

Aspirations, education and social justice: applying Sen and Bourdieu

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CHAPTER FOUR

EVOLVING THEORY INTO METHOD

[A] Introduction

Bourdieu's sociological concepts have been widely applied and there is a rich body of work to draw upon in finding suitable methodological approaches to research (Reay et al, 2005). There are, of course, challenges, but in this chapter I focus particularly on the application of the CA to empirical research as this is still very much an emerging area of expertise. First of all some points are made about the peculiarities of the CA on a generalised level, highlighting challenges as well as practical reflections. Then in the second part of the chapter the research methodologies are described for the two studies (S1 & S2) presented in this book on young people's aspirations and capabilities.

[A] Defining the Evaluative Space

Sen identifies 'capability' as a very important concept although he does not attempt to operationalise the concept for the purposes of research. It is deliberately left to the individual researcher to decide how best to approach their specific subject area (Sen, 1999a). The methodologies developed drawing on the capability perspective require a different kind of questions to be asked about what constitutes quality and success in and through education. The capability approach asks us to reconsider what kind of equality we are pursuing and also whether equality is the most worthy goal of policy. 'The evaluation of inequality cannot but be purpose-dependent, and the important need is to provide an appropriate match between (1) the purposes of inequality evaluation, and (2) the choice of informational focus' (Sen, 1992:71).

Researchers and theorists alike have been grappling for some time with the issue of how to measure capabilities especially as they are less tangible than functionings. The measurement of capabilities requires a different kind of data and informational focus compared to the measurement of functionings and more traditional indicators of development. Kuklys concluded from her survey of the literature that few attempts had been made to operationalise Sen's concept of capabilities (Kuklys, 2005:9). She argued that, 'while theoretically attractive Sen's approach is difficult to operationalise empirically' (*ibid.*, 2005:7) and her observation echoes previous work by Sugden

(1993:1953) who highlighted disagreement about ‘the nature of the good life’ and how to value capability sets leading him to question how far Sen’s framework is operational. This position has led to suggestions that functionings may need to be evaluated as a proxy for capabilities (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007:16). Kuklys identified problems relating to deciding, firstly, what functionings are to be measured and, secondly, how this is to be done. Often research is driven by available datasets and limited funding and this is especially the case for large scale international research on development issues such as poverty, health and education. Not all participating nations being able to access new datasets. A further difficulty that has been noted is the difficulty of meeting informational requirements due to a lack of relevant social indicators many places (Alkire, 2005)ⁱ. Kuklys’ work also draws attention to the problem of comparing multi-dimensional measures and all of the issues she highlighted are compounded further when working in the ‘space of potential achieved functionings [capabilities]’ rather than achieved functionings (Kuklys, 2005: 7-8).

Research and the practical application of the CA in education has evolved rapidly over the last few years. A substantial body of methodology literature is building up with regard to the application of both Sen and Nussbaum’s capability approaches. Recent contributions from Walker and Unterhalter (2007), Lessmann et al (2011) and Biggeri et al (2011) offer particularly helpful insights.

Terzi argues, ‘the capability to be educated is fundamental and foundational to different capabilities to lead a good life’. She suggests a list of basic capabilities for educational functionings (2007:37). However, it is unclear whether Terzi’s list of basic capabilities for educational functionings has been derived through a democratic process. A capability perspective in education encourages evaluation to look beyond years spent in education or level of study to consider the risks and benefits to an individual’s well-being and agency as a result of participation in education. Vaughan argues that educational processes can be viewed as functionings in themselves as well as being precursors or conversion factors in the development of future potential functionings (Vaughan, 2007:114). For example, it could be argued that being able to read or write enables the expansion of other capabilities. However, such a measure

does not take account of whether the teaching materials are a form of indoctrination or even in the primary language of the students.

Achieved well-being tells us little about the distribution of resources, opportunities and an individual's capabilities in converting resources and opportunities into achievements (Sen, 1992). Different individuals may be more or less able to make use of the same resource. As Robeyns writes, 'not everyone has the same rate of return on education. Given the same amount and quality of education, not every child or adult will to the same degree be able to use this education for income-generating activities' (Robeyns, 2006:73). For example, Janet Raynor undertook research with adolescent girls in Bangladesh, vividly portraying some of the many real constraints acting on girls' capabilities to be educated. Barriers included personal safety whilst travelling to and from school, facilities for maintaining female hygiene at school and the reinforcement of the ascribed lower status of girls through schooling (Raynor in Walker & Unterhalter, 2007:186). The capability approach demands that quantitative indicators of educational achievement are substantiated with more detailed analysis of the nature of children's participation in educational processes in relation to notions of freedom, equity and social justice.

In another example of CA research on education, Melanie Walker, drawing on empirical data from a South African study, puts forward a provisional list of educational capabilities with a special focus on gender equality in South Africa (2007:189-90). She readily notes that the suggested capabilities are not weighted and the issue of valuation of the various capabilities (regarding, for example, autonomyⁱⁱ, knowledge and social relations) is not addressed. Thus, although progressing the idea of developing a list of capabilities for gender quality, Walker leaves fertile territory for further work.

Williams (2002) comments on the difficulty in ranking the capabilities people have reason to value. He argues it is difficult to show the same respect for all individuals whilst suggesting inequalities in some capabilities are more important than others. Sen has tried to show how ranking of capabilities may be possible using partial orderings but this has not convinced all his critics. For example, Qizilbash argues, 'Sen fails to give a complete account of interpersonal comparisons' (Qizilbash, 1996:

147). More recent work by Comim (2008), Anand et al (2009) and others shows more optimism in addressing the issue of making interpersonal comparisons based on both capabilities and functioningsⁱⁱⁱ.

Mario Biggeri (2007) has focussed on the child as whole rather than specifically formal educational experiences and he thus brings some useful insights to exploring the nature of child well-being from a capability perspective. Reporting findings from empirical research undertaken with children in India, Italy and Uganda, Biggeri identifies issues specifically relevant to children’s capabilities. These are broadly related to the influence of parents and other adults on the development of children’s capabilities, factors linked to the life cycle and maturity of children, and the potential of children to acts as agents of change in society in adulthood. Biggeri reports a useful attempt to operationalise the CA for work with children. Specifically the researchers attempt to overcome the issue of adapted preferences^{iv}. This is done by asking children to reason reflectively about the opportunities children in general should have throughout life, rather than asking about the individual’s own life.

In concluding this review of the empirical application of the CA to research in education, eight key questions that I think are useful in orientating the researcher are summarised in Table 4.1, together with some key points to consider.

Table 4.1 Summary of Key Issues for Research Using a Capability Approach

Research Issue	Points to Consider
1. What is the purpose of the inequality evaluation? (Sen, 1992)	This question can help to identify what kind of equality is of interest.
2. What is the choice of informational focus? (Sen, 1992)	Is the individual or a group the unit of evaluation? Sen identifies four possible points of informational focus relating to well-being freedom, well-being achievement, agency freedom and agency achievement.

3. Should there be a threshold for any specified capabilities?	<p>Sen and Nussbaum have divergent views.</p> <p>Threshold minimum may have an instrumental value in helping to inform policy and practice</p>
4. Are functionings to be measured?	<p>Which functionings?</p> <p>How will they be measured? (threshold, individual episodes, over time, repetition)</p> <p>What are the limitations?</p>
5. Are capabilities to be measured?	<p>Consider evaluating the capability to aspire (CTA) and the capability to realise (CTR) aspirations as starting points for evaluating an individual's full capability set.</p> <p>Consider language and mode of communication of concepts to research participants.</p>
6. Is functioning an adequate proxy for capability?	<p>Functionings do not reflect the individual's full capability set and the intrinsic freedom to choose.</p>
7. Is a list of context-specific capabilities to be generated?	<p>Possibly follow Robeyn's procedural approach (2005a).</p> <p>Create opportunity for democratic deliberation of suggested capabilities facilitating a strong voice for all stakeholders.</p>
8. Are capabilities to be weighted?	<p>How can the differential weighting of capabilities be justified?</p>

In the light of the issues raised, in the following section an overview is given of the methodology used for the two studies I undertook to explore the nature of aspirations and their connections with capabilities.

[A] Applying the Capability Approach

Applying the capability approach to the study of young people's aspirations was challenging because, firstly, the concepts and language were unfamiliar to the young people and educational practitioners with whom I worked. Therefore the research strategy needed to incorporate a preliminary phase that aimed to find a vocabulary for communicating the necessary capability concepts. Secondly, it was challenging to operationalise the concepts of capability and well-being freedom in relation to the research questions.

[B] Study S1 – Bradford.

The fieldwork for study S1 was undertaken at an 11-18 state comprehensive school in south Bradford in 2003-04. The pseudonym Northmead is used to refer to the school. The S1 study aimed to explore first of all how students perceived their aspirations and needs. Secondly, S1 aimed to further understanding of how widening participation policy could support the aspirations of students and their needs in achieving them.

[C] Background

Bradford has an unusual demographic profile with a high proportion of ethnic minorities and a large population from low socio-economic groups (SEGs). The population of Bradford is very multicultural with proportionally four times as many Asians and five times as many Muslims as in the national population. A very large number of school-leavers from Bradford who went on to higher education at the time of the S1 study remained in Bradford. The students either went to Bradford University, Bradford College or commuted to Leeds or Huddersfield whilst continuing to live at home with parents. In some schools over ninety per cent of students continuing to higher education stayed in Bradford (Bradford LEA, 2003). At the school where the S1 study took place, situated in South Bradford, a third of the students were eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) and this was typical of the local area. In the Sixth Form at the same school around two-thirds of students were eligible for Educational Maintenance Allowances (EMA) which are means-tested on parental

income. Bradford also has a relatively young population compared to national demography with considerably more young people under 30 (National Census, 2001). Relatively few students go on to higher education and unemployment is above average. Table 4.2 gives some basic national comparisons regarding employment, qualifications and home environment and, although now dated, this reflects the demography at the time of the S1 study (2003-04).

Table 4.2 Socioeconomic Data Comparison for the S1 Study.

Area	No qualifications 16-74yr olds	Employment of 16- 74 year olds	Homes without central heating
England	30%	60%	8.5%
Bradford	35%	56%	23%
South Bradford	38%	40%	N/A

(National Census, 2001)

[C] Population and Sampling

The population for S1 included all students in Year 10 (aged 14-15) and all Year 12 students (aged 16-17) studying for either Advanced Vocational Certificates of Education (AVCE's) or Advanced Subsidiary (AS) qualifications at Northmead. Year 10 was chosen because it included a wide cross-section of students in a year group prior to Year 11 when students can legally choose to leave school^v. It was likely that this cohort would have a range of needs and aspirations perhaps more diverse than in later years. Year 12 students who were studying AVCE and AS courses formed the target group for post-16 Aimhigher Widening Participation activities at Northmead and were chosen mainly to see if there were any significant differences in the dynamic of aspirations and needs between Year 10 and those students who stayed on beyond the compulsory school leaving age.

[C] Research Strategy

Initially informal discussions were held with students in years 9, 11 and 13 (aged 13-18) at Northmead in order to operationalise the concepts of 'aspiration' and 'need'. Students brainstormed the meanings of the terms and considered other words which

they felt had similar meaning. Further discussion revealed that students identified different types of aspirations and needs relating to the short, medium and long term. Students appeared to perceive different degrees of control over the achievement of aspirations and longer term objectives seemed to be associated with greater uncertainty. When considering what students need in order to achieve their aspirations I divided this into broadly two aspects. One aspect considered what factors may help an individual achieve their aspirations and the other considered what barriers may prevent an individual from achieving their aspirations.

[D] S1 Preliminary Group Interviews

Four group interviews were conducted at Northmead as pilot work for both the questionnaires and interviews. Group interviews (small groups of 6-8) were conducted with Year 10 and 12 students to explore their perceptions of the concepts of 'aspirations' and 'needs' and to facilitate the construction of a questionnaire suitable for this population. They provided useful experience in communicating with young people and 'tuning in' to their sociocultural environment. The groups consisted of six to eight students each, one male and one female group from each year group. A semi-structured questioning approach was used and the emphasis was on the exchanges between myself and the interviewees as well the exchanges between participants. The aim was to explore the concepts of aspirations and needs by encouraging free group discussion (Litoselliti, 2003).

[D] S1 Main Study

A self-completion questionnaire was designed to gather data on how students perceived their aspirations and needs in relation to the development and achievement of their aspirations. A range of variables were used as indicators of socioeconomic background defined by eligibility for FSM^{vi}, receipt of EMA and whether a parent had been to university (Kysel, 1992:88, Foskett et al, 2003). This was seen as preferable to other methods such as postcodes and parental occupation since quite a few students have more than one address and occupations are notoriously difficult to link to income and social class. The survey was completed by all students in Year 10 at the school and also all Year 12 studying for Advanced Vocational Certificates of Education (AVCE's) and/or Advanced Subsidiary (A/S) qualifications as described above. It aimed to explore student perceptions of aspirations and needs at a broad

level and also to identify individual students for in-depth interview. The survey was comprised of mainly quantitative Likert-scale and fixed response questions with a small number of open questions (Oppenheim, 1996). In total 239 students completed the S1 survey which generated an 82% response rate. 53% of the sample were female and 47% male. 31% of the survey participants were eligible for FSM and 71% were eligible for EMA which are both means-tested as described earlier. The relatively high proportions of students receiving benefits in the sample population is indicative of the multiple socioeconomic deprivation of the catchment area for Northmead. Individual interviews with Year 12 students aimed to follow-up on the survey data to enrich understanding of how students perceived their aspirations and needs in achieving them.

[B] S2 Study - Sheffield

S2 concentrated on identifying the factors that reduce or enhance an individual's well-being freedom and hence their capability in relation to realising aspirations. Four indicators were identified which could illuminate factors which influence an individual's well-being freedom. They include, firstly, the perceived agency of the individual; secondly, the range and significance of perceived barriers and constraints; thirdly, the range and significance of perceived needs and, fourthly, the adaptation of preferences by young people.

The S2 study was conducted in Sheffield, England from 2006-08. The study aimed to understand the nature of participants' aspirations and the factors that helped and hindered the transformation of aspirations into capabilities in response to widening participation policy in England. The S2 study built on the findings of the S1 study. Further key aims were to learn more about young people's experiences and participation in education in relation to notions of equity and inclusion. There was a particular focus on students' ideas about HE and their decision-making processes regarding post-school and college transitions.

[C] Background

Sheffield is a large city with a population of over 500,000 situated in South Yorkshire, England. There are two universities in the city, the University of Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam University. Together they have a total student population of

over 50,000. Sheffield has an industrial past, becoming famous for the production of steel and cutlery which was exported worldwide before falling into economic decline in the 1980s and early 1990s. Over the last few decades the city has redeveloped with new businesses being attracted to the area. Like other large cities in England, Sheffield is socio-economically divided with affluent residential areas situated in the south-west of the city and households with multiple social deprivation being predominantly situated in the north-east of the city. Sheffield was selected for the S2 study because the contrast between the two sides of the city is more extreme than elsewhere. It was felt this provided a strong context to explore the generic and unique features of aspiration formation and their transformation into capabilities. In 2005, Higher Education Council for England (HEFCE) published a report on ‘Young Participation in Higher Education. The report showed that the Yorkshire and Humberside region, where the city of Sheffield is situated, nationally had the second lowest Young Participation Rate (YPR) including all forms of HE^{vii}. Research by Kay and Walker (2006), highlighted that Brightside ‘had the lowest participation rate in England’ whilst ‘Sheffield Hallam constituency had the third highest participation rate in England’ (Kay & Walker, 2006:6). Young people in Sheffield Brightside were much more likely than their Sheffield Hallam counterparts to be eligible for means-tested Free School Meals (an indicator of socio-economic status) and much more likely to have recognized Special Educational Needs. Less than one in three 15 year olds in Sheffield Brightside achieved five or more A*-C’s at GCSE in 2005 compared to more than 2 in 3 of their Sheffield Hallam counterparts (Kay *et al*, 2006). HEFCE estimated that in this region only around 1 in 4 young people went on to HE at age 18 or 19 and a significant number of these did not achieve a qualification at this level (HEFCE, 2005). In the north-east constituency of Brightside, only 6% of 18 year olds accepted places in HE in 2002-04 despite this area having 19% of the Sheffield Year 11 cohort^{viii}. By stark contrast, just 12% of the city’s Year 11 cohort lived in the south-west constituency of Sheffield Hallam and yet 33% of 18 year olds from this area accepted HE places in 2002-04 (www.dfes.gov.uk , accessed 12 June 2006).

[C] S2 Population and Sampling

At the time of the S2 study (2006-08), the geographical layout of post-16 educational institutions in Sheffield was such that the only schools with sixth forms were situated in the south-west of the city in Sheffield Hallam and the neighbouring areas. The

north-east of the city had two large sixth form colleges which both had links with secondary schools in the Brightside and Hillsborough areas. Thus, although students could choose where to study, the vast majority attended their local school sixth form or college reflecting the socioeconomic make-up of the surrounding areas.

The S2 study involved four schools and colleges. Sites included two school sixth forms in the Sheffield Hallam area (Goldsmiths and Speedwell) and two Sixth form colleges in the Brightside area (Riverdale and Sherwood). The sites cannot be seen as statistically representative of secondary schools in Sheffield generally or indeed elsewhere. However the aim of the S2 study was to provide more detailed understandings of what I have termed, the ‘capability to aspire’ (CTA) and the ‘capability to realise’ (CTR) aspirations by looking at these two contrasting areas within the same city.

[C] S2 Research Strategy

Focus groups, a large-scale survey, group and individual interviews were used to learn more about the aspirations of sixth formers and the opportunities and support they have in exploring and pursuing these aspirations. Using the Sen-Bourdieu analytical framework, the findings were considered in relation to current UK government policy to widen participation in higher education.

[B] Preliminary S2 Study

The group interviews were conducted as pilot work for both the questionnaire survey and interviews. Bogdan and Biklen (1992:100) have found that group interviews can be useful in generating a wider range of responses than in individual interviews and this was what was required for the development of the survey. This method has also been found useful for working with young people where the aim is to encourage participants to, ‘challenge and extend each other’s ideas and to introduce new ideas into the discussion’ (Cohen et al, 2003:287).

The group interviews provided the opportunity to become familiar with the research sites and to talk informally with students and staff about my research area. It was important to develop a common language for communicating with young people of different abilities about the concepts I wanted to explore in my research relating to,

for example, notions of aspiration, opportunity and barriers to achieving aspirations. The group interviews provided useful experience in communicating with young people and ‘tuning in’ to their socio-cultural environment. In terms of my substantive research topics I was able to learn a great deal about the kind of terminology and questioning that the young people could relate to. For example, the role of Connexions Advisors^{ix} emerged as a major feature of young people’s lives at school or college in terms of addressing (or not addressing) their needs in relation to their aspirations. The data generated helped in the construction of the main survey instrument by providing insights into appropriate language for the age and ability groups targeted by the research.

In total, 84 students took part in group interviews for S2 made up of 59 Year 12 students and 25 Year 10 students. This included 53 females and 31 males. 28 were from Sheffield Hallam and 56 were from Brightside and the surrounding area. The interviews were conducted over a four-week period from mid-June to mid-July 2006. In the group interviews I explored different strategies to learn about how young people see their futures (and hence their aspirations) based on previous work in this area. I explored young people’s perceptions of their ideal and expected futures (Marjoribanks, 1998); their possible, impossible and feared selves (Oyserman & Markus, 1990) and their hopes and fears for the future (Seginer, 1988). As an introduction to the group interviews I used different forms of stimulus material to facilitate this process and an example is shown in Appendix I. Drawing on work by Caviglioli and Harris (2001) I also used mind-mapping to encourage young people to think about different topics. Participants were given a sheet of paper with just the think bubble and asked to map out their ideas in note form. I have included an example of a higher education mind map in Appendix II. I have previously found that young people often feel more confident speaking in a group situation if they have been given a little time to gather their thoughts initially. I used a semi-structured questioning approach with the emphasis on the exchanges between the interviewees and myself as well the exchanges between participants. I was interested to see what areas the young people introduced in relation to the research areas and tried to be flexible in response to their contributions. The overall aims were to explore factors influencing the development and realisation of participants’ aspirations and to find a tangible way of assessing capabilities in relation to aspiration.

Three school sixth forms agreed to take part in the pilot. Sixth Form pastoral staff were each asked to obtain individual survey responses from around 20 young people in Year 12. In total around 60 surveys were completed. The schools were situated outside of the research area to avoid sample contamination with one situated in Bradford, one in South Wales and one in Essex. This was convenience sampling based on personal contacts with school sixth forms but included contrasting socio-economic areas reflecting the contrasting research sites used for the main case study.

[C] Main S2 Study

A sample of 580 young people took part in the survey drawn from the two schools with sixth forms in south-west Sheffield (jointly referred to as Westside) and two sixth form colleges in north-west Sheffield (jointly referred to as Eastside). Over 50% of the year cohort in each institution were included in the sample and the samples aimed to be broadly institutionally representative in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic factors, ability and intention to continue to HE. A survey response rate of over 90% was achieved in each institution.

In order to generate possible questionnaire items relating to the S2 aims questions used in previous research were considered^x (Farmer, 2003; National Centre for Social Research, 2002, 2003; Hart, 2004; Yeshanew *et al*, 2005; Equal Opportunities Commission, 2006). The questionnaire consisted mostly of closed questions with a few open questions. The closed questions mainly required students to give responses using a Likert scale. In order to assess socioeconomic background a range of variables were used as 'traditional' indicators defined by eligibility for FSM, receipt of EMA and whether a parent had been to university (Kysel, 1992; Foskett, Dyke & Maringe, 2004). This work was reviewed by considering a variety of forms of social difference rather than solely focussing on social class. Marjoribanks (1998) work and the HEFCE study of Young Participation (2005) where much broader ranges of indicators were helpful in informing the development of a number of other social difference indicators. Alongside traditional indicators of socio-economic status such as FSM eligibility, for example, questionnaire items were included to indicate variations in young participant's involvement in paid work, personal income from paid work and domestic labour. I also sought information on the accumulation of family cultural

capital in terms of familial experience of HE. The questionnaire was refined following piloting in three school sixth forms situated outside of the research area to avoid sample contamination (N=60).

The student questionnaire was used to identify individual students from each year group who were willing to volunteer to participate in individual follow-up interviews in the main study. A combination of 23 male and female participants including some planning to go on to high education and others who were not took part in the individual interview phase.

In 2007-08 interviews were undertaken in (during the academic year following the survey completion) and consisted of a short telephone interview. In some cases communication was mainly by email since the young people had left school or college since the start of the study. Interviews aimed to find out what individual interviewees had actually gone on to do once they left school or college. It was difficult to contact all young people who had take part in the original interviews but a response rate of over 50% was achieved.

[C] Reporting Data From the S2 Study

Each of the four institutions in the S2 study was given a pseudonym. The two schools with sixth forms in the affluent south-west of Sheffield are referred to as 'Goldsmiths' and 'Speedwell'. Together, they are jointly referred to as, 'Westside'. The two colleges situated in areas of multiple social deprivation in the north-east of Sheffield are referred to as, 'Sherwood' and 'Riverdale'. Together the two colleges are jointly referred to as, 'Eastside'.

In reporting data from the S2 study the term 'significant' is used throughout the analysis to denote statistically significant differences between the specified groups. See Appendix III for a table of statistical analyses carried out on the S2 survey data. For ease of reference Appendix IV contains a summary of the 23 interviewees that participated in the S2 individual interviews. Information is given regarding their institution, HE intentions, whether they are eligible for EMA or FSM (both means-tested based on family income) and ethnicity.

[C] Overview of the S2 Dataset

Over 90% of the survey sample (N=580) was aged from 17-18 years with the remaining students being 19 years old and mainly based in the two colleges. The sample was fairly evenly split in terms of gender with 45% males and 55% females. The majority of students (72%) described their ethnicity as 'White UK' with the remaining individuals spread across several ethnic groups including 8% who described themselves as 'Asian' and 6% who described themselves as 'Black'.

The ethnic groups used in the analysis are White, Black, Asian and Other Ethnic Groups. These groupings were determined after discussion with the group interviewees. There was significant variation in the mix of young people from different ethnic backgrounds in the four institutions studied. The variable for ethnicity was recoded into four main ethnic groups including self-defined Whites, Blacks, Asians and a fourth category of all individuals who had identified themselves as being from other ethnic groups. Missing values were omitted from the calculations.

Almost half (48%) of the general population indicated that they were eligible for the means tested EMA. 9% of the survey sample reported that they were eligible for Free School Meals with significant variation across the institutions. Regarding family educational background, two out of three young people in the overall sample knew other members of their family who had studied at university. However, less than one in three students in the general sample indicated having a father who had been to university and the figure was similar with regard to maternal education.

The following three chapters discuss findings from the S1 and S2 studies. Chapter Five concentrates on the findings related to understanding the nature of aspirations and their formation. Chapter Six connects with Chapter Five by examining the conversion factors influencing the transformation of aspirations into capabilities. Then in Chapter Seven consideration is given to the factors influencing young people's agency in choosing HE or alternative pathways once they leave school or college.

ⁱ See Comim *et al* (2008) Part II for further discussions relating to operationalising the CA.

ⁱⁱ For contrasting views on the idea of autonomy see, Hand, M. (2006) Against Autonomy as an Educational Aim, *Oxford Review of Education*, 32(4), pp.535-550.

ⁱⁱⁱ See Alkire (2005) and Part III in Volume I of Basu and Kanbur (2009) for further discussion of interpersonal comparisons.

^{iv} See Elster, J. (1983) and Bridges, D. (2006) on adapted preferences.

^v AVCE stands for, ‘Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education’ and A/S stands for ‘Advanced Subsidiary qualification’.

^{vi} FSM is a means-tested benefit available to children whose parental income falls below £15,000 pa.

EMA is a means-tested benefit of £10-£30 per week available to young people in full-time post-16 education where their parental earnings fall below £30,000pa.

^{vii} The YPR refers to those young people entering HE either at age 18 or 19.

^{viii} Year 11 pupils were aged 15-16 years and in their last year of school prior to reaching the legal leaving age of 16, at the time of the study.

^{ix} The Connexions service is a public service for young people aged 13-19 in England. It is also available to young people up to the age of 25 if they have learning difficulties or disabilities. The Connexions Service. Connexions Advisors offer information, advice and guidance to young people to help with decisions relating to careers and learning. They are offer advice on other matters, for example, relating to work, health and relationships. For further information see www.connexions-direct.com.

^x See the ‘question bank’ at www.qb.soc.surrey.ac.uk/surveys.