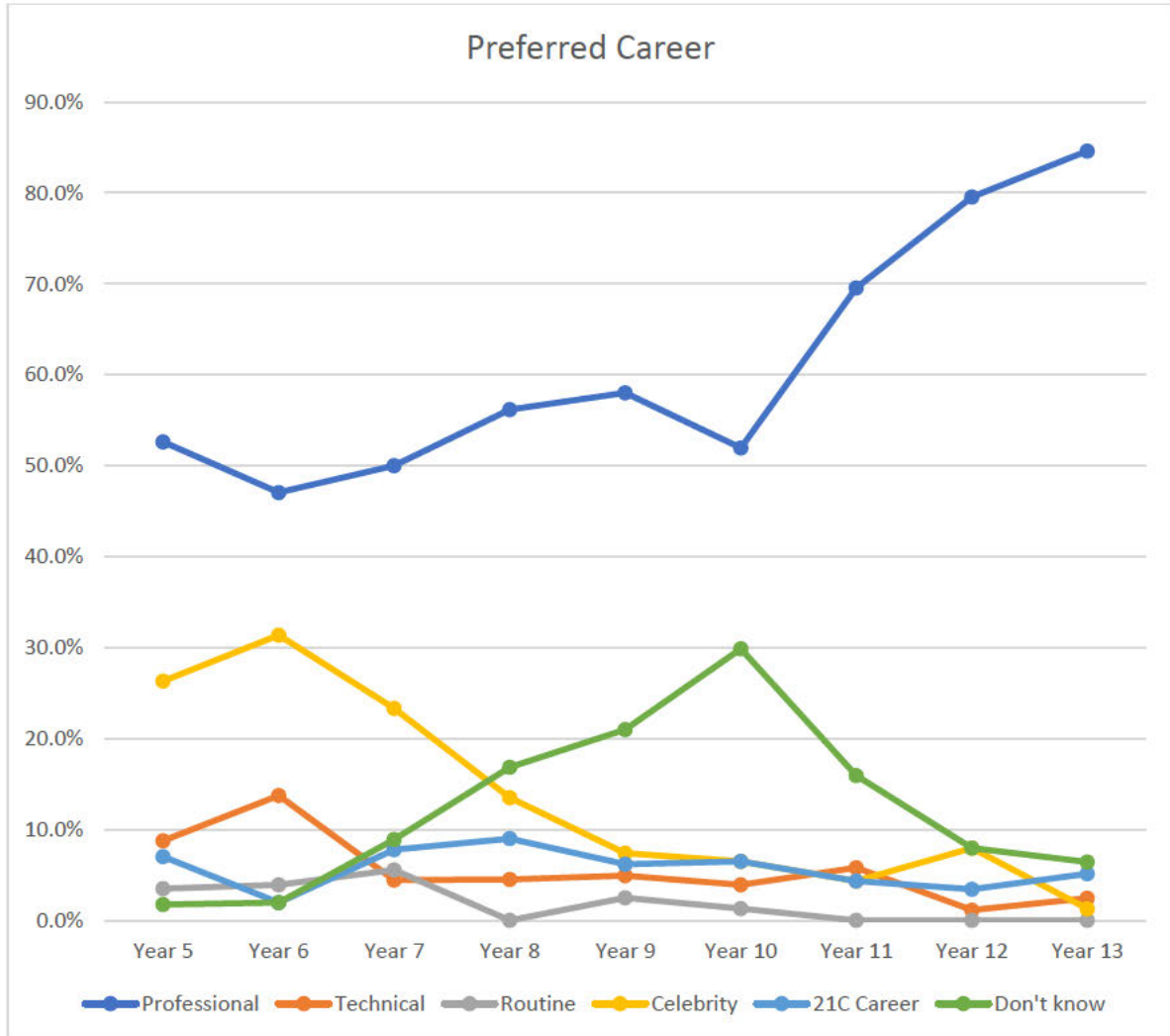
From this graph showing the percentage chosen by each year group I see the choice of professional careers rising from around 50% of students at the end of primary school to around 85% of students by Year 13. Another change I see is the fall in students selecting celebrity style careers from around 30% in Year 6 to just 1% in Year 13. This stage for younger students has been labelled the fantasy stage (Balci, 2018) with students then moving through the tentative stage to the realistic stage.

Technical and routine careers are selected more often by younger students at around 10% for technical jobs and 5% for routine jobs with these dropping to around 3% selecting technical jobs by Year 13 with no students choosing routine careers at this age.

The number of students selecting *don't know* rises from just 2% of students in both primary year groups up to a peak of around 30% of students in Year 10 and then drops again to 6% of students in Year 13. This initial rise coincides with the drop in the number of students selecting a celebrity career who may then not know what career they intend to do when they decide not to pursue a celebrity career which can be seen as the 'tentative stage' (Balci, 2018), and this can be seen in the graph shown in figure 4.7.

Figure 4.7: Percentage Selecting Celebrity or Don't Know
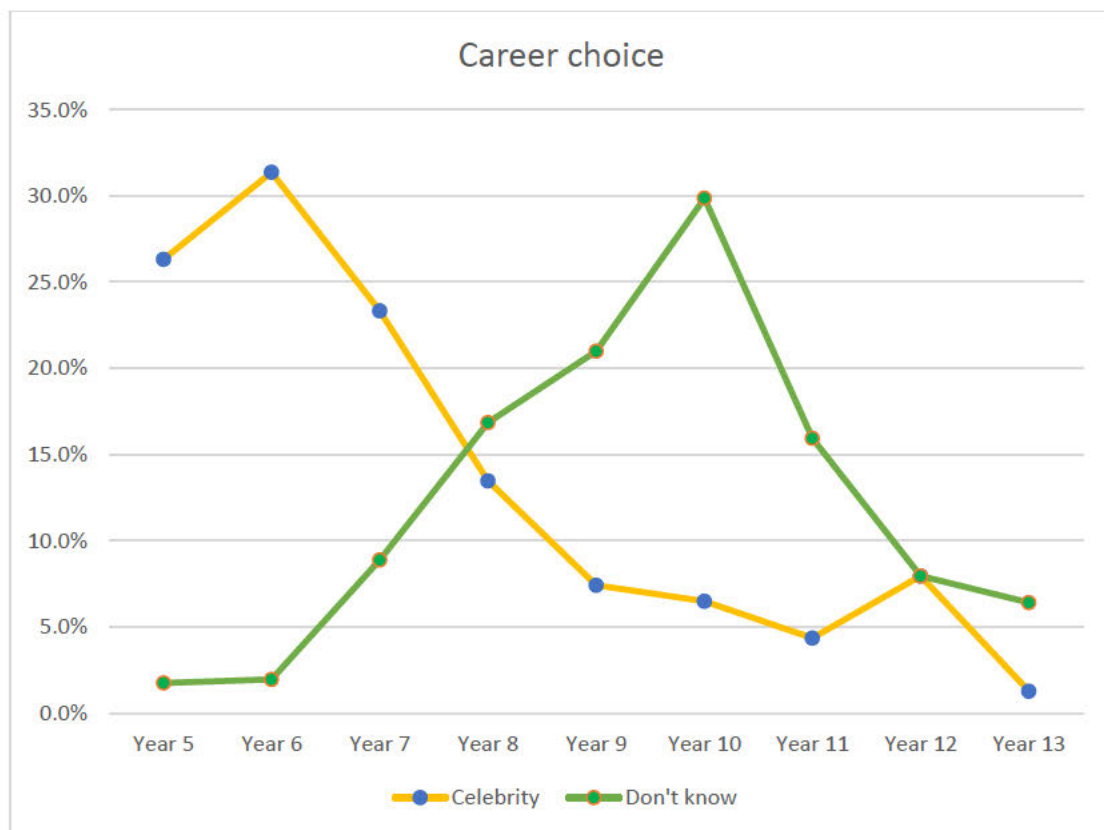
The drop in the number of students feeling they can achieve their hope of a celebrity career and the matching rise in the number who do not know what they want to do as students go through secondary school fits the findings of figure 4.3 where students responded that they felt stress tripled through secondary school while the

number responding that they felt happy about their future career halved. This fits the idea of self-discrepancy theory highlighted in the literature review (Higgins, 1987) and that career indecision leads to increased anxiety (Nalbantoglu Yilmaz & Cetin Gunduz, 2018).

A summary of the most popular answer, along with some less common answers that were interesting due to being selected by several students but more of a technical or more modern career can be seen below in table 4.4:

Table 4.4: Common and Less Common Career Choices

Most Common Answers	Less Common Answers
Don't know 99	Interior Designer 9
Engineer 54	Fashion Designer 7
Doctor 42	Working in Sustainability 7
Business and Management 41	Police 7
Lawyer 40	Armed Forces 6
Professional Sport 40	Game Designer 6
Acting 27	Youtuber 5
Scientist 21	Entrepreneur 5
Teacher 18	Photographer 5
Psychologist 17	Chef 4

These are from 694 responses to the questionnaire which gave an answer to the question on future career they hoped to do when aged 28.

After identifying the career that the student hoped to be working in at age 28, the following question asked how likely the student felt it was that they would be doing this job with the options of very likely, likely,

unlikely or very unlikely available as choices. For analysis purposes the responses were combined to make a binary choice of likely or unlikely with the following results:

Figure 4.8: Likelihood of Doing Preferred Job
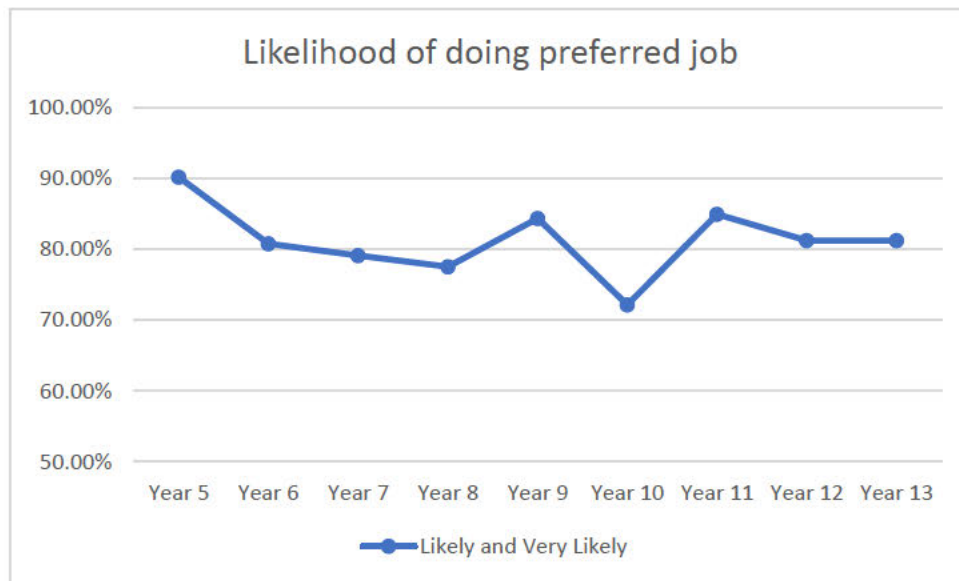
The results were consistent across the year groups with an average of 81% of students feeling it was likely or very likely they would go on to their preferred career. The year group who was least confident about their potential of achieving this career was Year 10 with 72% selecting likely or very likely which may coincide with the fact that 30% of these students selected *don't know* as their career choice linking the lack of confidence to uncertainty about what they intend doing. This identifies moving from Year 9 to 10 as an important time for the career chose making process by students.

To see if having more than one plan for the future impacted positively or negatively on the student's feelings around the future, I analysed three options, as either the student put down the same career at age 48, that they did not know what they hoped to be doing or they put down a change, either to a different career or through promotion by that age. The students can then be grouped by these three categories and compared with the

existing analysis over feelings around careers which could either have only positive responses, negative responses or a mixture of emotions. This gave the following individual results displayed in table 4.5:

Table 4.5 Student change in career choices versus emotions around careers

	Positive emotions	Mixed emotions	Negative emotions
Change of career at age 48	67	57	13
Don't know for career age 48	17	30	30
Same career age 48	94	118	36

These results show that students who considered more than one career in the future chose positive emotions about the future 49% of the time compared to 38% of students feeling positive about the future when selecting the same career and just 22% of students feeling positive if they didn't know what they would do later in their career. The Chi-squared test for independence shows this to be statistically significant at the 5% level (Chi-square: χ^2 (4, N=462) =37.7117, P<.001). This shows that students who considered more than one career felt more positive about their career future at a statistically significant level.

Following the questions on preferred career choice the students were asked if their parents would give the same answer to the career they would be doing at age 28, with three options available of *yes*, *no* and *don't know*. The results to this can be seen in the graph shown in figure 4.9.

Figure 4.9: Parental Alignment with Career Choice
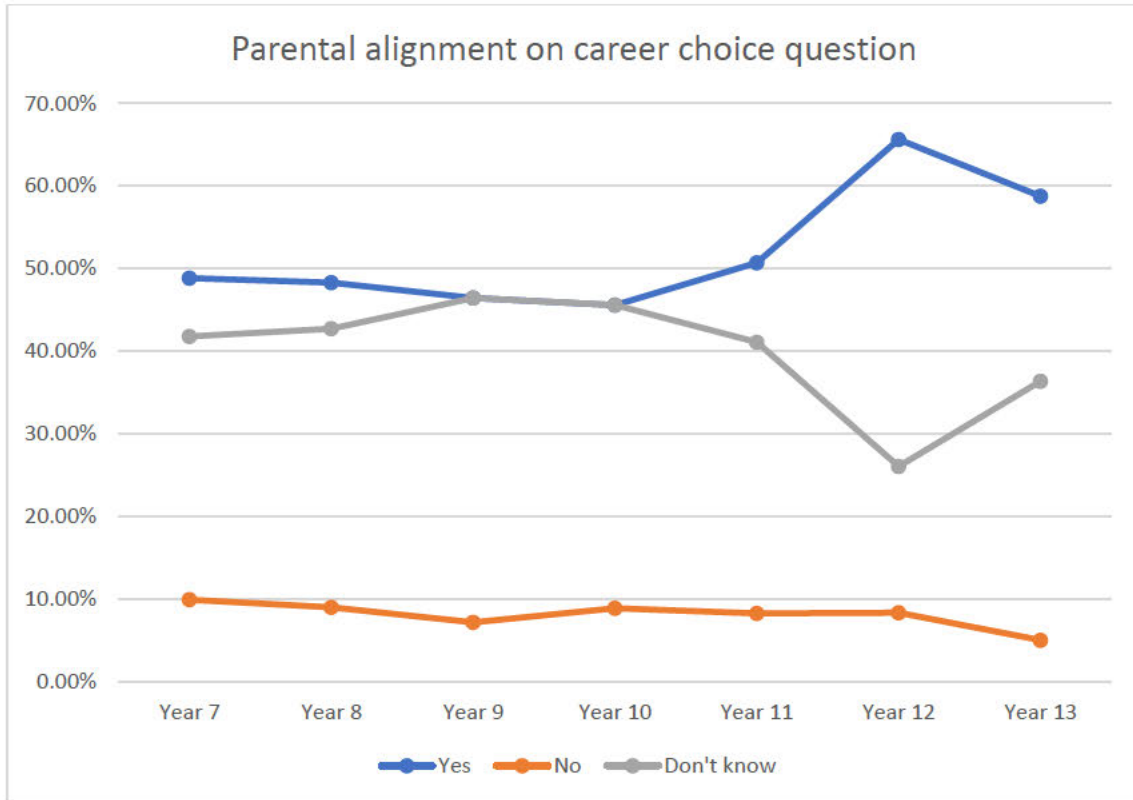
The results for parents having a different view on what the student would be doing as a career at age 28, which can be described as a student having unaligned ambitions (Schneider & Stevenson, 1999) are consistent, with around 8% of responses across all year groups showing potentially unaligned ambitions to their parents.

4.1.5 Analysis of question on career ranking

To help gain an understanding of whether students felt careers had a hierarchy or that they all had equal desirability, they were asked to rank seven careers from best to worst in their opinion. The rankings were turned into scores with the highest ranked job being given seven points down to the lowest ranked being given one point. The scores were then averaged across the year group to find the year group perception around different jobs.

Figure 4.10: Job Rankings
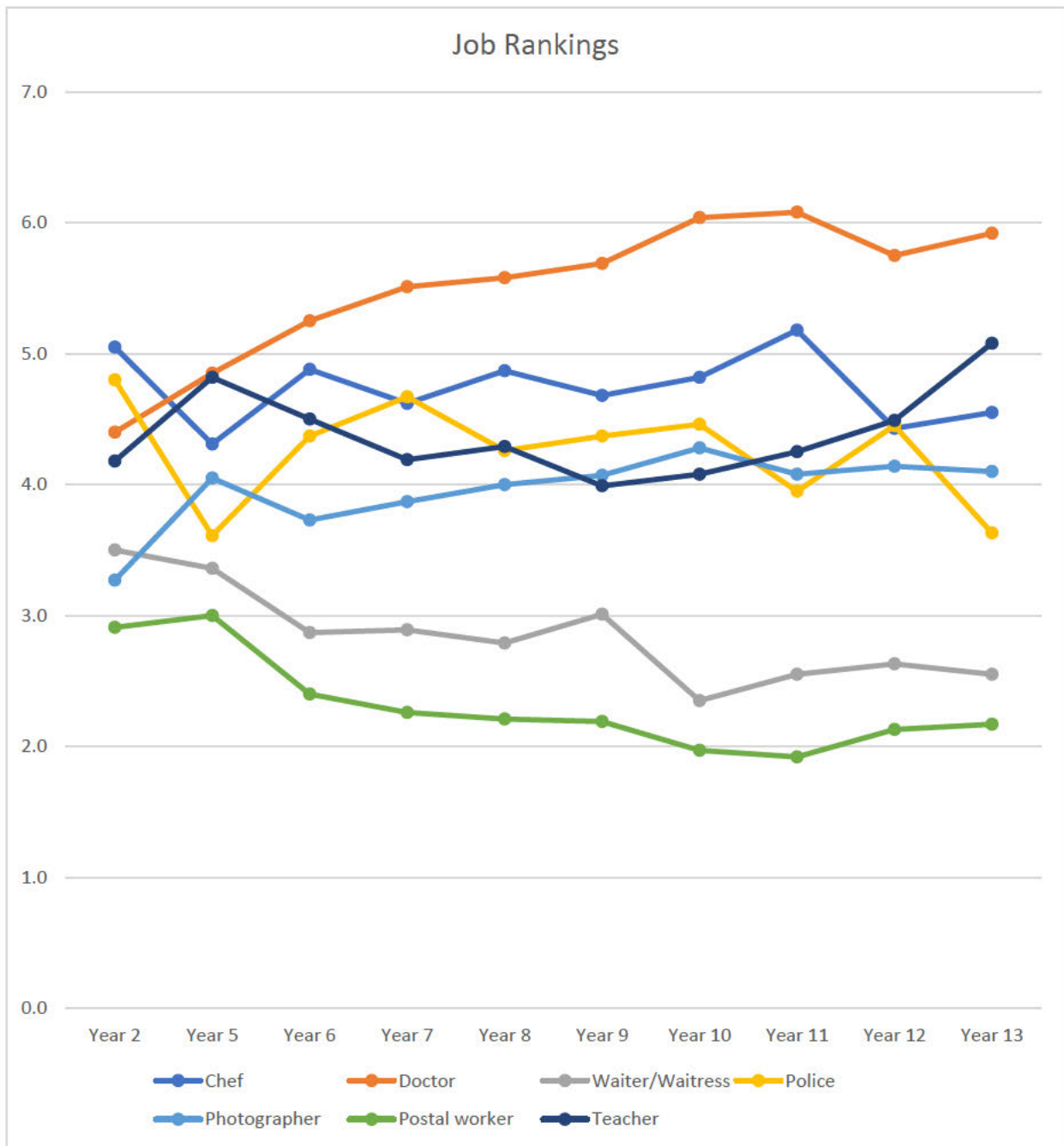
The graph of these scores shows that students consistently had the job of postal worker as the worst job followed by waiter/waitress as second worst. The job seen as best from Years 5 all the way to Year 13 was doctor. These results are in line with the categorisation used with the professional career ranked number one and the routine and semi-routine careers ranked at the bottom.

The careers classified as semi-professional, intermediate and technical were ranked between second and fifth place and varied in ranking in different year groups. Averaging these across all students had chef as second most popular career, teacher third, police fourth and photographer fifth. These rankings can be seen visually in a graph by rank in figure 4.11. For this question students in Year 2 were also asked to rank the jobs to see if the results changed with younger students.

Figure 4.11: Career Choice Ranking
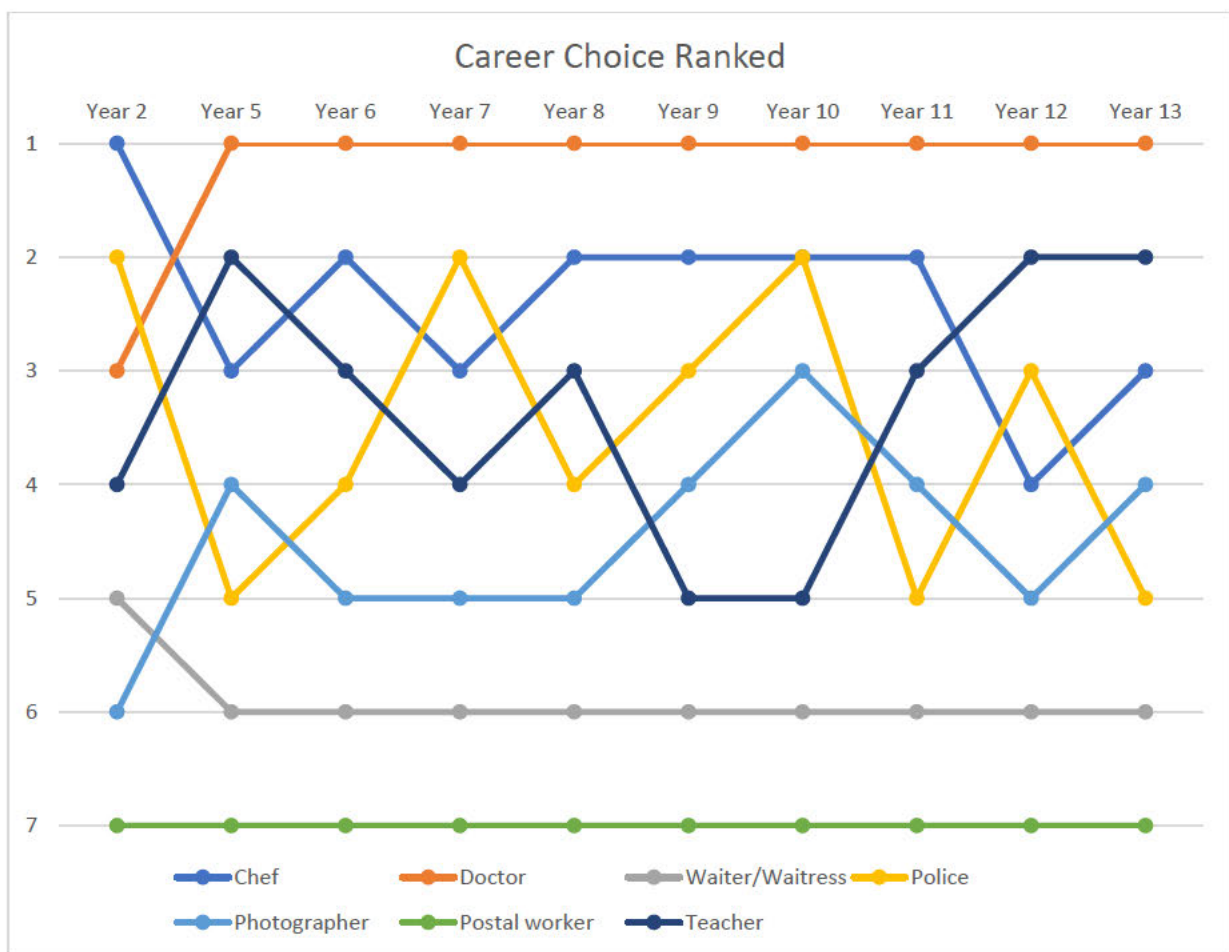
From this ranking (figure 4.11) I can conclude that students in the international school being studied consistently ranked the professional career as the best and the routine careers as worst all the way from Year 5 through to Year 13 and even Year 2 students had the routine careers at the bottom though had waiter one place higher and had doctor slightly lower than other year groups suggesting the cementing of job status has begun in Year 2 and solidifies by Year 5.

This consistency of classifications at all age groups can be explained by Bourdieu's (1977) concept of habitus as discussed in the literature review and summed up as:

> The habitus acquired in the family underlies the structuring of school experiences… and the habitus transformed by schooling, itself diversified, in turn underlies the structuring of all subsequent experiences… The child imitates not models but other peoples actions. (Bourdieu, 1977, p.87)

The only career that was misplaced according to the rankings used as a basis for the question was the career of Chef which should have been lower placed as a technical career and therefore has a higher perception within the school. This misplacing of the status of the career of chef may be down to the celebrity status given to chefs on television which is in keeping with the results on the question around students preferred job where up to 30% of younger students aspired to a celebrity career. The career of chef was given a lower position by the oldest students who placed the semi-professional career of teacher above it which again fits with their answers around preferred careers where the older students no longer gave celebrity careers as their preferred job aged 28. In the next section I will explore patterns in the student answers based around common answers given by different student demographic groupings.

4.2 Demographic analysis

The final stage of analysis that I conducted with the survey results was to analyse for any patterns based on different demographical data to use for comparisons. In the earlier analysis, age was considered by splitting the students by academic year group. I have identified five further groupings for additional analysis. These being gender, new versus old students, nationality, participation in clubs and perceived academic performance. Using gender and academic performance as demographic data was considered following the research from Fuller (2009) which used these as key differences when considering aspiration. Nationality and length of time

in the school were considered as part of the demographical difference of attendance at an international school while participation in clubs was added to identify student and parent engagement at school.

All the data from the survey was exported to excel and then tidied up to correct spellings and any other typos to make it easier to list answers to spot those given by multiple students. These were then sorted by the different groups with the relevant sub-sets exported for analysis by group for comparison.

4.2.1 Gender analysis

When splitting the results by gender I have eliminated responses that have stated they prefer not to give an answer for gender as they were too small in number to form a significant group at just four responses out of the total 705. This left 348 listed as female (49.6%) and 353 as male (50.4%). Initially I analysed by counting up the jobs each group choose and identifying the most popular five careers as well as the number of students for each gender that gave the response of *don't know*. Only one answer per student was possible and the results for this are displayed on table 4.6 below:

Table 4.6: Profession choice by Gender

Female		Male	
Don't know	46 (13.2%)	Don't know	53 (15.0%)
Doctor	33 (9.5%)	Engineer	45 (12.7%)
Lawyer	26 (7.5%)	Professional Sports	37 (10.5%)
Acting	20 (5.7%)	Business Management	25 (7.1%)
Business Management	16 (4.6%)	Lawyer	14 (4.0%)
Teacher	15 (4.3%)	Scientist	13 (3.9%)

This suggests a big difference in preferred jobs by gender with the top job in each gender not selected in the top five of the other list. Careers as lawyers and in business management seemed the most gender neutral and

both genders chose a career defined earlier as a celebrity career with males selecting professional sport as the second most chosen while females chose Acting as their third most chosen career.

When looking at whether the students felt it was likely or not that they would get into this career the groupings of very likely and likely were grouped together as were unlikely and very unlikely to make a dichotomous grouping of likely or unlikely with the results as follows:

Female – likely 283 (81.3%), unlikely 65 (18.7%)

Male – Likely 286 (81.0%), unlikely 67 (19.0%)

These results were very similar which shows the confidence levels of going on to their chosen career is similar regardless of gender.

Another question asked students which words best described their feelings about their career future and allowed them to select as many as applied. The words excited, relaxed, clear and happy were positive emotion words while uncertain, scared, unhappy and stressed were negative words. The student responses were summed up as either selecting only positive words, only negative words or a mix of positive and negative words. The answers are tabulated below (Table 4.7) with any students who left the question blank removed from the data for this question:

Table 4.7: Word choice summary by Gender

	Negative	Mixed	Positive
Female	68 (22.7%)	150 (50.0%)	82 (27.3%)
Male	63 (21.5%)	114 (38.9%)	116 (39.6%)

Looking at the numbers I see that males are more positive when selecting words about their career futures but to see if this was statistically significant I carried out a Chi-squared test at the 5% significance level which

showed this was statistically significant (Chi-square: χ^2 (2, N=593) = 10.8572, P=.004389) and males were more positive when considering their career futures in the school than females based on the answers to this question. This has similarities to the research of Khemka and Rathod (2016) who found that girls had more academic anxiety than boys in secondary private schools.

4.2.2 Analysis on time at the school

As the school is very transient with the average stay of a student being three years, I analysed whether duration at the school affected the student view around future careers. Originally several groupings were used from one to two years in the school, three to four and so on with more options available to the older students but as the key analysis was around students who were new to the school, I grouped the results into students who answered one to two years at the school and all the others as three years or more.

When counting the most frequent careers in each grouping the results were very similar though the students who had been at the school for three or more years were more likely to have a career in mind than those students who had been in the school for one or two years.

Table 4.8: Profession choice and length of time in School

1-2 years at the school	3+ years at the school
Don't know 38 (22%)	Don't know 50 (15%)
Engineer 14 (8%)	Engineer 33 (10%)
Doctor 10 (6%)	Business Management 28 (9%)
Lawyer 8 (5%)	Lawyer 25 (8%)
Business Management 7 (4%)	Doctor 20 (6%)
Scientist 7 (4%)	Teacher 9 (3%)

Following this I analysed the answers given to the likelihood of the student going into this career in the same way that I had done by gender. The results were identical with 80% of students saying they were likely or very likely to be successful in entering that career in both groups. When analysing the feelings towards future

careers by the word choice as positive, negative or mixed the results showed no significance (Chi-square: $\chi^2 (2, N=592) = 0.4585, P=.795115$) when comparing feelings to time at school. The analysis of feelings towards careers compared to time in school is shown below in Table 4.9 which shows individual results:

Table 4.9: Time in school and feelings towards Careers

	Negative	Mixed	Positive
1-2 years in the school	50	93	74
3+ years in the school	80	171	124

4.2.3 Analysis by nationality

The students were invited to list all their nationalities in the survey. As the school is described as being a British School, I analysed by comparing those students who identified as British, or dual nationality with one being British, against students who described themselves as another nationality to British. As before, I compared the job choices, likelihood of gaining a job in the selected career, feelings about their future career as well as their plans when leaving Year 13 with the results tabulated below (table 4.10).

Table 4.10: Nationality and Profession choice

British	Non-British
Don't know 29 (11%)	Don't know 70 (16%)
Professional Sport 19 (7%)	Engineer 40 (9%)
Lawyer 16 (6%)	Doctor 32 (7%)
Engineer 15 (6%)	Business Management 30 (7%)
Acting 11 (4%)	Lawyer 24 (5%)
Business Management 11 (4%)	Professional Sport 24 (5%)

This suggests some possible differences in career preference depending on whether the student identifies as British or not, but the jobs are mainly the same across the two lists which shows the differences are not particularly significant. Similarly, the analysis of whether students felt it was likely they would get into their identified career based on whether they were British or non-British

(Chi-square: χ^2 (1, N=698) = 1.8681, P=.205133) showed no statistical significance when calculating with a Chi-Squared test for independence.

When comparing the feelings students had towards their career future, I see a difference between British and Non-British students which is statistically significant (Chi-square: χ^2 (2, N=589) = 7.1124, P=.028548). British students selected positive emotions more frequently while non-British students selected mixed emotions more often as shown in Table 4.11 which contains individual student data.

Table 4.11: Nationality and feelings towards Career

	Negative	Mixed	Positive
British	53	82	84
Non-British	78	180	113

This gives an indication that the non-British students in the school may need consideration in the school's careers education programme to help deal with any negative emotions around their career future.

4.2.4 Analysis by club participation

When analysing the student attendance at clubs with their identified likelihood of going on to work in their selected career this did not show any significance between students who attended several clubs compared to those who attended very few. A significant difference was found when comparing feelings about their future careers (Chi-square: χ^2 (2, N=593) = 7.3143, P=.025806), with students who attended two or more clubs and activities being less negative about their career futures and those students attending one or no clubs selecting negative words around 50% more frequently which is shown in table 4.12.

The connection with extra-curricular participation and career success is supported in literature (Rook, 2013) suggesting the focus on wider participation in school life will be advantageous for student future career success. The feelings towards future careers compared to enrichment participation can be seen in table 4.12 which shows individual student answers:

Table 4.12: Enrichment participation and feelings towards Career

	Negative	Mixed	Positive
0-1 clubs attended	57	79	72
2+ clubs attended	74	185	126

4.2.5 Analysis by academic grades

The question on identifying the grades the respondent had been achieving this academic year was only asked on the surveys for Year 7-13 students, as primary students use a different grading system so comparisons would not be possible. To analyse any differences by academic grades, the students' results were put into two groups, those responding that they achieved high grades of A and A* grades or level 6 or 7 in the IB while all other students were classified as achieving average results with grades being B, or 5, or lower. The careers selected compared by level of achievement is shown in table 4.13:

Table 4.13: Grades compared to Career choice

High achievers	Average achievers
Don't know 36 (11%)	Don't know 62 (23%)
Engineer 37 (12%)	Business Management 18 (7%)
Lawyer 24 (8%)	Professional Sport 17 (6%)
Doctor 24 (8%)	Engineer 15 (6%)
Business Management 20 (6%)	Acting 12 (4%)
Psychology 12 (4%)	Lawyer 12 (4%)

Here I see a difference in the proportion of students who are unclear about their preferred career with lower achieving students being much less clear with twice the number recording that they *don't know* what they want to do as a career. The types of career selected are different as well, with engineer and doctor being prominent in the list of students with high academic grades while lower academic performers are more likely to select celebrity style careers of sports of acting. High achieving students are also more likely to select university as their likely destination when leaving school with 82% selecting this choice compared to 71% of students from the lower achieving group.

When comparing the feelings around their future careers I do not find any statistically significant difference between the two groups. However, when comparing the ratings given to the likelihood of going on to their selected career I find that students achieving high academic grades feel they are more likely to go on to their identified career choice at a statistically significant level (Chi-square: χ^2 (1, N=593) = 5.1319, P=.02349) which corresponds to the research of Denovan and Macaskill (2017) who found that low academic performance was associated with high levels of stress in students.

4.3 Summary of Survey Analysis by research question

The summary of chapter four is discussed below answering each of the research questions separately to see how the findings of the questionnaire data answer each of the research questions.

4.3.1 What factors influence international school student's choice making about their future education and careers?

- Factors influencing career choice are consistent from age 9 to 18 with job satisfaction always being the main choice and a very important factor while parent approval was always last choice and unimportant as a factor

- Rating around jobs as good or bad was consistent from age 9 to 18 with professional jobs ranking highest, celebrity jobs next followed by technical jobs with routine jobs coming last. For students aged 6 the routine jobs were rated last with celebrity jobs coming above professional jobs

- Aspirational alignment was consistent from age 9 to 18 with a figure of above 80% feeling it likely or very likely they would gain a job in their preferred career while less than 10% felt parents were unaligned with their career plans from age 11 to 18.

4.3.2 How do international school students make sense of their multi-faceted academic, social and cultural identities when making these decisions?

From the analysis of different sub-groups, I have identified three groups where a statistical difference was seen when asked to select their feelings about career futures. The following three sub-groups selected positive words more frequently:

- Male

- British

- Attending two or more clubs a week

When considering the likelihood of going on to the career in which they had stated a preference, students with lower grades gave unlikely or very unlikely as an answer more frequently and were also twice as likely to write *don't know* for the future career they hoped to be doing at age 28.

4.3.3 What are the main challenges international school students face when considering future careers?

- A change I see through secondary is around the feelings selected around career futures with students feeling of happiness dropping by over a half while the number of students choosing stress as an emotion more than tripled

- Students increasingly intend going to university when leaving school from 44% in Year 5 to 90% in Year 13

- Preferred careers change by age with the figure for those aspiring for a professional career at around 50% in Years 5-9 but rising sharply to 85% from Year 10-13

- Younger students select celebrity style careers in sport and acting around 30% of the time in Year 6 but this drops to below 5% by Year 11. This coincides with an increase in students who answered *don't know* for the career they hoped to do with this rising from around 5% in younger years to 30% of students by Year 10

4.3.4 Chapter Summary

In summary, the findings of chapter four showed some answers were consistent across all ages including the ranking of jobs and the ranking of the influences in deciding which career to follow. High career happiness and following a career identified as a profession were consistently ranked as the most desired at all ages.

Where we see a change as students get older is over feelings towards future careers with happiness decreasing while feelings of stress increase as they get older. The other main change identified in chapter four is that younger students often aspire to a more celebrity style career but the numbers of these reduce to almost none as the students get older and become more realistic with their career choice.

Chapter 5 Findings on student views through qualitative data

5.1 Introduction

To answer each of the research questions (Chapter 1.9) and to identify possible interventions from the school around careers advice and support for students, focus groups of students were conducted to hear the student perspective on the research questions through a set of guided questions. Due to Covid-19 restrictions in the schools, each year group was considered to be a bubble with students only allowed to mix with other students of the same year group. Therefore, by necessity, focus groups were formed in year groups according to the restrictions in place. The formation of the groups by age and year group was in itself advantageous as it allowed students of the same age to discuss the issues they faced and gave them a common understanding of the issues around the research questions as they saw them. When analysing the transcripts from the focus groups, the groupings enabled an analysis by age to find patterns as well as differences between them.

Each time a factor behind student career choice was discussed it was then coded in NVivo enabling the frequency with which it was discussed to be analysed (Appendix 5). The next section will explore the importance of happiness in the HE and career decision making process of students.

5.2 The importance of happiness

Career happiness was referred to in all nine focus groups with seventy references made in total making it the most discussed topic. This supports the findings of the questionnaire (Chapter 4) which placed career happiness as the most important aspect to students when considering future careers. This was a feature in all groups and summed up by a student in Year 8:

> I feel like it's coming to the point where it's kind of like you only have one life, so if you're just going to waste it on doing something that you don't enjoy and that you're just doing it because it makes other people happy, then there's no point in doing it [if] … you don't get happiness for yourself. (Tilly, Year 8 Student)

While this is a common view which was expressed in each focus group and corresponds to the questionnaire results, the students referred to many other factors as important in their decision making which could be compatible with career happiness or could be in conflict with it. The focus groups referred to the financial advantage of students at the school which allowed happiness to be a consideration for them rather than just seeing careers as important for future financial stability above all other considerations. This is shown in a Year 11 student comment where the ability to make happiness the priority is seen as unusual and specific to the type of school they attend.

> We have been given a luxury that this is an option. The only reason this is so high up job satisfaction and happiness is that we can actually afford that at this school. Whereas a lot of schools, you go for high job security. I used to go to a… state school. And my sister, a lot of her friends like her parents were making living wage…. I think the only reason that high job satisfaction is so high at this school is because we have the option. We have parents we can fall back on. (Charlotte, Year 11 Student)

Similar comments to this were made in both the Year 9 and Year 13 focus groups showing that this awareness of the opportunity students had in the school to consider happiness as an important factor was shared across the older student groups. Comparisons were made to situations in other countries such as the UK where students had attended state schools in disadvantaged areas, with students considering the results and giving the opinion that the order would be very different in other countries and cultures with happiness coming as a lower priority than salary and job security.

This reflection from students highlights an area of identity formation where students see themselves as being in a privileged position where they can have high aspirations based around the things that make them happy creating an identity of being ambitious as students which is supported in the literature review (Chapter 2) which identified young people from families with financial resources being able to 'choose less safe options' (Gjerustad & von Soest, 2012, p. 892). Alongside this opportunity to be ambitious was the identity of having confidence that their future would be stable based on the financial position of the family. A possible identity that will characterise students in the school would therefore be as confident and ambitious students.

A question from the focus group schedule asked students to consider whether the school should do more to promote happiness as important in career choice. The responses from the students were that the school was already promoting happiness as an important factor when considering future careers with this being supported by students in Year 7, Year 9 and also in Year 12.

> I feel like schools do a good job of showing that you should always go for satisfaction and happiness… they don't make it seem like high salary and high status is the most important, you should be picking ones that make you happy. (John, Year 7 Student)

> This school has told us that you need to be happy from what you're doing, and money is, of course, an important part, but it can't be your main factor of how you decide how you're going to live your life. (Kendra, Year 9 Student)

Other factors were considered alongside happiness as being important factors with the most common being the importance of salary and the tension this could bring as a choice between the two factors. This will be discussed in the next section on salary as a factor behind career choice though students as young as Year 6 felt this did not need to be a dichotomous choice.

> You can be very happy with your job and have a high salary. It doesn't mean that if you have a high salary that you're not happy with your job. Because, in my opinion, I'd rather have a job with a high salary that I love doing, instead of having a job that doesn't have a high salary, but I still love doing. (Eli, Year 6 student)

Choosing a career based purely on what is likely to most make a student happy or whether other, more pragmatic considerations need to be taken into account, is something that seems to come with age and links to the questionnaire response (Chapter 4) where happiness as an emotion around careers futures declined as a choice the older students got. This need for pragmatism over happiness was discussed by several students in the Year 13 focus group where they felt that decisions sometimes had to be made as students got older due to exams and university being closer.

As you become older it becomes more of a reality that your career is coming up, and so you start to think of your career path and how to get there… when I was younger I felt like I could be a dancer, I could be an astronaut. So, a lot of happiness came because I felt like I could be anything, and I wasn't really thinking of how I would get there or what that would lead to. Whereas now it's more stressful and I'm beginning to think of getting into university in order to do the career, factors that come into play that are more real. (Luna, Year 13 Student)

The focus groups were in agreement that happiness was a very important factor when considering future careers, and that the school culture was one that enabled this along with the advantage they had of financial backing in their personal circumstances. Students realised from a young age that other factors, most notably salary, were also important but it was the older students who were more pragmatic and decided that these may overtake happiness in importance due to issues around being able to access their dream careers. This balance of objective and subjective definitions of career success was highlighted in the literature review (Chapter 2) and the views from the focus groups were consistent with this (Arthur et al., 2005)

5.3 The importance of money

From the focus groups the notion of salary as an important factor in career choice came up 60 times and was discussed in every one of the focus groups. All of the groups commented that having a higher salary would be important and desirable, with both primary year groups commenting that certain jobs would be bad jobs as they did not pay high salaries. Students in Year 6, 7 and 8 made a similar comment that the jobs that were popular to students in the school were popular because they would give a high salary though no figures were mentioned to quantify what amount would make it a high salary with the amount being based more around stability in future life rather than a desire for luxury.

Looking at all the jobs… there are a lot of things that you could make quite a lot of money from. So, I think money was also really important. But, all these jobs, you're usually quite financially stable if you have these jobs, whereas if you're on other jobs, you can usually run into some financial issues or problems. (David, Year 8 Student)

Lots of people look at the bad side, and the bad side would be that you won't survive out in the world if you do not get paid much (Zak, Year 6 Student)

For the older students the importance of salary was related to financial stability when they grew up with the ability to support their families commented on by the Year 10 and 11 focus groups. This is different to the younger student groups who did not identify the importance of higher wages in helping them bring up a family.

> Personally, when I was thinking about a job, I want a job that I like doing, that I have a passion for but as well have a decent wage so that I can afford to live and have a family maybe in the future. So, that's my main mindset when I'm thinking about what I want to be. A decent wage so I can afford living and possibly a family. (Simon, Year 10 Student)

Students in all focus groups commented on parents and wider family as wanting them to be happy, have a good salary or both. From the Year 8 focus group upwards this was articulated around culture, with students citing their backgrounds and experiences in different counties where they saw more poverty as being countries where earning a high salary would be seen as being more important. Countries and regions mentioned included Thailand, India, South Africa and Eastern Europe. A culture of being expected to support family members as a reason behind the desire to earn high salaries was also expressed.

> I came from Thailand and it's the country where you, as a child, support your parents. After you get a job, you get money. You send to help your siblings, home to your parents, for them to spend on their food and for their living. And they would say, if you learn arts or languages, they call you an idiot. But if you learn like science, math… [and] have a good job, like a doctor, for example, in the future, as a career, you earn a lot of money for that. (Sally, Year 11 Student)

5.3.1 Money *and* Happiness discussed in the same comment

The most common overlap where a comment was coded twice for all of the focus groups was where a comment was coded with both salary and happiness being factors that were important in the decision-making process, with this happening on 18 occasions and with eight of the different focus groups.

Students described the ideal situation as one where they were well paid in a job that made them happy rather than needing to choose between the two. There was an appreciation that in the choice of career they may find

it hard to completely balance the two with an acceptance that they may have to take a job that made them slightly less happy than they would ideally like due to the financial practicalities involved.

This ideal of having good pay and career happiness was also something the students felt was important to parents and was mentioned in several focus groups down to the very youngest group.

> My parents would say they support me in my choice, as long as it's a high salary and that you enjoy the job, because if you don't enjoy the job then you're not really getting anything out of it (Lucia, Year 5 Student).

> For me it would definitely be something I enjoy doing but I would also like a good wage. (Abi, Year 10 Student).

The discussions around the possible trade-off between career happiness and salary also raised the differences depending on a student's home country and cultural background with students sharing the perspective that it would depend on which country they were from as to the extent to which they would have to prioritise financial security over career happiness.

> It kind of depends on what country, because we kind of have like a lot of countries in our family that it depends on what side you're looking at. Do you want to be happy and have less money? Or do you want to be...make money and be a little bit less happy? So, it really depends on how you put it into perspective. (Lisa, Year 9 Student)

> I'm Eastern European, and that's historically been a pretty poor area, so I'd say my parents would be very money based, so your job needs to make money for you and doesn't necessarily need to satisfy you in any way (Sirli, Year 8 Student)

In all of the comments made across the focus groups the assumption from students was always of having a financially stable future, so even if making a deliberate choice to prioritise happiness this would still be in a financially secure way. This is another area of commonality in the identity described by students in the school which would be based around an assumption of having enough money for it not to be a worry suggesting an identity based around the financial security of being in a more affluent social group.

5.4 Parental Approval

Parental approval as a factor in career choice was a frequent area for discussion within the focus groups with every group discussing it and the concept being raised on 52 occasions. This suggests it could be a more important factor for students in the decision-making process than was shown in the questionnaire. When students were shown the results of the questionnaire around that question several groups felt it should be higher up the list of important factors.

> I feel like parental approvement should've been maybe a bit higher… If your parents don't agree with it and say it doesn't go too well for you, then you won't have as much support. If your parents are not as nice, you won't have as many people to lean on and help support you because you went for a job that your parents do not approve of. (John, Year 7 Student)

When discussing jobs that the students would rank as lower on the sorting task, and asking how parents would respond to this job, a common view was that parents would not value these jobs highly with students describing them as having lower status. The support students would receive from parents to go into a job that was not perceived as high status was mixed across all focus groups with some students stating that they would be supported by their parents if they prioritised careers that would make them happy while others felt their parents would not support them if the job they aspired to do had a lower salary or the perception of being lower status. A possible reason for this proposed by a student in the year 11 focus group was that the parents would draw on their own experience.

> Culture, that's how they grew up. Their parents always taught them. Yeah, high salary is important, but you need to get our approval. So you can't resist. (Anastasia, Year 11 Student)

A challenge arising from this for many students was the stress that they commented on when feeling they had to follow a careers path that met with parent's approval. This was discussed in depth by the Year 11 and Year 12 focus groups which suggests this is more of an area of concern for older students. The students came into two groups when considering the need for parental approval and whether this brought stress on the student, with one group feeling their parents would support them regardless of their choice and expressing that they did

not feel stressed about their choice, while those who felt their parents' aspirations for them would be hard for them to achieve spoke of the stress they then felt.

> I have a friend at school whose father, and whose aunt, and some other people in her family are all doctors. And so, she wants to pursue medicine. And it's a general expectation that she will get in, and that she will become a doctor, and she will be successful because her family has been able to do it, and that puts more pressure on her. And then other people whose brothers and sisters have got into top universities, they also feel that comparison that they should be able to as well, even if that's not necessarily what they want to do. (Emma, Year 12 Student)

A possible reason for the low score given on the questionnaire for parental approval (Chapter 4) was suggested in three focus groups who explained that the students completing the questionnaire did not feel they needed approval but still want to make their parents proud, so parents were a more important influence than the answer would give due to the way the question was phrased. This fits the findings of the literature review (Chapter 2) that in the secondary years students are likely to adopt the aspirations of their parents (Rutherford, 2013).

The fact that parents and students would often have aligned ambitions was given as a reason for the low figure in the questionnaire by students who felt they would be choosing a career pathway the parents would find acceptable due to the school culture so the student would not feel a tension with their parents over the future career aspirations they had. The choice of school by parents represents 'the *only* real opportunity outside the family and immediate home environment where parents might exert a major influence on the habitus of the child' (Reay et al., 2011, p. 27).

> Parent approval is at the bottom because it's an international school. Your parents already are putting you through the level of putting you in this school, that they just accept what you'll do. (Kendra, Year 9 Student).

> For the job I want, I don't have to worry about it, because my parents have decided that I'm going to university from the start, and what's the point in worrying about it if it's already set and my job aligns with their university plans for me? (Suzi, Year 8 student)

When considering the student perception of alignment of ambitions with that of people around them, the students described their choices coming from their own views and personality along with the academic ability

they felt they had but that at the same time their decisions were influenced by their background and upbringing. The identity they formed was shaped by their social and cultural influences as well as their perception of themselves as a student which formed a complex identity in international school students.

> It does depend on their personality, but it also depends on their background and where they're from. If someone is from a rich and wealthy family that will be important. (John, Year 7 student)

5.4.1 The influence of the extended family

In the older focus groups, the students highlighted the influences from their more immediate community and cited family as an important influence, with students explaining that parents were often more accepting of whichever career they wished to follow, while grandparents placed pressure on the students to aspire to high status and high salary careers.

> My grandma… would be more happy if I just said doctor… because of the fact of money, and also it's known for being once you're a doctor and you sign a contract, it's for sure. Whereas a photographer… she'd be worried about the stability of that. I think if I told her I wanted to be a photographer… she'd be more worried than a doctor. (Rachel, Year 13 student)

> My grandparents were exactly the same… they're very closed minded and they don't think anything in the arts is a legitimate job (Charlotte, Year 11 Student)

The reason for this generational difference was explained by the focus group in two ways, firstly that as their parents had moved to a different country, as is usually the case for students in the school due to its international nature, this meant their parents had been more open-minded in their outlook than their own parents had been, while nationality was raised by one student as a factor when considering the influence of the extended family.

> It's kind of the norm to go to university. I think because, for example, I come from an Indian background, my parents are Indian… My extended family that lives in India, what other people think of you matters a lot. So, if my grandma had to tell her friend that, 'Oh, my granddaughter is not going to university,' it would be a big thing because it's not the conventional route to take. So that's what I mean by society. But I'm lucky that my parents are not like that. (Anita, Year 13 student).

The contrast between the student perceptions around the parents' influence compared to that of the wider family has parallels with an internal dilemma the students described between pursuing things that were of interest to them rather than a career which was perceived as being more secure and having a higher status. Some students in the focus groups described parents as being successful in careers having themselves studied at university making this a pressure to live up to their accomplishments.

> I also think that some of my friends whose families are generally successful feel more pressure to be successful themselves to fit in with the general family. (Emma, Year 12 Student)

The success achieved by members of the family was mentioned by several students as creating a pressure to achieve success themselves, particularly when being compared to a successful sibling, though one student in Year 11 saw the achievements of his sibling as reassuring that he too could be a success.

> My sister, she went through university and she's a lawyer and I just look and say 'if my sister can do that, surely I can do the same' (Jim, Year 11 Student)

5.5 The perceived importance of job status

The first activity in each focus group asked the students to sort seven jobs from the best to worst which was then a discussion starter with the focus group on what made it the best job. In each of the nine focus groups a new theme emerged which was the importance of the job to society. Three jobs were often placed higher than the rest, that of doctor, teacher and the police, and the reason given was that they were more important jobs to society. This was referred to on 41 occasions across the focus groups with the importance to society being an aspect of the perceived status of a career when considered by the students in the study.

In all focus groups except the Year 5 group, the idea of status as symbolic capital was raised as an area that was important, with it being commented on 49 times across the eight focus groups that mentioned it. The younger students in Year 6 and 7 made the connection with going to university making a job have higher status

and discussed the notion of a career being a profession which gave it more status than some popular, more modern careers.

> I didn't necessarily mean professional as in you're a professional athlete, you're like the best of the best, as in it's a profession. If you were on YouTube, it's not really classed as a profession, yet if were, let's say a lawyer, people would say that's your profession. (Eli, Year 6 Student)

A similar connection to further education and status was made in the Year 8, 9, 10 and 12 groups who ranked jobs at the lower end because they did not require further qualifications.

> My mum is quite against jobs... As an example, jobs that are lower status like hairdresser. She's against that. Even if it was my passion or nails, a nail salon or something basic she's really against that. She wants to be something more like lawyer or doctor. (Michelle. Year 10 Student).

> The reasons would be based on… the qualifications you need for that job. They'd probably see lower status jobs as being less important like a postal worker (Emma, Year 12 Student)

The older students in the Year 11, 12 and 13 focus groups made connections between status and salary which also implied a link to job security. In addition, they linked status to parental and wider family approval. Having a high-status job seemed to tick all the boxes around social acceptability and security in the future and was described in the Year 11 group as being the culturally accepted route for students in the school.

> This school we've been raised up in is higher upper middle class. A student doesn't want to grow up and learn to resent what she learned, to resent her childhood because she can't support herself in the same way. And things like photography. It just isn't [high status enough]… whereas as a doctor it's pretty safe in that everybody needs a doctor. Once you come out of university from being in a medical course, you're bound to come out with a job open for you. (Anastasia, Year 11 Student)

Through the influence students described feeling from their family, and the shared view they had with peers around status and desirability of different careers, these form a clear hierarchy of status. Students see themselves pursuing higher status careers that would be predominately professional or semi-professional (Pollock et al., 2017) showing that the students see their future career as a clear part of their identity with status being an important factor of their identity.

5.5.1 Difficulty in entering high status careers

The difficulty in entering a profession was mentioned in the focus groups and became a common talking point from Year 9 onwards. Students described becoming a doctor, engineer, footballer or acting as careers being very difficult to get into and things that some had considered but were no longer intending to do as they did not have the grade or ability profile to continue down this path.

> I think when you're young, you tend to look at the future through almost various colored glasses, and as you grow, you become informed about what it'll actually take to get there. And then, I suppose your aspirations seem a little bit less likely. (Emma, Year 12 Student).

As students got older, they describe having increased stress and pressure on them as they found the entry requirements for the more aspirational academic courses to be very demanding, or the celebrity type careers around sport and media to be difficult to get into.

> I remember that when I was younger, I used to think that I could get into all the universities, even the most difficult ones to get into. But then the closer you come to going to university, the more you realise that it's really difficult, and I think that's why you might become more stressed rather than happy, because you have to think about the difficult things and the things that maybe not everyone speaks about when you're younger. (Anita, Year 13 Student)

Therefore, the issues around the difficulty of getting into a desired career seems to be more of a concern for older students and brings stress and uncertainty (Duffy, 2019; Higgins, 1987; Morgan 2014), which was also shown in the questionnaire where the older students had more negative emotions around future careers and were more likely to choose more traditional careers than other pathways.

5.6 The Influence of social media

Students in the Year 6, 7 and 8 focus groups described social media as being an influence and that the particular careers it would promote were as either a Youtuber or gamer. The older students reflected back on when they were younger and felt they were influenced by the careers they looked up to on television which

were often as doctors, lawyers, sports stars, actors or singers. Looking back, these students reflected that these careers were glamorised and not truly reflective of the reality of what the career would involve.

> I think when you're young you want to think about unrealistic things. Like when I was young I wanted to be a singer but I know I don't know how to sing. Yeah. I think when they grow up they might be likely to choose the one… they saw on the television. (Defne, Year 10 Student)

> I think entertainment definitely has a big factor, because if you look at, for example, doctors and lawyers, there are whole TV shows based around these jobs and they're glamorised. You start to idolise these jobs…. [the media is] definitely a big influence. (Anita, Year 13 student)

The focus group format enabled the older student groups to come to a shared conclusion that their younger selves were heavily influenced by the media which glamorised certain careers and gave the students familiarity with them.

5.6.1 Emerging careers

An observation made in the Year 6 focus group was that the careers that most students in the school were choosing could be classified as more traditional careers while more modern careers were much less popular. This was also observed in the questionnaire where modern careers such as being an influencer or Youtuber were uncommon and mainly selected by younger students.

Considerations over the future of careers (Schwab, 2016) and the ways careers may change through the student's lifetime was discussed in more detail by the Year 11, 12 and 13 groups and was a concern for the older students. Students in the Year 11 focus group described conversations they were having with friends and family over the jobs they should choose and whether they would be affected by advances in Artificial Intelligence and robotics

> The digital age has just kind of overtaken too quickly for society to handle, I think. Jobs that exist now that are well known everywhere didn't even exist 20 years ago. And I think technology is moving faster than we are… You can't ask us now, 'are you sure your job is going to be there in 20 years' because we just don't know the way technology's moving… It feels like the only jobs that are going to be left, are the arts and therapists (Suzi, Year 11 Student)

The solution some students had found to this dilemma was to choose careers they felt were stable such as becoming a doctor or else to follow courses around technology, though for other students in the Year 11 to 13 focus groups this was just an area of anxiety where they felt uncertain about what the future would bring.

5.7 International School Culture

The culture of the school as an influence was discussed in all seven of the secondary focus groups with it being mentioned on different levels from the articulated culture through to that which was more unconsciously passed on to students. Year 9 students described a school culture starting from a young age where students were encouraged to choose careers that would make them happy as the main factor in their decision.

> I can already tell from people that have been here for a long time, my friends especially. They're always like, 'Oh yeah, I'm going to do this, because I'm going to be so happy in it' Whereas where I've come from, everyone's like, 'My dad did this, I'm going to do this' (Lisa, Year 9 Student)

> I was here from reception. I remember the teachers always telling us, like my reception teacher… she always told us that when you're older, you always want to be happy, and that you need to pick something that you're going to be happy with. (Kendra, Year 9 Student)

The Year 12 focus group had a similar discussion and felt that students would be able to follow their passion without being criticised by others in the school. The ability of students to have wider aspirations was discussed in the Year 8 and 9 focus groups with the students feeling the school had great facilities and reputation which widened their opportunities for the future.

A contrast was made by the Year 11 focus group to the culture of schools in the UK as well as to other international schools with the group concluding that the culture of the school having a very international intake

of students where the majority of parents had themselves gone to university had created a culture in the school where going to university was the most normal pathway for students.

> I used to live in Hungary where it wasn't as much of an international community as there is here especially. So, I went to international school there… but it was me and one other British boy in the entire year. The rest were just these top 1% of rich Hungarians who just went to the school for show, and they definitely would have put high salary and status as their one and two just because these are wealthy successful CEO parents. That's just kind of what would be the next step for them. (Anastasia, Year 11 Student)

> I think in UK and I feel like this school is completely different to a normal English school. Everyone here wants to go. Most people here want to go to university, and I think it's because there's a higher education at this school. More people's parents here have been to university and have got high paying jobs, while in the UK, that normal school, that isn't the case. (Jim, Year 11 Student)

The culture within the school is influenced by the international mix of students, as well as many parents working in high status jobs and having themselves, in most cases, gained higher qualifications. The school staff were seen by the students in the Year 11 focus group as giving a subliminal message that certain career pathways were more appropriate and that going to university was the best route for students which suggests the school is giving conflicting messages to students in what teachers say and through the activities it promotes.

> With all these university things that the school does, it's probably not intentional, but I've kind of realised that a lot of the people that come in to speak are either targeted for sports or targeted for careers like medicine, which then for me, personally, I start thinking in my head like, "Oh, so these are what I have to choose," because there's no one that's coming that I can speak to that's going into acting and stuff. (Charlotte, Year 11 Student)

The views around the culture of the school support the earlier concept of students in the school forming an identity based on confidence and ambition. In addition, the international mix of students has an impact on student identity which can be seen in focus groups when students refer to national identity when talking about their family but never when talking about their peers and this gives the students a mixed identity which is less rooted in the culture of their home country. This unique third culture kid identity (Pollock et al., 2017) is discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2) with the habitus formed by international school students identified by Azaola (2012) as a unique habitus to international schools and this will be revisited in chapter six.

Some Year 12 and 13 students described their cultural identity as being complex and felt that in moving countries several times as a child it meant they did not feel that they had a country to identify as home. The decision for these students to go to university in a particular country was influenced by the desire to gain roots in a country and they saw university as a place to discover their own identity.

> University is about figuring out who you are, if you can function without your parents and learning about yourself a little more. You are by yourself in university and can see if you actually enjoy it. (Juan, Year 12 student)

5.7.1 Role Models

Students in focus groups from Year 6 to 13 all described the importance of role models in shaping their career choice. The student experience in the international school setting means they are away from their extended family so the main jobs they see first-hand are those they see in school as well as those of their parents and jobs held by parents of their friends. This makes the parents within the school community important as role models to the students and is likely to be a key factor in the high numbers of students who attend university every year.

> When I was younger, I wanted to go to university because my mom did it, my dad did it, my oldest sister is going to do it. But as I got older, I wanted to do it because I get to learn things, and then I have a better chance of getting a job. (Anya, Year 9 Student)

> Everyone in my family has gone to university… and they've all gotten good jobs. And my parents are always telling me 'oh yes, if you go to university you can do this and can do that.' And then I think it's kind of just going to be my reality. And also, if I hear they've been saving up before I was born, I don't want to let them down. (Eleanor, Year 8 Student)

As well as giving a narrow view of options after school with university seen as the obvious next step, the limited set of careers the parents will be working in gives a narrow understanding of different jobs and what they entail. Student understanding of careers is then limited to a distorted view from the media and familiarity with jobs their parents and the friends of parents are currently working in. This will give an exposure to a

small number of careers and helps explain why pursuing degrees and careers around business, economics, politics, science and engineering are the most common routes for students in the school and the most popular choices for students in the questionnaire (Chapter 4).

> And one of the first things my father said was, "Wow, they're all doctors or lawyers here." There's no secretary… it's only people who are Heads that go to the school, which is one of the things that he kind of said to me… it might be better for you to understand what every single job might be, because not every kid can become a lawyer (Luke, Year 9 Student)

While the school cannot change the careers of the parents in the community and the limited number of role models this gives, a Year 11 student observed in the focus group that the school does bring in external visitors as role models but in doing so may be further perpetuating the issue of having a very narrow set of role models for students at the school.

> There are Olympic swimmers, and an Olympic gymnast that came in for a talk. There's no one like that for drama. There's so much that's done for the sport. It's always promoted. It's constantly like, "Oh, we're going to do this and it's to do with sports." But there's nothing for drama. (Charlotte, Year 11 Student)

The common role models being parents and teachers who themselves have predominately been educated at university was identified in the literature review (Chapter 2). The work of Donnelly and Evans (2018) identified the issue of students whose parents had not gone to university as they would be unfamiliar with the process of applying to university to support their children. In the focus groups the opposite is seen with students having the confidence to apply for university as their parents are familiar with the process and can support them in applying. In addition they will see the careers of the adults in their community which are likely to shape their aspirations towards careers that require a university degree (McDevitt et al., 2013).

An added influence on the students from the role models they see around them is that they are all from the same social class which presents not just certain careers but also the associated social status as a requirement to be considered successful.

So, I'm kind of hesitant because my parents all went to university, got good jobs. And if I don't do like them, then I'll probably be like a black spot to my family. Like, you're different from everyone. (Sally, Year 11 Student)

I have a certain fear I guess of failure. So, for me, if I were to pick a job that I don't like or has a very low wage, that would be considered a personal failure. I feel a small pressure just from being in the school, and if I choose a job that is lower after graduating from the school. It's kind of pressure from my parents like, "Why would you do that if you have this kind of opportunities from that school to go to higher education?". So, I feel pressure. (Michelle, Year 10 Student)

Students described the pressure of not maintaining their social status, and the anxiety arising from fear of downward social mobility was shared by students in most older focus groups as seen in earlier quotes from Rachel (Year 13), Emma (Year 12), Anastasia (Year 11), Abi (Year 10), Simon (Year 8) and Eleanor (Year 8). The fear of downward social mobility and the anxiety students feel because of this was a common theme from the focus groups and an important concern for the students. This was seen with students as young as Year 6 expressing a concern over the need for a high level of education to avoid the downward social movement associated with being in 'bottom' career.

University definitely would come first, because in my job I would like to be the best at it. I wouldn't really like to be really [in a job] at the bottom… I would like to have a top job and so when you go to university you can get your master's degrees and your doctorates and things like that which, for me, are quite important. (Eli, Year 6 Student)

5.8 Feelings around going to University

5.8.1 The Unwritten Expectation that Everyone will go to University

A common theme through all the focus groups was the topic of attending university. Apart from two students in Year 5, every student said during the focus groups that they intended going to university in the future. Students in several focus groups described the route to university as being an expectation rather than a choice.

It's been engraved that it's school, university, job and then that's it. We're not taught any different so how are we going to know any different? (Suzi, Year 11 Student)

A reason that was given for this expectation from a young age was that it was something parents frequently talked to them about as being planned in their future with parents being open about financial plans such as having a college fund to enable students to go to university. This creates a culture identified in the literature review (Chapter 2) that will make attending university a 'taken for granted assumption' (Archer et al., 2014, p. 59)

> I guess for a long time, growing up, I just thought that university was the only option you could do after school… Our parents were saving up before we were even born, I feel like my future was then set. I wasn't even born and I knew I had to go to university because my parents have been saving up for 18 years, and then I have to go, so yeah. (Sarah, Year 8 Student)

As the students discussed the culture within the school of everyone going to university, they were able to compare to where they had experiences in other schools and the focus groups agreed this expectation on all students to attend university would also be the experience in other international schools but that it would be very different in state schools in their home countries. Students described this expectation, particularly when it came from families, as a pressure on them to go to university which was a concern raised in several of the focus groups.

> My parents are quite adamant about me going to university and there's no other choice like not going to university and working, my mom doesn't want me to do that… My mom is determined, she's just like, 'Go to university and study somewhere.' There is quite a pressure to actually go and study. (Abi, Year 10 Student)

A less common observation was that students felt pressure from friends around attending university though this was more of an implied pressure due to everyone going to university and it being a normal conversation amongst peers.

> I feel like there is a little bit of pressure from friends as well. They ask you what university you want to go to because they assume that you are going to university as a standard-wise. (Simon, Year 10 Student)

131

Although it has been described as a pressure, the majority of comments about attending university were very positive, with students in all focus groups saying they wanted to go to university which fits the findings of Erel (2010) that international schools will reinforce western cultural capital and the university aspiration associated with it. The pressure described was around the challenges of entry to university and the courses they would choose rather than students feeling unhappy that they were encouraged to go.

5.8.2 The Importance of University

Students in all of the focus groups saw attending university as important for several reasons. This was largely to do with the issues discussed earlier in the chapter of students aspiring to high status careers that would then give the salary, job satisfaction and security that would meet both the student and parent expectations. It was common for students, even in the younger focus groups, to aspire for high levels of study with several considering studying at university for more than one degree.

> Ever since I knew what university was, I wanted to go. That has never changed, I always wanted to do a job where I would have to study a lot, and I know what job I like, what type of job I want to do in my main one, but I do want to get multiple degrees and get master's and doctorates and stuff, which is a lot of studying but I like that. (Anya, Year 9 Student)

An important benefit of university that was raised in the focus groups, and in particular amongst older students, was the opportunity at university to become an adult in a safe environment. This seems logical for students in the international school environment who are away from their home country and extended family making it more challenging for them to go straight to the world of work, particularly as they have been working in a language that is not the language of the host country.

> For me, it represents an opportunity into adulthood. So, it gives you the opportunity to still study while you start understanding how things work around you when you don't have your parents around, you don't have that stability around you… you're left by yourself most of the time to find out how things around you... I find that very good. (Vicky, Year 13 Student)

With many students in the school choosing to study at university in a country in which they are a passport holder this can be a natural step in helping them develop their own cultural identity. By moving country for university they are choosing a country to live and study in and this would be the first time they have been able to make a choice rather than being moved according to their parents work.

> I feel like university here is almost seen as a ticket home. I take it to go and start your life somewhere else… for me university is a way to get back into England… university for me is a way to be like, okay, English culture, I'm figuring that out. (Suzi, Year 11 Student).

An additional benefit to university that was mentioned in the older focus groups and discussed most widely in the Year 11 group was that university gave an opportunity to form a network that would help them in later life creating career and social opportunities.

> They they see how they can network... You go to Harvard University… you make connections… you're paying for the education... [but also] you pay to meet the people that are going to get you places. That's what university is now. It's the networking. (Anastasia, Year 11 Student)

The identity of students in the school has then been infused with the purpose of attending university in the future, with HE seen as the natural pathway for students at the school making a key aspect of identity the importance of education to the student.

> If I went to university and I succeeded, then my parents would be proud of me and I want that. I want their approval so that means a lot to me. (Lucy, Year 9 student)

To help make sense of their complex background and the various influences placed on them when deciding their future career pathway, students in the older focus groups concluded that attending university enabled them to delay the decisions around career choice with university being a place they could grow into adulthood and learn about themselves. They could then make a future decision once they were more certain about their own desires for the future. This is consistent with the literature review (Chapter 2) and the findings of Pollock

(2017) which sees third culture kids having a delayed adolescence making university an ideal way to achieve independence and become an adult (Seldon & Abidoye, 2018).

5.8.3 Challenges when Considering Attending University

The main challenge, and therefore a major aspect of stress associated with applying for university, was around the difficulty in gaining the grades to enter the courses they aspired to. This was a concern shared in the younger focus groups where the students were still several years away from needing to apply to university as well as in the older student focus groups.

> I think it's very hard to get in a university because my sister, she's in year 13 and she's going to university and it's a very stressful place right now because she has to write essays and everything, but it's very hard to get in. (Stephanie, Year 7 Student)

> I think especially with anything relating to medicine, there's a lot more anxiety because the passing note for a lot of universities is really high. And a lot if anxiety if they get a bad grade on a test or anything like that. (Juan, Year 12 Student)

An extra dimension to this challenge is that the students were aspiring for attendance at highly selective universities even from the youngest age which would add to the challenge of meeting the entry criteria to these courses.

> As Eleanor and Eli said, I would like to go to a prestigious university, I'm really after a Cambridge or Oxford or Harvard. Because in Cambridge, they're known for how many people have gone and famous and all that, but normally, are made for lawyers. I've got one in mind. Maybe Harvard, Cambridge, Oxford, and London School of Economics. (Zak, Year 6 Student)

The other main challenge students commented on, particularly in the Year 9 through to Year 13 focus groups, was around the cost associated with university and the way this would impact on their choices. This was discussed at length by the students in the year 9 focus group with the students already formulating plans around savings, scholarships and the country where they would attend university to allow them to consider attending a more aspirational university despite the high cost associated with this. The transcript of this dialogue shows

the depth of feeling students had around cost of university and the stress this was giving even from Year 9 (Appendix 10).

> I find it quite stressful when I think about university because like Defne said, it is a commitment. It's a lot of money. My family isn't the wealthiest and I'd most likely have to take out a student loan, which is a lot of money you have to pay back and as well with the interest on it. And it is quite stressful thinking about how hard it is going to be to then pass and… then you're stuck with quite a lot of debt from the university. (Simon, Year 10 Student)

5.8.4 Back-up plans to attending University

To mitigate the risk around gaining the grades for courses as well as the worry about costs in some universities, the students in Year 10 to 13 focus groups all discussed the strategy of having a backup plan. For most students this involved an alternative course or a different country where the fees were much lower but it was also a way to consider a pathway that was different to university in a low-risk way alongside a plan to attend university as this would still keep the student aligned with the parents' wishes for them to apply to university.

> So, my dream… requires a lot of I guess perseverance. So, I have backup plans… I definitely want to go to university for maybe astronomical physics or something along those lines, something that I definitely like doing… because my dream job isn't really realistic would be a singer. So, I like to release maybe a song or two halfway through my university years and see how that goes. If it blows up then maybe leave university to pursue that or if it doesn't then I at least have a backup plan. (Abi, Year 10 Student).

The students who described having a backup plan also commented that they were not worried about failing on their preferred path as they had a good alternative. In contrast a few students said that they did not have a backup plan and that this caused stress in the event that their preferred option did not work out.

> My sister also followed this path with going into drama and it didn't make her happy and she very quickly changed and became a journalist. But for me, I get really, really stressed because I'm like, I have no backup plan if I don't get into drama. I don't have a backup plan. (Charlotte, Year 11 Student)

The student discussion in the focus group tallies with the questionnaire (Chapter 4) which showed that where students consider more than one career in their future this correlates to more positive emotions around the

future and shows that this strategy is statistically significant in helping mitigate against the stress associated with students having aspirations that they felt would be difficult to achieve.

Having more than one aspiration is seen in the literature review (Chapter 2) as a very positive approach with happiness and the good life (White, 1973) best achieved when one has the opportunity to 'choose from genuine options' (Walker, 2008, p. 270) while the ability to consider more than one future career is important for future, boundaryless careers (Sampson, 2009) so is beneficial for students in several ways.

5.8.5 Alternatives to University

When discussing alternatives to university within the focus groups, at no point was the option of going straight to work seen as viable. Several students were interested in taking a gap year before starting university and in a similar way starting an internship held interest to enable students to network and gain work experience but the focus groups felt this would be a one-year experience before then starting at university.

An alternative to university seen as acceptable by several students was to join the armed forces. This seemed to be due to the context of the school where some students come from families whose work is connected to the military or NATO so the families have a role model in the armed forces which enables this to be seen as an acceptable alternative. Some students attending the school are required to undertake military service in their home country making a year in the armed forces an expectation for them before going to university based on their national background.

> I think some of these would be acceptable... I mean armed forces definitely in my family because my dads in the armed forces. My brothers just joined the armed forces, and my nan works as a civilian in the armed forces, so that one's definitely acceptable. But my family are quite open to what I would like to do, and they are quite supportive. (Simon, Year 10 Student)

5.9 Suggestions for Supporting Students

One of the key comments arising from the focus groups highlighted the narrow set of role models available to the students, and as parents and alumni are often used to deliver career talks, this continues the perpetuation of a narrow set of careers being promoted as the best route for students. A suggestion from several focus groups was that the school could widen the careers that were promoted in the school and deliberately target alternative careers with guest speakers used that were less reflective of the parent body.

> Making sure that the people that we have access to talk aren't your conventional jobs. If someone was coming in talking about accountancy, no way would I want to be listening to that… Game designers…even YouTubers... instead of looking at game designer, you could just look at designers in general. (Suzi, Year 11 Student)

The Year 12 and 13 focus groups raised the challenges associated with careers changing as a result of technological advances. Students described feelings of anxiety around this and whether the careers they were committing themselves to in the coming years of university study would still be available to them in the future or might be at risk of automation. The focus groups saw a solution to this in the careers programme by widening the careers being promoted to include newer careers and also placing an emphasis on transferable skills through the taught curriculum.

> There's been more and more idea that you can have more than one type of career. So, I feel there's also safety in that because you know that even if you start doing this career and you realise, 'I'm not interested in this anymore,' you can decide that you want to do something else and try to do something else. (Vicky, Year 13 student)

> When I was thinking of what I wanted to do in the future, that's something I took into consideration, that some jobs may not exist because they may be computerised. So, I think I was looking at jobs where this can easily be replaced by a computer… One of the things from what Vicky said with the transferrable skills, it's something I've realised that happens to our generation. (Rachel, Year 13 student)

The proposal of promoting careers that are very modern and different ties in with the general idea of widening the careers that are being promoted by the school, and the need to develop transferable skills was something the older students felt would be important in helping with the anxiety over careers changing in the future.

In the Year 11 focus group, the discussion about widening the profile of careers being promoted had a focus on arts subjects, partly as the group felt these were under-valued by parents and needed to be promoted to them but also as they were seen as skills that would be beneficial in the future if developments in Artificial Intelligence changed the nature of some careers. The students felt like opportunities in Arts subjects in the school were strong but they saw a hierarchy in the parents view around subjects with the Sciences being favoured, then Humanities subjects having value just underneath this and with the Visual and Performing Arts having lower status amongst parents and needing more promotion within the school.

The school has been putting on career roundtables some lunchtimes where alumni were invited to school to give talks about their career and the route that led to it which students could attend on an optional basis. This was valued by several of the older focus groups as a helpful way to better understand what is involved with different careers.

> I found it really useful, I used to attend career roundtables, and I found it really useful to lower the stress a little bit to hear from people who have done certain careers… I've heard about people who studied something, and they went onto become a different career. So, it puts off a bit of stress because when you hear from people who are real life people…and that it's okay if you don't choose the exact [correct] university degree, for example, it can lead you to something else. (Rachel, Year 13 student).

The benefit of the career round table approach was expanded on by students in the focus groups who saw the potential in widening this to a careers fair which could promote a wide range of careers along with possibility of work experience as a useful extension to this programme. The variety of external speakers that can be offered to students makes this a more effective approach than work experience (Houghton, Armstrong, & Okeke, 2021). Promoting different careers helps develop career curiosity which helps develop career adaptability (Karacan-Ozdemir, 2019) and is best done in collaboration with the workplace (Kuijpers, 2019).

The students in older focus groups talked through the challenges in an international school setting with gaining work experience as language would be a barrier to working, and this disadvantaged students in understanding different careers and also prevented them from starting out on a course that required work experience. A development to the school careers programme that was suggested by the focus group would be to set up work experience placements for students during their time at school as well as establishing internship or apprenticeship opportunities for students when leaving Year 13 to give an alternative pathway to attending university.

All of the focus groups highlighted Year 9 as a good starting point for more in-depth support and promotion of careers which ties in with students choosing GCSE options and then continuing the programme for students through to Year 13. To enhance the programme, students were keen for a wider range of HE establishments to be promoted not just in the UK while offering practical advice and support in getting scholarships to more selective universities.

5.10 Summary

In all the focus groups it was clear that several factors were important to students when choosing careers and ideally their future careers would allow career happiness, status, good salary and job security and in doing so would make their parents proud of them. These decisions were influenced by several external factors as well as the students own feelings around their ability and personal interests.

The home and school culture along with the transient nature of the student body led to a complicated student identity based on their own personality but influenced by the culture around them. Students described feeling confident and ambitious about the career futures with further education an important aspect of the future they projected for themselves along with the aspiration they had for high status careers.

To achieve their desired goals, students saw university as the logical pathway to gain higher qualifications to give them a competitive edge in the workplace while giving a safe environment for them to become an adult. All students looked at university positively though the high aspirations they had for courses at very selective universities in traditional and competitive subjects led to feelings of stress around the grades needed as well as concerns over the financial implications of attending a more prestigious university in the United Kingdom or the United States.

When suggesting ways that students could be supported, the focus groups felt the school could promote a more diverse set of careers, particularly in more modern career fields and those based around the arts. Exposing students to a wider range of role models through roundtable discussions and careers fairs would help students choose from a wider set of career and HE pathways.

A difference was identified between students who were considering several careers and had backup plans compared to those who only had one career in mind and felt this brought more stress to them as they had no alternatives. Promoting the concept of having a variety of careers in the future not only helps students manage the stress involved but also better prepares them for careers that are likely to change in the future.

Chapter 6 Discussion

6.1 Overview

This Chapter will discuss the findings from both the questionnaire conducted with 705 students and the nine focus groups of 47 students, considering the existing literature (Chapter 2) and the research questions (Chapter 1.4). As already identified in the literature review, the pathway of studying at university to achieve the goal of career happiness was common in international schools and the aspiration of students in this regard would have many influences leading to students having aligned or unaligned ambitions (Schneider & Stevenson, 1999).

To compare the literature review to the findings in chapters four and five, the research questions will be used as a structure to discuss the findings of the study. The first question relates to the factors influencing students in their decision making. The second question asks how students make sense of all these influences and then the third question looks at the challenges this brings. I then look at practical implications for international schools to encourage a wider range of pathways for their students.

6.2 Research Question One: Factors Influencing choice making

RQ1: What factors influence international school students' choice making about their future education and careers?

When considering factors that influence students in their career choice, money appears to lie behind many of the reasons given for choices. As many students attending the school have access to high levels of financial capital this seems to allow them to be more ambitious when considering their career choice including those which will require qualifications that may be expensive to obtain (Gjerustad & von Soest, 2012). Student plans include attending universities where tuition fees and living costs are high and the focus groups described it as a 'luxury' (Chapter 5) to be able to have very high aspirations around future careers and HE pathways and not feeling pressured to sacrifice future studies for more pressing financial considerations.

Students from financially advantaged backgrounds will also have educational advantage (Hoare & Johnston, 2011) so demonstrate high achievement in pre-university qualifications increasing their chance of going to university. This is seen in the questionnaire responses where students that identified themselves as achieving high grades were significantly more confident about the likelihood of then being successful in their future careers and being more likely to have a successful career planned out (Chapter 4). The academic advantage that students gain in the school takes on the form of institutionalised cultural capital in the form of IB and A-level qualifications which is transferred from the financial capital invested in their private school education (Grenfell, 2008) to give an advantage in gaining entry to university.

A key finding of the focus groups and the questionnaire was that students felt parental approval was the least important factor as an influence when answering in the questionnaire, yet it was one of the most talked about aspects of the focus groups. This is likely to be down to the phrasing of the questions with students in the focus groups expressing the importance of making parents proud rather than needing their approval. Some focus groups described sharing the aspirations of their parents which fits the research of Rutherford (2013) who found that American high school students were likely to adopt the aspirational beliefs of their parents. This was commented on in focus groups where student and parent aspirations were already aligned through the international school culture of university attendance being the norm, with 90% of students in international schools going to university (ISCResearch, 2020) making students and parents aspirations likely to align which fits the theory of social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1977).

Parental expectation was discussed in the literature review, along with educational plans of peers, as an important influence on aspiration (Pavlova & Pavlova, 2017) and in the focus groups students commented on parents' expectations on 52 occasions which was the highest of any of the external influences analysed through coding with it being mentioned in all of the focus groups. Students felt it was important to them to make parents proud of them making parents an important influence on students aspiration (Taylor et al., 2018)

Role models are also crucial in shaping students' ideas for future careers and children will notice the careers they see around them and particularly that of their parents and the friends of their parents (McDevitt et al., 2013). The focus groups described family role models as being an important influence and referenced them as an influence in their desire to attend university. The questionnaire showed that for all ages, students had a consistent rank ordering of careers, with professional careers seen as the best and this was articulated in the focus groups with students seeing professional jobs as being more important to society (Chapter 5). Where jobs are seen as important to society it gives them a high status to their social group (Susskind & Susskind, 2015) though other factors around high status such as the high pay and job security that comes with it were also mentioned as reasons that status is important to the focus groups.

School is itself a key influence on students future plans with fee-paying schools labelled as 'thrusting' schools (Pugsley, 2004) where the schools actively steer students towards more prestigious universities to enhance the schools reputation. This is referenced in the focus groups where students frequently commented that everyone around them was going to university, and they felt it was the only choice open to them and that it was normal to go to university. The culture of the school supports the parent's aspirations making students feel that university followed by a professional career was the most natural pathway for them.

This culture fits the theoretical framework of social and cultural reproduction (Bourdieu, 1977) where parents, other role-models, peers and the school culture create a situation where an education in an international school followed by attendance at university is a way of maintaining social status for their family (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). The questionnaire identified career happiness as being the most important factor for every year group and the focus groups frequently connected happiness in a career with other factors such as status and salary which they described as being achieved by attending university.

The school environment and family background seem to give the students high cultural capital which makes university seem the logical next step and could lead to high aspirational capital for students arising from their cultural background (Yosso, 2005) but this can be seen another way with students having very low social and

cultural capital when it comes to considering alternative pathways such as careers in more technical roles where students will lack the social and cultural capital to move into this field (Walker, 2008). This explains the answers to the questionnaire on likely destinations after school where 45% of students in Year 5 intend going to university which rises to 90% by Year 13, a final figure which matches the international school average (ISCResearch, 2020).

In maintaining social status by attending university this gave an additional advantage to students of having the opportunity to gain an important network for their future (Seldon & Abidoye, 2018). This was referred to in the focus groups as a benefit of university by the students and one factor in wanting to apply to the most prestigious universities for the network it would give along with the institutional capital gained.

A final factor that some older students were considering, was an awareness that the traditional model of having a job for life after university was changing with careers now likely to be changing at a faster pace (Schwab, 2016) and this was a concern for students in the focus groups with some commenting that it was causing stress and that it factored into the careers and university decisions they were making.

The result of these factors is that as students get older, they increasingly see university as the most desirable destination after leaving school resulting in over 95% of students from the school attending university each year. Students see this as a pathway to a narrow set of careers that will achieve the desired goal of ensuring their career happiness and financial stability which results in social reproduction (Azaola, 2012; Bourdieu 1977; Toprak & Tosten, 2017) as they follow in their parents' footsteps.

6.3 Research Question Two: Student Identity Formation

RQ2: How do international school students make sense of their multi-faceted academic, social and cultural identities when making these decisions?

Being in a school environment which values the continuation into higher education and having role models in parents and other adults who have, for the most part, themselves gone to university creates a disposition or habitus that students feel culturally drawn to university and due to social and cultural reproduction they will see themselves as fitting in (Archer, DeWitt & Wong, 2014; Bourdieu, 1977; Greenfell, 2008). This was shown previously in the rise in the number of students intending to go to university as they get older. This makes students aspire to study at university but also to favour popular courses that are seen as safer professional options such as economics, engineering and medicine (ISCResearch, 2020). These are perceived as more secure because of the familiarity students have with these careers due to the number of role-models around them making these careers seem attainable.

The challenge students face is defined by different theorists of having two or more selves where the identity they form is derived by the way they perceive that others see them (Cooley, 1983; Rutherdord, 2013). Where the students preferred self is different to the way they are viewed by others, particularly parents, this creates a conflict termed as self-discrepancy (Higgins, 1987) leading to feelings of stress and frustration (Duffy, 2019; Ingram, 2011). The results of the questionnaire showed that as students progressed through the school the types of careers they aspired to changed and along with this the figures around feelings of stress around future careers rose and feelings of happiness dropped.

Where students feel an expectation is placed on them and that expectation is consistent with the culture around them they are likely to conform to the expectation (Goffman, 1990) and this can be an issue where the student struggles to meet these expectations and in many cases the 'failure to succeed is simply presented as failure to aspire.' (Bowers-Brown et al., 2019, p. 209). From the focus groups, students described that they were conforming to the career paths expected of them and in some cases, this was detrimental to their emotional well-being, particularly where they were worried about achieving the grades in an area that did not match their strengths.

This observed conformity to expected career pathways may be a particular issue for students in international schools where they are from a variety of cultural backgrounds as the nature of being a 'third culture kid' means they will be presented with many cultures and identities but feel they do not fully belong to any of them (Pollock et al., 2017). The culture of the school and the university aspiration that is prevalent will then become reassuring for students and helps them form an identity based around attendance at university. As the predominant message is that students should aspire to attend highly selective universities this places a pressure on students to achieve this perceived version of success.

The ideal situation is where the students goals for future education and careers match the levels they are working at and is termed as aligned ambition (Schneider & Stevenson, 1999). The questionnaire and focus group responses showed a high number of students who were positive about their career and HE plans with the majority of students showing aligned aspirations. This was particularly seen where students felt their aspirations were achievable for them, often because they were getting good grades or because they had back-up plans to increase their options, and where students have achievable aspirations this gives better mental health making depression less likely and gives the student a greater sense of purpose (Gjerustad & von Soest, 2012).

In making sense of their multi-faceted international identity, we see a conforming as students go through school which leads to a decrease in happiness and increase in stress as they will change their aspirations to ones that are expected of them even when it does not match their initial aspirations or are highly challenging aspirations based on their current academic performance. The pressures on students regarding future educational and career aspirations come from a variety of factors including the wider family expectation, fear of downward social mobility, the feeling of wanting to fit in with those around them and the lack of role-models for alternative career routes. These factors create a culture within the international school where university attendance is the natural and socially acceptable pathway for students. Aspiring to attend university is a key part of the way students make sense of their cultural identity based on their perception of having high status and delaying the step into adulthood while making further sense of their identity by choosing a country to grow into adulthood through university attendance. Any students who hold on to aspirations for alternative

careers which follow a non-university pathway will be in a very small minority and this is likely to create anxiety and fear around the future as they are not following the expected, safe career pathway (Pavlova & Pavlova, 2017).

6.4 Research Question Three: Challenges and Opportunities for Students

RQ 3: What are the main challenges and opportunities international school students face when considering future careers?

6.4.1 Challenges faced by international school students

The main challenge identified by the data collected is around the pressure on students to fit in with the expectations of others, which, as seen in the last section, leads to conformity and social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1977) and this can leave students feeling like they only have one option ahead of them. The key notion behind achieving a good life is in developing autonomy (Burchardt & Vizard, 2007, White, 1973) while the students often responded that they were unable to choose from genuine options (Walker, 2008). If students feel there is conflict between their preferred 'self' and the choices they want to make with the perception on them from others, this will impact on their well-being (Denovan & Macaskill, 2017; Higgins, 1987)

Where the students feel their parents or those around them have very high aspirations of them, yet feel themselves that their ambitions are unaligned, this makes failure to achieve these goals more likely which can lead to feelings of sadness and result in poor mental health (Higgins, 1987; Morgan, 2014). This was seen in the questionnaire (Chapter 4) when linking feelings around grades to feelings around the future, as students reporting lower grades used negative emotions to describe their futures more frequently at a statistically significant level and in the focus groups it was the students who had only one plan which they felt would be hard to achieve that commented they felt stressed and anxious about their future.

A second challenge faced by students where they have several pressures on them in the decision making process, is that they may struggle to filter the external voices to hear their own voice (Walker, 2008). In the focus groups (Chapter 5) students frequently commented that attending university was the only option that would be allowed for them except possibly taking a gap year first or going into the armed forces where that was something familiar to their family. With the narrow view on the options available for students it would be a challenge for a student who was interested in following a different path to explore this due to the lack of role-models to help them understand the career as well as it being less culturally acceptable. Students in the focus groups wanting to study arts courses at university described this as being more risky and less acceptable than studying in medicine or engineering.

Students who wish to find role-models for themselves through internships or work experience will find this challenging in international schools as they will be in a host country where the main language is not English creating a barrier to students hoping to make their own network.

A potential challenge for some students is that they are in a culture where it is normal for all students to continue their education at university while some students come from families that themselves are not familiar with going to university making it possible they will struggle to fit in at university (Nash, 2006) and this could explain why two students in the focus groups who had parents from a military background saw the armed forces as a good option.

A final challenge which was discussed in the focus groups was around the importance of considering a university degree as the main desired outcome. Where students are given the idea that getting a degree is enough to set them up for the future through institutionalised cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977) this creates the potential for future disappointment due to the rise in graduate unemployment (Walker, 2008) with current trends suggesting that just having the degree in itself is not enough to ensure future career success.

6.4.2 Opportunities for international school students

A key opportunity for students in the school comes from the financial opportunity they have both in their family background but also in the level of resources available to them in the school which enables them to choose more risky and aspirational university options (Gjerustad & von Soest, 2012). With high academic opportunity in the school where excellent grades are achieved this gives a strong basis of academic skills and the opportunity for the school to widen the curriculum to develop 'fusion' skills which involves the teaching of entrepreneurial, creative and technical skills (Berger & Frey, 2015). Developing emotional intelligence alongside this will prepare students for jobs that are likely to be in demand in the future (Schwab, 2016). The students will then be in a strong position to secure an educational advantage to prepare them well for future careers.

While the majority of parents are affluent, some students who have the school fees paid by their parents workplace described in the focus groups the challenge of affording university, with this being a concern amongst the older focus groups as university fees were not covered by most companies. A potential opportunity for students who expressed concerns over affordability of courses could be to attend university in countries where fees are lower or to consider online courses at university (Seldon & Abidoye, 2018)

A key opportunity to improve the emotional well-being of students is seen through both the quantitative and qualitative data around the number of future careers and pathways a student feels are open to them with those who had plans for different options when leaving school feeling more positive about their futures. As it is important for aspiration to be achievable, as failure in the admissions process will heighten anxiety and impact on the students' self-esteem (Schneider & Stevenson, 1999), an important opportunity for students is the ability to have several options planned out which gives various pathways on leaving school. These can be in different countries and at different costs with cheaper options available for EU students in countries such as the Netherlands while opportunities are emerging in countries developing talent hubs which can 'subsidise their tuition in exchange for a fixed period of employment contributing to the local/national economy when the student graduates' (Knight, 2013, p. 382).

An important factor in future success for students in any time of instability is the ability to adapt (Scott, 2008) and students who were involved in the wider life of the school, taking on several extra clubs and activities gave more positive answers at a statistically significant level when giving their thoughts on the future (Chapter 4). The opportunity for students therefore, is to widen their skills both academically and in the extra-curricular options to gain confidence and develop transferable skills (Collins-Nelson et al., 2021; Hill et al., 2020; Pellegrino et al., 2012) to be well prepared for portfolio careers of the future (Handy, 1991). A useful way of promoting and developing transferable skills can be by displaying transferable skills badges which prompts 'students to think about skills and increase recognition of the improvement of some skills, particularly those less obvious to them' with studies showing that when these were given in electronic form students responded positively (Hill et al., 2020, p. 14).

6.5 How can international schools promote diverse options for their students?

The reason for diversifying the careers and educational opportunities being promoted is to ensure students can choose from viable options, as choosing from genuine options is key to the possibility of a good life (Walker, 2008). In addition, this has been identified as reducing stress and anxiety, while promoting a more flexible attitude towards careers that will better equip students for the changing nature of careers in the future.

When diversifying the careers and educational pathways promoted in the school it is important to note the very high numbers of students at all ages who value university as the best, and possibly the only pathway for them while often having a perception that 'students attending traditional universities were more intelligent' (Brooks et al., 2021, p. 8). This aspiration is in part due to the educational and networking opportunities it gives but also as it is considered to be a safe place to become an adult which acts as a 'buffer against the future uncertainty of the world of work' (Alexander et al., 2020, p. 123).

Going directly to work after leaving school is a challenge for international students who may be living outside of their home country and lacking the cultural and social capital to find work or internship opportunities in the host country where they are at school. The ranking activity showed that students of all ages placed routine jobs at the bottom of the ranking activity while technical jobs were valued more highly but not as much as professional jobs. The focus on professional and technical careers rather than routine careers also helps avoid preparing students for jobs which are most under threat due to advances in automation and Artificial Intelligence (Frey & Osborne, 2017).

The school should widen the range of universities that are promoted and the types of courses that are encouraged with students in focus groups suggesting careers and courses in arts related subjects should be a particular focus for attention along with those based around emotional intelligence. This would help offset the international school culture which results in the majority of applications to university being in engineering, medicine and economics (ISCResearch, 2020) which can be a problem for students who do not have aptitude in these areas. An emphasis should be given to a wider set of skills, and in particular the ability to adapt would be a benefit as it is seen as being an important skill in leading a good life due to the instability present in the workplace (Scott, 2008)

Students in the focus groups in the older year groups were keen for the school to do more to showcase a range of careers and courses, including technical courses through careers fairs and roundtables by inviting speakers outside of the school network of parents and alumni which currently perpetuates the promotion of science-based careers. This will ensure students receive helpful advice as shown in a study (Selingo, 2017) where students felt the best advice they had came from those working in alternative jobs who could tell them about the realities of the career.

By deliberately seeking role models in more modern and arts-based careers from outside the immediate network of the school this will help widen the circle of role-models available to students. Promoting careers in the arts helps steer students and parents towards skills that are projected to be in need in future jobs (Berger &

Frey, 2015). In addition, where a variety of pathways are promoted this gives choice and reduces the potential for misaligned ambitions which may come where students are unaware of viable alternatives (Schneider & Stevenson, 1999)

With a better network of role-models, this could also create opportunities for work experience or internships for students to gain a better understanding of careers which can greatly help their chances of success (Redmond, 2010; Rook, 2013). Through first-hand experience students will see what career success will look like (Arthur et al., 2005) which will help them when planning their pathway to develop the necessary skills and qualifications to prepare them for the future. Where students have a stronger understanding of themselves, their skills and abilities, this helps ensure aspiration is achievable which reduces anxiety for the students (Schneider & Stevenson, 1999). An alternative to work experience that may be more achievable for an international school is to develop volunteering opportunities for students which will help them develop confidence when working with adults and to help students gain practical skills and real-world experience.

An important discovery when analysing data from the questionnaire, which was supported by comments in the focus groups, was that the students who were planning for the possibility of more than one career, either by having a back-up plan or by planning to change careers through their lifetime, were far less stressed or anxious when thinking about their futures. It is therefore important to encourage students to think about careers in the plural rather than what job they will do in the singular which can be seen as an outdated 'matching' model of career guidance (Sampson, 2009). Data from students (Chapters 4 and 5) showed them to be far more stressed if they felt they had only one option, and by encouraging students to have multiple options giving them choice this reflects the fact that their career will have different phases, and this reduces stress and prepares students for the changing nature of careers in the future (Handy, 1991).

The idea of a backup plan is consistent with students having multiple options, one of which could be aligned with parents and the wider community to reduce conflict and increase happiness (Rutherford, 2013). Having multiple options for the future helps ensure student agency as they can have career plans that are aligned in

different ways and for different reasons and this self-efficacy will lead to improved student well-being (Ahuja, 2016). Multiple options also helps prepare students for future careers where it is likely that people will change careers throughout their life (Handy, 1991) and therefore developing transferable skills is important as a school aim (Heap, 2014).

6.6 Possible implications for other international schools

Raising aspiration in students from disadvantaged backgrounds has been well researched though no research was found around aspiration in students in international schools. With over 5.6 million students studying in international schools globally, this is an important area for future study to consider aspiration in different school contexts.

Studies around raising aspiration of students with disadvantaged backgrounds were a key reference at the start of the study (Fuller, 2009; Ingram, 2011; Reay, 2017). As a comparison to Fuller's study where students could be grouped into three categories of low, middle and high aspirers, all students in the international school study from Year 6 onwards in the focus groups would be termed high aspirers.

The same influence of parents, peers and the school were seen, with a similar phenomenon identified of students feeling they needed to go along with the 'Herd' (Fuller, 2009) which in the context of international schools means almost all students will be high aspirers seeing attendance at university as the only route for them to follow. In the case of high aspiring students in Fuller's study, they did not have clear intentions for future careers which contrasts to those in the international setting who have clear educational and career goals from the end of primary school. The implication for international schools is the potential for stress and anxiety in students which was expressed by those who felt they only had one option for the future and felt pressure to achieve demanding entry requirements, pay high university fees and fulfil the expectations of parents and the school on them.

A similarity to the study from Fuller was the correlation of high aspirers being highly involved in the wider aspects of school life. This suggests that engaging students fully in the enrichment activities offered by the school does more than just make them well-rounded but also fosters agency and wider institutional confidence that helps equip them for their future educational plans. A parallel situation to the findings of Reay (2017) was identified in the difficulty students had in pursuing an educational or career future that was outside the normal pathway expected of them, even where their skills and abilities seemed better suited to a different career and educational plan.

The key implication in this study for international schools is that where students were able to see themselves having multiple career pathways and different options available to them post-18, they identified as being significantly more positive about their career future than students who did not know what they intended to do in the future or had one set idea which kept all their careers eggs in one basket.

The implication for international schools, therefore, is that knowing the importance of students seeing several career and future study pathways as being possibilities for them, schools must reflect this important message by giving a variety of role-models, promoting a wider variety of careers and study pathways, and thinking carefully about the deliberate and sub-conscious messages given to students to ensure they have the skills to identify with several futures for themselves.

6.7 Knowledge contribution

The anxiety associated with the fear of downward social mobility was first identified in the literature review (Chapter 2) and then through the questionnaire (Chapter 4) and focus group data (Chapter 5). This was shown to be a serious issue for international school students leading to considerable stress and anxiety for students where their academic and career aspirations were limited to university attendance followed by a professional career as the only option to maintain social status giving students a lack of autonomy in decision making. As students have a very narrow definition of success this adds an additional layer of stress where the academic

requirements for these pathways are demanding making students anxious that they may fail to meet the aspirations placed on them.

Previous studies into student emotion around social mobility have focussed on upward social mobility (Fuller, 2009; Ingram, 2011; Reay, 2017) and identified the tension this brings to the habitus and identity of the student. Social mobility, while describing mobility between social position in any direction has commonly been regarded as a 'generic term to describe efforts to raise the achievement of pupils from lower socio-economic backgrounds' (Major & Weiner, 2021, p. 304).

This study makes a unique contribution to knowledge through identifying the issue of student anxiety around the need to maintain their middle-class position and the fear this brings with the possibility of downward social movement and the risks perceived through alternative pathways other than attending university.

Due to the fear of downward social mobility the students and parents identify university attendance as the safest route to maintaining their social status (Brown, 2020) which is seen as a way to ensure social and cultural reproduction (Bourdieu, 1977). This creates a single imagining of the future which requires the student to attend university to maintain social position. Students are therefore unable to meet the requirements of a good life and of having autonomous choice (White, 1973) and students are instead given the illusion of choice presented as a choice of country and university in which to study but where no alternatives to university attendance are socially acceptable to them.

The maintenance of social position for students in international schools, many of which will have parents who have benefited from upward social mobility, presents students with significant stress and anxiety. This was demonstrated through the quantitative study which highlighted the rising levels of stress from age 14-18 and the subsequent drop in student happiness at these ages. The focus groups confirmed the feeling of stress

around their futures and the feelings of having no choice around their future career decisions as any alternative to university attendance was too high risk to be considered.

As the students in the study are from internationally mobile families and can be termed Third Culture Kids (Pollock et al., 2017) they are able to use their geographic mobility by attending universities in different countries to increase options and choice. This helps prevent downward social mobility through a willingness to use geographic mobility to maintain social status (Farrugia, 2020) which is the main strategy to mitigate against stress and anxiety. Students in the study expressed that they would like the school to present them with more options for university courses in the Arts and Social Sciences and not just limited to STEM subjects as a further way of widening their ability to choose from different options even if these were all within the narrow pathway of university attendance.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This thesis set out to discuss and answer three research questions as outlined in the previous chapters. In answering these questions around international schools and the culture around high university enrolment this study has shown the topic to be of importance due to the shared views expressed by students when discussing the topic and the resulting stress and anxiety described by many of the participants. The recommendations from the study have the potential to improve this situation in the school where the research was conducted and potentially for other students across thousands of international schools.

In this chapter these findings will be summarised, and suggestions made for the institute where the study was conducted with this being a practical advantage of a Doctorate in Education due to the potential benefit it brings to the institute where the study takes place. In the previous chapter, the contribution to knowledge was shown, while the comparison to existing research was also made with reference to research around students in low-aspiration settings as a similar area of study coming at the problem from a different context. The methodology used will be evaluated to discuss what was successful as well as being aware of any limitations. The study has made conclusions but also raised additional questions which could be the basis for further research with recommendations around this made in the conclusions of this chapter.

7.2 Summary of findings

A key finding of the study from the questionnaire data found that as students go through the school, they increasingly see university as the most appropriate destination after school. The focus groups highlighted a common feeling amongst the groups, even in primary aged students, that attending university was expected of them with parents, peers and the messaging from the school reinforcing this expectation.

The focus groups described feeling comfortable with this expectation as it offered a safe place to mature into adulthood. As the majority of students are foreigners to the host country, with less than 5% coming from the country where the school is based, this made finding work in the host country difficult though university was a safe next step giving them time to decide what they wanted to do in the future while they could grow in independence and become an adult.

Along with the expectation of attending university, a feeling expressed by students was that a narrow set of courses were being promoted by the school and were demonstrated by the role models around them. Students described the expectations placed on them of attendance at more prestigious universities making many of them express concerns that their aspirations were unaligned causing anxiety that they did not have the academic profile to meet course entry requirements.

In the considerations from students of what they wanted from a career, the common desire was for happiness in a career along with security in the form of salary and status. The careers that were profiled as most secure were based around STEM subjects which caused feelings of unaligned aspiration in students who had an interest in studying for a career in the arts in particular.

The levels of stress reported by students tripled from Year 7 to 13 while expressions of feeling happy about their career future dropped by half over the same time period. Students in the focus groups felt this was based around the pressure they felt they were under to be channelled towards a narrow set of careers where the grade expectations would be very high and possibly unattainable for many students. This created anxiety over the implications of failing to meet the expectations placed on them and the fear that they would be unable to maintain their social status without achieving a suitable university degree.

The focus groups suggested widening the further education and career routes that were profiled by the school making use of the existing roundtable events and adding a careers fair which would go beyond the parent

community for speakers but would deliberately promote careers in the arts and in new careers that would be an alternative to the more traditional careers students were more aware of.

7.3 Recommendations and implications for the school

The recommendations for the school would involve a focus on the messaging within the community to move away from asking questions such as *what job do you want to do?* which promotes the idea of having a single job for life, and of career advice being a matching process (Sampson, 2009) to instead ask questions such as *what problems do you want to solve?* or *what careers are you considering for the future, and what skills are you developing for this?* The focus groups identified Year 9 onwards as the key time to focus careers and HE education programmes in the school. The messaging to students should be for them to consider more than one career throughout their career journey with careers education being a 'journey of discovery' (Mullins, 2013, p.2) where advice uses the analogy of students as explorers discovering different careers throughout their school life and beyond rather than using the analogy of summiting a mountain as a single lofty goal.

The student recommendations of widening the careers promoted through roundtables and regular careers fairs should be implemented with a focus on careers of the future and careers in the arts with a wider range of role-models deliberately identified and promoted and these can be used to develop networking skills in students (Rook, 2013). This will help students to consider a wider variety of careers, and through the taught curriculum a focus on future skills development around entrepreneurship and emotional intelligence would lead to better students' self-awareness about their strengths and potential. By encouraging students to take part in enrichment activities and volunteering opportunities students can develop transferable skills and gain confidence (Redmond, 2010) to equip them for the changing nature of careers in the future.

This focus on the changing nature of careers and the wider opportunities available to students should also be developed with parents and teachers to change the culture of having universities and a narrow set of courses perceived by students as the only route to career success. The careers fairs with a wide range of careers

including those more commonly aspired to by students in the school, but also including modern careers and arts-based careers should be open for parents and teachers to develop community understanding around alternative careers that can bring success and fulfilment.

The demographic analysis (Chapter 4) found that students who identified in certain groups were more likely to have negative feelings around future careers and would be groups to target in any interventions. These groups were females, non-British, those achieving low academic grades and those with low extra-curricular involvement. The findings on extra-curricular involvement and links to career optimism while in itself making students more employable (Heap, 2014) means that encouraging students from Year 9-13 to take part in extra-curricular activities can help increase positive emotions towards their career and HE intentions.

The main recommendations are therefore to:

- Encourage students to consider several career and HE pathways, particularly promoting careers in Arts and Social Science subjects to promote a wider set of careers and better prepare them for future portfolio careers by running modern careers fairs

- Develop networking skills through roundtable sessions using these to promote a diverse set of careers, particularly future careers

- Develop transferable skills through the extra-curricular and volunteering activities available to students as well as in the taught curriculum and to explore the use of digital skills badges to promote the development of transferable skills.

7.4 Methodology review and limitations

As discussed in chapter three, a constructivist paradigm was considered in this study with a two-stage mixed methods approach to data collection. The use of quantitative data across nine year-groups with a very high response rate is a strength of this study which gave rich data to analyse, and from this the focus group schedules were shaped using respondents who showed their willingness to take a further part in the study.

This had an advantage that the students who were selected for the focus groups were the students who made themselves available without any bias around selection. However, this could be seen as a limitation as the subset of students in the focus groups was made up of the students willing to take part which may mean they are not fully reflective of the whole student body. The use of a questionnaire gave all students from Year 5 upwards the opportunity to have a voice in the study with 71% completing the questionnaire. This enabled the views of the focus group to be compared against the questionnaire data to ensure they were representative of the wider student body.

As the study followed an interpretivist epistemological position this had the strength of enabling me as the researcher to take advantage of my position in the school as an insider-researcher enabling comments to easily be decoded in the context of the school making follow up questions meaningful. At the same time the limitations of this approach should be acknowledged as another researcher looking at the same data could draw different conclusions. The use of coding to identify more common themes helped to mitigate this and ensure the reflections that were most prominent were fully considered (Richards, 2009) with other individual experiences that were counter to the majority view also included as important alternative perspectives.

Both the quantitative and qualitative data collections began with pilot groups used to collect data with the questions then refined which led to purposeful questions being asked at every stage. Referencing these to the three research questions ensured the purpose of the study was followed through with the data collection and analysis. As the focus groups used a semi-structured approach to the questions answered, this made comparisons between the different age groups possible while still giving the opportunity for new data to emerge that was not in the focus group schedules such as the discussions that arose around grandparents and home-country views to jobs as well as the discussion around future careers and student anxiety around this.

Having both quantitative and qualitative data allowed the research questions to be answered by both. This gives confidence in the findings while giving a richer set of data than would have been available through either set of data without the other. This is a key strength in the approach used and allowed student voice to contribute from the large cohort questionnaire data, as well as through the focus groups to elicit the student viewpoint.

With the study being cross-sectional this enabled an understanding of the experience of students at different ages and stages of school life which was useful in understanding the journey through school and the key times that different pressures would be experienced by students. It also had the advantage over a longitudinal study that all of the year groups were under the same challenges around Covid-19 and the impact it had on school life whereas a longitudinal study may have found removing this extra impact on students at some point in time hard to mitigate against when evaluating answers at different times during the pandemic. The disadvantage the cross-sectional approach has when comparing to a longitudinal study is that each year group was different with a different demographic in terms of gender, nationality and ability so the year groups would not always be a like-for-like comparison as has been largely assumed in the study.

A limitation to the study is that the school, while international and following a British based curriculum, may be similar to many other schools in name, but also has a unique context with the school having a more international mix of students than most international schools while the majority of student fees were paid for by companies rather than by wealthy parents. This means the institute used for the study may not be truly representative of all international schools which may make transferability of the results limited.

7.5 Suggestions for future research

The issue of anxiety around the fear associated with the risk of downward social mobility has been shown to be an important issue to students. Further study around the issues of being a student in a high aspiration culture in

a private school would be useful to compliment the research around aspiration in disadvantaged schools which consider the stress for students who are aspiring towards upward social mobility.

In particular, the observation that attending university is seen as an expectation would be interesting to study further to discover the extent to which this is replicated in other international and private schools and to see whether this creates stress and anxiety around narrow choice and aspiration. The study showed that almost all students in the school being studied were positive about studying at university and saw it as a safe place to gain independence and become an adult. Following up with students in their first or second year at university for further interviews could explore whether the reality of university was as positive as they hoped it would be.

A key finding of the study was around the concept of students having more than one career in mind for the future, either through answering the question around their career aged 28 and then at 48 differently or through the focus group comments around having back-up plans and the reduction in stress and anxiety that was associated. Further studies around this key finding on multiple career plans versus single plans would be beneficial as this has important implications for HE and careers programmes in all schools.

A further recommendation for future research would be to consider a longitudinal study where a group of students were taken through a programme designed to widen their exposure to different careers and to develop skills around entrepreneurship, emotional intelligence and the arts to see how the students benefit in terms of their identity and agency. Giving a wider set of role-models and helping students understand the reality of different careers will help meet the student recommendations from the focus groups and a longitudinal approach would allow the success of this to be analysed to see if it does widen the options they then consider taking after school and to see if the concept of aspiring for more than one career does help mitigate the stress and anxiety identified by older students. Through a longitudinal approach, parents could also be included in workshops to raise their awareness of the change in careers in the future and some possible misconceptions they may have over their perceptions of the jobs that will most bring career happiness and fulfilment could be addressed.

7.6 Final Summary

The study set out to explore the views and aspirations of students in an international school regarding future career and educational goals using the analogy of the child's game fitting pegs through different shaped holes. An initial assumption was made that students who had the disposition of being square pegs were being pushed through the round hole of university which was a major factor behind the high levels of stress demonstrated by the high counselling attendance statistics in year 10 to 13 students in the school.

After discussing with 47 students in the focus groups and analysing their comments alongside the questionnaire responses of 705 students it has become clear that students in the school do not feel forced through the round hole of university attendance even if it is a difficult fit for them. Instead, it was the students were forcing themselves through the round hole of university due to the desire to maintain their current social position. Students had positive feelings towards university but had a concern around the very narrow set of high status, traditional careers valued for salary and reputation being portrayed as those that led to happiness and security. The limited number of role-models seen by the students reinforced the view of having only the round hole as the acceptable route.

To summarise the findings, the limited aspirational goals students currently experience causes stress and anxiety for students who feel this will be hard for them to achieve thus putting their social position at risk. Through the habitus of the international school community, the round hole in the initial analogy is to attend university and follow courses in STEM subjects leading to a career in a profession that will maintain the social position of the student. Some students are confident in their ability to follow this route while for others this brings anxiety as they feel it will be difficult for them to achieve access to these courses and careers yet fear that alternative pathways will not maintain their social position. For students this brings stress along with a limitation of choice and agency as they are on the same pathway with only a narrow set of careers seen as being safe in the quest to maintain their social position.

Rather than considering themselves as having just one route to success it is helpful for students to imagine themselves going through a variety of different 'holes' considering several Higher Education and Career pathways. Through the analogy of the peg game presented at the start of the study students can imagine themselves having the potential to go through several different holes with each leading to a successful future, this is described by Rook (2013) as taking the scenic route. Having flexibility when considering future careers enables students to continue to explore different educational and career options throughout their life's journey. The peg game analogy allows each student to consider all the different shaped careers and HE holes on offer at different times in their career journey to discover if it is the right fit for them at that point in time. Some of these may not even exist yet but are open to consideration in the future by students.

Presenting Higher Education and Careers pathways as a journey of discovery can then help students mitigate against some of the stress they feel when concerned about the potential change in social position in the future. Students can be presented with a wider variety of courses where they can use their geographic mobility as an advantage to see a wider set of career options that will maintain their social status rather than just the 'safe' set of STEM courses traditionally being considered as the round holes they need to squeeze through.

References

Adnett, N. (2015). The Economic and Social Benefits of Widening Participation: Rhetoric or Reality? In.

Ahuja, A. (2016). A Study of Self-Efficacy among Secondary School Students in relation to Educational Aspiration and Academic Achievement. *Educational quest (New Delhi), 7*(3), 275. doi:10.5958/2230-7311.2016.00048.9

Ainley, P. (2003). Towards a Seamless Web or a New Tertiary Tripartism? The Emerging Shape of Post-14 Education and Training in England. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 51*(4), 390-407. doi:10.1046/j.1467-8527.2003.00245.x

Alexander, P., Loewenthal, J., & Butt, G. (2020). 'Fuck It, Shit Happens (FISH)': a social generations approach to understanding young people's imaginings of life after school in 2016-2017. *Journal of Youth Studies, 23*(1), 109-126. doi:10.1080/13676261.2019.1704406

Archer, L., DeWitt, J., & Wong, B. (2014). Spheres of influence: what shapes young people's aspirations at age 12/13 and what are the implications for education policy? *Journal of Education Policy, 29*(1), 58-85. doi:10.1080/02680939.2013.790079

Archer, L., & Yamashita, H. (2003). 'Knowing their limits'? Identities, inequalities and inner city school leavers' post-16 aspirations. *Journal of Education Policy, 18*(1), 53-69. doi:10.1080/0268093032000042209

Arthur, M. B. (1994). The boundaryless career: A new perspective for organizational inquiry. *Journal of organizational behavior, 15*(4), 295-306. doi:10.1002/job.4030150402

Arthur, M. B., Khapova, S. N., & Wilderom, C. P. M. (2005). Career success in a boundaryless career world. *Journal of organizational behavior, 26*(2), 177-202. doi:10.1002/job.290

Arthur, M. B., & Rousseau, D. M. (1996). *The boundaryless career : a new employment principle for a new organizational era*. New York ; Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Azaola, M. C. (2012). Revisiting Bourdieu: alternative educational systems in the light of the theory of social and cultural reproduction. *International Studies in Sociology of Education, 22*(2), 81-95. doi:10.1080/09620214.2012.700187

Balcı, S. (2018). Investigating career guidance needs of middle school students. *SHS web of conferences, 48*. doi:10.1051/shsconf/20184801017

Barner, M., Donnelly, K., & Rizvi, S. (2013). *An avalanche is coming*. Retrieved from

Belson, W. A. (1986). *Validity in survey research : with special reference to the techniques of intensive interviewing*. Aldershot: Gower.

Berger, T., & Frey, B. (2015). *Future Shocks and Shifts: Challenges for the Global Workforce and Skills Development*. Paper presented at the OECD Education 2030.

Bernstein, B. (2000). *Pedagogy, symbolic control and identity : theory, research, critique* (Rev. ed. ed.). Lanham, Md. ; Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Bock, K. a. (2021). *Brain inflamed : uncovering the hidden causes of anxiety, depression and other mood disorders in adolescents and teens*.

Bohrnstedt, G. W., & Knoke, D. (1988). *Statistics for social data analysis* (2nd ed. ed.). Itasca, Ill.: F.E. Peacock Publishers.

Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bowers-Brown, T., Ingram, N., & Burke, C. (2019). Higher education and aspiration. *International Studies in Sociology of Education, 28*(3-4), 207-214. doi:10.1080/09620214.2019.1641307

Bridge, G., & Wilson, D. (2015). Towards an interactive sociological rational choice approach to theorising class dimensions of school choice. *Policy & Politics, 43*(4), 493-507. doi:10.1332/030557314X13923920087710

Brink, C. a. (2018). *The soul of a university : why excellence is not enough* (1st ed.).

Brooks, R. (2013). The social construction of young people within education policy: evidence from the UK's Coalition government. *Journal of Youth Studies, 16*(3), 318-333. doi:10.1080/13676261.2012.725836

Brooks, R., Gupta, A., & Jayadeva, S. (2021). Higher education students' aspirations for their post-university lives: evidence from six European nations. *Children's geographies, ahead-of-print*(ahead-of-print), 1-14. doi:10.1080/14733285.2021.1934403

Brooks, R., Gupta, A., Jayadeva, S., & Abrahams, J. (2020). Students' views about the purpose of higher education: a comparative analysis of six European countries. *Higher education research and development, ahead-of-print*(ahead-of-print), 1-14. doi:10.1080/07294360.2020.1830039

Brown, P. (2013). Education, opportunity and the prospects for social mobility. *British journal of sociology of education, 34*(5-6), 678-700. doi:10.1080/01425692.2013.816036

Brown, P. (2020) Some observations on the race to higher education, digital technologies and the future of work, Journal of Education and Work, 33:7-8, 491-499 DOI:10.1080/136390080.2020.1852500

Brown, P., & Lauder, H. (2012). The great transformation in trhe global labour market. *Soundings (London, England), 51*(51), 41-53. doi:10.3898.136266212802019489

Brown, P., & Souto-Otero, M. (2020) The end of the credential society? An analysis of the relationship between education and the labour market using big data, *Journal of Education Policy,* 351:1, 95-118, DOI: 10.1080/02680939.2018.1549752

Brown, P., & Tholen, G. (2017). Higher Education and the Myths of Graduate employability. In:Waller, R., Ingram, N. and Ward, M.R.M. (Eds,), Higher Education and Social Inequalities: University Admissions, Experiences and Outcomes. *Sociological Futures.* UK: Routledge. ISBN 1138212881

Brown, R. K. (1974). *Knowledge, education, and cultural change. Papers in the sociology of education. Edited by Richard Brown*. London: Tavistock Publications.

Bryman, A. (1988). *Quantity and quality in social research*. London: Unwin Hyman.

Bryman, A. (2008). *Social research methods* (3rd ed. ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Burchardt, T., & Vizard, P. (2007). *Definition of equality and framework for measurement : final recommendations of the Equalities Review Steering Group on measurement*. London: CASE.

Chowdry, H., Crawford, C., Dearden, L., Goodman, A., & Vignoles, A. (2013). Widening participation in higher education: analysis using linked administrative data. *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society. Series A, Statistics in society, 176*(2), 431-457. doi:10.1111/j.1467-985x.2012.01043.x

Coetzee, M. (2012). Archetypal life themes, career orientations, and employability satisfaction of higher education students : a postmodern career counselling perspective. *South African Journal of Higher Education, 26*, 691-716.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education* (6th ed. ed.). London: Routledge.

Collini, S. (2012). *What are universities for?* London: Penguin.

Collins-Nelsen, R., Koziarz, F., Levinson, B., Allard, E., Verkoeyen, S., & Raha, S. (2021). Social context and transferable skill development in experiential learning. *Innovations in education and teaching international*, 1-10. doi:10.1080/14703297.2021.1886970

Cooley, C. H. (1983). *Human nature and the social order*. New Brunswick (U.S.A.): Transaction Books.

Creswell, J. W. (1994). *Research design : qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks, Calif. ; London: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design : qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed. ed.). Thousand Oaks, Calif. ; London: Sage.

Croll, P. (2009). EDUCATIONAL PARTICIPATION POST-16: A LONGITUDINAL ANALYSIS OF INTENTIONS AND OUTCOMES. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 57*(4), 400-416. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8527.2009.00445.x

de Vries, R. (2014). *Earning by Degrees - differences in the career outcomes of UK graduates*. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED559244

Denovan, A., & Macaskill, A. (2017). Stress and Subjective Well-Being Among First Year UK Undergraduate Students. *Journal of happiness studies, 18*(2), 505-525. doi:10.1007/s10902-016-9736-y

Donnelly, M. (2014). A new approach to researching school effects on higher education participation. *British journal of sociology of education, 36*(7), 1073-1090. doi:10.1080/01425692.2014.886942

Donnelly, M., & Evans, C. (2018). A 'home-international' comparative analysis of widening participation in UK higher education. *Higher education, 77*(1), 97-114. doi:10.1007/s10734-018-0260-3

Drever, E. (1995). *Using semi-structured interviews in small-scale research : a teacher's guide*: Scottish Council for Research in Education.

Duffy. (2019). *Parenting the New Teen in the Age of Anxiety*: Mango Publishing Group.

Edgerton, J. D., & Roberts, L. W. (2014). Cultural capital or habitus? Bourdieu and beyond in the explanation of enduring educational inequality. *Theory and research in education, 12*(2), 193-220. doi:10.1177/1477878514530231

Education at a glance 2017: OECD indicators. (2017). Paris: OECD.

Erel, U. (2010). Migrating Cultural Capital: Bourdieu in Migration Studies. *Sociology (Oxford), 44*(4), 642-660. doi:10.1177/0038038510369363

Ericsson, K. A. a., & Pool, R. a. (2017). *Peak : secrets from the new science of expertise*.

Farrugia, D. (2020). Class, place and mobility beyond global city: stigmatisation and the cosmopolitanisation of the local. *Journal of Youth Studies,* 23(2), 237-251. doi:10.1080/13676261.2019.1596236

Floyd, A., & Arthur, L. (2012). Researching from within: external and internal ethical engagement. *International journal of research & method in education, 35*(2), 171-180. doi:10.1080/1743727X.2012.670481

Frey, C. B., & Osborne, M. A. (2017). The future of employment: How susceptible are jobs to computerisation? *Technological forecasting and social change, 114*(January), 254-280. doi:10.1016/j.techfore.2016.08.019

Fuller, C. (2009). *Sociology, gender, and educational aspirations : girls and their ambitions* (1st ed.). New York: Continuum International Pub. Group.

Further and Higher Education Act 1992. (2009). In (1 ed.): Oxford University Press.

Gardner, H. (1983). Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences. New York: Basic Books

Gardner-McTaggart, A. (2016). International elite, or global citizens? Equity, distinction and power: the International Baccalaureate and the rise of the South. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 14*(1), 1-29. doi:10.1080/14767724.2014.959475

Garrick, J. (1999). Doubting the philosophical assumptions of interpretive research. *International journal of qualitative studies in education, 12*(2), 147-156. doi:10.1080/095183999236222

Gillham, B. (2000). *Developing a questionnaire*. London: Continuum.

Gjerustad, C., & von Soest, T. (2012). Socio-economic status and mental health - the importance of achieving occupational aspirations. *Journal of Youth Studies, 15*(7), 890-908. doi:10.1080/13676261.2012.693590

Goffman, E. (1990). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. London: Penguin.

Goos, M., & Manning, A. (2007). Lousy and Lovely Jobs: The Rising Polarization of Work in Britain. *The review of economics and statistics, 89*(1), 118-133. doi:10.1162/rest.89.1.118

Grenfell, M. (2008). *Pierre Bourdieu*. Stocksfield: Acumen.

Handy, C. B. (1991). *The age of unreason* (2nd ed. ed.). London: Arrow Business Books, 1995.

Hayden, M. (2011). Transnational spaces of education: the growth of the international school sector. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 9*(2), 211-224. doi:10.1080/14767724.2011.577203

Hayden, M., & Thompson, J. (2019). The rise of 'illiberal international schools'? *21*(2), 5-7.

Heap, B. a. (2014). *Choosing your degree course & university* (14th edition. ed.).

Heckman, J. J. (2013). *Giving Kids a Fair Chance*. US: The Mit Press.

Higgins, E. T. (1987). Self-discrepancy: a theory relating self and affect. *Psychological review, 94*(3), 319-340. doi:10.1037//0033-295X.94.3.319

Hill, M. A., Overton, T., Kitson, R. R. A., Thompson, C. D., Brookes, R. H., Coppo, P., & Bayley, L. (2020). 'They help us realise what we're actually gaining': The impact on undergraduates and teaching staff of displaying transferable skills badges. *Active learning in higher education*, 146978741989802. doi:10.1177/1469787419898023

Hoare, A., & Johnston, R. (2011). Widening participation through admissions policy – a British case study of school and university performance. *Studies in higher education (Dorchester-on-Thames), 36*(1), 21-41. doi:10.1080/03075070903414297

Högberg, B., Strandh, M., & Hagquist, C. (2020). Gender and secular trends in adolescent mental health over 24 years – The role of school-related stress. *Social science & medicine (1982), 250*, 112890-112890. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2020.112890

Holstein, J. A., & Gubrium, J. F. (1995). *The active interview*. Thousand Oaks ; London: Sage.

Hoskins, K. (2012). Widening participation aims and outcomes: Examining higher education prospects for four non-traditional students. *Widening participation and lifelong learning, 14*(3), 235-249. doi:10.5456/WPLL.14.3.235

Houghton, A.-M., Armstrong, J., & Okeke, R. I. (2021). DELIVERING CAREERS GUIDANCE IN ENGLISH SECONDARY SCHOOLS: POLICY VERSUS PRACTICE. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 69*(1), 47-63. doi:10.1080/00071005.2020.1734533

Humboldt, W. F. v., Brandes, C. H., & Humboldt, A. v. W. e. t. o. w. c. b. t. A. (2016). *Wilhelm von Humboldt's Gesammelte Werke. [Edited by C. Brandes, with a preface by Baron F. H. A. von Humboldt.]*: Wentworth Press.

Ingram, N. (2011). Within School and Beyond the Gate: The Complexities of Being Educationally Successful and Working Class. *Sociology (Oxford), 45*(2), 287-302. doi:10.1177/0038038510394017

ISCResearch. (2020). ISC Report. Retrieved from https://www.iscresearch.com/data

James, W. (1948). *Psychology*. Cleveland,: World Pub. Co.

Jenkins, R. (1992). *Pierre Bourdieu*. London: Routledge.

Johnston, P. (2015). *New research exposes the 'glass floor' in British society*. Retrieved from: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-research-exposes-the-glass-floor-in-british-society

Karacan-Ozdemir, N. (2019). Associations between career adaptability and career decision-making difficulties among Turkish high school students. *International journal for educational and vocational guidance, 19*(3), 475-495. doi:10.1007/s10775-019-09389-0

Kelly, R. (2005). *Education and Social Progress*.

Kersh, N., & Juul, I. (2015). Vocational Education and Training as a Career Path for Young People: Making Choices in England and Denmark. *LLAKES Research Paper 52*. Retrieved from http://www.llakes.ac.uk

Khemka, N. O., & Rathod, R. R. (2016). A Study of Academic Anxiety of Secondary School Students. *TechnoLearn: An International Journal of Educational Technology, 6*(1), 31. doi:10.5958/2249-5223.2016.00005.X

Knight, J. (2013). Education hubs: international, regional and local dimensions of scale and scope. *Comparative education, 49*(3), 374-387. doi:10.1080/03050068.2013.803783

Krueger, A. B. (1993). How Computers Have Changed the Wage Structure: Evidence from Microdata, 1984-1989. *The Quarterly journal of economics, 108*(1), 33-60. doi:10.2307/2118494

Kuijpers, M. (2019). Career guidance in collaboration between schools and work organisations. *British journal of guidance & counselling, 47*(4), 487-497. doi:10.1080/03069885.2018.1548007

Kumar, R. (2005). *Research methodology*. Frenchs Forest, N.S.W.: Pearson Education Australia.

Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews : learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (2nd ed. ed.). Thousand Oaks ; London.: Sage Publications.

Lareau, A. (2011). Unequal Childhoods: class, race and family life. *University of California Press*.

Léné, A. (2019). Job Satisfaction and Bad Jobs: Why Are Cleaners So Happy at Work? *Work, employment and society, 33*(4), 666-681. doi:10.1177/0950017019828904

Levine, H., Stock, S. R., & Prieto-Welch, S. L. (2016). International Student Mental Health. *New directions for student services, 2016*(156), 53-63. doi:10.1002/ss.20191

Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic enquiry*. Beverley Hills, CA: Sage.

Liu, Z., & Chen, G. (2013, 2013). *Theory of boundaryless career and employability training in higher education.* Paper presented at the International Conference on Education Technology and Management Science (ICETMS), Qinhuangdao Institute of Technology.

Major, L.E., & Weiner, J.M. (2021). "Rethinking social mobility in education: looking through the lens of professional capital", *Journal of Professional Capital and Community*, Vol. 6 No. 4, pp. 301-317. doi.org/10.1108/JPCC-09-2020-0070

Mansfield, R., Humphrey, N., & Patalay, P. (2021). Educators' perceived mental health literacy and capacity to support students' mental health: associations with school-level characteristics and provision in England. *Health promotion international*. doi:10.1093/heapro/daab010

McDevitt, T. M., Hess, C. A., Leesatayakun, M., Sheehan, E. P., & Kaufeld, K. A. (2013). A Cross-Sectional Study of Career Aspirations in Thai Children in an International School in Bangkok. *Journal of Career Development, 40*(6), 531-550. doi:10.1177/0894845312470025

McDonald, M., & Dunbar, I. (2012). *Market segmentation : how to do it, how to profit from it* (Rev. 4th ed. ed.). Chichester: Wiley.

Miller, S. T., Wiggins, G. M., & Feather, K. A. (2020). Growing up Globally: Third Culture Kids' Experience with Transition, Identity, and Well-Being. *International journal for the advancement of counselling*. doi:10.1007/s10447-020-09412-y

Mills, G. E. (2007). *Action research : a guide for the teacher researcher* (3rd ed. ed.). Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.

Morgan, D. L. (1988). *Focus groups as qualitative research*. Newbury Park, Calif. ; London: Sage.

Morgan, N. a. (2014). *The teenage guide to stress*.

Morse, K. (2019). "You can be anything" – career guidance messages and achievement expectations among Cape Town teenagers. *South African journal of education, 39*(Supplement 1), s1-s10. doi:10.15700/saje.v39ns1a1537

Mullins, J. a. (2013). *What rocks your world : putting your talent to work*.

Nalbantoglu Yilmaz, F., & Cetin Gunduz, H. (2018). Career Indecision and Career Anxiety in High School Students: An Investigation through Structural Equation Modelling. *Eurasian journal of educational research, 18*(78), 1-20. doi:10.14689/ejer.2018.78.2

Nash, R. (2006). Bourdieu on Education and Social and Cultural Reproduction. *British journal of sociology of education, 11*(4), 431-447. doi:10.1080/0142569900110405

Newman, J. H. (1886). *The idea of a university defined and illustrated* (sixth edition. ed.). London: Longmans, Green and Co.

O'Reilly, K. (2009). *Key concepts in ethnography*. London: SAGE.

Oakes, S. a., & Griffin, M. a. (2017). *The GCSE Mindset : 40 activities for transforming student commitment, motivation and productivity*.

Oliver, P. (2008). *Writing your thesis* (2nd ed. ed.). Los Angeles ; London: SAGE.

Östberg, V., Plenty, S., Låftman, S. B., Modin, B., & Lindfors, P. (2018). School Demands and Coping Resources-Associations with Multiple Measures of Stress in Mid-Adolescent Girls and Boys. *International journal of environmental research and public health, 15*(10), 2143. doi:10.3390/ijerph15102143

Pavlova, M., & Pavlova, M. (2017). Aspirations of and realities for Hong Kong students: is the "formal" transition system effective? *Educational Research for Policy and Practice, 16*(1), 77-93. doi:10.1007/s10671-016-9203-x

Pellegrino, J. W., Board on, T., Assessment, Division of, B., Social, S., Education, . . . Board on Science, E. (2012). *Education for life and work: Developing transferable knowledge and skills in the 21st century*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.

Pieh Jones, R. (2018). *Finding Home*: Amazon.

Pisarik, C. T., Rowell, P. C., & Thompson, L. K. (2017). A Phenomenological Study of Career Anxiety Among College Students. *The Career Development Quarterly, 65*(4), 339-352. doi:10.1002/cdq.12112

Pollock, D. C., Van Reken, R. E., & Pollock, M. V. (2017). *Third culture kids : growing up among worlds* (Third ed.). Boston: Nicholas Brealey Pub.

Pring, R. (2000). *Philosophy of educational research*. London: Continuum.

Pugsley, L. a. (2004). *The university challenge : higher education markets and social stratification* (1st ed.).

Punch, K. (1998). *Introduction to social research : quantitative and qualitative approaches*. London: SAGE.

Reay, D. (2006). THE ZOMBIE STALKING ENGLISH SCHOOLS: SOCIAL CLASS AND EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITY. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 54*(3), 288-307. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8527.2006.00351.x

Reay, D. (2017). *Miseducation: Inequality, education and the working classes*. Bristol;Chicago, IL;: Policy Press.

Reay, D., Crozier, G., & James, D. (2011). *White middle-class identities and urban schooling*. Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Reay, D., David, M. E., & Ball, S. J. (2005). *Degrees of choice : class, race, gender and higher education*. Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham.

Redmond, P. (2010). *The Graduate Jobs Formula*. Hampshire: Trotman Publishing.

Richards, L. (2009). *Handling qualitative data : a practical guide* (2nd ed. ed.). London: SAGE.

Robson, C. (2002). *Real world research : a resource for social scientists and practitioner-researchers* (2nd ed. ed.). Madden, Mass. ; Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Rogers, C. R. (1995). *On becoming a person : a therapist's view of psychotherapy*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Rook, S. (2013). *The graduate career guidebook*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Rutherford, T. (2013). Emotional well-being and discrepancies between child and parent educational expectations and aspirations in middle and high school. *International journal of adolescence and youth, 20*(1), 69-85. doi:10.1080/02673843.2013.767742

Salkind, N. J. (2010). *Encyclopedia of research design*. Los Angeles: SAGE.

Sampson, J. P. (2009). Modern and Postmodern Career Theories: The Unnecessary Divorce. *The Career Development Quarterly, 58*(1), 91-96. doi:10.1002/j.2161-0045.2009.tb00178.x

Schneider, B. L., & Stevenson, D. (1999). *The ambitious generation : America's teenagers, motivated but directionless*. New Haven, Conn. ; London: Yale University Press.

Schwab, K. a. (2016). *The fourth industrial revolution*.

Scott, D. (2008). *Critical essays on major curriculum theorists*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

See, C. (2012). *How to get into Oxbridge : a comprehensive guide to succeeding in your application process*. London: Kogan Page.

Seldon, A., & Abidoye, O. (2018). *The fourth education revolution : will artificial intelligence liberate or infantilise humanity*. Buckingham: The University of Buckingham Press.

Selingo, J. J. (2017). Why is choosing a college major so fraught with anxiety? *The Washington post*. Retrieved from: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2017/12/08/why-is-choosing-a-college-major-so-fraught-with-anxiety/

Silverman, D. (2010). *Doing qualitative research : a practical handbook* (3rd ed. ed.). London: SAGE.

Smyth, E., & Banks, J. (2012). 'There was never really any question of anything else': young people's agency, institutional habitus and the transition to higher education. *British journal of sociology of education, 33*(2), 263-281. doi:10.1080/01425692.2012.632867

St Clair, R., & Benjamin, A. (2011). Performing desires: The dilemma of aspirations and educational attainment. *British educational research journal, 37*(3), 501-517. doi:10.1080/01411926.2010.481358

Sternberg, R. J. (1988). *A triarchic view of intelligence in cross-cultural perspective*. Cambridge University Press

Storrie, K., Ahern, K., & Tuckett, A. (2010). A systematic review: Students with mental health problems-A growing problem. *International journal of nursing practice, 16*(1), 1-6. doi:10.1111/j.1440-172X.2009.01813.x

Stourton, I. (2007). *So you want to go to Oxbridge? Tell me about banana* (O. applications Ed.).

Strauss, D. (2008, 9/4/2008). Britons richer but no happier. *Financial times*. Retrieved from https://www.ft.com/content/3212e5a8-05c1-11dd-a9e0-0000779fd2ac

Susskind, R. E. a., & Susskind, D. a. (2015). *The future of the professions : how technology will transform the work of human experts* (First edition. ed.).

Taylor, C., Wright, C., Davies, R., Rees, G., Evans, C., & Drinkwater, S. (2018). The effect of schools on school leavers' university participation. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 29*(4), 590-613. doi:10.1080/09243453.2018.1484776

Thomas, G. (2009). *How to do a research project : a guide for students in education and applied social sciences* (1st ed. ed.). Thousand Oakes, Calif.: SAGE.

Tinsley-Myerscough, S., & Seabi, J. (2012). The effect of a postmodern career life story intervention on disadvantaged Grade 12 learners. *South African Journal of Higher Education, 26*, 742-764.

Tran, L. T. (2015). Mobility as 'becoming': a Bourdieuian analysis of the factors shaping international student mobility. *British journal of sociology of education, 37*(8), 1268-1289. doi:10.1080/01425692.2015.1044070

UCAS. (2019). UCAS Data and Analysis. Retrieved from https://www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis

Useem, R., & Cottrell, A. (1996). Adult Third Culture Kids*. In (pp. 22-35).

Walker, M. (2008). Widening participation; widening capability. *London review of education, 6*(3), 267-279. doi:10.1080/14748460802489397

Weinstein, E. C., & Selman, R. L. (2016). Digital stress: Adolescents' personal accounts. *New media & society, 18*(3), 391-409. doi:10.1177/1461444814543989

White, J. P. (1973). *Towards a compulsory curriculum*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Wong, B. (2015). A blessing with a curse: model minority ethnic students and the construction of educational success. *Oxford review of education, 41*(6), 730-746. doi:10.1080/03054985.2015.1117970

Xu, H., & Lee, J. C.-K. (2019). Exploring the Contextual Influences on Adolescent Career Identity Formation: A Qualitative Study of Hong Kong Secondary Students. *Journal of Career Development, 46*(3), 219-234. doi:10.1177/0894845317737380

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research : design and methods* (4th ed. ed.). London: SAGE.

Yorke, H. (2017, 18/10/2017). Half of students starting university are now the first in their family to do so, new figures reveal. *The Daily Telegraph*. Retrieved from https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2017/10/18/half-students-starting-university-now-first-family-do-new-figures/

Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth. *Psychology 7*(4), 69-84. doi:10.1080/1361332052000341006

Yuen, M., Chung, Y. B., Lee, Q. A. Y., Lau, P. S. Y., Chan, R. M. C., Gysbers, N. C., & Shea, P. M. K. (2020). Meaning in life and school guidance programs: Adolescents' voices from Hong Kong. *International journal for educational and vocational guidance, 20*(3), 653-676. doi:10.1007/s10775-020-09423-6

Appendices

Appendix 1 Ethical Approval Form

University of Reading
Institute of Education
Ethical Approval Form A (version May 2019)

Tick one:

Staff project: _____   PhD _____   EdD ___**√**_

Name of applicant (s): **John Knight**

Title of project: **Square pegs in round holes. A study around student identity in a high aspiration international school environment**

Name of supervisor (for student projects): **Dr Billy Wong**

Please complete the form below including relevant sections overleaf.

	YES	NO
Have you prepared an Information Sheet for participants and/or their parents/carers that:		
a) explains the purpose(s) of the project	√	
b) explains how they have been selected as potential participants	√	
c) gives a full, fair and clear account of what will be asked of them and how the information that they provide will be used	√	
d) makes clear that participation in the project is voluntary	√	
e) explains the arrangements to allow participants to withdraw at any stage if they wish	√	
f) explains the arrangements to ensure the confidentiality of any material collected during the project, including secure arrangements for its storage, retention and disposal	√	
g) explains the arrangements for publishing the research results and, if confidentiality might be affected, for obtaining written consent for this	√	
h) explains the arrangements for providing participants with the research results if they wish to have them	√	
i) gives the name and designation of the member of staff with responsibility for the project together with contact details, including email . If any of the project investigators are students at the IoE, then this information must be included and their name provided	√	
k) explains, where applicable, the arrangements for expenses and other payments to be made to the participants		NA
j) includes a standard statement indicating the process of ethical review at the University undergone by the project, as follows: 'This project has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct'.	√	
k)includes a standard statement regarding insurance: "The University has the appropriate insurances in place. Full details are available on request".	√	
Please answer the following questions		
1) Will you provide participants involved in your research with all the information necessary to ensure that they are fully informed and not in any way deceived or misled as to the purpose(s) and nature of the research? (Please use the subheadings used in the example information sheets on blackboard to ensure this).	√	

	YES	NO	N.A.
2) Will you seek written or other formal consent from all participants, if they are able to provide it, in addition to (1)?	√		
3) Is there any risk that participants may experience physical or psychological distress in taking part in your research?		√	
4) Staff Only - have you taken the online training modules in data protection and information security (which can be found here: http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/humanresources/PeopleDevelopment/newstaff/humres-MandatoryOnlineCourses.aspx Please note: students complete a Data Protection Declaration form and submit it with this application to the ethics committee.			
5) Have you read the Health and Safety booklet (available on Blackboard) and completed a Risk Assessment Form (included below with this ethics application)?	√		
6) Does your research comply with the University's Code of Good Practice in Research?	√		
	YES	NO	N.A.
7) If your research is taking place in a school, have you prepared an information sheet and consent form to gain the permission in writing of the head teacher or other relevant supervisory professional?	√		
8) Has the data collector obtained satisfactory DBS clearance?			NA
9) If your research involves working with children under the age of 16 (or those whose special educational needs mean they are unable to give informed consent), have you prepared an information sheet and consent form for parents/carers to seek permission in writing, or to give parents/carers the opportunity to decline consent?	√		
10) If your research involves processing sensitive personal data[1], or if it involves audio/video recordings, have you obtained the explicit consent of participants/parents?	√		
11) If you are using a data processor to subcontract any part of your research, have you got a written contract with that contractor which (a) specifies that the contractor is required to act only on your instructions, and (b) provides for appropriate technical and organisational security measures to protect the data?			NA
12a) Does your research involve data collection outside the UK?	√		
12b) If the answer to question 12a is "yes", does your research comply with the legal and ethical requirements for doing research in that country?	√		
13a) Does your research involve collecting data in a language other than English?		√	
13b) If the answer to question 13a is "yes", please confirm that information sheets, consent forms, and research instruments, where appropriate, have been directly translated from the English versions submitted with this application.			
14a. Does the proposed research involve children under the age of 5?		√	
14b. If the answer to question 14a is "yes": My Head of School (or authorised Head of Department) has given details of the proposed research to the University's insurance officer, and the research will not proceed until I have confirmation that insurance cover is in place.			NA
If you have answered YES to Question 3, please complete Section B below			

- Complete **either** Section A **or** Section B below with details of your research project.
- Complete a risk assessment.
- Sign the form in Section C.
- Append at the end of this form all relevant documents: information sheets, consent forms, tests, questionnaires, interview schedules, evidence that you have completed information security training (e.g. screen shot/copy of certificate).
- Email the completed form to the Institute's Ethics Committee for consideration.
- **Any missing information will result in the form being returned to you.**

---

[1] Sensitive personal data consists of information relating to the racial or ethnic origin of a data subject, their political opinions, religious beliefs, trade union membership, sexual life, physical or mental health or condition, or criminal offences or record.

C: SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT:

Note: a signature is required. Typed names are not acceptable.

I have declared all relevant information regarding my proposed project and confirm that ethical good practice will be followed within the project.

Signed: Print Name: John Knight   Date 25 May 2020

STATEMENT OF ETHICAL APPROVAL FOR PROPOSALS SUBMITTED TO THE INSTITUTE ETHICS COMMITTEE

This project has been   considered using agreed Institute procedures and is now approved.

Signed: Print Name: Name: Dr Karen Jones   Date: 2 June 2020
(IoE Research Ethics Committee representative)*

* A decision to allow a project to proceed is not an expert assessment of its content or of the possible risks involved in the investigation, nor does it detract in any way from the ultimate responsibility which students/investigators must themselves have for these matters. Approval is granted on the basis of the information declared by the applicant.

Appendix 2 Consent forms

Parent/carer information sheet

Research Project: A study around student aspiration in an international school setting
EdD researcher: John Knight

We would like to invite your child to take part in a research study about future aspiration.

What is the study?
The study takes the form of data collection to find out more about student aspiration for further education and future careers and if this changes according to the ages of students.

Why has my child been chosen to take part?
Your child has been invited to take part in the project as all students from Year 5 to 13 have been given the opportunity to take the short questionnaire. Your child self-identified on the questionnaire as being willing to join a focus group for follow up discussion with other students in their year group.

Does my child have to take part?
It is entirely up to you whether your child participates. You may also withdraw your consent to participation at any time during the project, without any repercussions to you or your child, by contacting John Knight by email on uo818983@student.reading.ac.uk

What will happen if my child takes part?
Students will meet as a group of around five participants on one occasion for about one hour. The group will discuss the questions from the questionnaire in more detail. This will be audio recorded to make it easier to analyse the key points they make but any contributions will be anonymised in any subsequent writing.

What are the risks and benefits of taking part?
The information you and your child give will remain confidential and your child will not be identifiable in any published report resulting from the study. Taking part will in no way influence the grades your child receives at school. Information about individuals will not be shared with the school.

Students taking part will find it interesting to think about future aspirations and we anticipate that the findings of the study will be useful for teachers in planning how they support students in meeting their aspirations.

What will happen to the data?
Any data collected will be held in strict confidence and no real names will be used in this study or in any subsequent publications. The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you or your child to the study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. We will transcribe the recordings from the group discussions and anonymise them before analysing the results. Children will be assigned a number and will be referred to by that number on all transcriptions of audio recordings and on all questionnaires.

Research records will be stored securely on a password-protected computer and only the EdD student and his supervisors will have access to the records. The results of the study will be written up as a doctoral thesis.

Who has reviewed the study?
This project has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct. The University has the appropriate insurances in place. Full details are available on request.

What happens if I/ my child change our mind?

You/your child can change your mind at any time without any repercussions. During the research, your child can stop completing the activities at any time. If you change your mind after data collection has ended, we will discard your child's data.

What happens if something goes wrong?
In the unlikely case of concern or complaint, you can contact Professor Billy Wong, University of Reading; email: B.Wong@reading.ac.uk

Where can I get more information?
If you would like more information, please contact John Knight
email: uo818983@student.reading.ac.uk

We do hope that you will agree to your child's participation in the study and to your involvement in it. If you do, please complete the attached consent form and return it, sealed, in the envelope provided, to your child's class teacher or tutor.

Thank you for your time.

Yours faithfully,

John Knight

data protection for information sheets

The organisation responsible for protection of your personal information is the University of Reading (the Data Controller). Queries regarding data protection and your rights should be directed to the University Data Protection Officer at imps@reading.ac.uk, or in writing to: Information Management & Policy Services, University of Reading, Whiteknights, P O Box 217, Reading, RG6 6AH.

The University of Reading collects, analyses, uses, shares and retains personal data for the purposes of research in the public interest. Under data protection law we are required to inform you that this use of the personal data we may hold about you is on the lawful basis of being a public task in the public interest and where it is necessary for scientific or historical research purposes. If you withdraw from a research study, which processes your personal data, dependant on the stage of withdrawal, we may still rely on this lawful basis to continue using your data if your withdrawal would be of significant detriment to the research study aims. We will always have in place appropriate safeguards to protect your personal data.
If we have included any additional requests for use of your data, for example adding you to a registration list for the purposes of inviting you to take part in future studies, this will be done only with your consent where you have provided it to us and should you wish to be removed from the register at a later date, you should contact Professor Suzanne Graham – s.j.graham@reading.ac.uk

You have certain rights under data protection law which are:
- Withdraw your consent, for example if you opted in to be added to a participant register
- Access your personal data or ask for a copy
- Rectify inaccuracies in personal data that we hold about you
- Be forgotten, that is your details to be removed from systems that we use to process your personal data
- Restrict uses of your data
- Object to uses of your data, for example retention after you have withdrawn from a study

Some restrictions apply to the above rights where data is collected and used for research purposes.

You can find out more about your rights on the website of the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) at https://ico.org.uk
You also have a right to complain the ICO if you are unhappy with how your data has been handled. Please contact the University Data Protection Officer in the first instance.

Research Project: A study around student aspiration in an international school setting
<u>Parent/Carer Consent Form</u>

I have read the Information Sheet about the project and received a copy of it.

I understand what the purpose of the project is and what is required of my child and me. All my questions have been answered.

Name of child: _____

Please tick as appropriate:

I consent to my child completing the questionnaire or taking part in the discussion group ☐

I consent to the audio-recording of my child if taking part in the discussion ☐

Signed:_____

Date: _____

<u>Secondary student information sheet</u>

Research Project: A study around student aspiration in an international school setting

EdD Researcher: John Knight

Dear Student

Research Project: A study around student aspiration in an international school setting

I would like to invite you to take part in a study I am undertaking for my doctoral thesis.

What is the study?

This study is asking both primary and secondary students for their views on future careers and their aspirations. The information that is collected will be used to gain student feedback on the opportunities and challenges faced when attending an international school, often in another country. The views given by students will help form part of a larger study into student aspiration in international schools and will inform the school about ways they can help students prepare for future career aspirations.

Why have I been chosen to take part?

Following the completion of the questionnaire that was conducted with all students in Years 5-13 you have indicated that you would be willing to join a focus group for one session to discuss the questions in more detail.

Do I have to take part?

It is entirely up to you whether you give your consent to participate. You may also withdraw your consent to participation at any time during the project, without any repercussions to you, by contacting me on email uo818983@student.reading.ac.uk If you prefer you can contact my supervisor, Professor Billy Wong on B.Wong@Reading.ac.uk

What will happen if I take part?

Students will be invited to a group discussion around future ambitions. With your consent, the meeting will be audio recorded, and then transcribed for analysis.

What are the risks and benefits of taking part?

The information given by participants in the study will remain confidential. Neither you nor the school will be identifiable in any published report resulting from the study. Information about individuals will not be shared with the school. Participants in similar studies have found it interesting to take part. We anticipate that the findings of the study will be useful for developing the school's careers and Higher Education provision.

What will happen to the data?

Any data collected will be held in strict confidence and no real names will be used in this study or in any subsequent publications. Recordings from the meetings will be transcribed and anonymised before analysing the results with all data being kept electronically in a password protected format.

What happens if I change my mind?

You can change your mind at any time. If you change your mind after data collection has ended, your data will be discarded.

What happens if something goes wrong?

In the unlikely case of concern or complaint, you can contact Professor Billy Wong, University of Reading, email: B.Wong@reading.ac.uk

Where can I get more information?

For more information, please contact John Knight, email: uo818983@student.reading.ac.uk

If you are happy to take part, please complete and return the attached consent form to John Knight.

Yours faithfully

John Knight

---

data protection for information sheets

The organisation responsible for protection of your personal information is the University of Reading (the Data Controller). Queries regarding data protection and your rights should be directed to the University Data Protection Officer at imps@reading.ac.uk, or in writing to: Information Management & Policy Services, University of Reading, Whiteknights, P O Box 217, Reading, RG6 6AH.

The University of Reading collects, analyses, uses, shares and retains personal data for the purposes of research in the public interest. Under data protection law we are required to inform you that this use of the personal data we may hold about you is on the lawful basis of being a public task in the public interest and where it is necessary for scientific or historical research purposes. If you withdraw from a research study, which processes your personal data, dependant on the stage of withdrawal, we may still rely on this lawful basis to continue using your data if your withdrawal would be of significant detriment to the research study aims. We will always have in place appropriate safeguards to protect your personal data.
If we have included any additional requests for use of your data, for example adding you to a registration list for the purposes of inviting you to take part in future studies, this will be done only with your consent where you have provided it to us and should you wish to be removed from the register at a later date, you should contact Professor Suzanne Graham – s.j.graham@reading.ac.uk

You have certain rights under data protection law which are:
- Withdraw your consent, for example if you opted in to be added to a participant register
- Access your personal data or ask for a copy
- Rectify inaccuracies in personal data that we hold about you
- Be forgotten, that is your details to be removed from systems that we use to process your personal data
- Restrict uses of your data
- Object to uses of your data, for example retention after you have withdrawn from a study

Some restrictions apply to the above rights where data is collected and used for research purposes.
You can find out more about your rights on the website of the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) at https://ico.org.uk
You also have a right to complain the ICO if you are unhappy with how your data has been handled. Please contact the University Data Protection Officer in the first instance.

Secondary student assent form

A study around student aspiration in an international school setting

	Please circle Yes or No for each question	
1. I have read the information sheet.	Yes	No
2. I understand what the study is about.	Yes	No

3. I understand that I don't have to take part and can drop out of the study at any time.　　Yes　　No

4. I agree to take part in this study.　　Yes　　No

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Primary student information sheet

Research Project:　　　A study around student aspiration in an international school setting

EdD Researcher:　　　John Knight

Dear Student

I would like to invite you to take part in a study I am working on around student views on their future career ambitions. The information that is collected will be used to help understand the ambitions of students in an international school and this will help with the careers support for students.

It is entirely up to you whether you want to take part in the discussion and you can stop at any time if you decide. If you decide to drop out you just need to tell your class teacher and they will let me know.

Students who take part will be invited to a group discussion around future ambitions. With your consent, the meeting will be audio recorded, and then written up to be analysed.

Anything the students say in the discussion will be confidential and won't be shared with teachers in school. No real names will be used when the study is completed and the recording from the discussion will be kept electronically in a password protected format.

You can change your mind at any time. If you change your mind after the group discussion has ended, your comments will be removed.

If you have any concerns please let your class teacher know and they will contact Professor Billy Wong, University of Reading, email: B.Wong@reading.ac.uk

If you are happy to take part, please complete and return the attached form to John Knight.

Yours faithfully

John Knight

data protection for information sheets

The organisation responsible for protection of your personal information is the University of Reading (the Data Controller). Queries regarding data protection and your rights should be directed to the University Data Protection Officer at imps@reading.ac.uk, or in writing to: Information Management & Policy Services, University of Reading, Whiteknights, P O Box 217, Reading, RG6 6AH.

The University of Reading collects, analyses, uses, shares and retains personal data for the purposes of research in the public interest. Under data protection law we are required to inform you that this use of the personal data we may hold about you is on the lawful basis of being a public task in the public interest and where it is necessary for scientific or historical research purposes. If you withdraw from a research study, which processes your personal data, dependant on the stage of withdrawal, we may still rely on this lawful basis to continue using your data if your withdrawal would be of significant detriment to the research study aims. We will always have in place appropriate safeguards to protect your personal data.
If we have included any additional requests for use of your data, for example adding you to a registration list for the purposes of inviting you to take part in future studies, this will be done only with your consent where you have provided it to us and should you wish to be removed from the register at a later date, you should contact Professor Suzanne Graham – s.j.graham@reading.ac.uk

You have certain rights under data protection law which are:
- Withdraw your consent, for example if you opted in to be added to a participant register
- Access your personal data or ask for a copy
- Rectify inaccuracies in personal data that we hold about you
- Be forgotten, that is your details to be removed from systems that we use to process your personal data
- Restrict uses of your data
- Object to uses of your data, for example retention after you have withdrawn from a study

Some restrictions apply to the above rights where data is collected and used for research purposes.
You can find out more about your rights on the website of the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) at https://ico.org.uk
You also have a right to complain the ICO if you are unhappy with how your data has been handled. Please contact the University Data Protection Officer in the first instance.

Primary student assent form

A study around student aspiration in an international school setting

	Please circle Yes or No for each question	
I have read the information sheet or had it read to me.	Yes	No
I understand what the study is about.	Yes	No
I understand that I don't have to take part and can drop out of the study at any time.	Yes	No

I agree to being audio recorded as part of the group interview.　　Yes　　No

182

I agree to take part in this study.　　　　　　　　　　　Yes　　No

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 3 Questions asked in the Questionnaire

Year 12 Career intentions questionnaire

* 1. Are you male/female/prefer no to say

- [ ] Male
- [ ] Female
- [ ] Prefer not to say

2. How many years have you been at BSB

- ( ) 1-2
- ( ) 3-5
- ( ) 6-8
- ( ) 9+

* 3. Are you studying

- [ ] A-Levels
- [ ] IB
- [ ] BTECs
- [ ] Other

4. What is your nationality/nationalities (please write all in space below)

[   ]

* 5. How many clubs and activities do you take part in each week (both school run and those outside of school)

- [ ] None
- [ ] One
- [ ] Two
- [ ] Three or more

* 6. How would you summarise the grades you have been getting this term

- [ ] Mainly grades A*/7
- [ ] Mainly grades A/6
- [ ] Mainly grades B/5
- [ ] Mainly grades C/4
- [ ] Mainly grades D/3
- [ ] Mainly grades E/2

7. What job do you hope to be doing when you are 28?

[   ]

* 8. How likely do you think it is that you will be doing this job

☐ Very likely

☐ Likely

☐ Unlikely

☐ Very unlikely

9. Why do you think it is likely/unlikely you will be doing this job?

[   ]

* 10. Would your parents give the same answer to question 7 about the job you are likely to do in the future?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Don't know

11. (optional) Please comment on your answer to question 10

[   ]

12. Which words best describe your feelings about your career future (choose as many as apply)

☐ Excited   ☐ Unhappy

☐ Uncertain   ☐ Clear

☐ Scared   ☐ Happy

☐ Relaxed   ☐ Stressed

13. What job do you hope to be doing when you are 48?

[   ]

14. Please rate the importance of the following factors in your choice of career

	Of no importance	Of little importance	Quite important	Very important
Having a high salary	○	○	○	○
High job satisfaction and career happiness	○	○	○	○
High job status	○	○	○	○
Parental approval of career	○	○	○	○
Ease of entry to career (I think I could achieve the qualifications required)	○	○	○	○
Job security	○	○	○	○

* 15. Do you intend on continuing in education after completing Year 13?

☐ Yes - to University   ☐ I would like to join the armed forces

☐ Yes - to College or other 1 year training course ☐ I would like to go straight to work

☐ I would like to take a gap year before deciding   ☐ Don't know

☐ I would like to start an internship

* 16. Rank the following careers from best (1) to worst (7) in your opinion

Chef

Doctor

Waiter / Waitress

Police Officer

Photographer

Postal Worker

Teacher

17. Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

If you would be willing to be part of a small group of students who would meet one lunchtime to discuss this topic further (with free lunch provided) please write your name below.

Appendix 4 Pilot Focus Group Schedule

<div align="center">Focus Group Pilot Schedule</div>

Introduction – Estimated time 5 minutes

- Explain the purpose of the study and the interest in student views around aspiration and careers
- Explain that the student comments are confidential
- Students are reminded about need for consent and that they can withdraw at any point including after the focus group has finished
- Ask students to speak up and not to talk over each other (for recording and transcription purposes)
- State that everyone gets the chance to talk
- There are no wrong answers and all comments are valid
- Ask students to go around the room and say their name or a pseudonym if they prefer as well as the career they hope to do in the future or to say 'don't know' if they are not sure at this stage

Starter activity – Estimated time 5 minutes

- Students fill in ranking sheet of best to worst job
- Then students are given laminated copies of seven jobs and are asked to discuss the jobs to come up with a group ranking on the seven jobs

Further discussion around 'best' jobs – Estimated time 10 minutes

- Go around the room – what were your criteria when deciding what made a 'good' job?
  - Main RQ
- Do you have any differences as a group?
- Might different groups in the school (different nationalities, parents, teachers) define good jobs in different ways
  - Sub-RQ1
- Imagine you wanted to do job seven (in the ranking) as your preferred career, what might other teachers, students or parents say to this?
  - Sub-RQ2

Thoughts on Questionnaire results – Estimated time 15 minutes

- Students are shown diagram (below) where happiness is very important while status and parental approval are very low. Who agrees? Who disagrees? Why – discuss.
  - Main RQ

- Students in Year 10-13 are shown diagram 4.2 and 4.3. As students go through school they use the word 'happy' to describe thoughts about future careers less and the word stressed more. Why do they think that is?
  - Sub-RQ2

All students are asked the following:

- Could the school do more to promote career happiness over other factors? What could the school do?

- Sub-RQ2

For Year 10-13 students only

- What could the school do to reduce stress around future careers as students get older?
  - Sub-RQ2

- Students are shown figure 4.4 and asked why they think the number of students who plan to go to university doubles as students get older
  - Main RQ

- Students are asked as a follow up what their views are about university in general and what alternatives to university do they see and what are their opinions of these
  - Sub-RQ2
  -
- Are the alternative routes acceptable? Are the supported (by parents, school)
  - Sub-RQ1

Views on school influence towards different careers – 10 minutes

- Students are shown the table summarising common answers and less common answers from all students. Around the table students are asked to select a career from each column and then say what they think influences students in the school to select each.
  - Main RQ

- After each answer students can add to or disagree with the influences suggested.

- Do the students have any other comments on careers advice and support at the school and any suggestions on how it can be improved to ensure all students are properly supported?
  - Sub RQ2

Appendix 5 Main Focus Group Schedule

<u>Focus Group Schedule</u>

Questions that are posed are in bold

<u>Introduction – Estimated time 5 minutes</u>

- Explain the purpose of the study and the interest in student views around aspiration and careers
- Explain that the student comments are confidential
- Students are reminded about need for consent and that they can withdraw at any point including after the focus group has finished
- Ask students to speak up and not to talk over each other (for recording and transcription purposes)
- State that everyone gets the chance to talk
- There are no wrong answers and all comments are valid
- Ask students to go around the room and say their name or a pseudonym if they prefer as well as the career they hope to do in the future or to say 'don't know' if they are not sure at this stage

<u>Starter activity – Estimated time 5 minutes</u>

- Students fill in ranking sheet of best to worst job
- Then students are given laminated copies of seven jobs and are asked to discuss the jobs to come up with a group ranking on the seven jobs

<u>Further discussion around 'best' jobs – Estimated time 10 minutes</u>

Q1) (Go around the room) – **what were your criteria when deciding what made a 'good' job?**

    Main RQ

Q2) **Do you have any differences as a group?**

Q3) **Might different groups in the school define good jobs in different ways**

        o **Firstly adults (Parents and teachers)**
        o **Then Other students**
        o **Any different opinions by nationality**

    Sub-RQ1

Q4) **Imagine you wanted to do job seven (in the ranking) as your preferred career, what might other groups say to this?**

    Sub-RQ2

Q5) Do any personal factors such as nationality, gender or ability make a difference to students when deciding which career they would like to pursue?

Students are shown diagram (below) where happiness is very important while status and parental approval are very low.

Q6) Do you agree or disagree with this ranking? Why? (discuss).

Main RQ

Factors behind career choice

Legend:
- High Salary
- High job satisfaction and happiness
- High Status
- Parental approval
- Ease of entry
- Job Security
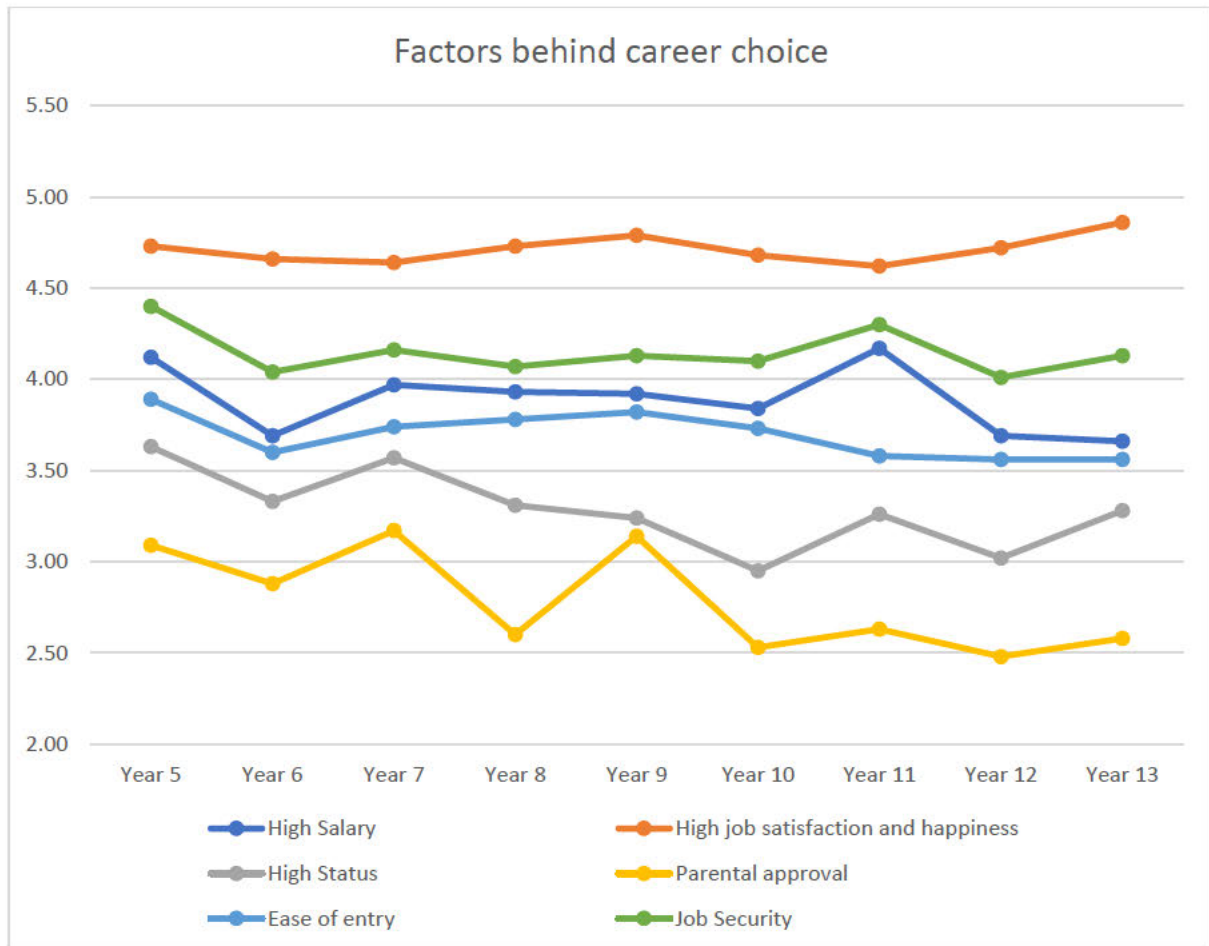
Q7) Students in Year 10-13 are shown diagram 4.2 and 4.3. **As students go through school they use the word 'happy' to describe thoughts about future careers less and the word stressed more. Why do you think that is?**

Sub-RQ2

Q8) All students are asked the following:

Could the school do more to promote career happiness over other factors? What could the school do?

Sub-RQ2

Q9) For Year 10-13 students only

What could the school do to reduce stress around future careers as students get older?

Sub-RQ2

Career future emotions

Chart Title
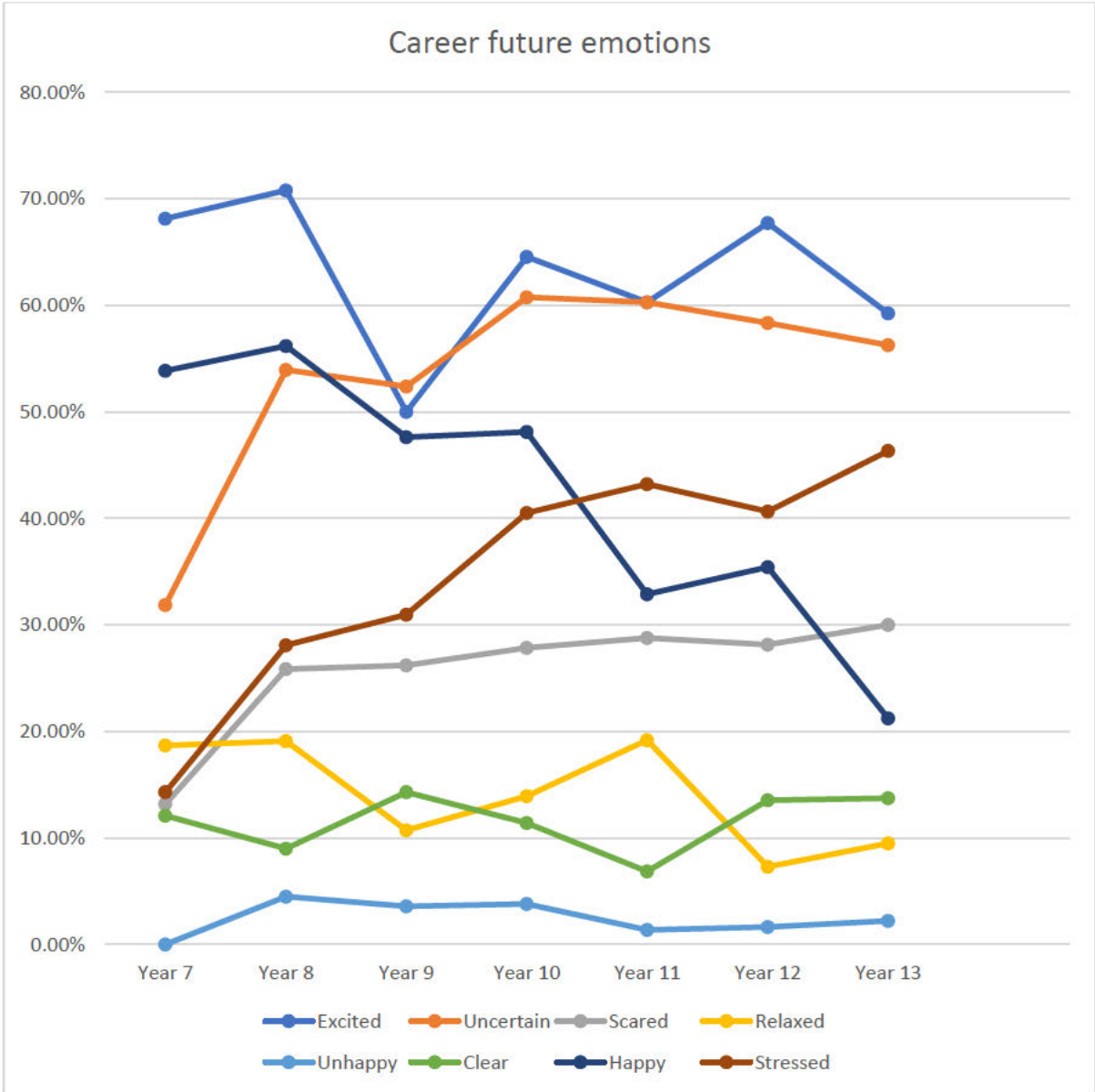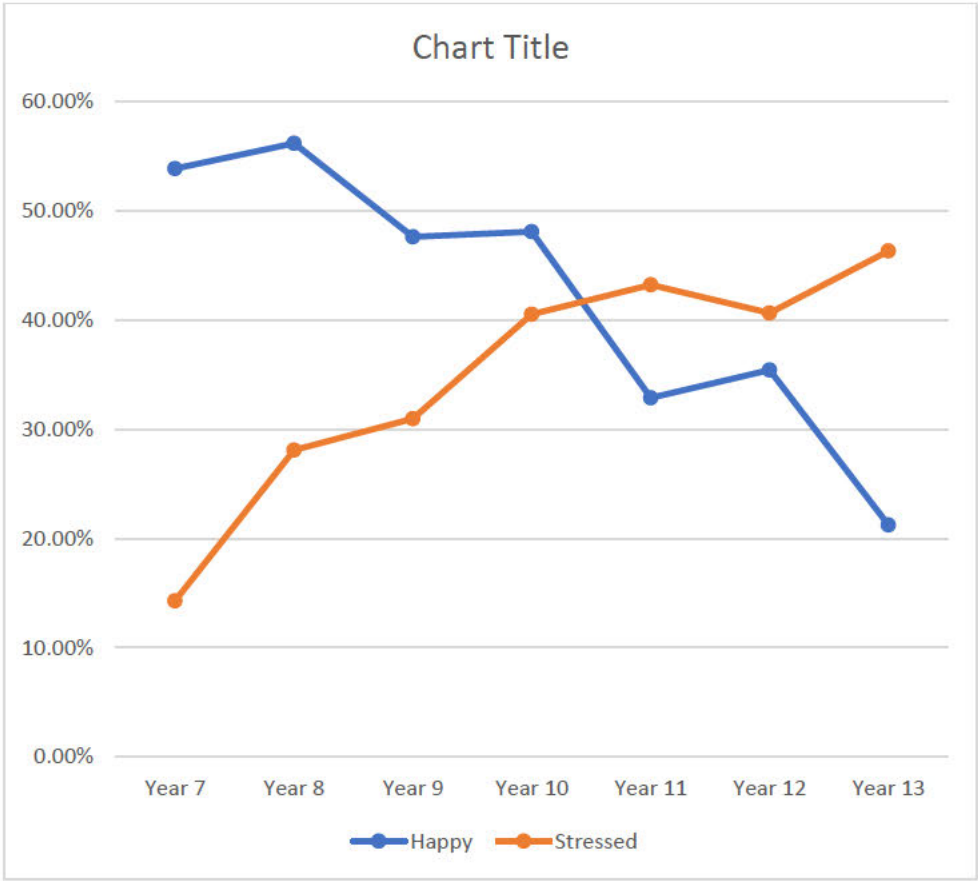
Q10) Students are shown figure 4.4 and asked 'why do you think the number of students who plan to go to university doubles as students get older?'

Main RQ

Intentions after Year 13
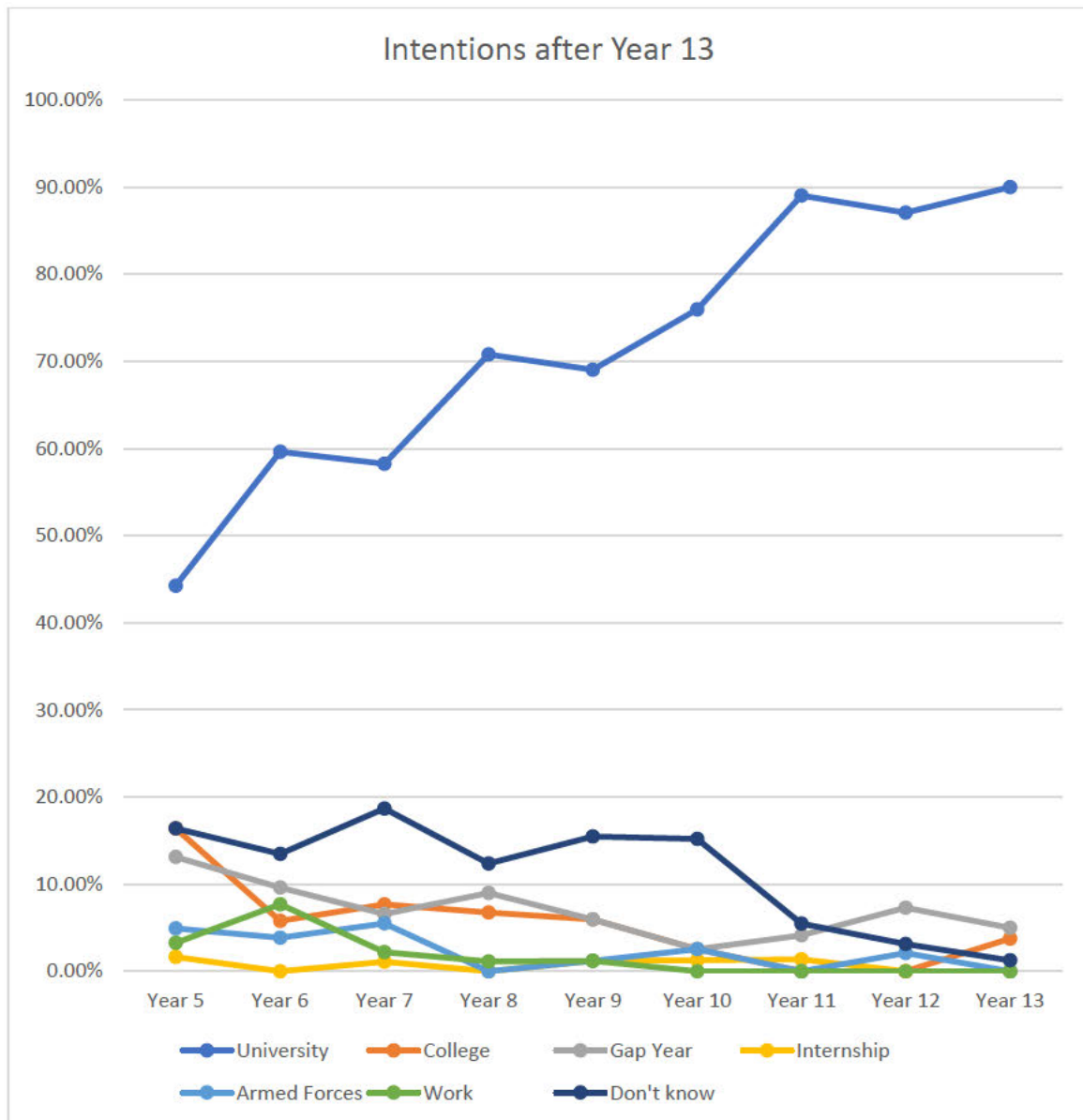
Q11) Students are asked as a follow up: **'what are your views are about university in general and what alternatives to university do you see, what are their opinions of these?**

 Sub-RQ2

Q12) **Are the alternative routes acceptable? Are the supported by others?**

  Sub-RQ1

Q13) **How far do you feel that your plans after leaving school are your own choice and not to please others?**

  Sub-RQ1

Views on school influence towards different careers – 10 minutes

Q14) Students are shown the table summarising common answers and less common answers from all students. Around the table students are asked: **'please select a career from each column and then say what you think influences students in the school to select that career?.'**

192

Main RQ

After each answer students can add to or disagree with the influences suggested.

Popular Answers	Less Common Answers
Don't know 99	Interior Designer 9
Engineer 54	Fashion Designer 7
Doctor 42	Working in Sustainability 7
Business and Management 41	Police 7
Lawyer 40	Armed Forces 6
Professional Sport 40	Game Designer 6
Acting 27	Youtuber 5
Scientist 21	Entrepreneur 5
Teacher 18	Photographer 5
Psychologist 17	Chef 4

Q15) **Do you have any other comments on careers advice and support at the school and any suggestions on how it can be improved to ensure all students are properly supported?**

Sub RQ2

Appendix 6 Coding frequency of responses recorded in NVivo

Node	Code	Frequency
Factors in Career Choice	Happiness and interest in Career	70
	Salary	60
	Job Security	19
	Job Status	49
	Difficulty of entering Profession	31
	Parental Approval	52
	Importance of Job to Society	41
	Jobs being similar to Hobbies	14
	Jobs being Safe	10
	Jobs existing into the future despite AI developments	23
Influences on Career and HE choices	Family as an Influence	57
	Friends as an Influence	9
	International School Culture and Opportunities as an Influence	34
	Home Country Culture as an Influence	29
	Financial backing as an Influence	18
	Media as an Influence	17
	Role Models as an Influence	32
Emotions around the Future	Stress and Pressure about the Future	64
	Uncertain about the Future	10
	Scared about the Future	6
	Unhappy about the Future	6
	Excited or Positive about the Future	8
	Pressure over having to Payback Educational Investment	18
Feelings about University	Importance of going to University	29
	Brexit Concerns of University	1

	Passionate about taking studies further	12
	Feelings around cost of University	20
	Difficulty of getting Grades to enter University	21
	Unwritten Expectation that everyone goes to University	35
	Feeling fed up with Studying	4
	University is a safe place to become an Adult	17
	University and back up plans	9
	University and level of aspiration	11
Feelings around alternatives to University		34
Comments around age		63
Suggestions for Improvements to School Support	Career Roundtables	11
	Careers Fair	8
	Work Experience	9
	Linking Careers to Subjects	17
	Building Student Agency	8
	Alumni Career Talks	4
	Scholarship and other practical support	13
	Exposure to wider range of careers	29
	Help managing stress	8
	Promoting careers in the Arts	11

Appendix 7 Details of Students in Focus Groups

Year Group	Gender	Nationality	Career Aspiration	Intentions Post-18
Year 13	Female	Indian	Psychologist	University
Year 13	Male	Swedish	Doctor	Gap Year
Year 13	Female	Chilean	Psychologist	University
Year 13	Female	French/American	Film Maker	University
Year 13	Female	Belgian	Working for an NGO	University
Year 12	Male	Spanish	Don't know	University
Year 12	Male	British	Hotel Management	University
Year 12	Male	German	Entrepreneur	University
Year 12	Female	British	Psychologist	University
Year 12	Male	Dutch	Engineer	University
Year 11	Male	British	Teacher	University
Year 11	Female	Thai	Don't know	Gap Year
Year 11	Female	British	Lawyer	University
Year 11	Female	Iranian	Doctor	University
Year 11	Female	British	Acting	Gap Year
Year 10	Female	Spanish	Lawyer	University
Year 10	Female	Lesotho	Accountant	Gap Year
Year 10	Male	British	Pilot	University
Year 10	Male	Estonian	Don't know	Don't Know
Year 10	Female	Polish	Singer	University
Year 9	Female	South African	Diplomat	University
Year 9	Female	Slovakian	Nanny	University
Year 9	Female	Brazilian/Dutch	Marine Biologist	University
Year 9	Male	Indian	Lawyer	University
Year 9	Male	British	Don't know	University
Year 8	Female	British	Chef	University
Year 8	Female	British	Doctor	University
Year 8	Female	Estonian	Diplomat	University
Year 8	Male	Italian	Engineer	University
Year 8	Male	Dutch	Lawyer	University
Year 7	Male	American	Games Shop Owner	Armed Forces
Year 7	Female	Indian	Author	University
Year 7	Female	South African	Actor	Gap Year
Year 7	Female	French	Fashion Designer	University
Year 7	Male	Finnish	Pilot	Armed Forces

Year 7	Male	British	Lawyer	University
Year 6	Female	British	Farmer	University
Year 6	Female	Irish	Baker	University
Year 6	Male	British	Author	University
Year 6	Male	German	Apple Designer	University
Year 6	Female	Dutch	Dancer	University
Year 6	Female	Irish	Therapist	University
Year 5	Female	American/Hungarian	Actor	Gap Year
Year 5	Female	Spanish	Dentist	University
Year 5	Male	Turkish	Professional Sport	College
Year 5	Female	Moroccan	Dentist	University
Year 5	Female	Hungarian/Chilean	Teacher	University

Appendix 8 Further Questionnaire Analysis of Responses by Year Group

Survey Analysis of unusual responses by Year Group

Having analysed the results of the survey by year group, it has become apparent that certain responses were common to the 705 respondents regardless of the year group they were in, and formed the common opinion within the student culture. These include the plan to have a career in a profession and to go to university which was shared by a large and growing majority, also the view that they would be likely to get the job the wanted which was an opinion shared by more than 80% of students and the opinion that parents see them going into the career they have selected which is shared by over 90% of students.

As a follow-up to the analysis by year group, I read through each of the 705 student responses, taking all of their answers together to get a picture of how they perceived their future career. In particular I looked for students who did not conform to the majority view and expressed a different opinion to two or more of the most commonly held opinions from the following:

- Intention to go to university at age 18

- Intention to have a career categorised as a profession of intermediate career

- Perception that they were likely to get into the desired career

- Perception that parents were aligned in their career aspirations with the student

After reading through each students' responses I have identified the more interesting and unusual respondents from each year group to be considered together for further themes that emerge by group. Each student will be identified by the number given to them by SurveyMonkey according to the order in which they completed the survey.

Year 5 students showed an interest in celebrity careers with 20% of responses in this area. This was comprised of five wanting to become professional footballers, one professional gymnast, four actresses and two youtubers. From these, all twelve felt it was likely or very likely they would follow this career.

In Year 6 the students had a small but significant proportion wanting to pursue a career in professional sport with 17% responses expressing this desire. Of these all but one felt it was likely they would achieve this goal and the student who felt it was unlikely felt the reason for this was that they may change their mind.

I have categorised the last two years of primary school as the optimistic dreamer stage where students feel confident about their likelihood of success whatever career they have chosen.

Year 7 responses

In Year 7 a relatively large number of students hope to work in a celebrity career, but with several feeling this is unlikely. The responses from fourteen Year 7 students around their preferred career has been tabulated below for ease of comparison.

Celebrity Career Choice in Year 7 Summary

Student	Career selected for age 28	Likelihood of doing this	Reason given
3	Footballer	Likely	Because I will try hard
6	Acting	Very likely	It has always been my dream
9	F1 racer	Likely	I really like F1
14	Runner	Unlikely	Because people are faster than me
15	F1 racer or rugby player	Unlikely	Because it is hard to be good enough

20	Actor	Likely	I thought about becoming and actor and I am pretty good I think
33	Actor	Likely	Because I was always good at acting
35	Footballer	Unlikely	Because lots of people want to be a football player so it will be hard
41	Footballer	Likely	Because I do football 5 times a week and I am in the U13 right now and I am 11
47	Actress	Likely	Because I have been practicing and to auditions
49	Actress	Unlikely	Because it is hard to get through auditions and get onto TV
55	Footballer	Unlikely	Because if I want to become a footballer I need to practise way more
57	Cricketer	Likely	Likely
59	Youtuber	Likely	Because it is something I really enjoy
66	Actress	Likely	Because I love to act, and I think I am quite good at it
72	Footballer	Unlikely	I will want to do something else when I am older

Year 7 is the age where realisation starts to come around celebrity aspirations, with six students now feeling this is unlikely while ten felt their aspiration is still likely without giving any strong reasons why this should be the case.

Year 8 responses

In Year 8, the students who stood out for their responses fell into two main groups. Firstly, we have students such as student 52 wanting to become a singer, student 53 wanting to play golf professionally and student 70 wanting to become a professional cricketer who all felt it was unlikely they would achieve this as the competition was too great. All three of these students felt they would attend university when they left school.

Student 16 hopes to be a Youtuber when aged 28 and felt this was likely 'because I have already started and am doing well'. The student was achieving B grades and expressed feeling excited, uncertain and happy about the future and did not know what they would do when leaving school in terms of future education or going straight to work.

Student 43 hopes to be an international table tennis player and felt this was very likely 'because I already am'. The student was achieving mainly B grades and felt happy about the future and expected to take a gap year after Year 13.

Student 45 hopes to be a tennis player and felt this was likely as he had already won seven tournaments. He was achieving A grades and felt excited yet uncertain about the future and expected to go straight to work after leaving school.

Student 74 also stood out as an A grade student who hoped to be a doctor but felt this was unlikely to be what they were doing aged 28. The reason was 'because it is very hard to be a doctor and takes years of work and studying to get there so by the time I am 28 I will still be training'. This student was excited, uncertain and happy about the future and expected to go to university when they leave school as well as filling in that they would be a doctor at age 48 in response to the later question.

At this age we see two groups forming, those with their dreams fading as they realise their celebrity career aspiration is looking unlikely, and those with achievements already demonstrated towards their preferred aspiration. For students 16, 43 and 45 their accomplishments came outside of school while the infrastructure in the school is better suited to students who hope for a career in a profession as shown by the continuity of students believing they can access a career in a profession in all year groups without this tailing off as students get older.

<u>Year 9 responses</u>

Four responses from Year 9 students stood out as those hoping to follow a celebrity career, with student 4 hoping to be a professional skier, student 74 hoping to become a professional basketball player and students 16 and 19 both hoping to become actresses. All felt it was likely they would achieve this despite giving little explanation other than they were good at it.

Four students in the year group, students 38, 45, 50 and 81 all filled in that they were achieving B grades and all said they were unsure about the career they hoped to do in the future and expressed uncertainty and stress as their emotions about their future career prospects. Three of the students had doctor as the best job and the other had it placed second with police officer the best job. Two of the students didn't know what they would do after leaving school, one hoped to take a gap year while one hoped to study at university.

<u>Year 10 responses</u>

From the 79 responses given by Year 10 students, there were eight that stood out as being almost identical. Students 5, 6, 12, 13, 25, 32, 42 and 48 all described achieving average to below average grades and all filled in that they were unsure what job they hoped to do when they were 28 and that it was unlikely they would achieve this.

Some features from the responses these students gave were that they all filled in that they did not know what their parent's response would be and all put uncertain as a word to describe their feelings about their future career. Six of the students were female and two male and they had been at the school for varying lengths of time. Seven of the eight students intend studying at university when leaving school. A difference between the genders was that where additional emotions were described by the girls the word stressed was used by four of

the six students with no positive words used at all where both boys used positive words along with uncertain such as excited and happy.

Student 45 had a similar grade profile but hoped to become a painter and decorator at age 28. They expressed feeling excited, relaxed, clear and happy about their career future. They planned on starting an internship when leaving school.

Student 66 also had a similar grade profile and stated they hoped to be working in the Royal Air Force (RAF) at age 28. They described their emotions as excited, clear and happy and hoped to join the armed forces when leaving school.

A common theme for Year 10 students is around uncertainty for students achieving average to below average grades with no plans for the future except to go to university and these students expressed negative emotions around their career futures. In contrast, two students with a similar profile, but who aspired for careers in technical occupations were very positive when describing their career futures.

Year 11 responses

The theme that emerged from Year 11 student responses that were different from the majority was of acceptance around challenges associated with certain careers.

Students 3 and 54 were both females who chose acting as the career they hoped to be doing but both said they felt it was unlikely they would be doing this as it was difficult to get in. One felt they were getting A* grades while the other B grades but otherwise the responses were almost identical including both responding that parents felt they should be aiming for a different career as acting was not going to be achievable. Both felt that

Chef was the best career with one having doctor ranked number five and the other ranking it in last place showing these students would consider careers outside of the professions as desirable.

Students 10 and 11 both hoped to pursue professional careers, one as an engineer and the other as an architect. Both felt it was unlikely this would happen as they didn't have the academic ability to follow this pathway and both put down that grade C's were their current level of achievement. Both students had photographer as number one career and had doctor as number four suggesting a technical profession could be a better fit for them.

Students 56 and 61 were unsure about the career they hoped to do with both summarising their grades as C's for the term. Both students hoped to attend university when then left school. All six students chose the words uncertain and stressed when selecting the words that described their feelings about the future.

A student who had a response not seen anywhere else was student 47 who expressed a desire to be a games workshop store manager at age 28 and felt this was likely as he had a good knowledge of the game Warhammer. This student reported getting B grades and was positive when describing his future.

Year 12 responses

The theme that emerged from the responses given by Year 12 students that stood out as different from the majority were around students who had hopes of a career that I have termed a celebrity career. In each of these we see an awareness around the difficulties getting into this career and either a plan in place already to overcome this difficulty or a realisation the pathway may be unlikely but no decision yet made on an alternative.

Students 14 and 22 both hoped to become authors in the future though both felt it was unlikely they would achieve this but both were achieving good grades and were positive about the future identifying alternative careers that would appeal to them with both planning on going to university in the future.

Students 35, 37 and 49 all expressed a hope that they would have a career in sport though only student 35 felt this was unlikely as he chose a sport he wasn't currently playing and planned attending university in the future. Students 37 and 49 had plans around professional sport with a clear backup plan either in physiotherapy for student 37 or in engineering for student 49 with both planning on attending university when they left school.

Students 54 and 83 both hoped for a career in acting with student 54 feeling this was likely as they had an agent and were already had a backup plan if it didn't work out, while student 83 felt it was unlikely they would be able to follow an acting career at a sufficient level to make a good living so would give it a try with parents support but would then go to university and pursue a career in advertising if it didn't work out.

To summarise the responses from Year 12 students it would be the age of pragmatism with students having a plan B already being worked out while they see if their hope for a celebrity career has potential. The number of students considering a celebrity type career has already reduced with those still considering it having a realistic pathway to the career. The majority of students have plans to attend university and pursue a professional or intermediate career with very few considering a technical or routine career.

Year 13 responses

Student 1 was a male studying the IB and getting reasonable grades having been at the school for several years. He hoped for a career in the film industry though felt this was unlikely as it is a 'hard industry to get into'. The student intended to go to university though ranked the best career as photographer with doctor in sixth place suggesting a more technical route would be more appropriate. The student selected 'uncertain' as the word to describe their feelings about their career future.

Students 8 and 41 were studying A-levels and getting average grades. Both expressed feeling uncertain about the future. Where these two students differed was in student 41 feeling job security and happiness was most important putting chef as the number one job and doctor at number 7, this student put down grade C's as the current level of achievement. By contrast student 8 had parental approval as very important and had doctor as the best career though felt they would not have the academic profile to go to university despite putting grade B for their grades this term.

Another student having photographer as the best career in the ranking activity was student 63 who felt they were achieving grade C's this term but was unsure of a future career putting down ease of entry into a career as the main priority.

Student 35 hoped to play in professional sport though split this with a job in business feeling that it would be challenging to get into so was pursuing two options and planned attendance at university after Year 13.

Student 70 wanted to become a pilot and was getting good grades though was the only student who felt getting into the career was unlikely due to volatility in the marketplace and had decided to take a gap year so they had longer to decide.

The vast majority of students, as identified in the year group analysis, had identified university and a career in a profession as the preferred future. The students who were considering slightly different pathways in Year 13 were low in number and either had a more aspirational career balanced with a safer option or were undecided at this stage and were students identifying themselves as having average grades. These students were split into those who felt they needed parental approval rating a career in a profession more highly but then feeling negative about their own future and those who ranked technical careers more highly, did not feel parental

approval was important and felt more positive about their future. These different situations can be summarised in the figure 4.13 below.

Year 13 Decision making and Happiness

Student 1 – Decided on a career in film and felt photographer the best career though unhappy at future prospects feeling it unlikely they would get into the career they hoped for

Student 8 – Did not know what they wanted to do but felt the need for parental approval by following a high-status career though felt they didn't have the academic profile for university

Students 41 and 63 – Both identified themselves as having a lower academic profile and were unsure what they would do in the future but were positive towards routine and technical jobs and felt positive about the future.

Students 55 and 70 – both had preferred plans but were pragmatic about the future and optimistic about different pathways open to them.

Summary

When reflecting on the answers given by different age groups the responses in the last years of primary all seem very similar with students displaying high aspiration and optimism. At the end of secondary we have a similar group response with almost all students planning on attending university and then pursuing a professional or intermediate career. Where we see a difference though is the change through secondary school to get to the conformity of almost all students fitting the institutional approach to HE followed by a more academically oriented career.

I have identified three pathways where for the majority, their early optimistic aspirations fit in with the herd direction (Fuller, 2009) and this becomes a realistic aspiration throughout secondary school. For those who have a less traditional aspiration these are split into two groups. One group was seen from Year 8 where students had a more celebrity type career aspiration but were seeing their achievements in this area as a way of legitimising this aspiration. As this group moved into Year 12 we see a more pragmatic mindset where they have both the aspirational plan and an alternative plan based on going to university should the aspiration not be achieved. The third group is those who do not see any accomplishments in their preferred career area and drop this aspiration but then become undecided over their career direction expressing stress and unhappiness about their career future. By Year 13 we see very few undecided students as they conform their plans to match those around them despite showing a preference towards more technical careers and then remaining unhappy about their career direction.

As the study is cross-sectional rather than longitudinal I have not tracked individual students through the year groups to be sure the students remain on these three pathways from Year 7 to Year 13 and the students may in fact move across pathways. The model can be explored with focus groups to find out how students feel their answers may have differed if they completed the same questionnaire when they were younger to help give more of a longitudinal viewpoint to it.

Appendix 9 Word Frequency Report from NVivo

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)	Similar Words
university	10	420	1.37	universities, university
school	6	379	1.24	school, schooling, schools
parents	7	278	0.91	parent, parental, parents, parents'
different	9	239	0.78	difference, differences, different, differently
students	8	182	0.59	student, students, students'
doctor	6	182	0.59	doctor, doctorates, doctors
important	9	163	0.53	importance, important
interesting	11	159	0.52	interest, interested, interesting, interests
career	6	148	0.48	career, careers
happy	5	148	0.48	happiness, happy
money	5	111	0.36	money
teacher	7	105	0.34	teacher, teachers
future	6	101	0.33	future, futures
personally	10	101	0.33	person, personal, personality, personally
older	5	92	0.30	older
agree	5	89	0.29	agree, agreed, agrees
stress	6	87	0.28	stress, stressed, stressful, stressing
pressure	8	80	0.26	pressure, pressured, pressures, pressuring
friends	7	79	0.26	friend, friendly, friends
influence	9	78	0.25	influence, influenced, influencer, influencers, influences, influencing
family	6	77	0.25	families, family
choose	6	75	0.25	choose, choosing
works	5	74	0.24	worked, working, works
lawyer	6	72	0.24	lawyer, lawyers
talked	6	71	0.23	talked, talking, talks
choices	7	71	0.23	choice, choices
enjoy	5	70	0.23	enjoy, enjoyable, enjoyed, enjoying, enjoyment, enjoys
group	5	69	0.23	group, grouped, groups
better	6	67	0.22	better
forces	6	67	0.22	force, forced, forces, forcing
become	6	67	0.22	become, becomes, becoming
studying	8	66	0.22	studied, studies, study, studying
change	6	65	0.21	change, changed, changes, changing
salary	6	65	0.21	salaries, salary
country	7	64	0.21	countries, country
everyone	8	62	0.20	everyone
learn	5	62	0.20	learn, learned, learning
option	6	62	0.20	option, options
youtubers	9	61	0.20	youtube, youtuber, youtubers
little	6	60	0.20	little
experiences	11	59	0.19	experience, experiences
popular	7	59	0.19	popular

number	6	57	0.19	number, numbers
designer	8	57	0.19	design, designed, designer, designers, designing, designs
support	7	56	0.18	support, supported, supporting, supportive
common	6	55	0.18	common, commonly
guess	5	55	0.18	guess
certain	7	54	0.18	certain, certainly
armed	5	54	0.18	armed
place	5	54	0.18	place, placed, places

Appendix 10 Codes Analysed against Year Group

	Year13	Year12	Year11	Year10	Year9	Year8	Year7	Year6	Year5
1 : A Factors in career choice									
2 : A.1 Happiness and interest in career	10	4	10	8	13	10	5	6	4
3 : A.10 Jobs of the Future	10	2	8	0	0	0	0	3	0
4 : A.2 Salary	3	4	7	9	10	8	5	9	5
5 : A.3 Job Security and risk	4	5	5	2	1	0	1	0	1
6 : A.4 Job Status	5	6	10	5	5	6	3	9	0
7 : A.5 Difficulty of entering profession	2	7	5	5	6	1	2	1	2
8 : A.6 Parental approval	1	5	12	4	10	5	9	4	2
9 : A.7 Importance of job to society	3	7	3	4	3	6	8	2	5
10 : A.8 Jobs being similar to hobbies	4	2	0	2	0	0	3	2	1
11 : A.9 Job being safe and no danger	1	1	0	2	4	0	0	1	1
12 : B Influences on Career and HE choices	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
13 : B.1 Family as an influence	11	8	16	4	13	4	0	1	0
14 : B.2 Friends as an influence	2	0	0	1	3	1	2	0	0
15 : B.3 International School Culture or Opportunities as an Influence	4	4	12	1	11	1	1	0	0
16 : B.4 Home country as an influence	1	3	6	4	7	3	2	2	1
17 : B.5 Money and Financial Backing as an Influence	2	2	5	0	6	2	1	0	0
18 : B.6 Media as an Influence	7	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	0
19 : B.7 Role Models as an Influence	3	1	12	2	7	4	2	1	0
20 : C Emotions around the Future									
21 : C.1 Stress and pressure about Future	10	8	22	9	9	1	0	5	0
22 : C.2 Uncertain about Future	3	2	3	1	1	0	0	0	0
23 : C.3 Scared about Future	2	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	0
24 : C.4 Unhappy about Future	1	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	0
25 : C.5 Excited or happy about the Future	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
26 : C.6 Positive or Happy about the Future	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
27 : C.7 Pressure over future having to Payback the Opportunity	5	1	1	1	8	0	0	2	0
28 : D Feelings about University	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

29 : D.1 Importance of going to University	0	4	1	3	4	1	6	10	0
30 : D.10 Brexit issues with university	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
31 : D.2 Passion about Studying and wanting to go further	6	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	1
32 : D.3 Feelings around Cost of University	0	0	4	6	9	1	0	0	0
33 : D.4 Difficulty of getting Grades to enter	0	3	9	4	1	0	4	0	0
34 : D.5 Unwritten expectation as everyone goes	7	4	10	2	8	4	0	0	0
35 : D.6 Feeling fed up with studying	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
36 : D.7 University is safe place to become an adult	1	5	4	1	3	1	2	0	0
37 : D.8 University and backup plans	1	2	2	4	0	0	0	0	0
38 : D.9 University and level of aspiration	1	2	2	1	3	0	0	2	0
39 : E Feelings around Alternatives to University	8	2	3	2	7	3	4	5	0
40 : F Comments around Age	8	6	4	4	10	11	10	6	4
41 : G Suggestions for Improvements to Advice	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
42 : G.1 Suggestion of Career Roundtables	3	4	3	0	1	0	0	0	0
43 : G.10 Promoting Arts	0	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	0
44 : G.2 Suggestion of Careers Fair	0	1	3	3	1	0	0	0	0
45 : G.3 Suggestion of Work Experience	1	5	0	0	2	0	1	0	0
46 : G.4 linking careers to subjects	0	2	4	0	2	1	8	0	0
47 : G.5 Building student Agency	1	1	4	0	1	1	0	0	0
48 : G.6 Alumni Career Talks	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0
49 : G.7 Scholarships and other practical support	0	0	2	0	11	0	0	0	0
50 : G.8 Exposure to different and future careers	5	5	11	1	6	0	1	0	0
51 : G.9 Help managing stress	1	1	4	2	0	0	0	0	0

Appendix 11 Example Focus Group Transcript Exert

Focus Group Transcription Exert – Year 9 (2 March 2021)

Kendra:

Because I've noticed that when I talk to my peers about the future, a lot of them say, "Well, I want to do this." And I'm like, "okay, why do you want to do... that sounds interesting, why do you want to do that?" And they list a bunch of cons and it's like, they don't know about the bad side of it. And a lot of the times, we have school alumni; when they talk to us, a lot of the time, very little is talked about the bad side of it. It's always the pros and, "Oh, you get to do this. It's fun." But they don't talk a lot about the actual reality of it. So I think it would be better if people were exposed to both sides of the rope, "There's this stuff, but then you also have to deal with this, and you also have to do things like this that you might not be very happy with," because I feel like a lot of people will get older and they'll realize, "Oh, I wasted my time trying to get there because I don't think that's something I can find [inaudible 01:07:55]."

Anya:

Yeah. Personally, ever since I came into secondary, I truly found that I want to do science for the rest of my life. I wanted to know more. I wanted to know what universities would be able to give you the best and their best degrees and stuff. And I feel like people don't think, don't realize that how young of an age, a lot of people think about this. And I've personally done a lot of research for myself, but I preferably have input from my teachers and adults around me and others, career day and stuff. If that was for a little younger, and to show us more about universities themselves and especially scholarships because in this school, there are so many people that the only reason they can afford coming here is because of their parents' jobs. And they are going to have issues with finances and getting into universities when they're older.

Anya:

And I'm one of those people and I've always been terrified of that. And I have this bank account and my mom doesn't realize how often I actually ask her how much is in it, because I already know the prices for places I want to go. And I know that I'm not going to have nearly enough unless I do something about it because one

213

year it's already like $58,000, and I don't have that much in my bank accounts, nowhere near. So I need to inform myself on scholarships, but that's one of the things that's really kept me in the dark, I guess. It's really hard to find stuff on scholarships.

Interviewer:

Can you tell me, the $58,000, where's that figure come from?

Anya:

That's Harvard for one year.

Interviewer:

And is that the fees or the accommodation and everything else.

Anya:

That's not even accommodation. That's just the study itself. And I have nowhere near that. And that is like almost... you could get a house or an apartment for that and you could get a house for double that. So it just like really puts into perspective and my mom also always lectures me, because I talk a lot about this with my families, my family. And she always says, "Oh yeah. Well, for me, housing was the most expensive thing." And she said how she shared a house with little rooms and that was dirty with other people that she barely knew when it was extremely expensive, more expensive than the college itself, because she had free education. But people that you didn't know would be there and it would be dirty, and they'd always make you do the dishes if you were new and stuff. But that's changed now and I hope so. And from what I see, from what I read it's changed, and the prices, I don't have much of an idea of that.

Interviewer:

Have you got any other thoughts? On the 5$8,000, what's your other plans?

Anya:

Well, for me, I've always had a plan that I would use as little money as I possibly could, and I'd get a job and live in a very small place, have like the minimum, only the necessities. And then just save up till at some point, build a house and then just live there for as long as I could.

Lisa:

We're talking about financial things and aid in the future. My parents have always tried to incorporate me and my brother in financial decisions so we can get real life issues on how much it really is to do all these things that we're very lucky to have. So I know all about taxes. I know how to do taxes and I know what tax loopholes are, because I'm just so fascinated in how am I going to live life if I don't know how to do these things, unless someone teaches me? So knowing that there are ways you can go to school and try to save money, get a scholarship or try to ask your parents for something and student loans and stuff.

Lisa:

Knowing how you can get in life with information that some people don't know. So let's say, I know about I don't know.... one of my friends didn't know about taxes, how much tax in Belgium actually gets taken off of a salary. So I feel like knowledge of other things that you don't know in school is a lot really helpful in going into college and stuff.

Lucy:

I mean, financially, I know that like I'm one of three and in Scotland, if you're a Scottish national and you've lived there for over three years, as in, like before you go to Uni, it's free... free tuition, but then you have to make like housing and stuff, which is fine. Because I've family over there; but I've been away since I was six and unless I moved back next year, I wouldn't be able to go for free. But it'd still be discounted; so it'll still be fine, but it limits where I can go because like I said, my dad's job pays for the school. And there's three kids to look after and all of us want to go to uni and I'm limited to where I want to go. And I have to go to a certain place so that it doesn't cost as much money on my family. And it is fair like that.

Lucy:

And I have done a little research personally because I have... like last summer I got so interested in the entire thing, like where to go, stuff about like grants you can get, I literally searched constantly every single scholarship I could possibly find, always looked through everything. And you can barely find anything, because it's very limited to how much you can find. You can only find basic things and you never find loopholes or anything like that, or anything like just life in Uni. Even YouTube, there's like three YouTubers I watch that go to uni and they show what life is like in it. Other than that, I have no clue what to expect when I got there in the end.

Lisa:

Yeah. Talking about scholarships being very hard to find, my dad said, there's this one kid in his class who was so smart but he was like so poor, but their university made up a scholarship to let him go to the school. So there'll be like normal scholarships, like high-grade scholarship and no money scholarship, but they will make up scholarships so that you're in the school, because having your name in the paper was good. So I also think of it that way.

Kendra:

Yeah. But for me, I've always been taught not to look too much at the bright side because if your too ambitious you're going to get crushed and burned. And for me, scholarships has been something that have fluctuated in my thoughts all the time. It's, "Oh, that's great, but I can't find anything." Well I might get it if I'm smart enough; it's like, "Oh, but what if I'm not?" And like Lucy said, research. I tried to find so many scholarships and there's not much at all. I asked my parents, my mom knows nothing about it and I've already worked out a lot of the costs.

Kendra:

I've already worked out a lot of the costs, but if you see the average salary for a marine biologist after a few years of working is $76,000 a year, and one year of Harvard is $58,000. So loans isn't really going to help me in that situation because it would take me a long time to be able to pay it back, and scholarships is the only thing I could think of. I know there are countries like Germany that give you free education and it is really

good, and that would be my last resort because I really want a very high education, and I've always wanted to go to the top universities, always Oxford, Harvard. Boston is where you can get the best marine biology degree, so I wanted to do that, but it turns out Boston is $62,000 a year. It's just so difficult to make choices, and I know in a few years I'm going to have to apply to universities and I'm going to have to think even more about it than I do now.

Kendra:

If I can already start getting information in the years to come and already now, I feel I'll be more comfortable and less stressed when I apply, because I see so many people applying and being really nervous, not knowing what to do and then constantly having the toll of nerves on their mind thinking, "Oh, how did I do? Did I get in properly?" And it takes a few months for the results to come back, so it's always been something that's at the back of my head.