There's no place like home education: A narrative-based analysis of the personal experiences of work and employment of home educated people

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This thesis is submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

December 2023

Department of Organisation, Work and Technology

Declaration

This thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in substantially the same form for the award of a higher degree elsewhere.

Acknowledgements

I would first like to extend my gratitude to each of the 31 people who agreed to participate in my research. This thesis could not have come to fruition without you. The willingness and the level of depth regarding your lives, which you shared with me, were nothing short of remarkable.

Secondly, it is important for me to acknowledge the instrumental role my dad has played in this thesis. It was his suggestion, 18 years ago, to home educate me because of what we as a family felt was the solution to several schools having failed to educate me suitably. I remember telling him during my 'PE class' how I was going to get a PhD one day, but little did I know, the PhD I was going to write was going to be about the experiences of home educated people. Therefore, I have the utmost gratitude to my dad for providing me with the inspiration to carry out this research. I have always felt you were (and still are) the best teacher I ever had.

Thirdly, to my supervisors, Dr. Kay Greasley and Professor Pete Thomas, it goes without saying that the dedication, encouragement, and support you have shown me over the past 6 years have been greatly appreciated. Your kindness, patience, and how you have often gone above and beyond your roles to support me at what have been some immensely testing times for me outside of the PhD programme have meant the absolute world to me.

Fourthly, I would also like to acknowledge my gratitude to my mum. My mum has been the unfortunate person who has had to endure all my bad moods and depressive episodes to get this thesis to the finish line. While no one can really understand what a person goes through when writing a thesis, you have tried your very best to understand and keep me motivated. Thank you for always being there for me and believing that I could do this, even when I didn't believe in myself.

Fifthly, to all the people named in this thesis, whether you are a family member, a friend, or a colleague, please know that you are named in my thesis because, without you, my journey through life so far would have been considerably more challenging. I am the kind of person that never forgets when someone has been a source of support,

influential, or done something that has in some way shaped my life positively, and featuring your name in my thesis is one small way I can acknowledge and repay you.

Finally, to my dear late grandmother, who would always say to me, "Rachael, I do hope I am still here when you finish your PhD; I'm so proud of you." Sadly, you didn't get to finish this journey with me, but please know your wholehearted support has meant so much to me over the years. I would also like to thank you for your final gift to me in adopting 'Snaps' the cat, as she has been the absolute best source of comfort and motivation in the last few months of writing. While Snaps will not be able to read or acknowledge this, it is important, none the less, that she be thanked for all her cuddles and headbutts that have helped to de-stress me after extremely long periods of intense writing! Thank you, my little one.

"Doing nothing often leads to the very best kind of something."

-Winnie the Pooh

Abstract

Little research exists on the personal experiences of home educated people in the workplace. This research aims to explore those personal experiences in various work and employment contexts, to develop an understanding of the role home education may have played in shaping these experiences. The study adopts a qualitative narrative-based methodology to capture a range of personal experiences and personal stories of work and employment. A Bourdieusian framework is used to develop a systematic understanding of these experiences, with the narrative accounts demonstrating the interrelatedness and significance of their home education for their subsequent experiences of work and employment. The study recounts varied individual personal experiences but also reveals some shared themes which include: The role of home education in shaping respondents' sense of 'self', othering and judgement, the haunting quality of the home education experience, and the experience of the 'game' of work and employment. The study reveals how home educated people experience work and employment in a multitude of ways with some degree of similarity shared in these experiences that they attribute to their home education. It also reveals how home educated people do consider their personal experiences of home education to be significant to how they experience work and employment.

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1. Introduction

[Abstract from research diary]

November 5th, 2021

Yesterday I attended the CIPD exhibition—not as a student but as a member of staff. I was also invited to join my colleagues after checking out the exhibition for 'lunch'. I agreed to join, being eager to experience the world outside of being 'the PhD student' given that I am now a member of staff. On the one hand, I was excited, but on the other, I felt daunting anxiety about having to navigate what felt like an entirely new world to me.

At the exhibition, my first reflection of the day was how I felt somewhat overdressed in my dress and velvet dress coat. This feeling and my perception of it changed when the environment in which I was in changed. When we arrived at the restaurant's entrance, I felt completely at ease with my choice because it seemed to reflect the culture and atmosphere of the restaurant. I felt that, at least in this context, no one would be able to tell that I didn't 'belong' because my outfit and demeanour concealed the complex and conflicting emotions I was internalising.

After concluding that I at least 'looked' like I 'belonged', I now felt I needed to 'read' the situation in terms of who was paying. I remember being very cautious about what I ordered, on the assumption that we would each pay our own part of the bill. It turned out that the lunch was being paid for on the departmental credit card because the lunch was part of an approved work trip. I didn't even know such a card existed, and I certainly didn't expect the department to pay for my food. I just recall feeling naïve and so glad I didn't verbalise this internal questioning to colleagues. If I had done so, I certainly would have felt even more like an out-of-place fool than I already did.

This feeling of being a fool continued throughout lunch, particularly when trying to join in the conversations. I remember thinking how I had absolutely no grounding in how to 'read' the social situation. Did I try to insert myself into the conversation? Did I just sit and wait for someone to include me? I was used to talking to my supervisors about research (but this wasn't the context for that), I had tended not to talk too much to another colleague because I had never figured out 'how to' approach him (but knew I needed to at some point), and the other colleague present we had not really had much opportunity to speak outside of course admin purposes (so, what do I say?). I can't quite explain my decision, but I chose to mostly sit there in silence,

observing the conversation and only contributing when I felt certain I wouldn't sound like an uneducated 'fool' or just plain 'weirdo'.

Despite these complex and conflicting emotions, I did recognise how far I had come since my home education, especially considering how my extended family had expressed to my father, "You must be mad because she's going to achieve nothing; you're taking her future away from her." I reflected on how these expressions of madness couldn't be any further from the truth because I was educationally and professionally 'successful' and being invited to a fancy lunch wearing middle-class clothing with a couple of professors and a senior lecturer was evident of this.

The reason for writing this diary entry is because, on reflection, I would attribute some of what I was feeling yesterday to having been home educated. Not knowing how to 'read' a social situation and what was considered 'appropriate' topics to talk about are two things I strongly attribute to being home educated. I feel as though my identity is never fully aligned with the social world; I now find myself in it, but it is no longer fully aligned with the social world I've come from. This reflection has raised more questions than given me answers, such as wanting to understand if these experiences are mine alone or if other home educated people have similar ones.

I begin with an abstract from my research diary because of its relevance to the central aim of this thesis. I came to this research with a personal interest in home education because I have been home educated myself and have had employment experiences that I attribute to being home educated. The event referred to took place during a period of intense reading to work out what my theoretical framework was going to be. I needed to take into consideration the complexities of my participants personal experiences and how difficult it had been in some employment situations for them to 'reconcile' their home educated backgrounds with professional success. These ambivalent feelings associated with possessing two different sets of experiences that might not align are one of the central themes of this thesis, alongside how work and employment are experienced more generally.

The study focuses on how home educated people experience employment to develop an understanding of the ways in which they see their experiences of home education as significant or not to their experiences of employment. Particularly, I focus on the

ways in which people attribute meaning to their personal experiences of both employment and home education, as well as the connections they draw between these two sets of central life course experiences.

The study also seeks to develop new ways of understanding how previously home educated people negotiate who they are in employment contexts considering their alternatively educated backgrounds, which are not easily reconcilable with the structures and practices of employment. The thesis draws upon a narrative-based approach employing life story interviews that enable engaged and reflective responses from the participants involved in the research. Specifically, this method provides the research with a way to focus on the voices of this particular group of people, whose voices are so often undervalued and underrepresented in academic and wider societal debates (Fensham-Smith, 2021a; Nelson, 2013).

1.2 Research Context

In the UK, the Education Act (1996) stipulates how children must receive an 'efficient full-time education' whether that be through regular school attendance or 'otherwise' (Department for Education, 2022). It is further stipulated how the subsequent education received must also be 'suitable' for their age, ability, aptitude and for any special educational needs or disabilities that they might have (Education Act, 1996). Most children receive their education through regular attendance at school such as by being enrolled in state schools, private schools, or academies amongst other official educational institutions. Legal alternatives such as Elective Home Education (EHE) exist for those who opt for education 'otherwise'. EHE involves parents educating their children outside the formal educational system, taking the responsibility for 'suitably' educating their children (Department for Education, 2022). In exercising their right to educate their children 'otherwise', parents and their children often come to the attention of Governmental actors, media agencies, and members of the public who seemingly are interested in questioning their decision-making to home educate. Questions often relate to how their children will gain qualifications and employment post-secondary education or how will they be socialised, if they do not go to school, when school is seen as the norm for preparing children for their adult lives in the workplace (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Willis, 1977; Ingram and Abrahams, 2016; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). Suissa (2006) acknowledged how within the political

and public spheres education has come to be indistinguishable from the concept of schooling in that there are no 'suitable' alternatives seen within the education narrative. Pattison argues that home education has tended to be labelled as 'other' (2018, pg.55), rather than as a legal form of education (Department for Education, 2022), meaning it is often viewed publicly and politically as a subordinate and sub-standard version of education (Pattison, 2015). Lees refers to this labelling, as home educators and their children being 'marginalised by ignorance' (2014, pg.46), with home educated children and people being paid little, if any, societal or academic attention (Fensham-Smith, 2021a; Nelson, 2013; Monk, 2009), their voices being unheard, and their experiences being largely underexplored and undervalued.

In recent years, there has been an increase in attention being given to home education by Governmental actors such as the House of Commons Education Committee (2021) because of the rise in the number of families choosing to home educate their children, with the estimated figure rising from 37,500 in 2015-16 (ADCS Report, 2016) to 116,300 in 2022-23 (Gov.uk, 2023). The most recent rise can be partially attributed to implications stemming from the covid-19 pandemic which saw families being forced into a form of home education for various periods between 2020-21 (BBC News, 2021). Amongst the recent attention was the 'Strengthening Home Education' report which recommended that the Department for Education urgently commissions and publishes systematic and longitudinal research, which explores the suitability of home education for providing children with equal access to further education, training, or employment as their schooled peers. Particularly, their recommendation included, acknowledging the growing need for research that 'maps the long-term experiences and transitions of previously home educated people, capturing the needs, voices and experiences of home educated children and people from different socio-economic and minority ethnic backgrounds' (Fensham-Smith, 2021a, pg.31) to develop an understanding of whether home education 'suitably' prepares children for the next stage (e.g. employment).

While prior research (Webb, 1989; Nelson, 2013; Ryan, 2019) has attempted to develop some understanding of how home educated people experience work and employment; there remains a considerable gap in what is currently known and what could be known about the personal experiences of home educated people post-

education. Research to date has also largely been conducted within the field of Education Studies, with a 'relatively narrow range of themes' having been researched (Knowles and Muchmore, 1995, pg.36), and little of them relating to employment experiences. For example, there has been research carried out on understanding the parental motivations, characteristics and rationales for choosing to home educate (Mayberry and Knowles, 1989; Ray, 1990; Collum, 2005; Merry and Karsten, 2010; Rothermel, 2003; Neuman, 2018), and several studies have focused on the educational and socialization outcomes of home education (Mayberry and Knowles, 1989; Meighan, 1995; Medlin, 2000, 2013; Beck, 2008; Ray, 2013; Lawy, 2014; Murphy, 2014; Neuman and Guterman, 2016, 2017), but there is little research on how home educated people experience and gain employment. There has also been no research carried out in the field of organisation studies looking specifically at home educated people in work and employment contexts. The research reported in this thesis therefore aims to address this knowledge gap by exploring how work and employment is experienced by home educated people to contribute to providing an understanding of the role their home education plays in these personal experiences of work and employment.

1.3 Objectives of the Research

The main objective of this study is to explore how home educated people experience work and employment by drawing on the theoretical work of Bourdieu, and Bourdieusian-inspired writers such as Ingram and Abrahams (2016). It does this by offering an in-depth empirical analysis of the storied experiences of work and employment of people who were home educated to provide understanding of how they gain, approach, progress within, and navigate work and employment, as well as how they interact with and perceive other actors within work and employment contexts.

My positionality, as a home educated person, was also important for this research, as it shaped my reasons for choosing this topic to research. I wanted to understand whether my experiences of work and employment having been home educated and the significance that I attribute to being home educated for how I've experienced the workplace are mine alone, different, or shared to some extent by other home educated people. Hence, within my research, I wanted to prioritise the voices and personal experiences of home educated respondents, who are often invisible within academic

and societal debates (Nelson, 2013; Fensham-Smith, 2021a; Webb, 1999) because of their alternative education.

Whilst my overarching objective is to explore the personal experiences of work and employment of home educated people and their relationship to their personal experiences of home education, I am also interested in what implications might emerge for home educated people in employment contexts given their atypical educational backgrounds. As such, this research objective can be further defined through the following research questions:

1. How do home educated people experience work and employment?
2. Do home educated people consider their experiences of home education as significant in shaping their employment experiences?
3. What are the implications of the empirical findings for theory and policy?

While these objectives have influenced my research approach and data collection, I also wanted to be guided by how the respondents storied their experiences so that the data and findings of this research reflected their personal experiences and perceptions, rather than my own. Their voices need to be heard if we are to fully appreciate the role that having an education gained outside of the main institutional structures of school can have on how people experience the next stage in their lives, given the centrality of the institutional structures of school in preparing young people for the world of work and employment (Bowles and Gintis, 1976). This of course raises questions regarding the importance of also developing an understanding of not just how home educated people experience work and employment, with a consideration of whether they consider their experiences of home education as significant in shaping their experiences of work and employment, but whether there are implications for these experiences from having been home educated.

1.4 Research Positionality

As touched upon in the diary extract at the opening of this thesis, I come to this research as a previously home educated person, which means my positionality as a researcher inevitably does shape the processes behind this research and the choices made. Before starting to embark on an academic career path, I was home educated for approximately eight years, with my father taking on the responsibility for my

education. This decision was made in part because of the perceived failings of schools in our local area at satisfactorily educating me and partly because of not fitting in with the structures and rules embedded in the school environment. As I aged and began experiencing work and employment, I often found myself questioning certain rules within the places I was working, and quite often I also felt out of place with my colleagues and generally in the work environment. Over time, this has changed depending on the industry and role I was in. To illustrate this, I have felt more like I belong since changing industries to working in a role within academia than when I worked in a direct marketing role in the past. I therefore share many characteristics with the participants who participated in my research. For example, most of the respondents discussed having had issues in formal schooling, notably in secondary education, which led to the decision to home educate, as well as having re-experienced some of these issues in particular work and employment contexts.

My insider status was therefore useful in giving me a way to access the home education community, but it also came with implications for how my research was designed and the conclusions formulated (Bryman, 2012), which I will explore in more detail later in *Methodology* (Chapter 4). Therefore, while my research is focused on the work and employment experiences of home educated people, as told through their voices, I am aware that my voice is also tied to the research.

Also, of consideration is how this research is theoretically positioned and the journey taken towards the Bourdieusian framework that was ultimately adopted for understanding the findings of this thesis. The thesis was originally considered the role of identity theory in understanding the personal experiences of home educated people. For example, through identity theory, I initially viewed home educated people as people whose personal experiences reside outside of the 'norm' (Kenny, Whittle, and Willmott, 2011) because of their atypical educational trajectories. This perspective led me down a Foucauldian framing route through considering his analytical tools of 'normalising judgement', 'hierarchical observation', and 'the examination' (Foucault, 1977). The rationale was how societal discourses position people into occupying certain subject positions, which both enable and constrain people by structuring their senses of self (Kenny et al., 2011). People who have been home educated might not subscribe to dominant discourses, meaning they might reject or negotiate their

positionalities in the workplace. Identity and Foucault, as a theoretical framing for the thesis, proved to be too narrow of a focus when analysing the data collected from the initial home educated participants. I found that these concepts and the research that currently exists in these areas could not explain the complexity and diversity in personal experiences that had been emerging from the life story interviews. This meant that I had to circle back to the literature in a reiterative manner to explore which theoretical lens would be the most appropriate for framing the thesis and explaining the emerging data.

In revisiting the literature, I came across the theoretical work of Ingram and Abrahams (2016) in which they discussed their adaption of Bourdieu's concept of the 'cleft habitus' to explore how people respond to being 'out of place' in the social world. This felt like it explained considerably a lot of what was emerging from the early data analysis, which led me to explore Bourdieu's work in more depth before deciding on whether this would be an appropriate framing. Bourdieu's theory of practice consisting of 'habitus', 'capital', and 'field' in particular demonstrated utility for explaining what the early data analysis was highlighting. At this point, it seemed logical and justified to abandon the original theoretical framing and adopt a Bourdieusian framework consisting of his 'theory of practice' analytical tools that are also informed by Ingram and Abrahams work on 'cleft habitus'. For a detailed account of how the framework was redeveloped during the initial data analysis process see *Methodology* (section 4.4.3, Chapter 4).

1.5 Thesis Outline

The thesis is organised into 7 chapters with the first being *Introduction* (Chapter 1). I will now outline the remaining chapters in order with a brief overview of what each one focuses on.

The *Literature Review* (Chapter 2) contextualises the thesis within current academic debates highlighting the considerable lack of existing debate on the personal experiences of work and employment of home educated people. The literature review aims to do this by synthesising debates from the field of educational research to draw out what little is known about home education and employment. It also draws on the notable debate in the field of sociology of education relating to how school prepares

children and young people for their adult roles in the workplace to highlight the importance of experiences of school for subsequent social world experiences.

The *Theoretical Framework* (Chapter 3) defines the theoretical underpinnings used to understand and analyse the data. The framework first draws upon Bourdieu's theory of practice and defines my use of the three underpinning concepts of habitus, capital, and field. The chapter then draws further upon Bourdieu's work to define its use of his lesser-known concept of cleft habitus. In drawing on cleft habitus, the chapter also draws on Bourdieusian-inspired work from Ingram and Abrahams to further the utility of the concept.

The *Methodology* (Chapter 4) discusses how the study was carried out in more detail, including the epistemological and ontological choices framing the research. It outlines the narrative-based methodology used in tandem with the life story method of interviewing to collect rich qualitative data. It further details how the data was analysed and discusses in some detail my positionality in the research because of sharing several characteristics and experiences with my participants. The chapter also discusses the practical ethical considerations relating to consent and handling of sensitive information.

Work and Employment Experiences (Chapter 5) introduces the first of two empirical data chapters by providing an in-depth exploration of how home educated people have storied experiencing work and employment. The chapter explores in-depth four themes which include: the role of home education in shaping respondents' sense of 'self' and career choices, the haunting quality of the home education experience, othering and judgement, and the experience of the 'game' of work and employment including knowing the rules of the 'game'. It explores these themes through drawing on quotations and vignettes from the interviews.

Responding to a Cleft Habitus (Chapter 6) introduces the second of two empirical data chapters by building on the findings and themes presented in *Work and Employment Experiences* (Chapter 5) to further reveal how the haunting quality impacts on how home educated peoples' experiences of the 'game' of work and employment. The focus of *Responding to a Cleft Habitus* however is predominantly on demonstrating how home educated people respond when they are faced with a disruption to their

home educated habitus through movement in and across various sub-fields of work and employment. It also reveals the long-term implications that such a disruption causes for their subsequent employment choices as well as their emotional and physical wellbeing.

Conclusions (Chapter 7) first provides an overview of what each chapter discussed and aimed to achieve before summarising and discussing the findings of the two previously outlined empirical chapters. It then outlines what the three main contributions of the thesis are. The chapter then offers critical reflections on my positionality throughout the research process, as well as indicating what the limitations of this thesis are. Finally, the thesis is drawn to a close with suggestions for future research, such as exploring the transitions of home educated people into work and employment, amongst others.

2. Literature Review: Socialisation, Education, and Employment

2.1 Introduction

As outlined in the previous chapter, *Introduction,* the research objective of this study is to explore how home educated people experience work and employment and to understand, from their perspectives, if their home education is significant in shaping these experiences. Furthermore, this study also aims to develop an understanding of what implications might emerge for home educated people in employment contexts, given their atypical personal experiences of education. Hence the research objectives will be developed throughout the literature review through the discussions around the key debates within the literature and the points of departure for this thesis.

Research on home education is a large field within the discipline of educational research covering a range of topics from pedagogy through motivations for home education to the legalities of home education (see Rothermel, 2003; Bhopal and Myers, 2016; Pattison, 2015; Collum, 2005; Neuman and Guterman, 2016; Neuman and Aviram, 2003) but despite the range of topics, there has been a relatively small amount of research which has focused on the personal experiences of work and employment of home educated people (see Webb, 1989, 1999; Knowles and Muchmore, 1995; Ray, 2004; Neven Van Pelt et al, 2009). In exploring the organisation studies literature to understand how home education has been researched within this discipline, the search found only one study focused on the impact on employment for mothers who had to home educate their children during the covid-19 pandemic (Petts, Carlson and Pepin, 2021), but there were no matches for studies focused on how home educated people have experienced work and employment. Literature on work-readiness was also considered as a way to explore experiences of work and employment of home educated people, however, despite there being some relevance in the work-readiness literature (see Winterton and Turner, 2019; Caballero, Walker and Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, 2011), the focus of this literature seemingly was on college and university graduates preparedness for work and employment, which contrasted how this thesis was interested in exploring home educated peoples longer-term experiences across their work and employment trajectories, not just their transition into work and employment for the first time. Work-

readiness is recognised, however, later in this review to acknowledge that it is one element through which children are socialised by schools, but it is not the main way this thesis approaches how children are socialised within the education system. In attempting to understand the phenomenon my work connects with sociology of education literature to explain the connection between school and the workplace (Bowles and Gintis, 1976, 2002; Bourdieu, 1973; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Ingram and Abrahams, 2016).

The literature review begins by defining home education, before discussing the reasons why families and individuals choose to home educate. The literature review then gives an overview of current research into home education, which includes a critical commentary on the nature of existing studies. The final section focuses on reviewing existing sociology of education literature on the correspondence between school and the workplace, to highlight the importance of school as a socialisation process for preparing children for their future adult roles as workers. More importantly, this section reviews the current literature in the field of educational research on home education and employment to demonstrate how little is known about home educated peoples personal experiences in their adult lives.

2.2 Defining Home Education

In the UK, the official term to describe the practice in which children are removed from the school system and brought into the home to receive an education is known as, 'Elective Home Education' (EHE) (Department for Education, 2019). Despite this being the legal term, the shortened form of 'home education' will be used throughout the remainder of this thesis though, there is a need for researchers to acknowledge that there are differences in terminology, for example, 'home education' is commonly used across the rest of Europe and 'homeschooling' being the preferred term in the United States (US) (Davies, 2015).

Home education is the practice of parents choosing to take responsibility for their children's education by removing them from school and either, educating the child themselves from home, or delegating the responsibility to private tutors (Neuman and Guterman, 2016; Rothermel, 2015). Durbin (2009) and Morton (2010) have argued how the methods through which home education is practiced is at the discretion of the

parents, private tutor, or child and largely dependent on their ideological beliefs, but the decision may also be based on the individual child's health and social needs. Morton (2010) particularly emphasised the importance of acknowledging how there is no universal way, or even most 'appropriate' way, to practice home education because home education has a heterogeneous nature, which means no two home education contexts are the same (Durbin, 2009). This means that home educated people are not a homogenous group having the same experience of home education as each other, rather they are a heterogeneous population possessing individual personal experiences of home education that vary from one another on the one hand, while also sharing some similarities on the other (Knowles and Muchmore, 1995; Bhopal and Myers, 2018). Knowles and Muchmore (1995) made this explicit through their findings which argued how home educated people are not amenable to easy categorization because they remain differentiable from each other through their individual personal experiences of home education.

Existing research has explored the prominent ways families approach home education with 'structured', 'unstructured', and 'unschooling' approaches being the three most discussed (Rothermel, 2011; Beck, 2008; Neuman and Guterman, 2016; Kunzman and Gaither, 2013; Dowty, 2000). Dowty's (2000) study of how home education was experienced daily for twenty British home educating families demonstrated this variance, with her findings having showed how some of the families adopted an autonomous 'unstructured' approach, while other families adopted a 'structured' approach, which meant a more school-like style and curriculum. Neuman and Guterman (2017) argued how an 'unstructured' approach to home education involves children often deciding what it is they want to learn about without having a curriculum imposed on them by their parents or private tutor. For example, a child might have interests in sowing and dressmaking, or sailing, meaning that the child might want to explore these interests in more depth leading parents to arrange for activities related to these interests to form a portion of their child's education (Dowty, 2000). Contrastingly, 'structured' home education adheres to a defined curriculum, with more fixed timings for curriculum subjects to be learned (Rothermel, 2015), and is more focused on having some specific educational goals to aim for (Gray and Riley, 2013). For example, parents or private tutors of home educating children might decide to have 'lessons' on Science, English, and Math to closely align their educating practices

with the national curriculum (Durbin, 2009). Several academics (Neuman and Guterman, 2016; Rothermel, 2015; Beck, 2008; Gray and Riley, 2013) have argued how despite these two approaches being the most common categorisations for how home education is practiced, the reality is that families often fall somewhere on a spectrum, which positions them in-between the two categorisations (Durbin, 2009; Dowty, 2000). As highlighted, there is a third approach termed 'unschooling' which focuses more on children learning through their personal experiences of exploration and interaction with their everyday environments (Gray and Riley, 2015; McGrath, 2010). Despite the variation in home education approaches, it could be argued that irrespective of which approach is adopted, it is likely to be less structured than school. This raises the question of whether there might be implications for home educated children's subsequent experiences of structured workplaces.

De Bellaigue (2016), alongside Neuman and Guterman (2017), noted how the practice of home education is not a new phenomenon, with parents and the child's wider community having traditionally held the responsibility for their child's education between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. During this period, home educating a child was understood to involve engaging them in everyday life activities, from assisting with household chores through attending religious events and celebrating traditions to being taught the necessary skills to become a functional citizen within their communities and society (De Bellaigue, 2016; Guterman and Neuman, 2017). Over time, home education saw a decline because of the advent of state-run schooling, and the enaction of mandatory education legislation (Ray, 2013; De Bellaigue, 2016; Guterman and Neuman, 2017). In tandem, these have been seen as replacements for the once 'strong philosophy for community and familial-based education' (De Bellaigue, 2016), because of the urgency that the Industrial Revolution created for the need to prepare youth with the necessary skills and resources to participate in the workplace (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Willis, 1977; De Bellaigue, 2016). During the late twentieth century, home education began to re-emerge in its modern form with many parents opting to assume full educational responsibility (Meighan, 1981). As highlighted in *Introduction* (Chapter 1), it has been estimated that as of 2022-23 there was 116,300 children within the UK estimated to have been being home educated (Gov.uk, 2023) which is a considerable rise given the estimated number in 2015-16 was only 37,500 (ADCS, 2016). A recent article by BBC (2024)

also noted that during this period of 2022-2023 freedom of information requested showed how UK councils received at least 49,819 notifications from families wanting to home educated their child/children moving forward. The last time UK councils arguably received this many requests had been during the COVID-19 pandemic in the period 2020-2021 when there were at least 49,851 new notifications received from families but unlike the most recent figure (BBC, 2024), it could be argued that this figure had been influenced significantly by the ongoing pandemic mandates requiring children to be educated from home but still through the provision of school. However, it can also be argued how these new notifications are distinctly different in meaning and process from the mandate placed on schools because such notifications are only sent to UK councils by schools if a family has declared deregistration of their child or children from the school system (Department for Education, 2019; Educational Freedom, 2024). This means that the notifications received during the above period had been the result of families who had made a conscious decision to home educate irrespective of the legal mandates in place because of COVID-19.

2.2.1 Reasons for Home Education

One of the most recent reasons for children being home educated has been the result of the previously outlined implication of the COVID-19 pandemic, which generated a mandate stipulating how all families had to educate their children from home, for a period between 2020-21 (BBC News, 2021). However, home educators who had been educating their children from home prior to the pandemic have been outspoken regarding how they see home education as distinct from what they term 'pandemic schooling at home' (Bennett, 2021) because for them, home education involved visiting museums, exploring stately homes and gardens, visiting heritage sites, going to the cinema, socialising with friends and going to local home education meet ups (Bennett, 2021) that all became impossible under the COVID-19 lockdown mandates. There is the argument, therefore, that families who became motivated to home educate longer-term through having experienced 'pandemic schooling at home' might not realise the extent of the possibilities available to them, alongside the potential drawbacks of home education, as a legal alternative to school because they only got to experience a small snapshot of what it means to home educate a child. Despite this distinction vocalised by long-term home educators, on what is and is not considered to be home education, recent research has argued (Duvall, 2021; Twenge, Coyne,

Carroll and Wilcox, 2020; Hamlin and Peterson, 2022) how the experiences of educating children at home during the COVID-19 pandemic that have been experienced meant that families who had not previously considered home educating their children as a viable or do-able option have gained a once in a lifetime insight into the potential benefits that the practice can offer them and their children. The benefits associated with home education during the pandemic included improvements to children's mental health (Twenge et al, 2020), quicker academic gains than those experienced in school (Duvall, 2021), and tailor-made curriculums with more flexible time scheduling (Duvall, 2021). In fact, the mental health element has surpassed most of these reasons and seen endurance since the pandemic ended, as a main motivator for families choosing to home educate in the past couple of years (BBC, 2024) However, it could be argued how for those who have home educated for a much longer period of time and those that advocate for it that these insights were nothing new.

As noted, mental health and academic advancing through tailor-made curriculums are amongst the more notable and long-standing reasons for families and individuals choosing to home educate (BBC, 2024; Murphy, 2014; Ray, 2013; Thomas, 2016). It is important to note though how reasons for choosing to home educate can also vary considerably, with the decision resting predominantly with parents (Rothermel, 2003, 2015; Beck, 2008; Mayberry and Knowles, 1989; Hoelzle, 2013; Van Galen, 1988; Neuman, 2018). Notably, reasons for home education have also been documented to change over time (Neuman and Guterman, 2019). For some home educators, there is a clear rationale for why they want to home educate such as the overall benefits home education can provide for their child's educational needs or their lifestyles as a family (Dowty, 2000; Ray, 2013; Medlin, 2000). Pedagogy is often the most cited reason by parents when choosing to home educate their children (Beck, 2008; Mayberry and Knowles, 1989; Rothermel, 2003; Fensham-Smith, 2021b). Ideologically, parents are argued to be at odds with the values and ideas that are taught by schools, with parents commonly noting how their children should have an individualised education that provides them with the freedom to explore what interests them (Beck, 2008; Mayberry and Knowles, 1989; Rothermel, 2002). Some parents also choose to home educate for their religious views because it allows them to shape the curriculum their child is to be taught around the lifestyle of their faith such as the case is for Amish families in the US (Bhopal and Myers, 2014; Rothermel, 2002; Beck, 2008; Van Galen, 1988).

Research has also shown how other reasons parents have referred to is how their own negative experiences of school have shaped why they have chosen to home educate their children (Neuman, 2018). The literature has extensively discussed how children who often face bullying, peer pressure, poor relationships with teachers, or not being intellectually challenged enough by their teachers and other pupils often self-initiate discussions with their parents regarding the desire to be home educated, or alternatively, the parent recognises the detrimental effects these issues are having on their child from having reflected on their own personal experiences of school (Neuman, 2018; Webb, 1999; Mayberry, Knowles, Ray and Marlow, 1995; Rothermel, 2002; Bhopal and Myers, 2018; Nelson, 2013). Webb (1999) highlighted this prominently through her respondents' voices regarding how the physical, emotional, and mental bullying they had received in school was the significant driver for them being home educated. What this driver of home education also reveals is how children may prelude parental decision-making on home education when it comes to difficulties experienced in school. Increasingly, there has also been a rise in children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) being home educated because their parents have perceived that their children's needs are not being met in school (Bhopal and Myers, 2016; Kendall and Taylor, 2016; McDonald and Lopes, 2014). These reasons driving families and individuals' motivations for choosing home education are suggestive of perceived school failings rather than a desire to home educate, which as several academics have argued can leave families and their children feeling as though home education is the only solution, they have available to them (Bhopal and Myers, 2018; Nelson, 2013; Kendall and Taylor, 2016; Neuman and Guterman, 2019). This raises an important point of whether an expressed dislike of institutional learning and organisation, might prelude a dislike of work organisation in the future.

Some home education research (see Reich, 2002; Lubienski, 2003) has typically contrasted this argument in favour of an alarmist perspective, arguing that home education is a deviant activity going against the social fabric of how a child should be educated within society (Medlin, 2013). As noted in *Introduction* (Chapter 1), school is seen as the social norm within UK society for how a child should receive their education (Suissa, 2006). Therefore, it could be argued that alarmist perspectives of home education might endure and carry through into the workplace, which means that for home educated people, they might be stereotyped or not seen as equal to their

school-educated peers. This could also potentially have implications for home educated people getting on at work in terms of their professional relationships and advancing within their careers.

2.3 Current Research into Home Education

Several researchers have argued (Nelson, 2013; Jones, 2013; Kunzman and Gaither, 2013; Ryan, 2019; Medlin, 2000) how there is a relatively small amount of research which explores home education in-depth, and particularly, the relationship between home education and personal experiences of work and employment. Most of what research does exist has also been commissioned in the US (Mumford, 2022; de Carvalho and Skipper, 2019), with only few UK-based studies. There have also been several studies conducted across multiple European countries such as Rothermel's (2002, 2011), Kasparova 's (2015), Blok and Karsten's (2011), Mandel's (2020) and Korkmaz and Duman's (2014). A solid foundation has also been established amongst doctoral students who have produced rigorous and insightful studies mostly conducted within the field of educational research (see Webb, 1989; Ryan, 2019; Mukwamba-Sendall, 2019; Nelson, 2013; Mumford, 2022). Drawing on the work of Eddis (2015), Mumford (2022) suggests that the limited studies conducted in Europe could be attributed to home education being less visible than it is in the US. It could be argued that a further reason might be that in some European countries home education is illegal to practice for example in The Netherlands (Merry and Karsten, 2010) and Germany (Spiegler, 2003).

The focus of existing research has tended to focus on motivations for home educating (Green-Hennessy and Mariotti, 2021; Neuman and Guterman, 2020; Rothermel, 2003), home education pedagogical approaches (Neuman and Guterman, 2017; Kunzman and Gaither, 2013; Neuman and Aviram, 2003; Mayberry and Knowles, 1989), home education regulations and legislation (Mukwamba-Sendall, 2019; Blok and Karsten, 2011; Taylor, 2000), considering the role of socialisation in home education (Guterman and Neuman, 2017; Lawy, 2014; Beck, 2008, Medlin, 2000, 2013) or home education in the context of different countries (Mandel, 2020; Brabant, Bourdon and Jutras, 2003; Wang and Langager, 2023; Tan, 2020).

Despite this plethora of themes, Kunzman and Gaither (2013) and Mumford (2022), highlight how there are difficulties around political motivation with home education

research. A significant proportion of US-based research are said to have been commissioned by home education organisations, meaning there needs to be caution taken regarding potential bias in the findings being reported and conclusions drawn. Conversely, Mumford (2022) argued how some research can be argued to also be politically motivated against home education (see Badman, 2009). Fensham-Smith (2021a) argued that more balanced and longitudinal empirical research into home education is needed and, most notably, within the UK context.

Bhopal and Myers (2018), alongside Nelson (2013) note that this is a challenging area to research unless the researcher is a 'native member' of the home education community. Kaseman and Kaseman (1991) years prior suggested that researchers are often seen as intruders and home educating families and young people distrust them. Home education arguably also takes place outside of traditional educational and institutional structures (Mumford, 2022), meaning families who home educate and children who have been home educated are typically hard to locate. There is also the issue of trust for home educated people participating in research since the Badman Review (2009) that the researcher is not going to manipulate what they tell them, and subsequently, misrepresent their experiences of home education as something that they are not (Mukwamba-Sendall, 2019).

Murphy (2014) also highlights difficulties with current home education research from a methodological perspective, which was most recently supported by Fensham-Smith (2021a). Most research on home education to date has focused on positivist designs employing quantitative methods (see Ray, 2004; Neven Van Pelt, Allison and Allison, 2009; Hamlin, 2019; Jones and Gloeckner, 2004; Korkmaz and Duman, 2013). This is despite positivist research and quantitative approaches having been criticised for their limited insight (Murphy, 2014; Kunzman and Gaither, 2013). Murphy (2014) argues how quantitative-based research has tended to generalise and benchmark the experiences of those who have been home educated against schooled peers.

Fensham-Smith (2021a) through the work of Goymer (2001) also expressed how there is a lack of inclusion of the voices of those who have been home educated within current research and how in the UK there has been no "single, systematic and longitudinal study" (2021a, pg.31) that focuses on how home educated people have experienced not only their home education but also crucial adult life experiences.

These points on access and trust, dominance of positivist research, and the lack of inclusion of home educated peoples voices in current research highlights how there is a considerable gap regarding exploring qualitatively the experiences of home educated people as told through their voices. Ryan (2019) and Jennens (2011) have argued in fact how first-hand experiences and perceptions of those who have been home educated are largely non-existent in the current home education literature, with only a few studies existing largely in the US and Canada but with a couple existing in the UK. These existing studies will be explored in greater detail in the next section, alongside, sociology of education literature which refers to the correspondence between going to school and being socialised for our adult roles in the workplace.

2.4 Socialisation, Education and Employment

A key area of interest in the sociology of education literature is the correspondence between school and the workplace. Several academics (Bourdieu, 1973; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Bowles and Gintis, 1976, 2002; Willis, 1977; Ingram and Abrahams, 2016) have argued extensively how children are primarily socialised through the social institution of the family. Through the family, children acquire cultural and social traits from their parents (Bowles and Gintis, 2002) via their everyday personal experiences, which Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) has suggested then underlies the structuring of school experiences. Ingram and Abrahams (2016) have stated how after being primarily socialised through the institution of family; children start attending educational institutions to receive secondary socialisation through the primary field of schools. Grenfell (2008) and Bourdieu (2002) argued how the function of schools is to teach children particular things and to socialise them in a particular way. Bowles and Gintis (1976) also explored how school socialises children with a particular emphasis on preparing them for their future adult roles in the workplace. This extends to preparing them for being good citizens, which requires schools to develop a curriculum that teaches the accepted ways of behaving, forming relationships, networking, and being sociable that underpins a democratic society (Geboers et al, 2013; Lawy, 2014; Neuman and Guterman, 2017).

Bowles and Gintis (2002) have argued there are two fundamental ways through which schools typically accomplish this aim. The first way is by socialising children to accept social norms, beliefs, and forms of behaviour based on authority structures and

practices (Bowles and Gintis, 2002; Maccoby, 2007). For example, schools teach children things society values such as formal and informal rules, punctuality, obedience, discipline, turn-taking, and teamwork amongst others (Bowles and Gintis, 2002; Grenfell, 2008). The transmission of these values could relate to practices such as wearing a school uniform, working in groups for a project, being on time for classes, socialising on the playground, and listening to authority figures. The second way is argued to be through sorting children into classifications via a rewards and sanctions structure to replicate the environment of the workplace (Bowles and Gintis, 2002; Grenfell, 2008; Bourdieu, 2002). For example, schools reward children who get good grades and by moving them into higher classifications, but also sanction those who achieve lower than average grades by demoting them into a low classification (Grenfell, 2008). This process is also used to position children with suitable routes into employment based on their academic achievements and talents (Bourdieu, 1984; Bowles and Gintis, 2002). To illustrate, a child who excels in geography would likely be encouraged to consider going to university with the potential of becoming a geographer or geography teacher. It could be argued that there is also a third way relating to work-readiness that was not necessarily a focus of Bowles and Gintis (2002) work, but which has been widely discussed in the literature and more widely by the Department for Education and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Work-readiness explores how schools and other educational institutions prepare youth for adult employment through engaging them in skills-based education around becoming competent learners and future employees, possessing transferable skills such as teamworking and communication, and having exposure to workplaces through placements (Herbert, Rothwell, Glover and Lambert, 2020). A work-readiness approach often involves prioritising the imparting of skills to youth that are most relevant to the labour market demands at the time in which a child is being educated. For example, since the COVID-19 pandemic there has been a drive to understand how schools can better prepare young people for their working lives in the era of COVID-19 (Mann, Denis, and Percy, 2020). With this emphasis on school, as the secondary primary agent through which children become socialised into becoming workers and citizens, that Webb and colleagues (2002) have noted how it could be seen as an unthinkable act for children to not be educated through the route of school.

Hence, school prepares children for work as adults, and therefore, not being schooled is seen as damaging to a child or young person by some, but there is no evidence to suggest that home education cannot prepare children for work. For example, Murray (1996) has noted how opinions exist within educational psychology, suggesting that home educated children may face issues when entering mainstream fields such as employment owing to having had little opportunity to form their own views of the social world outside of their family. Monk (2004) also argued that it is unhealthy for a child's development if they are educated by any means other than through attending a school under a 'child psychology/common sense discourse' approach to socialisation. However, other academics (Lubienski, 2003; Mallah, 2021) have commented on how these claims are typically 'mythical' because there is little reason to believe that home education cannot effectively socialise a child with the basic social norms and rules that govern our society if they expose their children to diverse socialising activities and environments. For example, evidence has shown how home educating families use diverse activities (such as sports, societies, and local community events), social influencing (such as parents teaching their children about the social norms of society and placing emphasis on community values), and social exposure (such as introducing children to a wide range of different people from across society), which, in their opinions, adequately socialises and prepares their children for lives as both good citizens and as workers (see Medlin, 2000 and Beck, 2008). This gap identified in the literature regarding whether not attending school is damaging versus whether home education does prepare children and young people for the workplace will be explored in greater detail through the empirical analysis in *Work and Employment Experiences* (Chapter 5) and *Responding to a Cleft Habitus* (Chapter 6) later in the thesis.

A few studies have moved beyond addressing the argument of whether home educated people are adequately socialised for their adult roles to focus more on developing a general understanding of their experiences of transitioning to higher education and employment contexts (Ray, 2004; Neven Van Pelt et al, 2009; Knowles and Muchmore, 1995; Webb, 1989, 1999; Goymer, 2001; Lattibeaudiere, 2000; Ryan, 2019). Of those that focused on experiences of transitioning to employment (Ray 2004; Neven Van Pelt et al, 2009; Webb 1989, 1999; Knowles and Muchmore, 1995) there were several themes within their findings that are of some relevance to the

objectives of my research which included: chosen occupations, civic involvement/social development, and conformity/authority.

The first theme provided insight into what occupations home educated people have reported going into and how they made their decision. Reported occupations have included: homemakers, entrepreneurs, artists, religious figures, nursing, advertising, manual labouring, humanitarian work, working with animals, self-employment, and retail (Neven Van Pelt et al, 2009; Knowles and Muchmore, 1995; Webb, 1999). Across studies respondents had seemingly indicated how they attributed their choice of occupation to skills gained or interests had during their home education. For example, occupations which involved the use of skills such as self-discipline, self-motivation, self-presentation, and self-awareness (Knowles and Muchmore, 1995). There was also a common pattern identified in having selected these occupations because they give them a sense of doing something meaningful with their lives. This finding is interesting because in some ways it is not all that different to how other groups of people in the workplace have expressed choosing their occupation to find meaning in their work (Biggs, 2015; Terkel, 1972). Ray (2004) also found how only 6% of his respondents felt at a disadvantage when it came to gaining employment or having a diversity of opportunities to choose from, which is suggestive of home educating people tending to not feel like their home education did not adequately prepare them for their adult roles in employment. The issue though is how this statistic does not provide context as to why 6% of the respondents reported feeling at a disadvantage. It raises more questions than it gives us answers to such as 'how' and 'why' they felt disadvantaged.

The second theme provided insight into how civically involved and socially developed home educated people reported being, with evidence to support the claim that many home educated people are actively involved in their local communities and wider society (Ray, 2004; Knowles and Muchmore, 1995; Neven Van Pelt et al, 2009). Ray's (2004) study for example reported how 71% of his 5,254 surveyed respondents had self-reported doing well in terms of their social development and being civically involved because they enjoyed being coaches of sports teams and being a member of their local church, amongst many other civic and social activities. Knowles and Muchmore (1995) also suggested how there was no evidence from their data to

support the often-prevalent opinion that home educated people are a liability to society. Interestingly, the authors did also draw out the differences between their respondents to show a balanced argument, by highlighting how for several of them, engagement in civic activities was an uncomfortable experience because of how other people involved in the activities would interact with them and stereotype them. Neven Van Pelt et al's (2009) findings supported this claim finding how there was a preference to stay on the periphery of social activities for their respondents irrespective of their respondents self-reporting having been adequately socialised. Similarly, to the prior theme, this theme provides important findings for developing our understanding of how home educated people transition to their adult roles in employment and society but does not go far enough in demonstrating the 'how' and 'why' of home educated peoples experiences and perceptions of the social world.

The third theme of relevance relates to findings on how home educated people have expressed their relationship with authority and the need to conform. Webb's (1999) study particularly demonstrated how the home educated people she interviewed had expressed having difficulties with regimented environments and pressures to conform in a professional and social context. For example, they found it difficult having to conform to authority figures and play their roles in the hierarchical structure. Her respondents seemingly reported only conforming to authority in these contexts for the sake of it but for the most part questioned why these structures exist. They also strongly expressed not agreeing with the rules or the reasons why the rules were needed in the first place. Webb's respondents attributed their views on and feelings towards authority and conformity to having been home educated because they did not encounter these sorts of structures during their experiences. The other studies did not touch upon this theme in any substantial detail and therefore did not yield any additional knowledge on home educated people's perceptions and experiences of work-based authority and rules. Therefore, further studies are warranted to understand the personal experiences of work and employment of home educated people because of the centrality of what these experiences represent for any member of society.

There were also several further interesting findings to emerge from Webb's (1989, 1999) studies that did not necessarily fit into one of the outlined main themes, but

which are important to draw into this review because of their relevance to the focus of my research. Firstly, Webb (1989) discussed how most of her respondents had formal qualifications that enabled them to enter the labour market with relative ease but for others they gained employment without having achieved any formal qualifications. This was argued to be the result of the respondents talking to employers and showcasing to them their mature and interesting personalities as well as their unique experiences from having been home educated. Secondly, Webb found how her respondents would associate negative experiences of employment with experiences they had at school, which left them with a sense of needing 'time out' to recharge. Thirdly, respondents added how they can take on chameleon-like personas when in employment settings with Webb arguing how they appeared to credit this to seeing through the social dynamics by virtue of their social maturity, attributed to home education. Overall, these themes all signal issues to explore in this study, which will be revealed in more detail in the later empirical chapters *Work and Employment Experiences* (Chapter 5) and *Responding to a Cleft Habitus* (Chapter 6).

Despite the key debates outlined in this section providing some insight into the transitions of home educated people into employment contexts, there is still little known on how well-prepared home educated people are for transitioning into the workplace or their subsequent experiences of work (Webb, 1989; Kunzman and Gaither, 2013; Ryan, 2019; Knowles and Muchmore, 1995; Fensham-Smith, 2021a; Medlin, 2000). Amongst several reasons, the studies had been based largely on positivist approaches employing quantitative methods such as statistical analysis (Ray, 2004; Neven Van Pelt et al, 2009), which do not elucidate enough on the individual contexts behind the experiences being self-reported on. While a few of the studies such as Webb's (1989, 1999) had instead employed an interpretivist approach using qualitative interviews, they also did not reveal depth of experience of employment transitions of home educated people. It could be argued this is because Webb's focus was not solely on understanding the 'how' and 'why' but rather just developing an initial understanding on their transitions to employment as one theme which emerged from her data analysis. Hence, the overall issue with these three studies is that despite their relevance to my objectives and overall methodological approach, the scope of their studies did not go far enough in developing an in-depth understanding of the personal experiences of work and employment of home educated

people in the context of their individual lived histories, as to reveal the similarities and differences across experiences.

What these evaluations on existing studies have shown is how there remains a substantial gap in the literature relating to the field of home education research on experiences of work and employment. Since the studies outlined in this section where conducted, there has been no further contributions to this gap, which led Fensham-Smith (2021a) to call for new research to strengthen the little that is known about home education and the workplace. In particular, Fensham-Smith (2021a) called for research which prioritises the voices of those who have been home educated to understand their personal experiences from their perspectives. In fact, this was a finding of the recent Department for Education's (DfE) (2021) 'Strengthening Home Education' report which concluded, there is a lack of robust and independent empirical evidence that prioritises the voices of those who have been home educated, especially regarding their experiences of further education, societal engagement, and employment. Further, there has been no significant study conducted in the organisation studies field about how this growing group of people have experienced employment or are viewed by employers. It could be argued that this group of people might experience work and employment in a similar way to how other marginalised groups in work organisations do such as those who are gendered, raced, disabled, or classed.

This research therefore takes as its main objective to explore how home educated people have experienced work and employment through listening to their voices. It aims to achieve this objective by revealing an in-depth understanding of their individual personal experiences to demonstrate the similarities and differences that likely naturally exist across the individual personal experiences, which in turn will highlight the complexity of what it means to be home educated and experience work and employment contexts. This issue will also be looked at through a Bourdieusian lens to make use of his work on the correspondence between school and the workplace through the process of socialisation, as outlined at the beginning of the *Literature Review* (Chapter 2). His work is built upon further in the ensuing *Theoretical Framework* (Chapter 3) in considerable detail to demonstrate its usefulness for this research.

2.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has explored the ways in which home education has been researched and understood within existing academic debates. It illustrated how these debates have focused on grappling with key issues around the practicing of home education, and understanding whether home education adequately provides children with a suitable education and childhood socialisation to prepare them for their adult lives in society and employment. Yet, this chapter has also highlighted some significant areas which are under-explored within the home education literature such as home education in relation to personal experiences of employment. In particular, research has often neglected understanding how home educated people gain and experience employment, and whether their experiences of home education have been significant in shaping these adult experiences. It has also neglected the importance of such experiences as told through the voices of those who have been home educated.

To explore how people who have been home educated experience employment, it is important to develop a theoretical framework conducive to understanding these complex and heterogenous experiences. For this purpose, the next chapter will outline my theoretical framework which explores Bourdieu's theory of practice pertaining to habitus, capital and field which provides a way to understand the centrality of educational experiences to how people experience employment. It also considers Bourdieu's lesser-known concept of the cleft habitus to show how people who experience multiple fields such as employment and home education may experience ambivalence when trying to successfully navigate their experiences of both. Therefore, the following research questions have arisen: *How do home educated people experience employment? Do they consider their experiences of home education as significant in shaping these experiences? What are the implications of the empirical findings for theory and policy?*

3. Theoretical Framework: Employing the Concepts of Bourdieu

3.1 Introduction

Theoretical Framework: Employing the Concepts of Bourdieu outlines the central theories from Bourdieu's extensive work that this research draws upon for its utility in providing an in-depth analysis and understanding of the empirical data. The framework is built using both Bourdieu's theory of practice, including the key conceptual tools of habitus, capital, and field, as well as his lesser-known concept of cleft habitus. The decision to use his work developed iteratively during the data analysis process when it became apparent after multiple rounds of coding and revisiting the literature that his work was the most applicable for developing an understanding of themes emerging from the interviews. Bourdieu's work seemingly fitted because of its prominence in exploring the importance of education in shaping young people's dispositions and experiences of the wider social world, which has utility for explaining the personal experiences of people whose education resides outside of the 'norm' of society. It also lends itself to understanding the complexities involved in how education shapes peoples later experiences of the social world. Bourdieu believed having similar experiences, tastes, and behaviours create a sense of a shared identity much like social class can achieve. Despite much of Bourdieu's work having considered the role of social class as a central influence on how people experience the social world, this thesis does not concern itself with understanding the role of participants social class backgrounds on their experiences of work and employment because the focus is rather on how their educational backgrounds irrespective of class have impacted on their experiences of work and employment.

This chapter is split into two sections. The first section outlines and explores Bourdieu's theory of practice, including its three underlying concepts of habitus, field, and capital. While these concepts have been separated so that they can be explored in depth, as shall become apparent in this chapter and in their use later in the empirical chapters *'Work and Employment Experiences'* and *'Responding to a Cleft Habitus'*, they are interrelated and cannot be easily separated when used to explain how people experience social phenomena (Hermann, 2004). The second section will then critique

elements of Bourdieu's theory of practice by drawing on Bourdieu's lesser-known concept of the cleft habitus, as well as Ingram and Abraham's work on how people might respond to a cleft.

3.2 Bourdieu's Theory of Practice

In 'Outline of a Theory of Practice' (1977), Bourdieu introduced his theory of practice to account for the social practice of everyday life. In particular, the theory focuses on the synthesis of societal structures with people's individual dispositions (Bourdieu, 1977). However, as Walther argues, it is important to recognise how Bourdieu's theory of practice does not constitute a theory within itself but rather represents 'a flexible theoretical approach' (2014, p.8), consisting of multiple concepts that cannot be easily separated from each other because of their relational and co-dependent nature (Bowers-Brown, 2016). These concepts are widely known as *habitus*, *capital*, and *field*. I will now loosely define each concept in turn to provide initial context for each one.

Habitus refers to deeply internalised structures of patterns of thought and behaviour known as dispositions, which not only guide our social practice in everyday life but also give meaning to our experiences of the social world (Bourdieu, 1984). *Habitus* is also considered to be a product of our historical experiences, such as how our dispositions are formed and further shaped during formative experiences of family and education (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). Bourdieu also argues that these formative experiences that shape our dispositions position us in terms of how we subsequently experience the social world (e.g., employment).

In addition to *habitus, there* is *capital*, which is understood as the particular resources (e.g., qualifications, social networks, cultural assets) that people possess or have access to and can be exchanged or invested in for tangible and intangible goods (Bourdieu, 1986). For example, people may possess qualifications in the form of degrees awarded by educational institutions that they can use as investments to gain a particular job in the field of employment. It is also important to note that capital is not purely economic (as will be discussed in more depth in *Capital,* Section 3.2.3), but rather consists of multiple physical and symbolic forms: cultural (e.g., tastes, forms of

knowledge, cultural preferences, language, and aesthetics), social (family, religious background, connections, and networks), and economic (money, assets, and land).

Central to capital is field, which is understood as a site or place (e.g., family, education, employment, etc.) in which habitus and capital meet to engage in social practice (Bourdieu, 2001). Field is argued through habitus and capital to position people's expectations of what is possible within fields for them (Bourdieu, 1984), with an example being a pupil whose family has a distinctive working-class habitus who could become positioned in the field of education to expect that progression to university is not possible for them. Significantly, field is also argued by Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) to operate games that are governed by people who hold dominant positions within respective fields, such as how the government holds dominant positions in the field of education, such as setting the rules that govern the curriculum, amongst others.

The three sub-sections that follow will explore each of these outlined concepts of habitus, field, and capital in considerably more detail, with a particular emphasis on how the concepts connect with education and employment.

3.2.1 Habitus

Habitus has been argued as the way in which society becomes embodied in people through being socialized with a set of dispositions that inclines people to act upon the social world in certain ways over the course of their lives (Bourdieu, 1977, 2002; Wacquant, 2005). For Webb, Schirato, and Danaher habitus is the way people learn to 'become themselves' (2002, pg.xii). This latter statement being telling of how these dispositions are argued (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) to be generated through our ongoing social world experiences but are fundamentally shaped by our formative experiences in our primary field (the family) and secondary fields (education, community etc). In defining habitus, Bourdieu argued:

> *"[habitus is] a system of dispositions, that is of permanent manners of being, seeing, acting, and thinking, or a system of long-lasting (rather than permanent) schemes or schemata or structures of perception, conception and action" (2002, pg.27).*

Dispositions are therefore argued to be generative of practice as well as peoples' perceptions and attitudes towards the social world. For example, Bourdieu argued how through this process, people internalise and convert dispositions into meaningful practices providing them with meaning-giving perceptions of the world particularly. The dispositions themselves can include accents, postures, movements, ways of dressing, ways of thinking and feeling about ourselves and others, and tastes towards certain cultural objects (Bourdieu, 1979). Dispositions are understood then as habits of expression in orienting our self to the social world. They predispose people to act in embodied ways consistent with the social and cultural norms of their class (Bourdieu, 1990).

In an 'Outline of a Theory of Practice' (1977), Bourdieu argued that there are two fundamental ways in which habitus becomes embodied with predispositions in how to act upon the social world, which includes family and school. The first of these relates to the family field. For Bourdieu (1977), the family is the first field that provides children with insights into how everyday life is to be structured and constructed, which is reflective of the family's social class background. It is also the responsibility of the family to impart the family resources (e.g., tastes, dispositions, and capital) on their children that they will come to embody in their habitus and take forward with them to make sense of their experience of secondary fields throughout their lives. Bourdieu also argued how:

> *"the habitus acquired through the family also underlies the structuring of school experiences, and the habitus transformed by schooling, itself diversified, in turn underlies the structuring of all subsequent experiences" (1977, pg.87).*

Bourdieu's argument was supported by Ingram and Abrahams (2016) who added how as children age, they become less dependent on their family as their central source of socialisation into the social world and it structures, because the norm is for them to move into the secondary field of education, and notably, its sub-field of school. School is therefore the second fundamental way in which habitus becomes embodied with predispositions (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). Ingram and Abrahams (2016) suggest this is because of the amount of time children spend immersed in the sub-field of school from around the age of four through to eighteen for on average 6 hours

a day, 5 days a week. It is also common for most children to share some form of experience of school. Bourdieu expressed how; school enables the "passing on from one generation to the next the prevailing social structures and relations" (1984, pg.387). Reay (2004) supported Bourdieu's assertion expressing how early socialization experiences of school are particularly prominent experiences in the forming and shaping of children's dispositions and their aspirations regarding what is possible. One reason for this is because as several authors have argued (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Ingram and Abrahams, 2016; Willis, 1977) school reflects the structures and dispositions that are embodied in the middle class, enabling those whose habitus already embodies these dispositions, through their family socialisation, to fit into school with ease and achieve academic success. However, as Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) wrote, how in school privileging the middle-class ways of being, it also means predisposing the working-class pupils to reproduce their own inequality, through the belief that they do not possess the innate talent and correct dispositions to succeed academically and are therefore, destined to predispose themselves to 'fail' at school repositioning them in the direction of labour force trades.

However, school being structured around a hierarchical and classificatory design has been argued to have the potentiality for creating resistance for members of some social groups, such as the working-class (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Ingram and Abrahams, 2016; Willis, 1977). For example, in Willis classic study 'Learning to Labour' (1977) he found how an informal group of working-class boys resisted behaving according to the middle-class ideology of school in which they formed their own sub-culture instead. In support of Willis argument, Ingram and Abrahams (2016) added how children whose habitus originated from working-class conditions typically resist the pedagogic action of school because of a mismatch between their originary habitus dispositions and the general one that school is trying to develop in them. It is important to stress though that not all members of the working class resist the middle-class values because some working-class children do accept the middle-class ideology of school (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016). Bourdieu himself could be argued to have accepted the middle-class ideology of the French school system defying the predisposed trajectory that his working-class origins made probable for him to become immensely academically successful by becoming a

Professor of Sociology at the Prestigious *College de France*, a position that is usually reserved for members of the middle to upper classes (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). Bourdieu (1977) would therefore argue how school is a formative experience in forming people into certain kinds of subjects (e.g., classed, gendered, raced, citizens etc.) that support and reinforce their habitus.

For Bourdieu (1979), what this process of inculcation of habitus also draws attention to is how the body is taken as a site of incorporated history, embodying a strong interplay between a person's past experiences and their present. This interplay is central to understanding the relationship between habitus and field because people are argued to structure their new field experiences (e.g., employment) through their earlier experiences in other fields (e.g., education). For example, Winterton and Irwin (2012) argued that people's formative experiences of institutions such as school are the central driver for shaping young people's expectations of how they will experience other fields such as employment. This could be understood as what Gordon (2008) referred to as 'social haunting', whereby residues of a person's past are carried forward to their present. A social haunting, for Gordon (2011), is an emergent experience that is triggered when there is a rupture in a person's habitus such as when they move between fields. This is argued to cause a 'ghost' to emerge that demands the attention of the person it is haunting because it is a representation of repressions that typically result from the historical consequences of two different but related phenomena (Gordon, 2008, 2011). For example, a person could be haunted by a ghost of 'deficit' in the sense of reminding them of what is missing from their habitus when they have moved into a new field (Morrin, 2016). In using this example, it could be further argued that for a home educated person, their experiences of school and home education could be considered two different but related phenomena because both take place within the field of education during their childhood, and arguably, they could be haunted by a ghost of 'deficit' if they have little to no experience of school when they enter the workplace. Gordon (2011) has further argued how people experiencing being haunted by a 'ghost' can confront them in a 'something-to-be-done' sense in which they can either 'exorcise' the 'ghost' (Morrin, 2016) or re-narrativize them as a magical and transformative experience representing hope and future possibilities (Morriss, 2018) if they make peace with what the ghost originally symbolised. Habitus therefore reflects a person's unique set of experiences that

constitute their biographical narratives, enabling sociological analyses to bridge people's pasts to their present to better understand how their habitus is generated (Bourdieu, 1993).

Habitus is further argued by Bourdieu (1979) to be generated preconsciously, with agents not being capable of conscious reflection or strategic manipulation of their dispositions; rather, they take them for granted as the way in which one should act upon the social world. Bourdieu did caveat that habitus is capable of modification, but only when faced with unexpected change (Bourdieu, 2000; Navarro, 2006). Bourdieu (1990, 2000) referred to change as a necessary consequence of the interdependent relationship between habitus and field because a change in one necessitates a change in the other. Habitus modification is therefore argued by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) to occur through a person experiencing new fields over the course of their lives or resulting from gradual pedagogic action enacted in the field of education, such as through the longitudinal experience of school during habitus formative years (see *Habitus,* Section 3.2.1). Change can also occur at a more collective-societal level over a period, such as when the socio-cultural conditions of a society change habitus must also change to remain normal in society.

This raises an important point of how despite habitus being expressive of the individual level of analysis, Bourdieu has acknowledged how it is a multi-layered concept (Bourdieu, 1990) in which collective notions of habitus at the level of the group or society are also permissible (Reay, 2004; Nash, 2009). Nash (2009) argued how analysing habitus at a group level can be helpful for assisting empirical investigations that are trying to understand how individuals experience the social world considering they share similar habitus dispositions as formed through similar formative experiences such as pedagogic action. Reay (2004) also supports general notions of habitus arguing how individual history constitutes habitus as much as collective experience of the social world do. At the collective level, Bourdieu (1990) would argue how people who originate from similar cultural and social conditions are likely to possess similar experiences opposed to two people who originate from a variation of these conditions. This meant that for Bourdieu members of the same social group typically are more harmonized and in-sync than they realise because of the level of congruence between their habitus. This is not to say that every individual within a social group will experience things in the exact same way, or in the same order as

each other, as this would be impossible for even two members of the same conditions (e.g., the working-class) to achieve this (Bourdieu, 1990). Despite sharing similarities such as attendance at the same school, two pupils will still originate in their family unit from different conditions of existence, which ultimately will generate habitus differently for both pupils. Hence, it could be argued how habitus can be analysed at a collective level, but researchers need to be cautious because doing so could lead to unintentional homogenization of experience.

It is important to stress how despite the utility of habitus for empirical investigations, habitus does not exist in a vacuum. Habitus is argued to be inextricably bound up in an unconscious relationship with the concept of field (Bourdieu, 1993). I will now introduce the concept of field.

3.2.2 Field

For Bourdieu, the word field refers to the French word '*le champ'*, meaning a battlefield (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Field, as *le champ*, assists in understanding the complexity of diversity in the social interactions, interplays and negotiations that are played out by people to 'vie to establish a monopoly' over others less endowed in capital (see *Capital*, Section 3.2.3 for a discussion on capital) (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, pg.17). Bourdieu offered the following definition:

> *'Field is a social space that acts both as a field of forces, whose necessity is imposed on individuals who are engaged within it, and as a field of struggles within which individuals confront each other, with differentiated means and ends according to their position' (2001, pg.32).*

Bourdieu (1984) further noted significantly how field consists of an initial primary field and several secondary fields meaning people are not merely positioned within a singular field, but rather are positioned in multiple fields at any given time. The primary field is argued to result from early childhood socialization through the home environment encompassing familial experiences with secondary fields referring to education, employment, and community amongst others (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). Secondary fields can also encompass sub-fields such as the field of education can encompass higher education, school, and alternative forms of education. Bourdieu (1984) argued how secondary fields result from a person's movement through fields

over the course of their lives. For example, a typical person would move into the secondary sub-field of school before graduating and moving on to the sub-field of higher education or field of employment.

Central to Bourdieu's field concept is how any given field is governed by a game operating with its own set of rules and practices that are socially constructed by the state and its agents, which he discussed in depth in his works '*The Logic of Practice*' (1990), '*Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field*' (1994), and '*The State Nobility*' (1996). For Bourdieu (1994), the state refers to the dominant class of privileged individuals who preside over the subtle and discreet symbolic field of power. The field of power is argued to operate to exert power over the populace through systems of classification and categorisation with the aim of reproducing the social hierarchy and inequalities that ensures the states dominance is maintained (Bourdieu, 1996; Webb et al, 2002). However, for Bourdieu, power relations have no necessary basis for existence because they exist merely as a cultural arbitrary imposed by an arbitrary power through game-playing. For Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) this emanates to who can get away with what and against whom in the games played out within and across fields. This is argued by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) to cause inevitable suffering by the majority of those who are dominated because they misrecognise the symbolic classificatory and categorising systems as the natural way of organising society.

It has been argued by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) and several other scholars (Grenfell, 2008; Webb et al, 2002; Reay et al, 2009; Willis, 1977; Bowles and Gintis, 1976) how one of the most common mediums through which reproduction and misrecognition occurs is through the pedagogic action of the field education, and notably, its sub-field of school. For example, Bourdieu (2002) and Grenfell (2008) have emphasized how schools teach students particular things and socializes them in particular ways, which is directive of political intervention by the state through their agents in the educational system. Political intervention in schools concerns the (1) setting and controlling of what subject fields will be covered, including the medium through which it will be taught (e.g., specific books, technology etc.); (2) how the school day, week, and academic year will be structured, including set timings for when pupils will arrive, through the order of their classes and coordination of breaks, to the time in which to depart; (3) how pupils come to be spatially and academically classified into

particular groups and disciplined accordingly by these classifications; and (4) how pupils must adhere to a strict dress code that fits with the culture and values of the school. What this demonstrates is how schools primarily exist to propagate the interests of the state through engaging in pedagogic practices to impart their version of how the world should be acted upon to their populace (Andrews, 2021; English and Bolton, 2015). It has also been argued how these pedagogic practices within school sites are aimed at preparing children for a smooth transition into the field of employment through socialising their habitus with dispositions that are reproduced in the workplace (Bowles and Gintis, 1976). For example, much like in school, (1) workers are told when to arrive and leave, with their breaks being time regulated; (2) workers have limited amount of sick leave which must be granted approval; (3) workers are often classified by roles and assigned to particular departments; and (4) workers have to answer to arbitrary powers known as management in a hierarchical fashion for the most part. In bringing these two examples to a close, it can be seen how the game of school prepares children for their future lives as workers in the field of employment participating in the game of work.

Bourdieu (1990) acknowledges, however, that for these games to operate, the state needs the rules and practices contained within their games to be interpreted successfully by those they seek to have power over. Bourdieu (1990) referred to this as people possessing a 'practical sense' of how games work through having developed an inborn 'feel for the game' usually through their formative experiences of school. For example, as highlighted in the *Literature Review* (Chapter 2), children become socialised into the rules of the game through school socialisation practices, with a notable example being how schools temporally and spatially sort children into hierarchical classifications, which is argued to prepare them with the necessary skills to transition into subsequent experiences of field games such as employment (Bowles and Gintis, 2002; Grenfell, 2008).

Ingram and Abrahams (2016) have argued that this inevitably means that players enter field games with marked differences because some players begin the game with an advantage because they already possess the right dispositions that the game depends upon and further seeks to reproduce. This is because players with an inborn feel for the game possess 'native membership' (Bourdieu, 1990) through their personal histories, which have afforded them opportunities to gain practical sense such as

experiences in the sub-field of school. To illustrate how this works, a game of cards can be drawn on as an analogy. In a game of cards, each player is dealt a different hand and then takes it in turns to play a card with the aim of winning the game. However, not all players will play the same cards in the same order; otherwise, the game would not work. There is also consideration of how some people become professionals at counting cards and strategize their moves within a game to achieve success. Therefore, this demonstrates how not all players have inborn practical sense in the game of cards, as inevitably some are dealt a hand of cards that will not yield success. This leads researchers (Bourdieu, 1990; Ingram and Abrahams, 2016; Ingram, 2012) to question how people might navigate field games if, instead of an inborn native membership such as through school, they rather possess varying levels of practical sense, like the card player possessing a less favourable hand. For example, a person who has not participated in the sub-field of school might navigate the game of work in the field of employment. Bourdieu, to some extent, explored this by acknowledging how:

> *"the earlier a player enters the game and the less he is aware of the associated learning, the greater is his ignorance of all that is tacitly granted through his investment in the field and his interest in its very existence and perpetuation and in everything that is played for in it, and his unawareness of the unthought presuppositions that the game produces and endlessly reproduces, thereby reproducing the conditions of its own perpetuation" (1990, pg.67).*

The alternative to this, according to Bourdieu (1990), is that if a player where to enter a game later they might become conscious of the field of power and its aim of dominance because of the marked differences they are entering the game with, leading to a questioning of why the game exists and in the way in which it does. For example, if a previously home educated person was to enter the field of employment possessing marked differences, from having previously not been in the game of school or from having questioned it and the prevailing structures and social inequalities that it inculcates habitus with, they might therefore question the game of work in much the same manner because of how the structures, inequalities, and rules of school are reproduced in the field of employment (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Webb et al, 2002; Willis, 1977; Reay et al, 2009).

For the state, players who become conscious and question their arbitrariness are an uncalculated risk to the reproduction of their dominance. This is because players who are not compliant to the rules of the game, and rather possess the capacity to destroy the game, are outsiders that are not welcome because they do not embody the "undisputed, pre-reflexive, naïve native compliance" (1990, pg.68) demanded of players. Players of this kind are argued to be sanctioned and debarred being branded as absurd for engaging in deviancy (Bourdieu, 1990; Webb et al, 2002). Bourdieu wrote of this how:

> *"It is likely that those who are 'in their right place' in the social world can abandon and entrust themselves more, and more completely to their dispositions (that is the 'ease' of the well-born) than those who occupy awkward positions, such as the parvenus and the déclassé; and the latter are more likely to bring to consciousness that which, for others is taken for granted"* (2000, pg.163)

Non-native players who are not 'in their right place' could therefore be argued to be categorized and classified by the state and its agents as the 'other' (Shilling, 2005; Staszak, 2009) and subsequently relegated to the periphery of the field. For example, it could be seen as an unthinkable act for a child's education to be taken out of the hands of the state (Webb et al, 2002) and given back to the parents, although prior to the establishment of the school system parents were the legal providers of their child's education and their wider community. This is because for the reproduction of the dominant structures and inequalities in society to be imparted onto the next generation then a child must remain in an institutionalised field of education (Webb et al, 2002). Hence for a child to be educated in any alternative form of education outside of what is normalised in society might be considered as an act of deviancy by some people.

Bourdieu further argued how being 'othered' generates a response from the state to close off field games for people who are categorized in this way because they are 'not for the likes of them' (Bourdieu, 1990). In the case of people educationally othered, this might mean that participation in the common game of employment is made considerably harder because they are deemed to not belong in a field that reproduces the structures and social relations of the school system. This argument is supported by Friedman (2016) in which he suggested how the state other certain social groups

in this manner because of their perceived alternative habitus being at odds with their own and being non-compliant with the correct socialized habitus which they seek to reproduce through their games. The state is therefore argued to devalue any practical sense and dispositions which are alternative to the ones they consider to be the norm for participation in their games (Bourdieu, 2001; Shilling, 2005). Hence this classifying and categorizing of the othered is argued to leave particular social groups occupying awkward social positions (Bourdieu, 2000). Field is therefore not a place of equality and inclusion for all players within society, rather it is a place of ongoing struggle through social relations between those who govern the fields and those who are dominated by it.

I will now turn to the last concept encompassed in Bourdieu's theory of practice pertaining to capital. Capital is an essential component to habitus and field because it is the communicator between the two (Bourdieu, 1984).

3.2.3 Capital

As the previous sections '*Habitus'* and '*Field'* inferred, field and habitus require capital for Bourdieu's theory to be fully utilized as a theoretical framework for the interrogation of empirical data. For Bourdieu (1979), capital is the currency of field defining the rules of the game regarding who and what is to be included and excluded. By inclusion and exclusion, Bourdieu is referring to the need for people to possess the 'right' kind of capital if they are to be included in field games or find themselves excluded to the periphery. For example, a person who lacks General Certificates of Secondary Education (GCSEs) are likely to not possess the 'right' cultural capital to play the game of employment finding themselves excluded to the periphery. Grenfell (2009) further adds how capital also defines how people playing a game accrue power to exert control; and subsequently, succeed or fail. This means that capital could be understood as the communication means between a person's habitus and field position in which capital directs certain pre-reflexive actions (much like habitus) pertaining to aspirations and expectations. Bourdieu referred to this process as 'the field of possibles' (1984, pg.110) which decides for people the path that cannot be taken by taking into consideration their habitus dispositions and level of capital. Capital is therefore a way in which we can locate peoples' position within the social hierarchy or given field (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu defined capital as:

> *"accumulated labour (in its materialized form or its 'incorporated,' embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labour"* (Bourdieu, 1986, pg.241).

From this definition, capital can be understood as the resources that people have access to, but which can also be invested or exchanged for goods in social spaces such as further education and employment. Capital has been argued to be acquired through the process of socialization, and particularly, early childhood socialization processes in which commonly shared capital, through formative experiences such as school, is acquired by most people (Reay, 2004).

When discussing capital, it is imperative to distinguish between the traditional economic and sociological terminology. For Bourdieu (1986) he criticised the traditional economic connotation because it reduces capital to mercantile exchange oriented towards the maximisation of profit instead of viewing capital as a relational exchange through social relations capable of mercantile exchange, while also being exchangeable for intangible goods such as social connections or entry into a particular occupation. This is not to say that the economic connotation does not feature in Bourdieu's capital theory, because one of his forms of capital is economic based (Bourdieu, 1986). For example, Bourdieu argued how capital in sociological terms refers to:

> *"Is what makes the games of society – something other than simple games of chance (e.g., roulette) offering at every moment the possibility of a miracle… [whereby], everything is not equally possible or impossible"* (1986, pg.241).

What Bourdieu is arguing is how unlike economic games of chance such as roulette, which afford players the opportunity of changing their social trajectories in an instant win through the tangible asset of money, sociological capital in all its forms takes players a long time to resource through extensive experiences across multiple fields, meaning their social trajectories are equally possible or impossible at the same time. It is, therefore, imperative that the whole sociological conceptualisation of capital and its cultural and social exchanges are considered in application to empirical

investigations, as to break away from the economic definition (Moore, 2004). Bourdieu (1986, 2004) therefore conceptualised three distinct yet intertwined forms of capital pertaining to economic, social, and cultural.

The first form of capital depicted by Bourdieu pertains to economic capital and is arguably the most straight forward of the three to discuss because as noted previously, the traditional conceptualisation of economic capital is as monetary. Bourdieu (1986) perceived economic capital as being the individual material assets which can be directly and easily converted into tangible money or institutionalized in the form of property rights. It is argued to be inherited directly from family such as through trust funds and social classed backgrounds but can also be negotiated through a person's direct effort to transcend their field of possibles (Bourdieu, 1984), such as Bourdieu himself accomplished. A person can also convert their economic capital into cultural or social capital. For example, an individual can convert economic capital into objectified cultural capital via the acquisition of a material object such as branded clothing or a piece of artwork. Economic capital is therefore argued to be of utmost importance because it is not only the root of enabling people to generate or possess the other forms of capital, but it is also the home in which all types of capital accumulation eventually return (Bourdieu, 1986; Schuller, Baron and Field, 2000). For without economic capital, people do not have the monetary means, or positions of power in society to inherit or generate other forms of capital for successful entry and achievement in fields games such as those of education and employment.

The second form of capital theorized by Bourdieu is social capital. Social capital refers to a network of contacts that people can draw upon for social support when game-playing and migrating between fields (Bourdieu, 1986). It is not reducible to economic or cultural capital, nor is it argued to be independent of them (Schuller et al, 2000). Bourdieu defined social capital as, 'the sum of current and potential resources that are linked to possession of a durable network of institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition, which provides each of its members with the backing of collectively owned capital' (1986, pg.249). However, as Bourdieu (1986, 2004) further argued, social capital is dependent on the bearer being able to exploit their social contacts to progress in a particular field such as employment to increase or reproduce their life chances. Social capital is also argued to have a multiplier effect on the other types of capital. For example, having a social connection that means one

can gain a highly regarded internship multiplies their economic standing in society, as well as generating an increase in their cultural capital levels.

The final form of capital Bourdieu theorized pertains to cultural capital. Cultural capital originated from Bourdieu's seminal work '*Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction'* with Passeron (1977). Arguably, cultural capital is the most expansive category of capital as it contains three different forms that an individual can acquire. The concept is also argued to signify cultural dispositions, knowledge and resources that may confer societal rewards to people by virtue of belonging to a particular social group (Bourdieu, 1986). Regarding the resources that constitute cultural capital, these are understood to be conferred through people exhibiting an educated habitus which possesses state valued qualifications through previously mentioned formative experiences of school, possessing knowledge of books and technology, and having engaged with cultural institutions and their objects such as art galleries and libraries (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1986). However, several scholars (De Graaf, 1986; Dumais, 2002; Sullivan, 2007; Gaddis, 2013) have argued that Bourdieu does not go into enough depth of what constitutes cultural capital because he does not acknowledge the processual relations during which the cultural capital is being gained. For example, the subjective and objective interactions people have within the acquisition site (e.g., discussing a book, a piece of artwork, interacting with exotic animals, or engaging in dialogue exchange with an expert regarding their knowledge or experiences within their area of expertise) can also constitute cultural capital. In his later work, *'The Forms of Capital'* (1986), Bourdieu did aim to deepen his understanding of cultural capital to acknowledge how cultural capital can have three different states (embodied, institutionalized; and objectified) but this expanded conceptualisation still did not reflect the more micro-level details of what is gained during the social processes and interactions of cultural capital acquisition.

In the embodied state, cultural capital consists of the knowledge generated by habitus through early childhood socialisation processes such as the family and school, as habitus and field have argued. This can involve dispositions being generated relating to etiquette, accent, dress, and tastes for certain cultural objects, which are then reflected in how a person acts upon the social world and choose to present themselves (Garratt, 2016). They could also extend to how people negotiate social and cultural relations such as how to make friends, being bullied, and experiencing institutional

and social politicking, which are all things often experienced during formative schooling years and later reproduced in the workplace (Biggs, 2016). It is of relevance to acknowledge how in the embodied state cultural capital can be conferred through people investing a great deal of personal time in intentional self-improvement to increase the value and variety of their cultural knowledge (Bourdieu, 1986). For example, it is not enough for a person to possess average graded General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSEs) qualifications, rather they should aim to achieve the highest grades they can for this form of cultural capital to have the maximum amount of symbolic value for exchange in the fields of employment or further education. Embodied cultural capital therefore could be argued to form through prolonged exposure to a socialized habitus, such as that generated through involvement in school (Moore, 2004).

In the institutionalized state, cultural capital takes the form of recognition conferred from an institution through qualifications, degrees, and credentials (Bourdieu, 1986). The institutionalized form is mostly concerned with academic qualifications because of the cultural value they confer onto the holder, which according to Bourdieu 'legally guarantees value with respect to culture' (1986, pg.20) for participation in other field games such as employment. It is also the only form of cultural capital that is measurable through the consideration of the prestige attached to having attended a particular university or private school in which the cultural capital is acquired from. Bourdieu does caveat how institutionalized cultural capital only has value in fields that recognise and share this value. For example, it could be argued how most sub-fields of the field of employment share the value in institutionalized cultural capital making it a pre-requisite for entry. Webb and colleagues (2002) have argued how it is also possible for people who lack institutionalized cultural capital such as the home educated potentially do to succeed in society by migrating to fields that value alternative cultural capital. They used the example of a circus performer who has acquired alternative cultural capital through having developed educational skills linked to lion taming, aerobatics, and through social interactions with a wide variety of people, but these skills are not accredited by a reputable educational institution but rather via the "university of life" (Webb et al, 2002, pg.111). For the state, it does not matter if the alternatively accredited educational skills have transferable employability skills (e.g., communication, organisation and interpersonal) because the means in which

they were acquired is afforded little to no value. This is because the state only accepts institutionalized cultural capital that is legitimated through their social spaces and the rules they inscribe to the game (Bourdieu, 1994).

In the objectified state, cultural capital takes the form of tangible material objects that people possess such as books, paintings, instruments, and clothing (Bourdieu, 1986). This state also extends to the symbolic value of the object afforded through society, such as wearing a dress from a particular designer or owning a piece of art by a prestigious artist. These objects are argued to be a physical representation of a person's cultural and intellectual experiences that may have been inherited through familial generations (1986). For example, an academic might display a first edition book in their office which holds significance in their field, which they have inherited from a member of their family, who might have also been a recognisable name in society because of their own cultural capital. Although for people who do not inherit cultural objects, they rely on accruing them throughout their lives. This latter process is argued to be determined often by our economic capital and ability to achieve upward social mobility much like Bourdieu himself achieved (Bourdieu, 1986).

In considering these three distinct forms of cultural capital, it has been argued how the main principle behind cultural capital is how it, "embodies or transmits the logic of practice of the field in a way that differentiates and therefore establishes hierarchies" (Grenfell, 2009, pg.20). It does however raise questions regarding groups who are othered in society and whether they have adequate opportunities to develop cultural capital if the narrative is suggestive that cultural capital is largely attained through formative experiences of the field of education, and notably, the sub-field of school.

While I have addressed each form of capital in turn, it is important to acknowledge how economic, social, and cultural capital work together in practice because it is through the exchange of capital that people and groups are included or excluded from fields such as employment and education (Zembylas, 2007). The accumulation and exchange of capital also generates habitus aspirations and expectations to be realised but is dependent on the field of possibles for each member of society (Bourdieu, 2004), which often begins during early childhood socialisation experiences. All capitals are argued by Bourdieu (2004) then to be products of investments secured by people through accruing vital resources that they can exploit because in each of its form's,

capital, can be 'exchanged, expanded, invested and reinvested' (Bourdieu, 1986). For example, attending the right educational institution such as Oxford University (cultural) can convert to having a network of the right sort of social connections (social) that can buy individuals specific types of financially rewarding jobs (economic). Hence, as Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) stressed, it is essential for individuals to find a way to maintain their capital levels through continuing to grow their accumulated resources throughout their lives if they are to maintain their social position or increase their chances of success in terms of exceeding their social positioning and achieving upward social mobility. Wacquant (1992) argued how, the possession of capital in all its forms is not available to everyone though because capital is limited and controlled by those already dominant in capital such as the state through institutions (e.g., schools). However, some have argued (Winterton and Irwin, 2012; Bowers-Brown, 2015) how people attain capital through fields external to these institutions through other people they encounter. For example, a person can attain capital through friends, local members of their community, their families and their family's connections, peer groups relating to their careers, and arguably, alternative forms of education. This thesis therefore aims to use Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field, and capital to explore how home educated people experience employment.

I will now turn to outlining Bourdieu's lesser-known concept of the cleft habitus to explore what happens when there is a disruption to a person's habitus when moving between fields, as well as to acknowledge some of the critiques of Bourdieu's theory of practice about the role of conscious agency in responding to habitus disruption.

3.3 The Cleft Habitus

Having outlined in the previous section Bourdieu's theory of practice concepts of habitus, field and capital that this chapter moves to discussing his lesser-known concept of cleft habitus (Bourdieu, 1979; 2000; 2004; 2007) to demonstrate what can happen when there is a breakdown or misalignment in the *habitus-field* relationship because of field movement (e.g., when a person moves from one field such as school to another such as employment). The second half of this theoretical framework therefore will now turn to introducing Bourdieu's concept of *cleft habitus* to explore how people navigate the social and psychological dimensions of *habitus-field* breakdown. This thesis, therefore, does not use Bourdieu's concept of habitus in a straightforward manner to show mere social reproduction, rather it wishes to consider

what happens when habitus shifts and what can be creatively generated when these shifts occur.

In 1981, Bourdieu arguably had reached the top of French academia when he was elected as Chair of Sociology at the College de France and asked to deliver his inaugural lecture. As Friedman (2016) acknowledged, most people would have expected Bourdieu to have felt a great sense of pride and accomplishment in this momentous moment, but for Bourdieu he rather engendered a profound sense of ambivalence. Bourdieu explored these feelings in greater detail in his books, '*A Sketch for a Self-Analysis*' (2007) and '*Pascalian Meditations*' (2000), recollecting how when standing in front of the audience, before beginning his inaugural lecture, he felt all the internal contradictions contained in his habitus coming to the fore resulting in a sense of feeling like he was not 'in his right place' (Bourdieu, 2000, pg.163). Bourdieu believed that the ambivalence felt was due to his extraordinary long-range upward mobility. This was because Bourdieu had been raised by an uneducated postal worker and his wife in a tiny peasant village in the French Pyrenees, which according to Bourdieu's theorizations on *habitus* meant he was positioned on a trajectory that made becoming a Chair of Sociology at a prestigious university 'unthinkable' and 'not for the likes of him' (Webb et al, 2002; Jenkins, 2002). What Bourdieu was arguably realising, was how there was a continual incongruence between his originary *habitus* and his current context in the *field* of intellectuals. Friedman (2016) referred to this as a person's originating social background having retained prominence in their current *field* position despite the *field* being at potential odds with their originating disposition. For example, Bourdieu argued how long-range migration between originary dispositions and the ones we come to encounter later in our lives can come at a considerable cost causing powerful emotions and internal conflicts that he argued remained largely unsolved. For Bourdieu, this created a 'sense of self torn by dislocation and contradiction' (2000, pg.16) leading him to extend his concept of *habitus* to acknowledge its capability of causing a *cleft* or put another way, a divide. Bourdieu defined a *cleft-habitus* as:

> "*a habitus divided against itself, in constant negotiation with itself and its ambivalences, and therefore doomed to a kind of duplication, to a double perception of the self, to successive allegiance and multiple identities*" (1999, pg.511).

Friedman (2016) acknowledged how despite Bourdieu defining a cleft and dedicating personal accounts to the concept, he seemed to underutilize it as an analytical tool in his empirical studies because he believed his experience was an exception to the rule. Bourdieu (2000) firmly believed that while *habitus* was capable of gradual change through *pedagogic action* and new *field* experiences (see *Field*, Section 3.2.2) habitus would endure with long-lasting effects over the course of a person's life. An example of this is how a people are argued through their personal experiences of university to be able to gradually change their habitus through having acquired new dispositions that are of value in our society, and notably, for the *field* of work and employment, but despite this their original dispositions from their *field* of origin will endure to some extent over time (Friedman, 2016). For Bourdieu, a *cleft habitus* was therefore a rare occurrence, only arising when a person's conditions of existence changed dramatically rather than gradually (Friedman, 2016). During moments of instability, Friedman (2016) argued, how the '*hysteresis* effect' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, pg.78) takes hold because of a mismatch occurring between a person's originary *habitus* and the *habitus* required in the new *field*. Ingram (2012) coined the term '*habitus* tug' to represent what happens at the time *hysteresis* arises. When a person's *habitus* becomes tugged, they are argued to feel as though their dispositions are losing coherency and begin experiencing a sense of self that is torn by dislocation and internal conflict, which can lead to a duality of self (Bourdieu 1999).

The *hysteresis* effect, and through considering the definition of a *habitus* tug, is particularly interesting for the developing argument of this thesis in considering how alternatively educated people transition to, and experience, the *field* of employment given their originary *habitus* was shaped extensively longer by the familial *field*, rather than being shaped through pedagogic action within the sub-*field* of education. It could be the case that for this social group they can be likened to those who experience long-range social mobility such as the case of the working-class students Bourdieu researched in '*The State Mobility*' (1996) regarding how their habitus adapted to life in the upper ranks of the French education system. The study found that the students found themselves in a painful social position feeling torn from both their originary *habitus* and the *habitus* required for smoothly transitioning into the new field. In some ways, the students tried to conform and adapt their *habitus* dispositions to the new *field* but ultimately could not erase their past and reconcile it with their present, which

led to experiencing profound internal conflicts such as Bourdieu had experienced. Bourdieu's own reflection of why he wrote about a *cleft-habitus* highlights the same contradiction, which he expressed:

> *"My main problem is to try and understand what happened to me. My trajectory may be described as miraculous, I suppose – an ascension to a place where I don't belong. And so, to be able to live in a world that is not mine I must try to understand both things: what it means to have an academic mind – how such is created – and at the same time what was lost in acquiring it. For that reason, even if my work – my full work- is a sort of autobiography, it is a work for people who have the same sort of trajectory, and the same need to understand" (Bourdieu and Eagleton, 1992, pg.117)*

Bourdieu's aim of attempting to develop a work that helps people understand what happened to them, when they find themselves in a world that is not their own, strongly implies that Bourdieu suspects other people also experience a *cleft-habitus*, which somewhat contradicts his original stance that his *cleft* was an exception to the rule. It could be argued how Bourdieu's position on the frequency of a *cleft* occurring might have developed over time to recognise that his own experience was not an exception because he observed the phenomenon occurring in other people's lives as well. Friedman (2016) also acknowledged this contradiction because in his empirical study of 14 socially mobile people, he found that they too shared similar experiences of a *cleft-habitus* to Bourdieu. Friedman noted how, "a relatively higher percentage of my respondents (although obviously still a minority) reported a sense of a cleft – and certainly many more proportionally than Bourdieu would have assumed" (2015, pg.1).

Bourdieu's work has also been criticised (Sayer, 2003; Sweetman, 2005; Reay, 2015; Ingram and Abrahams, 2016) by several scholars attempting to build upon his theoretical insights relating to *habitus*. The authors have argued how Bourdieu rarely acknowledged the potential emotional underpinnings of *habitus* especially when it develops a *cleft*, which Robbins (1991) had already tried to draw attention to by arguing for a broader interpretation of dispositions to include those which are emotions and not just cognitive ways of thinking and behaving. Reay has also supported Robbins (1991) argument, adding how:

> *"dispositions can include a propensity to fatalism, ambivalence, resilience, resentment, certainty, entitlement or even rage, just as much as a tendency to either theatre-going or watching soap operas"* *(2015, pg.10)*

For Reay (2015), the study of the emotional dimension of *habitus* has always been overshadowed by Bourdieu's aim of bridging the debates concerning agency and structure. This is despite Bourdieu's own work (as previously noted) being entangled in emotions relating to his own experiences of education and social migration. It could be argued that, despite not academically acknowledging an emotional dimension within his conceptualisation of a cleft, Bourdieu did seemingly imply through his expressions that his own experience of a cleft was an emotionally entangled experience but framed cognitively. Reay went on to conclude that while *habitus* is capable of adaption by developing an often-cognitive feel for the game, it is also capable of falling into repression and developing defensive cognitive and emotional responses, leading to experiencing a *cleft*. Hence, as Jenkins argued, Bourdieu's oeuvre "remains one in which things happen to people, rather than a world in which they can intervene in their individual and collective destinies" (2002, p.91).

For several Bourdieusian-inspired writers (Reay, 2015; Robbins, 1991; Ingram and Abrahams, 2016; Friedman, 2016; Abrahams and Ingram, 2013; Mills, 2008; Sayer, 2004), the role of emotions in individual accounts of field migration therefore represents an opportunity for developing Bourdieu's original theorisation of *habitus* in which Reay argued:

> *"it allows us to explore our understanding of how the past is played out in the present for individuals, but to also get a better grasp of the degree of ease and/or discomfort with which people respond to the internalisation of the wider social world, as they move across a range of familiar and unfamiliar fields"* *(2015, pg.22).*

The argument for the inclusion of the role emotions play in habitus being valuable given the limited amount of research on how people might use their agency consciously to respond to or resist the internalisation of multiple structures at the individual level of experience (to be discussed in depth in Section 3.3.3). For example, Friedman's (2016) work argued how Bourdieu's work on *cleft* and *hysteresis* has

tended to focus on large-scale changes that led to the reshaping of peoples socio-economic and cultural conditions, such as those created by the Algerian War of Independence (Bourdieu, 1979), or the implementation of the 'French State Code' on inheritance (Bourdieu, 2002, pg.12), which has come at a cost of Bourdieu having not developed theorisations on how the individual experience's *hysteresis* and a *cleft-habitus* in their everyday practices. Sayer (2004) had argued many years before Friedman, how there is significant value in understanding how habitus dispositions are experienced at an individual level through peoples everyday mundane experiences because as Mills (2008) added individuals possess revolutionary potential through using their conscious agency to disrupt class boundaries. Friedman (2016), Sayer (2003) and Mills (2008) also question whether people or particular groups of people consciously use their agency to not only respond to *cleft-habitus* situations, but to alter and disrupt class boundaries lacking in practical belief and resisting the practical sense of fields and their games.

The most recent and arguably important contribution which sought to develop a response to these suggested shortcomings of Bourdieu's cleft is the work of Ingram and her co-publications with Abrahams. For example, Ingram in her (2012) thesis, developed a framework that considered the different ways the habitus of educationally successful working-class boys responded to the mismatch in their dispositions from residing within two different incompatible worlds at the same time. Ingram later revised her framework, alongside Abrahams (2013), to consider an additional 'third space' response arguing that a *cleft* habitus can be an empowering resource that can be transformative rather than just a negatively felt experience. This idea of a third space was expanded upon in Ingram and Abrahams (2016) theoretical work '*Stepping outside of oneself: How a cleft-habitus can lead to greater reflexivity through occupying 'the third space'*'. Ingram and Abrahams wanted to account for the potentially creative aspects of experiencing a *cleft-habitus* and how people consciously can create a new space for themselves from having been 'outsiders within' the social system enabling them to contest and transform their positions through their revolutionary capacity.

The subsequent sections will therefore explore three emergent Bourdieusian-inspired theorisations based primarily on Ingram and Abrahams multiple works - *dislocation, dual location, and relocation* – relating to how people might respond to and negotiate a *cleft-habitus* (Ingram, 2012; Ingram and Abrahams, 2016; Abrahams and Ingram,

2013). Whilst these positions have developed from Bourdieu's conceptualisation of *cleft-habitus*, they offer researchers different theoretical perspectives on how people might navigate *habitus* disruptions when finding themselves in a *field* that is at odds to their field of origin. This is not to suggest that people can be categorised solely according to these three generalised theorisations because this thesis acknowledges how subjectivity can mean that peoples experience might fit with one category, but might also span across multiple categories at once, or different categories at different times in their lives. The following discussion of these theorisations presents a theoretical exploration of their potentialities, as analytical tools, for the interrogation of my own data in *Work and Employment Experiences* (Chapter 5).

3.3.1 Polar Opposites: Positions of Dislocation

The first theoretical perspective relates to the idea of dislocation, which is arguably prevalent within sociological accounts of individual experiences of social mobility, according to Friedman (2016), Reay (2015) and Abrahams and Ingram (2013). Dislocation refers to feelings of being torn between two differing fields and not having a sense of belonging to either like Bourdieu had self-reported having experienced (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016). It could be argued how Friedman's earlier theorisation of being 'culturally homeless' (2012), meaning identity becomes displaced in the field of origin (e.g., family) and field of destination (e.g., employment) simultaneously, can be likened to what Ingram and Abrahams wanted to convey with that of dislocation. As Hey argued, dislocation is a process of identity displacement which is painful in the sense that it is, "a pain that is constantly spun from the recognition and experience of loss of a previous home without the pleasure of feeling safe in the new location" (2003, pg.325). Reflecting on her own experiences of dislocation through becoming educationally successful from a working-class background, Ingram expressed:

> *"The experience of reorienting my way of seeing and being in the world through middle-class acculturation and educational success was quite a disturbing one. It threw me into a state of heightened reflexivity where I questioned and analysed taken-for-granted ways of being, and left me feeling like I belonged nowhere" (in Ingram and Abrahams, 2016, pg.143)*

What Ingram's words are expressive of is how movement across and within fields is far from a straightforward trajectory, rather it can be a painful and complex process involving immense emotional and psychosocial implications for those who experience this process (Reay, 2015), as Bourdieu (1999) had tried to caution of in his original theorisation of a cleft-habitus. Importantly, Ingram's experience also resonates with a wide range of other working-class academics (Reay, 1997; Lehmann, 2013; Dews and Law, 1995; Ryan and Sackrey, 1984) who have written about their painful experiences of being socially mobile within and across fields. For example, Hey wrote of her own painful experience as "not understanding as well as being misunderstood – of revealing a self that is thought stupid in the host culture and pretentious in your original home culture" (2003: 326). Common to Ingram's and Hey's accounts is how these experiences generate "continued feelings of being outsiders, having lost their true selves, and feeling like frauds or imposters" (Lehmann, 2013, pg.3) with little belief in being capable of reconciling their habitus leaving them with a sense of needing to either respond through reconfirming their originary habitus, or abandoning it and renegotiating their habitus through the dispositions and structures of the new field encountered (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016). In both cases, the habitus becomes divided from its originary field.

If a person responds through 'abandonment' the person is said to be renegotiating their habitus through disassociating with the dispositions and structures of their originary field, and instead internalising those of the new field (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016). The authors elaborated on the abandoned response using school as an illustration, explaining how:

> "As the secondary field of school exerts a structuring force on a person's habitus, they have difficulties in accommodating both sets of incongruent structures. Over time, the structures of the new field become internally dominant, and the old/originary structures are usurped or overwritten. Through a complex interaction between structure and agency a person renegotiates their habitus in response to the structuring forces of the new field." (2016, pg.150)

Illustrative of an abandoned habitus would be to consider a working-class academic coming to adopt the dispositions of their middle-class peers. This means to become

attuned to behaving 'appropriately' and succeeding in their career, but in doing so they become less attuned to the 'appropriate' dispositions and ways of being when they are in their originary field. It could be argued that this analogy could apply to a wider spectrum of employment experiences across several other sub-fields of the field of employment and for other social groups not exclusive to the working-class.

Alternatively, a person can respond by reconfirming their originary habitus through distancing themselves with the dispositions and structures of the new field to maintain their originating sense of self (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016). The authors make evident how when they theorize of 'reconfirmation', they are not merely referring to a 'confirmed habitus' because the theory of practice would argue how agents' habitus becomes confirmed several times a day "through its encounters with the field of which it is a product" (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016, pg.151). Reconfirmation is therefore when habitus enters a secondary field of which it is not a product and rejects the alternative dispositions it encounters, as not being for the likes of them (Bourdieu, 1990). Ingram and Abrahams expressed how:

> *"At times this may be partly conscious, when an agent considers the ways of viewing the world offered by each of the fields' structures. However, often this will be part of the non-conscious operations of the habitus, and the new field's structures simply find no means of being received by and assimilated into the originary schemes. The new structures do not then become part of the internalised dispositions of the habitus." (2016, pg.150)*

What positions of dislocation therefore demonstrate is how psychologically and emotively crippling field migration can be for people who find themselves culturally homeless. This theoretical position does not imply that a person can alter their positions to accommodate both the originary and new fields dispositions at once. The subsequent theoretical position aims to offer a perspective on how a person who experiences cultural homelessness might try to negotiate this ambivalence. For example, employment is a field in which people might try to negotiate ambivalence related to experiences of cultural homelessness, if they find they do not culturally fit with their organisations or norms associated with their chosen careers.

3.3.2 Double-edged Sword: Positions of Destabilisation

Whilst the theoretical position of dislocation places emphasis on identity displacement for people experiencing a *cleft-habitus*, the position of destabilisation offers the possibility for people's identity to exist in multiple versions across two *fields* simultaneously (Ingram, 2012; Ingram and Abrahams, 2016). For Ingram and Abrahams, they defined a destabilized habitus as:

> *"A destabilised habitus is when the structuring forces of each field are incorporated into the habitus but cannot be reconciled. Instead, the two separate schemes of perception vie for dominance. The person tries to incorporate the structuring forces of each field into their habitus but cannot achieve successful assimilation. Instead, they oscillate between two dispositions and internalise conflict and division." (2016, pg.151).*

Similarly, Stahl (2013) argued how this vying for dominance that occurs between two dispositions leads to a 'duality of self' meaning that people are capable of juggling, or even controlling and managing their dual dispositions within their 'cleft' habitus. For some people who experience this duality they have been observed to "successfully move across two very different fields, combining strong connections and loyalties [to both]" (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009, pg.1105). This was the case in Lehman's (2013), Abraham and Ingram's (2013), and Reay, Crozier and Clayton's (2009) studies which all considered the experiences of working-class students' abilities to move back and forth between seemingly incommensurate fields of home and university, fitting into both with relative ease and little ambivalence. For example, in Abraham and Ingram's study they found that working-class students demonstrated a capability to internalise the structures of both fields and modify their appearances, accents, and behaviour accordingly to ensure commensurability with both fields.

However, it is often the case, that this duality results in a negative experience because of the 'enormous body of psychic, intellectual and interactive work' (Reay, 2002, pg.223) that goes into controlling and managing two contradictory ways of being. Reay found this to be the case for 'Shaun' when narrating how he experienced "trying to achieve academically in a 'sink' inner-city boys' comprehensive school, whilst simultaneously trying to maintain his standing within the male peer group culture"

(2002, pg.221). Shaun's experience is remarkably like Bourdieu's own experience of a cleft-habitus, with Bourdieu having expressed:

> *"If, to resist, I have no means other than to make mine and to claim aloud the very properties that mark me as dominated, in the manner of the sons of English proletarians proud to exclude themselves from school in the name of the ideal of masculinity borne by their class culture (Willis 1977), is that resistance? If, on the other hand, I work to efface everything that is likely to reveal my origins, or to trap me in my social position (an accent, physical composure, family relations), should we then speak of submission?" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, pg.23-24)*

As Bourdieu depicts a destabilised habitus can generate an "unresolvable contradiction" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) leaving a person feeling that there is "no way out" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) for their identity, leaving them with a sense of self torn by ambivalence and conflict. This experience can be likened to how 'Alice' narrated of her experience in Wonderland to the caterpillar (Carroll, 1865). Alice tried to explain how *"I wonder if I've been changed in the night. Let me think. Was I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different. But if I'm not the same, the next question is 'Who in the world am I?"* (Carroll, 1865, pg.19). Alice is seemingly trying to explain the duality felt in her sense of self because her habitus is not aligned with the field of wonderland because her practical sense of the game is specific to her field of origin. This is also why the caterpillar, as a native player of the game, could not understand Alice because it has never experienced Alice's field of origin.

What these empirical examples, and analogy demonstrate, is how despite people being able to juggle two worlds at once (Stahl, 2013), it is often the case that people who experience *habitus* duality will often opt "to be more fully immersed within one field and distance from the other" (Abrahams and Ingram, 2013, pg.11) as to get a hold on 'Who in the world am I?'. This response is argued by Ingram and Abrahams to be a coping mechanism aimed at making the process of experiencing a cleft less painful due to the recognition that to force two incommensurate ways of being is going to be grossly psychosocially demanding of them.

The final theoretical position aims to offer a perspective in which bridging the two incommensurate fields does not have to be a painful experience but rather can be an empowering exploitive position that a person finds themselves in.

3.3.3 Third Space Travel: Positions of Relocation

In the previous sections, I have presented two theoretical positions of dislocation and destabilisation regarding how *habitus* might respond to a cleft. This section explores the final theoretical position of relocation which posits how cleft habitus can be rearticulated as an empowering and positive experience through reconciliation of habitus duality that is achieved by relocation to a space outside of fields games (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016). Ingram and Abrahams defined a reconciled habitus as:

> *"The reconciled habitus is a more positive framing of habitus interruption and accords with the concept of the third space where something new is generated from the process of internalising incommensurate structures" (2016, pg.151).*

For Ingram and Abrahams (2016), their theorisation of habitus reconciliation was a way to not only rearticulate Bourdieu's original theorisation of cleft habitus to account for greater complexity, reflexivity, and agentic action in how people can respond to a cleft, but also as way to understand their own and their previous participants experiences of a cleft. This criticism is consistent with several other academics (Mills, 2008; Reay, 2015; Jenkins, 2002) who argued how Bourdieu conceptualised that people unconsciously accept their position within field games internalizing the inevitable conflicts without any room for reflexive agentic action to negotiate or resist their position and all that it entails (e.g., the rules of the game). For example, Jenkins (2002) argued how Bourdieu's social world, "remains one in which things happen to people, rather than a world in which they can intervene in their individual and collective destinies" (2002, pg.91). Hence, the issue for these academics (including Ingram and Abrahams) was how they believed that habitus could be transformed through acts of conscious negotiation, reflexivity, and resistance meaning that a cleft could be responded to in a more empowered and positive manner.

Ingram and Abrahams (2016) starting position therefore was to consider how possessing dual identities from existing in multiple field games, enables a person to step outside of themselves to reflexively view both games from an outside position,

allowing them to create an entirely new position that is neither in the originary field or the secondary field. This was because through their own experiences as educationally successful working-class kids who got middle-class academic jobs, they expressed not being able to fit their experiences entirely into the previous two theorisations of dislocation or destabilisation (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016), which was also the case when trying to understand how their participants navigated and responded to multiple field structures and dispositions in their empirical study (Abrahams and Ingram, 2013). Hence, through theorising of a reconciled habitus, the authors wanted to explore:

> *"What can be created from the painful experience of a cleft-habitus…[because] there is an interesting creativity in not belonging fully in different fields because it allows us to contest the boundaries [because] through a displacement of habitus we need to operate in a space outside of the fields in which we function"* (Abrahams and Ingram, 2013, pg.152).

Ingram and Abrahams (2016) understood of this space through drawing on the work of critical theorist Bhabha and his concept of the 'third space' (1994, pg.211). They argued how the third space is not about tracing two originary moments from which a third space emerges to 'accommodate' and 'reconcile' the incommensurate structures and dispositions of multiple fields, rather the third space enmeshes together dispositions and tastes of the original habitus (family and education) with the new habitus (further education and employment) to create a new version of itself that is markedly different from its former versions. This means that:

> *"A person can successfully navigate both fields by drawing on these different aspects of habitus depending on which field they are in, i.e., in attunement with the field's accepted norms of behaviour and disposition. In this way a person can accommodate both field structures despite the opposition between them"* (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016, pg.151)

For Ingram and Abrahams, this results in cultural hybridity, whereby people positioned in the third space are enabled to creatively 'take their own histories and the structures that shape their habitus to find ways of creating their own structures of authority, which

go beyond assimilation or integration' (2016, pg.153). The third space therefore is a useful theory to assist academics in understanding why people might experience being neither a 'fish in water' or a 'fish out of water' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, pg.127), rather they can be considered as 'outsiders within' (when in secondary fields e.g., employment) and 'insiders without' (when in their originary field e.g., family). Friedman's (2016) study of his school friend's parents is illustrative of these two categorisations through their experiences of a cleft due to moving from a working-class position to an upper-class one resulting from exploiting employment opportunities. Friedman observed how from the outsider within perspective, they possessed the right occupation to position them within the economic elite but possessed the wrong sort of native cultural capital to be accepted in this field. Despite this they still embodied some of the tastes of the new field but would often make fun of this. From the insider without perspective, they felt their loyalties and their cultural tastes where more at home in their originary working class field, but they were no longer accepted fully in this field because of their economic capital and some of their 'new' tastes. Despite fitting into both fields and being able to successfully navigate both meaning they did not reject either field, they could be observed instead to inhabit a different space entirely enabling them to be cultural hybrids, while also contesting the rigid boundaries of both fields, through which they played their own game to exploit both positions.

People who are considered as both outsiders within and insiders without are therefore argued by Ingram and Abrahams (2016) to occupy a position of privilege because of their exploited and dominated positions in the social world they come to understand of it from a vantage point of the third space. The authors argue this is because they have found how people categorized in this way often have shared a similar experience of disadvantage in their formative habitus experiences, which means when they migrate to a position of advantage, they see this world with different eyes to those who have only ever known the privilege of that world. This is argued to occur through previously disadvantaged people being able to step outside of both fields to see each field for what it is and what it requires to be successful. From doing this, they can reflexively and creatively contest the boundaries and practical sense of field games to alter their own trajectories or find ease in negotiating their dual positions. In turn, this disrupts the normalised structures and dispositions reproduced by the state, which offers a 'small but significant resistance against the pull of the state that privileges and

supports the cultural reproduction of the dominant class to ensure continued dominance' (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016, pg.155). For example, it could be argued how the home educated group might share an experience of having been disadvantaged in one way or another by the school system that did not benefit them. If they then migrate from this position of disadvantage to a position of advantage such as through the field of employment, then one could argue that they might see this world with different eyes to their peers who have only known the privilege of employment through having benefitted from the school system. Being outsiders within, they might understand the game of employment from the vantage point of the third space able to disrupt the normalised rules of the game and capital pre-requisites.

To summarize, the potential for conscious intervention that is inferred to within this theoretical position of relocation does set it apart from the previous two. This can be understood in the sense that habitus intervention in positions of dislocation and destabilisation are largely a process of personal self-management of incommensurate dispositions, but in the position of relocation the personal becomes politicised through the questioning of practical sense. Relocation to the third space is understood to represent a conscious act by agents to use a *cleft* as a tool for strategic game-playing and social action (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016).

The theoretical position of relocation therefore offers new ways of looking at peoples' experiences of a *cleft*, which renders the 'taken-for-granted' problematic suggesting a whole range of questions that are yet to be addressed through empirical research (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016; Reay, 1995). For example, how well adapted are people to the context they find themselves in? Do those who are deemed to be 'othered' accept the painful experience of being dual positioned within two incommensurate *fields*? Do they feel as though they are disadvantaged by their 'othered' status? or do they feel at an advantage creatively re-positioning their identities into a third space?

Through these three emergent theoretical positions this thesis sees merit in arguing that there is potency in therefore developing an understanding of the mundane everyday experiences of employment for a typically 'othered' social group, and whether their limited experiences of the game of school impacts on how they respond to the multiple structures and dispositions of two potentially incommensurate *fields*. Therefore, one might ask how home educated people then conceive of the game in

the *field* of employment? And how might they view their position within it? Are these individuals equipped with the necessary capital for participation in the game due to their alternative educational backgrounds? Especially, if one considers how their *habitus* has likely been shaped through a series of subjective and unique experiences situational to their educational class conditions positioned in an alternate sub-*field* of education, which is positioned at odds with the majority accepted class condition of school, and its more systematic and routinized experience that reproduces the dominant players within society as to maintain dominance in other fields such as the political and employment. I therefore want to apply the Bourdieusian framework developed in this chapter to interrogate my own empirical data pertaining to home educated peoples experience of employment in *Work and Employment Experiences* (Chapter 5).

3.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, Bourdieu's theory of practice and concept of the *cleft-habitus*, which have been discussed in this chapter, provide a powerful analytical lens through which the data can be interrogated more deeply to answer the research questions. This helps interrogate the work and employment experiences of previously home educated people through this theoretical understanding of how people's *habitus* is generated and reproduced through *fields* of dominance and the *capital* accrued in these fields. The ensuing *Methodology* (Chapter 4) will outline the research design to be adopted in addressing this research topic.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

As the *Literature Review* (Chapter 2) discussed, the existing research studies on home education and employment have largely been grounded in positivist philosophy employing quantitative methods (Murphy, 2014; Kunzman and Gaither, 2013). Their focus has been on gathering generalisable 'facts' on what type of employment home educated people have gone into, how many are civically engaged, and how many of them report having issues such as authority (see Ray, 2004 and Neven Van Pelt et al, 2009). To contribute to the gap left by these positivist studies, this research is grounded in interpretivism and employs a qualitative narrative-based approach to reveal the home educated peoples' voices behind the personal experiences of work and employment as an often-underrepresented group within academic and societal debates (Nelson, 2013; Fensham-Smith, 2021a). To date there has only been Webb's (1989, 1999) and Knowles and Muchmore's (1995) studies that have contributed to this gap from a qualitative methods approach that focused on the voices of home educated people as adults, but the issue was that they did not capture enough depth about their respondents work and employment experiences because the focus of their studies had been on broader adult life themes. Hence, the research also aims to build upon these existing studies to add to, and further develop, existing knowledge on home educated peoples personal experiences.

In this chapter, I therefore set out the methodology used to explore the personal experiences of work and employment of home educated people, guided by my research questions:

1. How do home educated people experience work and employment?
2. Do home educated people consider their experiences of home education as significant in shaping their employment experiences?
3. What are the implications of the empirical findings for theory and policy?

First, I discuss the ontological and epistemological positioning of my empirical research, before introducing the narrative-based methodology adopted to explore the current and historical personal experiences of my respondents pertaining to their home education and employment. This first section also importantly includes a detailed

discussion of my reflexive positionality in this research because of the significance of my own background as a home educated person. Then I explain how I researched these experiences, paying close attention to the data collection and analysis processes involved at each stage of my research. Finally, I address the ethical complexities that my research was imbued with and describe how I have managed these in a way that is consistent with my philosophical and methodological choices.

4.2 Research Approach

This research adopts a qualitative approach to exploring the employment experiences of home educated people. Qualitative research emphasises exploring how people experience the social world and how they attribute meaning to these experiences (Sutton and Austin, 2015; Silverman, 2010). It also emphasizes the need for developing an understanding of what people find significant in their everyday mundane experiences by considering how people interpret and make sense of their experiences. Creswell (1998) argues that qualitative research provides the researcher with a way to understand the multitude of differing perspectives that experiences of the social world naturally create. Flick (2009) adds that obtaining rich descriptions of these perspectives is important for ensuring the qualitative researcher is presenting a balanced understanding of people's experiences. As Atkinson (1998) highlights, there is value in understanding the unique experiences of each individual life as lived to present insight into how a social phenomenon has been experienced. Qualitative research therefore aims to find a way to access the thoughts and feelings of its participants regarding their experiences (Sutton and Austin, 2015; Silverman, 2010). Merriam (2009), alongside Denzin and Lincoln (2005), also consider how one focus of exploring people's experiences is to gain insight into how they structure their experiences and why they structure them in the ways that they do. The benefits of this are achieving in-depth understandings of people's lives versus achieving a breadth of understanding (Silverman, 2010), which is the aim of quantitative approaches emphasising quantification and categorization of experiences (Bryman and Bell, 2011). A qualitative approach therefore suits this research project because the focus is not on categorising or generalising the voices of home educated people but on giving voice to their personal experiences of work and employment and what they consider to be significant to these experiences through their perspectives of the social world. The research also considers how home educated people's experiences of

employment might involve experiencing a cleft habitus and a qualitative approach enables me to appreciate the potential differences that could emerge in the data on how a cleft is experienced.

It is also important to consider which ontological and epistemological positions would be most suitable for aligning with this approach. Ontology is the study of the nature of reality (Punch, 1998), whether it is seen as subjective and socially constructed by people or as an independent object that is external to people (Opie, 2004). Epistemology is not only what we regard as knowledge (Willig, 2013), but also what is possible to know and understand about people and their experiences of the social world (Opie, 2004; Mason, 2002). As an insider[1] when deciding on the ontological and epistemological positioning of this research, it was imperative to understand what my view on the nature of reality (ontology) was, alongside how I make meaningful sense of that reality (epistemology). This was to ensure that I was conscious of the fact that my views of reality and how I make sense of it not only shape the decisions made within this research but may also be different for my respondents (Crotty, 1998; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). I therefore had to ensure my respondents voices and perspectives were fairly represented throughout the process. A detailed discussion on positionality can be found in *Reflexive Positionality* (Section 4.3.4).

To elucidate the respondents' voices and personal experiences of work and employment and gain the rich descriptions required to develop an understanding of their experiences, the research takes a social constructivist ontological orientation through emphasising the ways people interpret their social world and attribute meaning to their everyday personal experiences (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Mason, 2002; Bryman and Bell, 2011). Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue how people construct and reproduce reality through their everyday practices meaning social reality is in a constant shifting and emergent state because it is the ongoing creation of people (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Social constructivists therefore see people as not existing independently from their social world and their experiences of its collectively shared systems of meanings (i.e., education, employment, and culture

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[1] A detailed discussion of my positionality in this research can be found in the 'reflexive positionality' section later in this chapter.

amongst others) (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The focus of this research is on understanding how home educated people experience collectively shared systems of meanings such as those embedded within education and employment. It is further concerned with how these two shared systems of meanings may interact with each other, and how home educated people make meaningful sense of these experiences particularly, because they possess alternative experiences of them because of their home educated backgrounds.

The research is further positioned within the epistemological paradigm of interpretivism (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Schwandt, 1994), which views meaning as subjective and is therefore suitable for a social constructivist ontological orientation. Interpretivism is concerned with understanding the social world that people have produced and which they reproduce through their everyday lives (Mason, 2002). Of importance is being able to interpret people's actions and their interactions with other social actors from their points of reference within the context of their own lived histories (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Bryman (2012) adds how interpretivists explore the meaning people attribute to their social worlds and experiences within it meaning they lead the researcher to what they consider to be significant to them. Interpretivists therefore recognise how meanings are varied and multiple because of the diversity of peoples' perspectives when producing and reproducing their social worlds (Bryman and Bell, 2015). For these reasons, interpretivism is suitable for developing an understanding of the significance of alternative educational experiences for how people construct their social realities as adults, but also regarding the details of their experiences as adults such as how they interact with colleagues and interpret their own actions in experiences of employment. The ontological and epistemological positions outlined in this section are also compatible with the narrative-based methodology that was chosen to frame the data collection and analysis.

4.3 Narrative-based Methodology

Riessman (1993) and Denzin (1989) discuss how narrative inquiry is the exploration of how people story their lives as well as what they consider to be significant and meaningful within their stories. A narrative-based methodology has been argued to provide researchers with the "vantage point" of immersing themselves in understanding 'how each person within their study experiences and understands the phenomena under exploration' (Atkinson, 1998, pg.8). Riessman (2008) highlights

how narratives give the opportunity to learn about how several people have experienced the same phenomena but from different storied perspectives congruent with social constructivist research studies such as mine. A narrative approach is also an instrument through which researchers can develop a detailed understanding of how people make sense of themselves, other social actors, and their experiences of various life domains within the social world such as education and employment (Squires, 2008; Josselson and Lieblich, 1993). A narrative-based methodology therefore seemed suitable for this research to capture the individual life stories of home educated people through their voices, which gives them the freedom to draw attention to what they feel is significant about their life course experiences. The approach also gives participants scope to draw upon any aspect of their personal histories that have influenced their experiences of employment in their opinion. This also means that participants avoid being subjected to answering questions from preconstructed categories devised by the researcher (Josselson and Lieblich, 1993; Atkinson, 1998).

Narratives are also suitable because of how they focus not just on peoples' individual experiences but also on "the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed and enacted" (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007, pg.42-43). For my research, this was an important aspect of using narratives because of the Bourdieusian *Theoretical Framework* (as outlined in Chapter Three) being used to interpret the narratives, which understands of people's experiences through the wider social, cultural, and institutional narratives that shape our habitus when engaged in social action within fields such as education and employment.

It is also important to appreciate how there has been much debate in the literature regarding the differing terminology, their meanings, and interchangeable use when it comes to narrative inquiry (Bryman and Burgess, 2002). For example, Denzin acknowledges how there is a family of terms encompassing, "method, life, self, experience, epiphany, case, autobiography, ethnography, auto-ethnography, biography, ethnography story, discourse, narrative, narrator, fiction, history, personal history, oral history, case history, case study, writing presence, difference, life history, life story, self-story, and personal experience story" (1989, pg.27) that are used interchangeably under the umbrella term of narrative research. This thesis adopts the

term 'personal narratives' (Maynes et al, 2008; Squires, 2008) to inform a narrative-based methodology. Maynes and colleagues have defined a personal narrative as a 'retrospective first-person account of the current and historical experiences of an individual's life over their life course and rooted within a social context' (2008, pg.4). These characteristics of personal narratives are useful for this research because of the need to be able to gather retrospective first-person accounts of home educated peoples current and historical experiences to explore what is significant from their perspectives within and across these experiences.

4.4 Life Story Interviews

To capture these retrospective first-person accounts, it was important to employ a research method that could generate data in this form. Atkinson (1998) discusses the usefulness of using life story interviews when working with narrative inquiry. Life story interviews are based on the premise that people often explain their life experiences through stories (Maynes et al, 2008; Atkinson, 1998; Riessman, 1993; Josselson and Lieblich, 1993; Hatch and Wisniewski, 1995). It could be argued how home educated people explain their experiences of home education and employment through stories. When I have told people about my experiences or my home educated friends and colleagues have told me of theirs, we have done so through exchanging stories with each other. What this also means is that in telling stories to each other about our home education experiences we are co-constructing our realities regarding home education and our wider experiences of the social world. Therefore, it is important I acknowledge how in gathering participants stories, I need to be conscious of how I am a 'co-constructor' of the story being narrated by my participants (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004). This is also the case when working with interpretivism that the researcher is understood as an active instrument within the research shaping and influencing the how the data is to be collected, analysed, and presented in the final thesis.

Bryman and Bell (2015) argue how life story interviews also have a clear strength for qualitative researchers because they emphasize how events unfold and interrelate in people's lives throughout their personal histories. They enable researchers to convey the inner lives of people regarding how they interpret, understand, and conceive of their experiences and others in the wider social world (Faraday and Plummer, 1979). This means that researchers can consider the whole person through understanding multiple aspects of their experiences over the life course and in historical time (Maynes

et al, 2008). Therefore, through telling stories about our life experiences, it enables us to 'be heard and recognised by others making what is typically hidden seen and the implicit explicit to make the uninformed formed' (Atkinson, 1998, pg.7). For home educated people, their voices are often not heard, and their experiences are not made explicit because governmental and media organisations construct and publish narratives as uninformed outsiders without speaking directly to those who have direct experiences of home education to inform their own narratives. Afterall, as Atkinson notes, "it is important, in trying to understand others' positions in life or description of themselves and their relation to others, to let their voices be heard" (1998, pg.5). This research therefore aims to contribute an understanding of employment experiences of home educated people, through listening to their voices as informed insiders, to advance our understanding of the complexities and potential implications arising from being home educated. Consequently, a focus upon storied experiences of home education and employment is intended to reveal not only the life histories of home educated people, and how alternative educational experiences have shaped their experiences of employment, but explanations of 'how' and 'why' they attribute meanings to these experiences.

4.5 Data Collection

This section discusses the practicalities of the fieldwork in terms of the different qualitative methods used to collect data. First it outlines the research method selected before discussing how participants were recruited and providing some information on their backgrounds. The section then considers the construction of the interview guide and details the overall interview process, which includes introducing the timeline instrument used as a researcher aide during the interviews. The section ends with a detailed discussion of the role of positionality in this research because of the significance of my background as a home educated person.

4.5.1 Participants

The process of deciding on participants for this research started from a position of devising qualifying and selection criteria in which to select participants from. The two main criterions consisted of (1) people who had been home educated for at least one year during their formative education; and (2) people who had experiences of employment formal or non-formal for at least one year. This was to ensure that

participants had experienced enough of both home education and work to be able to reflect on what aspects of these life events had been most meaningful to them. I further considered as part of my criteria the type of employment in terms of industries and roles that participants held at the current time, as well as their broader employment history, to ensure I was capturing stories from as wide a range of employment experiences as possible. I also paid attention to age in much a similar manner ensuring diversity across the participants was achieved.

When considering accessing the home education community to recruit participants from I noted how Kunzman and Gaither (2013) argues that one of the main challenges of researching people within this community is locating them and gaining access. One reason the authors give is how members of this community often possess a distrust of researchers because they fear their stories would be misrepresented in the public domain. Mukwamba-Sendall (2019) suggests how the inadvertent consequences of adverse media reporting on home education, including the Badman Review (2009), can be a contributing factor to the development of their fear. As a member of this community, I was however able to gain access with relative ease because my prior experiences of being home educated meant I could operate as an 'insider without' (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016). As Chapter 3 introduced, an 'insider without' is a person who despite no longer residing in a particular field, still has their knowledge and loyalties deeply rooted within that community, and this provides them with a position of privilege in which to play the game within that community. This insider status meant that I understood the taken-for-granted assumptions and norms within the home educated community (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016), with the need to reassure participants that the research was not interested in collecting their stories to further a particular agenda evident to me, before seeking access to the participants. I also ensured participants were aware that I was not collecting these stories as an advocate of home education either despite being an insider to the community, as a researcher my role was to develop a view of their experiences that reflected their realities as told through their voices.

To gain initial access, I drew on my existing network of home educated contacts. This network consisted of friends who I had met through university, a member of my family, home education Facebook groups in which I was a member, and through colleagues from across two departments (Educational Research and Organisation, Work and

Technology) within the university. I combined this approach to gaining access with a snowball sampling technique (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, and Futing Liao, 2004). The technique is a non-probability sampling method which relies on existing participants offering the researcher names of other suitable contacts from within their own personal networks (Lewis-Beck et al, 2004). In employing this method, I asked participants on conclusion of their interview, if they had contacts who might be willing to participate and who they would be willing to introduce me to. This approach proved to be useful with the snowballing technique having facilitated access to 19 more participants, who I would not have been able to access without existing participant referral. The assumption when selecting this technique for recruitment was that a home educated person might be more willing to participate if one of their personal contacts had, owing to the earlier cited difficulty around distrust of researchers (Kunzman and Gaither, 2013). This assumption was confirmed by several participants citing how they felt more at ease agreeing to participate knowing that their close connections had entrusted me with their personal stories appeared to allow them to trust me as well.

The recruitment of participants took place over a three-month period from October to December 2019. Over this period a total of 31 participants were qualified and subsequently selected for interview[2]. I made the decision to cease recruitment at this point because not only had I reached a 'theory-saturation point' (Mason, 2002, pg.134) in which the interviews were not providing any new data on the social phenomenon being researched, but the participants also encompassed significant variation of experiences reaching a point of being reflective of the group of people who experience the social phenomenon (Bertaux and Bertaux-Wiame, 1981). As Kolar and colleagues (2015) argue qualitative research is not about creating a group of participants that seeks representativeness of the whole population that typically would require a large group of participants. Hence, this approach meant I undertook several periods of reflection through the recruitment phase regarding how many participants I needed to recruit as well as the range of employment experiences they possessed to ensure I was being led by the process. This provided insight on how to further diversify my participants regarding length of home education, length of attendance in schools, family backgrounds, and their current and previous employment experiences. The number of participants also suited the narrative-based methodology adopted by this

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[2] The interviews are discussed in greater detail in the next section.

research because the emphasis is on valuing the richness and meaning contained within each singular narrative. If more participants had been recruited it would have risked losing the richness of the narratives. Likewise, the aim of the narrative-based methodology was not to homogenize the population in which the narratives are being collected from, but rather embrace the unique and diverse perspectives that the narratives bring to the fore (Atkinson, 1998).

The following table outlines the diverse nature of the participants recruited regarding their current employment, age, length of home education and reasons for home education:

An outline of the participants in the study

Name (pseudonym)	Gender	Age	Qualifications	Length of Home Education	Reasons for Home Education	Current employment
Aurora	Female	22	NVQs	8-9 years	Parental decision	Self-employed model, hairdresser, and festival planning committee member
Lynda	Female	36	Masters degree	2-3 years	School issues	Deputy district judge and civil service lawyer
Della	Female	27	Aspiration to complete GCSEs and a university degree	2 years	Parental decision	Stay at home mother
Kay	Female	22	Undergraduate degree (in process)	5 years	School issues and for health reasons	Independent film producer and student
Pete	Male	24	Undergraduate degree (in process)	8-9 years	School issues and for health reasons	Entrepreneur in online education for the home education community
Bev	Female	25	Masters	5 years	School issues	Social worker
Arthur	Male	30	Undergraduate degree	4 years	School issues	Trainee vicar

Name	Gender	Age	Qualification	Duration	Reason	Occupation
Vanessa	Female	22	Undergraduate degree	7-8 years	Parental decision	Freelancer in outdoor education
Katrice	Female	24	Undergraduate degree	12 years	Parental decision	Administrator for a logistics firm
Sunanda	Female	18	GCSEs with aspiration to go to university	14 years	Parental decision	Freelance tutor
Sylvia	Female	19	College diploma aspiration to go to university	11 years	Parental decision	Environmental charity volunteer and retail assistant
Fiona	Female	27	PhD (in process)	12 years	Parental decision	Graduate teaching assistant and project manager at an education-based charity
Lily	Female	33	PhD	2 years	Parental decision	Postdoctoral researcher
Gareth	Male	18	No qualifications	14 years	Parental decision	Volunteer at a food-based charity
Divya	Female	26	Undergraduate degree	12 years	School issues and parental decision	Senior Project Leader at an environmental-based charity
Betty	Female	26	PhD (in process)		School issues	Graduate teaching assistant and employability freelancer
Naomi	Female	29	Masters (in process)	12 years	School issues and parental decision	Dance school principal

Joan	Female	36	Open University credits	14 years	Ideological reasons	Radio production and technology consultant
Gill	Female	27	Undergraduate	14 years	Parental decision	Banking advisor
David	Male	37	PhD	14 years	Parental decision	Program analyst for a governmental agency
Tom	Male	56	NVQs	2 years	School issues	Unemployed on health grounds
Ian	Male	25	Undergraduate degree	4-5 years	School issues	Fire safety consultant and author
Lola	Female	31	PhD (in process)	14 years	Parental decision	Graduate teaching assistant
Sophie	Female	26	Undergraduate degree	14 years	Parental decision	Freelancer in outdoor education
Rosie	Female	32	Masters degree	12 years	Ideological reasons	Nursery practitioner and charity volunteer
Kamila	Female	26	Undergraduate degree	12 years	Parental decision	Officer in exports and customs control
Wendy	Non-binary	19	Aspiration to go to a theatre school	8 years	School issues and for health reasons	Freelance acting and starting own dance school
Beth	Female	27	PhD (in process)	5 years	Parental decision	Graduate teaching assistant
Steven	Male	29	Undergraduate degree	15 years	Parental decision	Operations manager and home education tutor
Dexter	Male	44	Masters degree	12 years	Ideological reasons	Date farmer
Harry	Male	30	Adult Education degree	4 years	School issues	Full time carer

4.5.2 Interviews

Following Turner (2010) before conducting the interviews, I determined some areas of the phenomenon I was exploring based on previous knowledge gained from the literature to devise an interview guide. Gill and colleagues (2008) note how the use of an interview guide has value for providing guidance to participants on what to talk about during their interview. Guides are particularly suitable for researchers exploring peoples' perceptions and opinions of a social phenomenon that might involve complex or emotionally sensitive stories (Kallio et al, 2016). I devised the guide to reflect the main topics required for achieving the richest possible data (Turner, 2010) because as a qualitative researcher I was interested in the patterns of meaning contained within the collected narratives (Byrne, 2021). The topics consisted mostly of home education and employment related ones. I further included questions regarding participants personal experiences beyond their home education and employment which included: family and health. This was to gauge whether other factors in their lives have impacted on how they may experience employment. The devising of this guide also meant I could ensure similar types of stories were collected from each participant (Holloway and Wheeler, 2010).

To ensure I could elicit a range of responses and opinions, I also devised the guide to consist of two levels of questions including, main themes and follow-up questions (Byrne, 2021). The use of semi-structured questions on main themes meant that each participant was encouraged to speak freely about their perceptions and experiences to produce uninterrupted narratives (Byrne, 2021). For example, the first main theme question asked was "can you tell me about your experiences of home education and employment?" with the instruction to tell me stories about any aspects of these two sets of experiences they felt was necessary. This meant that the participants could move the conversation to areas within these aspects of their lives that they saw as relevant but might not have been reflected in the interview guide questions. Follow-up questions were used to clarify the main themes for the participants and ensure flow throughout the interview (Kvale, 2009; Whiting, 2008) but also to direct conversation towards interesting and meaningful aspects of participants stories as they arise (Turner, 2010). Whiting (2008) notes how the former type of follow-up questions can be pre-designed, but the latter are spontaneous based on participants' answers meaning the researcher must actively listen to participants while taking notes.

After devising the interview guide, the interview process commenced by conducting a pilot interview to test my initial guide, audio recording equipment, and to gauge potential interview length. Byrne (2021) and Chenail (2011) argue that by testing the interview guide, the researcher can make informed changes to the questions and improve the overall quality of data collection. Testing the interview guide was a success because it showed the aspects that were ineffective. The issue appeared to be with the sequence of semi-structured questions and ordering of the open-dialogue sections. The initial guide placed emphasis on the open dialogue of employment experiences first, with participants being probed with semi-structured questions on pre-identified topics relating to work and their home education second, and no open dialogue section for home education itself. During the pilot, the participant fed back how it was 'alien' for them to not talk about their home education experiences first in open dialogue because of how they had shaped their later experiences of employment. They further noted how the approach taken felt like barriers existed to being able to express freely the things that was meaningful about the two sets of experiences to them. The finding of this issue was in line with Goodson and Sikes (2001) recommendation that narrative-based interviews are best kept unstructured and informal with little pre-designed prompting or questioning. The guide was subsequently changed before going into the field to take into consideration the pilot feedback.

The new guide[3] was re-designed to invite participants from the beginning to engage in open dialogue regarding their whole life history encompassing home education, family, health, employment, and anything else they felt was meaningful to the overall main topics. Participants were encouraged to start at a place that felt right for them but with the aim of moving forwards chronologically through time. This meant that participants decided what to share (Nelson, 2010), which as Atkinson (1998) argues, is paramount when conducting life story interviews. The redesigned guide also included a brief introduction to my research and provided some detail regarding my own history to demonstrate my interest in the subject. The disclosure of a small level of person detail provided a useful way to open-up conversation (Oakley, 1981) and

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[3] A copy of the interview guide can be found in Appendix 1.

put participants at ease in sharing their own experiences with me. I remained conscious of the need to be careful of not pre-shaping my participants' accounts of their experiences through 'pre-guiding the participants choice of stories to be narrated' (Rosenthal, 1993, pg.65).

I chose to conduct the interviews in a staggered approach, with interviews being conducted over a four-month period on a weekly to biweekly basis, as to facilitate continual reflexivity and the opportunity to make minor modifications to the interview guide to include questions relating to emerging themes from the ongoing analysis of the stories gathered. The latter point is argued to be imperative for narrative research because the analysis of stories should not be seen as a separate activity to be conducted after the data collection but should be incorporated throughout the research process (Gehart, Tarragona and Bava, 2007; Riessman, 2008).

The interviews also took place predominantly over the phone, with 25 participants interviewed through this medium, and the remaining 6 interviewed in person. One reason as to why telephone interviews had been selected was because of their convenience for the interviewees (Sturges and Hanrahan, 2004). This was important to consider given all my participants were in employment and several had families to factor into their everyday commitments. Telephone interviews are also argued by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) to have the advantage of being able to access people who are geographically distant from the researcher. As most of the interviewees resided outside of Lancaster, telephone interviews offered a medium which was time, location, and cost convenient for them (Block and Erskine, 2012). For the 6 interviewees who did live locally they participated in face-to-face interviews taking place in the setting of the university campus in a pre-booked meeting room.

Most of the interviews had also been conducted in the evenings or on weekends due to the participants having work commitments through the weekdays, with each interview having lasted between 50 minutes (being the shortest) and 3 hours 15 minutes (being the longest). Interestingly, the interviews that had been conducted over the phone yielded longer interviews with richer more saturated data being collected from them than in the face-to-face interviews, which contradicts with Novick's (2008) and Irvine et al's (2013) concerns regarding telephone interviews having a negative impact on the richness and quality of collected empirical data. For example, Betty

shared sensitive personal experiences that she felt she might not have been able to share should she have been interviewed in-person, and Betty's data on these sensitive experiences had been fundamental for the findings of this thesis, as will be seen in '*Responding to a Cleft Habitus*' (Chapter 6). Hence, without the use of a telephone interview in Betty's example, then this crucial data might not have been obtained. The interviews averaged at around 2 hours long overall, with the length of interviews having been guided by the participants including, how much time they needed and, in some cases, wanted to story their experiences. Most participants told me how they found having the time dedicated to just talking about their experiences of employment and home education had been useful in helping them to see connections across and between their experiences that they had not previously seen.

All the interviews, with the participants permission, where audio-recorded to ensure I could capture the meanings as they attributed them in their own words to specific events in their lives. This would also benefit the presentation of their stories in the later findings and discussion chapters because I was able to retain much of their 'voice' when writing up excerpts from their narratives. Despite permission being granted, several participants did require reassurance before opening up to me because of the sensitive nature of some of the experiences they wanted to talk to me about. An example of this being Divya, who discussed having had to fire an employee, which she felt she did not want to be identifiable for in this research because of the complex backstory behind this event. Betty was also an example for different reasons because she shared sensitive personal experiences relating to consent with me that had not been pleasant experiences for her.

4.5.3 Timeline Instrument

The interviews also involved employing a visual data collection tool known as a 'timeline' (Kolar, Ahmad, Chan and Erickson, 2015; Bremner, 2020; Patterson, Markey and Somers, 2012) to develop a visual map representative of participants life story which included their personal experiences of work and employment amongst other areas. Timelines are argued to be a modification of several different data collection tools developed within life course studies (Glasner and Vaart, 2009) which can include: 'Life History Calendar methods' (Freedman et al, 1988), 'Illustrated Life Histories' (Glasner and Vaart, 2009), and 'Timelines' (Kolar et al, 2015). I chose the 'timeline' approach because of its increasing value as a way of enhancing life history research

(Bremner, 2020) when used in conjunction with narrative-based interviewing (Patterson, Markey and Somers, 2012). It also provided me with the advantage of capturing the variety and complexity contained within life stories, particularly, the 'how' and 'why' micro and macro factors impact on people within the context of their working lives' (Porcellato et al, 2016, pg.270). It was important for this research to capture these aspects to understand what role, if any, the respondents home education played in their personal experiences of work and employment (Nelson, 2010).

Traditionally, timelines have been employed as a participatory method to illuminate the researcher-respondent interaction in being co-producers of knowledge (Glasner and Vaart, 2009) by the respondent and researcher co-constructing the timeline during the respondent's interview. Respondent-created timelines where not however feasible due to the logistics of having conducted most interviews over the phone. Computerized techniques were considered as a potential solution for logistical issues which involved potentially providing participants with instructions on how to construct their timeline at home in their own time, but this was dismissed for several reasons inclusive of the imposition on participants time, the separation of the timeline from the narrative interview context, and inability of the researcher to use the timeline as an interview tool to prompt questioning during the second half of the interview. My research therefore adopted a researcher-created timeline approach (Kolar et al, 2015; Nelson, 2010; Patterson et al, 2012) which meant I constructed each respondent's timeline during their interview.

At the onset of each interview, I introduced respondents to the timeline tool to make them aware of its purpose[4]. Once they had confirmed their understanding, I began to populate the timeline, which was a relatively uncomplicated process. The process consisted of annotating a blank piece of A2 card that was landscape oriented. For many of the respondents, I ended up using both sides of the A2 card because their stories were more complex and varied than anticipated. The timeline was also populated in a chronological order (Kolar et al, 2015) beginning with the significant macro personal experience of their early education working forwards through their

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[4] An example of a timeline can be found in Appendix 2, which demonstrates what Naomi's timeline looked like.

educational trajectories and ending with their work and employment experiences. A chronological order was suitable because of how the respondents typically chose to narrate their life story. As I proceeded to annotate each macro personal experience, I ensured to listen carefully for the micro elements, to make a note next to the relevant experience where the participant indicated significance (Kolar et al, 2015). Kolar and colleagues note how it is important to create 'contextual detail' (2015, pg.23) around each plotted experience to help shape the follow-up and probing questions asked later in the interview.

The illustrative aspect involved using a continuous-line method involving a compilation of "varying types of notes and dates either below, above, or beside the continuous line" (Kolar et al, 2015, pg.21). While a lot of timeline methods utilize dates, within my research, the purpose of the timeline tool was not to produce a detailed account of 'when' significant experiences occurred, but rather to produce a detailed illustration of 'how' and 'why' significant events in their lives interrelate or not to their personal experiences of work and employment. I focused on asking participants to recall events in terms of their meaning and importance, as opposed to asking them to fixate on dates. In using the continuous-line method, I also used waved and spiked lines to indicate details regarding each life experience resulting in a spider-like diagram visual effect. Using such lines enabled me to indicate the linkages and various dimensions that existed between different domains of a respondent's life story. Coloured pens were also used to populate the timeline according to the domain of life in which the experience being narrated occurred. This enabled the overall narratives to be followed more easily by grouping experience using a colouring process. For example, I was able to clearly identify employment from education, and from other life experiences, by following the trail of 'purple' writing and waves, as I knew education was 'blue' and other life events such as health was 'green'. This was to make revisiting the information contained on the timelines in the second part of interviews, and for subsequent data analysis, easier to follow.

Alternative materials, structures, and approaches have been employed by scholars in previous empirical studies including, grids that feature axes whereby the horizontal axes focus on a temporal dimension, while the vertical one depicts the domains of study (e.g., work, education, relationships etc.) (Glasner and Vaart, 2009). However, for the purpose of my research, I considered this to be too complex of an approach

that would have potentially been disruptive to the primary intention of developing a visual map of my respondent's life story for researcher-use. In fact, Nelson supported employing a less structured timeline in favour of a pre-structured approach arguing how, "the very nature of [a] preprinted matrix contradicts one of the primary goals of qualitative research… [because] qualitative research depends on the breadth and depth of respondents' narratives being unhindered by researchers' preconceived categories" (2010, pg.417). Hence, throughout the interview and timeline construction, the aim was to preserve each narrative in its totality, while capturing information regarding the interrelatedness of a respondent's personal history, social and cultural context (Nelson, 2010; Porcellato et al, 2016; Atkinson, 1998) in a visual form.

It is also worth highlighting how to aide in the earlier noted process of analysing narrative data throughout the research process (Gehart et al, 2007; Riessman, 1993), I also used the timeline instrument after each story gathered to do an initial analysis of the words and phrases that seemed to dominate each respondent's story such as 'socialising' in work contexts and 'other people' being influencing factors on how they narrated experiencing work and employment. This step in the process also was important because it emphasizes the co-construction of meaning between myself as the researcher and my participant as the narrator (Holstein and Gubrium, 2012). Co-construction also occurs through the process of listening to and reading my respondents narrations because I am using my own understanding of how and why they have attributed meaning to life events, but also how their story can make sense alongside the other participants to be written up in the thesis (Riessman, 2008; Etherington, 2007). Hence, while the timelines themselves where not analysed, they have been used to aide clarification and to provide early indications as to some of the prevalent themes emerging from the interviews.

The timelines also came in useful for helping in reinforcing themes identified during the analysis stage because some of the 'words' and 'phrases' I had noted down originally as being significant appeared to reflect the themes emerging such as 'significance of home education', 'othering', 'haunting' and 'judgement' amongst others.

4.5.4 Reflexive Positionality

Reflexivity has widely been discussed as being an important principle for qualitative researchers to engage in (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003; Mortari, 2015), especially for researchers who are using personal narratives because, as Maynes and colleagues (2008) argue, the narratives can never be disconnected from the analyser. Mortari (2015) also posits how reflexivity enables a researcher to make the politics of their research transparent, which Collins and McNulty (2020) argue is of central importance for researchers who are positioned as an insider. Insiders are also argued to be motivated to embark on research which might have a personal as well as academic interest imbued (Haynes, 2012). In returning to Maynes and colleagues (2008), they note how being positioned as an insider, when combined with the use of personal narratives can result in an apparent closeness for researchers to their participants experiences, which can impact on how the final versions of their participants stories are presented. It is therefore important for me to acknowledge that I am both an insider, through having been previously home educated for 8 years, and a personal narrative researcher, collecting and analysing the narratives of other home educated people. I was motivated to carry out this research because it provided an opportunity to seek answers to questions that I had about my own experiences of being home educated, and what this meant for how I went on to experience, and perceive of, employment. Considering this, I have chosen to include a brief 'introduction' to my background, as the researcher to demonstrate my insider positionality, and how this might have impacted the research.

Before I began working at the age of eighteen, I was home educated by my father through an unstructured approach for an eight-year period. Like many of my participants, I experienced several issues in 'school' including, being bullied by peers and members of staff, feeling like I did not fit with its culture, and feeling like my educational interests were constrained. When progressing from home education to employment, I found that some of these issues experienced in 'school' reproduced in the context I then found myself in at work. For example, I found it difficult to be micro-managed by a higher authority, to fit in with the regimented and social culture, and to bridge a self-perceived gap between how I viewed the social world around me to how my schooled peers did. It felt like I could never fully reconcile who I was with who work wanted or needed me to be. As Passerini (1968) notes in her use of autobiographical

interviews, the carrying out of the life history interviews for my research threw me into flashbacks of these past experiences I am describing because of the familiarity in what my participants had been describing about their own. I, therefore, know that I share several characteristics with my participants including, reasons for being home educated, similar employment trajectories (i.e., those that had embarked on a PhD and became a Graduate Teaching Assistant), and some of how I have experienced employment.

Given the closeness of my experiences to my participants, it has been imperative to ensure that at every stage of the research process, the voices of this often-marginalized community were being heard. I wanted to avoid imposing my experiences and beliefs about home education and employment on their experiences to gain a balanced understanding of not only the lived similarities and differences in their experiences, but also what their perceptions are of having been home educated in relation to other prominent life experiences such as employment. This was especially important during the interview stage of the research because as Dwyer and Buckle (2009) have argued what information is shared in an interview may be influenced by how the participant perceives the researcher and their relationship with them.

On the one hand, participants may be willing and comfortable sharing personal information with someone who they perceive 'understands' (Fleming, 2018) their life experiences because they are an insider by having shared similar experiences. There was also the issue of the impact that possessing an insider status can have on the interview process. For example, several participants acknowledged how it was *'good to talk to someone who understood their experiences'* as well as how they *'wouldn't normally talk to 'other' people about their home education'* but made an exception for me because I was not considered to be in the 'other' category from their perspective. I had to be careful to ensure I was not 'assuming' the answers these interviewees were narrating due to having heard some of their employment and home education stories before because of our relationships outside of this research, which Fleming (2018) argued can be an issue for inside researchers who possess a greater familiarity with the interview content and might therefore probe the interviewee less as a result. Hence, this often made the interview context more complex to manage because throughout the interviews, participants would use my name when narrating their

experiences, equating theirs with what they assumed mine had been or would also be depending on their familiarity with me outside of the research, with examples such as, *'Rachael, you get it don't you. I mean, we're different aren't we how we experience things because of being home educated'* and *'I'm glad I'm talking to you about this because if it was someone who hadn't been home educated, they wouldn't get it. I don't think I'd be comfortable either because of the fear of being misunderstood by outsiders with no idea'*. On the other hand, participants may conversely feel sceptical and uncomfortable in sharing such personal information for fear of being judged or causing issues in their personal relationship with the researcher (Chavez, 2008; Mercer, 2007). For example, Divya was hesitant to go into details regarding the circumstances around having had to *'let go of'* one of her employees because she did not want to be *'judged'* for her *'people management skills'*. This was despite reassuring that my role in this context was to remain impartial and listen to her stories as she told them without passing judgement.

What these examples reveal, is how my participants tended to treat me as their home educated peer who was on the inside and who they could have a *'chit-chat'* with, rather than as a researcher interviewing them for a project on home education as an outsider. The interviews therefore benefitted from having a natural rapport from the onset and a certain level of trust in sharing their experiences with me. With some participants, this level of trust and rapport was not initially there as I did not know the participant in advance, requiring me to work harder at building a relationship with them.

Overall, I acknowledged that throughout the research process, I had held multiple positionalities, which Dwyer and Buckle (2009) argued is important for researchers to recognise because of how their closeness to their participants experiences can shape the final versions of the stories presented in their research. I have, therefore, recognised my multiple positionalities throughout the research process, ensuring I was not viewing my participants stories through a "rose-coloured lens" (Chavez, 2008, pg.475) putting aside my personal opinions and assumptions to present a balanced view of their experiences as told through their voices and views of the social world.

The next section *'Data Analysis'* will outline the data analysis process, including starting with the transcription process before discussing how the codes and themes were developed.

4.6 Data Analysis

As discussed throughout the previous methodology sections, this research adopted a constructivist approach, aiming to avoid the imposition of categories onto the home educated respondents and to allow them to attribute their own meanings and significance to life events that shaped their experiences of work and employment. The central focus was on respondents telling stories of their historical and current experiences through their voices. This has meant that an inductive approach to data analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2012; Strauss and Corbin, 1998) was the most appropriate. Strauss and Corbin (1998), alongside Polkinghorne (1995), argue how an inductive approach provides researchers with a way to develop common codes and themes that are drawn directly from the transcribed narratives in a bottom-up approach. This contrasts with a deductive approach in which codes, categories, and themes are developed in a top-down approach (Bryman and Bell, 2015). As noted in 'interviews', a total of 31 narratives were gathered from life story interviews which generated a large volume of data needing to be transcribed, coded, and analysed. As Edwards (2016) and Hunter (2010) note narrative research yields extensive data which can be daunting to analyse and difficult to manage for the researcher. From my data collection, I had over 200,000 words of in-depth stories pertaining to participants experiences of home education and employment, amongst other significant life domains (e.g., health and family), with an average of 2 hours of recorded material per interview. In this section, I will therefore first outline the transcription process touching on the initial themes which emerged from it, before detailing how I coded the transcribed data which included how the development of initial themes into mature themes happened.

4.6.2 Transcription Process

After each interview, I transferred the recording to a password protected computer ready for transcription. I chose to initially upload the voice recordings to an online transcription software that produces a transcript from the uploaded recording. This decision was made because of the amount and richness of the data I had collected from the interviews; it did not seem feasible to manually transcribe each interview by hand without any assistance. However, despite its usefulness in producing an initial transcript of recordings, the software tended to misinterpret certain words and phrases. This meant I had to review and edit the transcripts by re-listening to the

recordings. Re-listening to the recordings also helped to immerse myself in my participants stories to refamiliarize myself with the focus and 'feel' of each interview. I also kept a journal noting down repetitive words and phrases that I thought might form into themes later in the analysis process. For example, 'school' was a prevalent word that kept appearing in each narrative, particularly how participants would attribute their experiences of school to the negative experiences they had in employment, which became the theme 'haunting'.

Throughout the transcription process I also tried to ensure the transcripts underwent what Atkinson refers to as 'complete transcription' (1998, pg.55). Complete transcription is required when analysing narrative data (Atkinson, 1998), with the term referring to preserving the stories as they were told by the narrator to ensure that no detail is omitted except for punctuation correction or paragraphing (Atkinson, 1998). The aim for the researcher is to write their participants story "in the words he or she has already used" (Atkinson, 1998, pg.55). Although this can be time-consuming for the researcher it does ensure as much of the participants original voices are retained in the retelling of their story. It also meant that I was able to retain how they attribute meaning to their experiences of employment and home education.

4.6.3 Coding and Theme Development

Miles and Huberman argue that coding is the fundamental first step to data analysis when making sense of rich qualitative data for 'codes are labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive information compiled through the data collection' (1994, pg.56). Consequently, after transcription I began the process of coding and analysing the data concurrently in which each narrative was taken on a case-by-case basis (Riessman, 2008). To achieve this, I needed to decide on a method of coding and analysing my data. I consulted the literature on narrative analysis in which several authors (Riessman, 2008; Holstein and Gubrium, 2012; Figgou and Pavlopoulos, 2015) suggest that one method researchers can adopt is thematic analysis. Figgou and Pavlopoulos (2015) note how for some thematic approaches to narrative analysis they concentrate on the 'way' the story has been narrated and the language used. Riessman (1993) suggests that language can provide a route to understanding the meaning attributed to life events by people but the content of the story and 'what' the narrator said about their life experiences can be just as important. As my research is interested in the meaning making within each home educated person's story, and how

they story their experiences of employment, the analysis of content and 'what' they said about their experiences was the priority. For these reasons, I decided to employ a reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) (Braun and Clarke, 2012) approach.

Reflexive thematic analysis was selected because of its compatibility with the narrative-based approach of my research but also because it provided 'reflexive flexibility' as an inside researcher (Braun and Clarke, 2012). Reflexive flexibility is conceptualised by Braun and Clarke (2012) as acknowledging a researcher's active role in knowledge production. As discussed earlier in my positionality section (*Reflexive Positionality*, Section 4.3.4), and previously in discussions around co-construction, inevitably my position as an insider researcher means that I have the power to influence and shape the knowledge being produced during the narration of life stories, and subsequently, during the analysis when I am interpreting the findings and deciding which stories will be used in the writing up (Greene, 2014; Mauthner and Doucet, 2003). RTA also posits how codes are to be understood as representations of the researcher's interpretations of patterns and themes of meaning across the narratives (Byrne, 2021). Initial codes[5] were therefore developed through reading each narrative line-by-line searching for relevant patterns and themes for answering the research questions (Flick, 2009). I started by considering the research questions and grouping quotations from the data under codes related to 'employment' such as 'workplace spatiality', 'employment contract', 'organisational structure', 'interpersonal relations in work', and 'identity and work'. Each of these main codes also had several sub-codes such as, 'workplace socialisation', 'conversations', 'relationship management', and 'politicking' under the main code of 'interpersonal relations in work'. I kept a track of the codes on a OneNote notebook in a list like fashion with quotations from participants stories listed under each relevant code for example, under 'conversations' I included the following quote from David *"I sort of had no understanding like what's appropriate to talk about with different sets of people at one time, but I think I'm OK with that now. So, I guess initially, that was difficult in the work context"*. Throughout the coding and analysis process, I was not interested in attempting to develop 'accurate' codes (Byrne, 2021) because when working with RTA "the researcher's reflective and thoughtful engagement with their data and their reflexive and thoughtful engagement with the analytic process" (Braun and Clarke,

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[5] A first round table of codes can be found in Appendix 3.

2019, pg.594) is of more value. Hence, I was organising codes around a commonality interpreted from within a narrative and from across them (Braun and Clarke, 2019). This is also congruent with the epistemological and ontological considerations of my research that do not concern themselves with 'truth' and 'validity' as positivist research would. After all qualitative research does not offer a single 'correct' answer (Braun and Clarke, 2013).

Following this, I began a recursive process involving reading the transcriptions and subsequently, compressing the existing codes into more coherent themes and sub-themes, before repeating the process over until no new themes or phenomena were being observed. Bertaux and Bertaux-Wiame, (1981) refer to this as having reached a theory-saturation point in which nothing new was emerging from the analysis process. At this point, I went back to the literature to think through what the appropriate framework would be because previously I wanted to ensure my analysis was reflective of my respondents' and did not impose a theoretical frame to which the empirical findings had to fit. During the coding and theme development process, I had noted how several respondents[6] had referred to the work of Bourdieu as a way in which they tried to make sense of their personal experiences, but upon further interrogation it also seemed to be a natural fit with the empirical findings. For example, the narratives shared some degree of absence when it came to a common life event of school. An absence that is significant when read through a Bourdieusian lens because for the theory of practice to work it is reliant on the role of the field of education, and particularly the pedagogic action of schools. Consequently, I conducted a further round of analysis to look at the existing codes and themes through a Bourdieusian lens adding comments on which fitted with Bourdieu's concepts of 'habitus', 'capital', 'field' and 'cleft habitus' to see how suitable of a framework Bourdieu was. An example of this is how Bourdieu's concept of 'capital' proved to have utility in being able to explain the stories related to the code of 'qualifications', which had emerged from the respondents' narratives. I therefore found that this further round of analysis proved to be invaluable for discovering a theoretical framework that would provide a clear and comprehensive way in which to explain the macro and micro-level work and employment stories contained within and across the narratives.

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[6] Respondents referring to Bourdieu had been those whose current employment was within academia and familiar with his theories as a result.

The last section in '*Research Methodology*' before the conclusion will discuss the ethical approval process and considerations.

4.7 Ethical Approval and Considerations

The empirical research was undertaken in accordance with Lancaster University Research Ethics Code of Conduct and granted approval prior to commencing data collection. Accordingly, participants were provided with an information sheet[7] and consent form[8] before agreeing to participate in the project. The information sheet provided potential participants with details regarding the nature of the research and its aims. The voluntary nature of their participation was also outlined making participants aware that they were permitted to withdraw from the process at any time up to two weeks after the interview. All participants were also provided with a consent form to sign and date prior to be interviewed and had been given sufficient time and opportunity to ask any questions they might have before signing. Verbal consent was also given at the beginning of each interview relating to the interview being recorded and to cross-check that the participant was still happy to participate. As the researcher, I also signed the consent forms because I saw them as an agreement between myself and participants to demonstrate mutual respect and trust with the life stories being shared co-constructively. Participants were also made aware at the beginning of the interview that it would be recorded for transcription and data analysis purposes, which all participants gave consent to. The recordings were subsequently transferred to a password protected device as soon as possible after each interview to be prepped for transcription. By giving consent, participants were also granted anonymity, with pseudo names replacing their own in the thesis. Initially, I had decided to offer anonymity to my participants on the assumption that it is what an ethical researcher should offer their participants (Grinyer, 2009). However, during the interviews several participants raised the topic of anonymity when referring to sensitive information regarding their experiences of work. I was asked explicitly to not name organisations/role in connection with the participants in question, so that they remained unidentifiable, due to having had what could be considered as sensitive experiences.

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[7] A copy can be found in Appendix 4.
[8] A copy can be found in Appendix 5.

While the above constitutes the necessary box ticking exercises that are often associated with ethical approval and considerations when carrying out research, research ethics encompass more than neat definitions of issues. Ethical considerations can be complex and diverse requiring the researcher to be situational in each individual interview setting using personal judgement to inform their response to the arising ethical issue(s). For example, during my interviews several ethical issues came up relating to private and sensitive issues such as sexual harassment in the workplace, the issue of having to fire an employee, and a series of emotional breakdowns during a particular job. These issues required me to be situational, sensitive, and responsive to what I was being told to ensure I did not cause any undue distress to participants, regarding what might be considered as traumatic experiences for them (Hollway and Jefferson, 1997). One way I handled these situations was to be mindful of not "over-burdening the participants by collecting 'too much' personal data" (Bryman and Bell, 2011, pg.143) regarding their situations. I let them guide the discussion with little probing in line with my overall narrative methodological approach, which also demonstrated that I had respect for their privacy by not trying to force them to share more sensitive information. As a researcher, it is of utmost importance to recognise that participants have a human right to privacy, despite our need to obtain information from them regarding their experiences. I also noted in my ethics forms how if I felt a participant was distressed or becoming distressed, I would suggest to them that they contact their GP or occupation health representative at work for advice and support.

Ethical considerations also had a central role during my data analysis process. This was due to the research following a narrative-based methodology, requiring careful analysis that maintained as much as possible the richness and depth of each narrative in the words the participant (Atkinson, 1998). Participants voices can sometimes be lost in narrative research becoming 'subordinated' or 'silenced' (Atkinson, 1998; Brewis and Wray-Bliss, 2008) through the researcher reinterpreting the participants meanings and experiences through imposing their own voice on the data. The latter became a paramount ethical concern when I was transcribing and interpreting the data ready for presentation in the thesis during my writing up. Hence, it is important to acknowledge that while I worked with direct quotes and passages of the original narratives which were produced from 'complete transcription' (see section 4.4.2) as a

strategy to try to maintain the original voices and stories as they were narrated, I inevitably had to select and organize the data for interpretation and analysis purposes. For example, as part of my data analysis process I created individual stories about each participant based on the narrative they had provided during the interview, but this creative process required a degree of interpretation that led to the story being a co-construction between my participants words and mine. Therefore, while my research is focused on the employment experiences of previously home educated people as told by them, I am aware that it was not wholly possible to maintain a hundred percent of their voices and that my voice is also tied to the research. Barbour (2014) argued how researchers bring their own cultural assumptions, values and political views to their research and cannot be considered devoid these elements that make them human, which inevitably impacts on how data is interpreted, analysed, and presented within research. Despite the process I took to creating participant stories from the narratives and through my inside position within this research project, I do not consider my participants as subordinated and silenced as their experiences and original words are still evident in the data, as will be presented in the next Chapter (five) after this Chapter (four) is concluded in the next section.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter has explained the overall research design and rationale for the methodological choices made. As noted, because the focus of this research is on developing an understanding of home educated peoples personal experiences of work and employment as told through their voices, that a narrative-based methodology combined with a qualitative approach seemed the most appropriate fit for the research. I also highlighted the importance of my insider positionality when discussing the importance of recognising my own ontological and epistemological views of social reality when deciding how this research should be philosophically positioned. It seemed appropriate to position the research as seeing reality as socially constructed in which people interpret social reality. This was not the only way in which the chapter acknowledged my insider positionality because I had to be conscious throughout each stage of the research process to ensure I was fairly representing the voices and personal experiences of my respondents instead of letting my own colour what the respondents and the data was telling me.

The research findings from the narratives will now be presented within *Work and Employment Experiences* (Chapter 5) and *Responding to a Cleft Habitus* (Chapter 6) with a concluding discussion in *Conclusions* (Chapter 7).

5. Work and Employment Experiences

5.1 Introduction

Work and Employment Experiences is the first of two chapters which presents the empirical findings of this research. The aim of this chapter is to recount individual personal experiences of work and employment but also to reveal some of the shared themes emerging from the narratives which include: the significance of home education in shaping respondents' sense of 'self', the haunting quality of the home education experience, othering and judgement, and the experience of the 'rules of the game' of work and employment. One of the reasons to begin the empirical chapters exploring the differences and similarities contained within these themes, is the centrality respondents attribute to the role their home education has played in the shaping of the personal experiences in which all outlined themes draw upon.

The chapter also elucidates on how the Bourdieusian *Theoretical Framework* outlined in Chapter 3 is useful for presenting an understanding of the respondents' personal experiences of work and employment. For example, 'rules of the game' is evidently explained through drawing on Bourdieu's concepts of *field* and *capital* by demonstrating how respondents reported on how they navigate the 'game' of work within the *field* of employment. Social capital is one way in which they navigate this game much like people who have been to school but the respondents also detail how at times they could not navigate the game entirely due to a lack of knowledge over some of the rules but also because they detest and question the rules of the game, which also connects to Bourdieu's (1990, 2000) work on how *field* 'others' people who do not possess a feel for the game. Similarly, *field* is explored further through the strong connection between Gordon's work on *haunting*, and how the respondents described experiencing their transition between the *sub-field* of home education and the *field* of employment, with respondents detailing feeling as though their home education and experiences/perceptions of school appear in a ghost-like fashion when trying to navigate various work practices and situations. Therefore, this chapter will now draw upon several of the theories and concepts previously outlined in the *Theoretical Framework* (Chapter 3) as a tool to explain and interpret how respondents have described experiencing several different aspects of work and employment and how they connect these experiences to their former experiences of home education.

5.2 The Significance of Home Education

As the earlier literature review noted through the findings of Knowles and Muchmore's (1995) study, it could be argued that home educated people often see their current employment situations and functioning in society as connected with their experiences of home education. This first theme explores the significance articulated in the respondents' stories regarding the role their home education plays in their experiences of work and employment. The stories highlighted how the respondents have not forgotten their personal experiences of home education irrespective of how long ago they happened. There was also a clear sense of the respondents being self-consciously home educated because of the ways in which they talked about themselves, and the centrality of their experiences of home education for shaping the people they have become. For example, patterns could be seen across the narratives related to phrases such as *'being home educated is who I am'*, *'you never stop being the person who was homeschooled'*, *'it is such a huge part of your life, how can it not influence what I do for work and who I've become'*, and *'I think without it, I'd be a totally different person'*. Dexter provided an exemplary account of some of his experiences of home education that he saw as being significant to his personal experiences of work and employment:

> *"It's all interlinked because part of what I was exposed to when I was being home educated has shaped absolutely everything that came after. When I was being home educated, I would learn from role models which involved my family but also artists, entrepreneurs, and the like, but also there would always be opportunities to be had to learn more and to do exciting projects, and so the mindset that this involved is something that has stayed with me considerably. I always approach looking for work as though I'm looking for projects and opportunities that whichever one, I decide to do, can potentially lead to another opportunity. I do think there is a lot to be said for home education as a lifestyle. My home education cannot be extracted and seen individually from the other parts of my life because they are all so deeply connected in ways I can't even always explain. I think that is probably the best thing about home education as well is that all aspects of life are much more interwoven like family life, life in the*

community, life in education or the way that you engage with social life such as with your friends. All these things can be built up and around the opportunities that home education provides. There is also that really big thing, Rachael, that I think sometimes home educated children are associated unfairly with being isolated. I didn't, I felt almost the opposite. I felt that I was given access to so much more as a young person. I think having grown up and then entered work, as a home educated person, it has just reinforced for me why I didn't go to school and why home education is a lifestyle not an alternative to state schooling."

(Dexter, aged 44, home educated for 12 years, and possesses a masters in communication)

The centrality of referring to home education as a 'lifestyle' which cannot be separated from other notable parts of their lives was referred to several times by a handful of respondents, to highlight how it is this element of home education that they feel is so significant for their subsequent experiences in the social world. It could be questioned whether home education is a lifestyle, but the respondents personal experiences would suggest that for them it considerably is. Naomi also attributed the idea of a 'lifestyle' to home education through having provided a detailed illustration of the significance of the 'lifestyle' afforded by being home educated, for her subsequent personal experiences:

"I think, yeah, probably everything comes back to my home education. I sometimes sit and think wondering what my life would be like now if I had stayed in school. I compare myself to some of my peers that I've stayed in touch with and I kind of have a rough idea of where life may have taken me. You think I'd be happy? I don't think I'd be happy. I mean, I was smart so I'd have done well in my GCSEs and that would have given me a good base in which to do well in my A levels. Then I would have gone to a good university and got a good job, but I would probably have been working loads of hours in a job that maybe I didn't enjoy as a result of that conventional path. I'd never see my children. I probably wouldn't have met my boyfriend and yeah, I just think

everything, every decision I've made, has been influenced by my childhood. And I say childhood, because I think home education isn't an educational choice, but it's a way of life. It's not like "oh, are you going to go to school or be home educated?" You know, it's not quite like that and I think it's just a whole way of living and existing in the world. Yeah, I'd definitely say it influenced every single decision I've made to date."

<div align="right">(Naomi, aged 29, home educated for 12 years, possesses a bachelor's in ballet education)</div>

What this pattern in the data reveals is how the respondents are using their past experiences of being home educated to structure their subsequent experiences in other parts of their lives (Bourdieu, 1979), which could be argued to be no different to how people who have been to school would structure their subsequent personal experiences. However, it seems to be that what might be different for people who have been home educated is that there is more of a blurring of the boundaries between fields such as family, education, and employment. As Bourdieu (1979) argued, people tend to structure their experiences of the social world through drawing on their past experiences and dispositions, which originate from experiences within the family field, but also for most people, from their experiences of the secondary field of education, and notably, through the event of school. This suggests that for most people there are clear boundaries between fields and the intersections also have clear boundaries, but this is not the case for home educated people as they demonstrate not seeing field boundaries because to them the boundaries are blurred, and they find it impossible to separate their personal experiences of one field from another. Gareth provided an interesting illustration of a distinct way this blurring seems to occur:

"I think it's hard not to remember when it's such a huge part of our lifestyle and even now after I officially should have finished home educating, I'm still choosing to engage in a form of home education to educate myself with the skills needed to go into games development. There is always a new skill that I'll need to learn to be successful in this area, so it felt natural to use the practices and the lifestyle of home

education to get to where I want to be going with games development.
I just see working as a continuation of my home education really."

Here Gareth can be seen to be showing how through the process of home education, he internalised and converted dispositions developed into meaningful practices providing him with a meaning-giving perception of the world of work and employment (Bourdieu, 2002). Gareth's dispositions are therefore generative of his practices towards how he plans to get the career he wants and the lifestyle he intends to cultivate through this for himself, as being a reproduction of those experienced during his home education (Bourdieu, 1990). In fact, many of the respondents reflected on how they chose career paths that suited their dispositions from their home education, as well as sought out work environments that where reproductions of the structures and practices involved in their home education. For example, Wendy explained how she chose to go into acting because *'it is something that I first fell in love with when I did it as part of my home education. The skills and confidence I gained through doing that has also influenced my ability and desire to do this for work'.* Sylvia also acknowledged how *'I got to spend a lot of time outside which is probably why I would like to go into practical conservation. I grew up and was educated in that environment, so I can't imagine suddenly abandoning that and becoming a completely different person in an alien environment'.*

This theme has shown how despite the variability in the length of home education, experiences of school (or lack of), their ages, the ways in which they had been home educated, and their current employment situations there was still a considerable pattern related to just how significant they felt their experiences of home education was to who they became as adults and what they chose to do for work.

5.3 Haunting

A prevalent pattern that emerged across the narratives was how the participants would describe being *'haunted'* by their previous educational experiences when in various employment contexts. These descriptions not only constitute a dialectic relationship existing with their past experience and current practice, but also how their past is inscribed into who they are as well as their thoughts. Haunting emerged in the narratives in a predominantly negative way when the respondents discussed their

transitions to employment because their past experiences or imaginations of school emerged in a ghost-like fashion to *'haunt'* them. For some, the ghost of school only emerged in particular work situations such as when *'colleagues would gossip behind my back and I'd catch them but then they would deny doing this, it would remind me of the unresolved feelings I had towards other kids when I was in school'* (Della), while for others, the ghost emerged throughout several work situations within and across different organisations and industries, such as was the case for Tom:

> *"Yes, it's always the environment, it's the same kind of principle as school, isn't it? You go to school for like what? 6 hours a day? And like within one 2-hour lesson, let's say you complete all your work within 45 minutes, you're then made to stay sat in that classroom twiddling your thumbs until everyone else catches up. You can't go outside, you can't take a walk, you can't get air, you can't talk to the teacher or the other pupils, and you can't go home. All you are physically allowed to do is sit there and go over your work. It's the exact same logic that you find in work, the exact same rules and nonsense that just repeats itself but now you're in an adult environment. School is designed for preparing you for work and for helping you to transition into it. Like you have a form teacher and head of year, and then in work you have a team leader and a line manager. It's like school is a game and if you play by its rules then you get on just fine, but if you contest the rules and reject what's deemed as normal there then you're out, which was fine by me. The problem is then when you move on from home education and get to work the fucking game starts all over again. It's like a ghost following you around to haunt you forever. You know, the hierarchy and gossip mill that's prevalent on the playground returns, then there is the authority and control that comes back, you know, with managers telling you what you can and can't do. As that song says, high school never ends."*

> *(Tom, aged 56, home educated for 2 years, possesses 2 GCSEs in English and maths)*

Tom demonstrates how he associates his past experiences of school with his experiences of employment. For Tom, the social practice, and the structures of authority within work and employment contexts seemingly are designed in similar ways to those of various schools but also have similar meanings attributed to them. He particularly is seen to draw a parallel between school and haunting with school being narrated to be a ghost which has tended to haunt his experiences of work and employment. Harry shared a similar experience expressing how his issue since entering work and employment contexts has been with *'the people and their roles being mere replicas'* of those he had experienced in school. Harry stressed that he saw his colleagues as replicas of the bullies he had encountered in school when he was working in counselling because they would bully him in similar ways to how he was at school. He also acknowledged how the managers were also replicas of teachers in his opinion because his managers *'would pretend the bullying wasn't happening, just like the teachers had when I was in school'*.

Aurora shared a similar experience to Tom when she first entered the work environment finding a similarity between work and school:

> *"When I went to school, I was totally unprepared for the strict routines and rules at school. For example, the number of hours that we had to be there, how early it was, and then being told what to do constantly, you know, like when to eat and when to go to the toilet. I struggled a lot with it. I also struggled with the academic side of school like English, maths, science, etc. I went from teaching myself predominantly to having subjects and topics forced upon me. Then I found when I got to work, I was just reliving some of that same stuff that I had to endure. Like being told when I could eat and when to go to the toilet. Things were forced upon me to do which wasn't necessarily a part of the job I'd signed up for. It's like if you've been to school the experience never really leaves you."*

(Aurora, aged 22, home educated for approx 8-9 years, possesses college level education in hairdressing)

In both examples, Tom and Aurora are seen not only to feel a sense of being haunted by school in their experiences of work, but also to be trying to use residues of their past to make sense of their more recent experiences to understand why they are experiencing work in the ways in which they were. Using residues of one's past to make sense of one's present when being 'socially haunted' is argued by Gordon (2011) to be a way in which people can begin to confront and deal with their haunting. Gordon (2008) suggested that for people who want or need to confront and deal with their ghosts need to act on the 'something-to-be-done' response that a ghost triggers. Morrin (2016) also added how people can only figure out what needs to be done, for themselves, through reflection on their past personal experiences and why they are impacting on their current experiences.

However, being haunted by the ghost of school also became *'too much'* for some respondents leaving them with unresolvable feelings (Gordon, 2008) towards employment within mainstream organisations, which meant for several of them, they decided they had to act on the 'something-to-be-done' (Gordon, 2008) by making a change to their employment situations. Pete explained how he decided on this:

> *"Yes, I do see a link because I think the school system completely diminishes creativity and ingenuity and you see that with a lot of work environments, it's just this is the way we've always done it. This is the way you're going to do it. This is the way it's always going to be. So, I think that's how school and work are linked because school just puts you into a box and work is about replicating that throughout life. I just reached a point where I recognised that if I stayed in work environments which reminded me of the school system, then I was going to be unhappy and struggle. So, then, I had the idea to become an entrepreneur doing online tutoring for other homeschoolers. Then hopefully I could avoid school once and for all."*

> *(Pete, aged 24, home educated for approx. 8-9 years, partial bachelor's degree in mathematics)*

Pete's story is representative of Gordon's (2008) argument of how a 'ghost' creates conditions that demand the attention of the person being haunted, requiring them to act on the unresolved nature of their past experiences in their current situations to achieve a re-narrativization of their future possibilities. This is because being haunted

alters our current personal experience of being within a field since the trouble that the ghost is representing is no longer being blocked from our view (Gordon, 2011). For Pete, he did not envision a future reality that meant struggling with the ghost and reflecting on it each time it came into view, but rather he is interpreted to have felt a need to 'exorcise the ghost' (Morrin, 2015, pg.136), by removing himself from self-perceived 'haunted' places of employment. Other participants, such as Harry, also narrated in depth about being considerably haunted by his past experiences of school when he has been in work environments:

> *"I've struggled with being different and especially in work probably because those people who are in the positions to deal with bullying associated with difference are those that have come through the school system and have ingrained into them that mindset of being an arsehole. These are the people that have been conditioned and groomed to become the managers of those that never enjoyed or made it through school untouched mentally or without scars. It's a cruel trick because you think it's over when you've left school to be home educated, but then it's just replicated out there in society, and in the work environment. It's just like being straight back in school all over again and for me, school was the worst and most terrifying experience of my life."*

(Harry, approximately in his 30s, home educated for 4 years, possesses college level education)

Harry demonstrates a more frightening version of being haunted through his self-reporting of the immense psychological repercussions, as well as feelings of repression, which can be experienced by a person being haunted by residues of their past personal experiences. Ian also used the word 'repression' being attributed to experiences of working for *'mainstream employers'* but feeling *'free of the repression'* when working self-employed as a writer as well as with his dad in a consultancy company that they co-own. What this finding reveals, is how there can be real long-term work and employment implications for home educated people, who have experienced being haunted by the ghost of school, with implications including an altered relationship towards work and how they approach their work.

While these examples demonstrate common connotations of being haunted with a negative or frightening experience, it is important to highlight how there have also been connotations with haunting being seen as a positive and advantageous experience by respondents. An example of how respondents attributed haunting with a positive experience is seen in Lola's story:

> *"I think I gravitate towards certain kinds of work certainly because of my homeschooling experience. So, I think that's definitely a part of it. For example, I know that like the time that I had growing up to read was more abundant being homeschooled because I pretty much spent all of my spare time reading. I wouldn't have had that opportunity had I have been in school. I do think that it also probably impacted what I'm studying and probably the quality of my writing and just all that kind of stuff in my imagination. I mean I'm planning on a career[9] in which I'll be surrounded by books and rely on books for my job. So, I do think it probably has had quite a big impact on what I'm doing for work. I think being homeschooled never leaves you and there are times like when I'm thinking about my career that reminds me of the things I loved about my homeschooling."*

> *(Lola, aged 31, home educated for 14 years, possesses a doctorate in English literature and theology)*

What Lola's story shows is how residues of being home educated have emerged in a similar way to the how the ghost of school emerged for other participants in work and employment contexts. While Lola describes these residues as memories and does not display any expression that she feels haunted by them, she does state how these memories of homeschooling 'never leaves' meaning these memories have taken on a haunting-like form for her during her personal experiences of employment. This is an experience that was quite widely shared amongst respondents with Joan referring to skills she had developed during her home education as having *'carried forward into every experience and opportunity of work… and never left'* such as her curiosity towards learning new things and questioning everything. Steven also reflected on how

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[9] At the time of interview, Lola was employed as Graduate Teaching Assistant, while completing her PhD with the aim of becoming an academic in English Literature.

'*having been home educated meant I was able to choose lots of different things to do, and so, I think my home education has always subconsciously guided me to take on broad roles for work*'. Steven exemplifies having the ability to 'listen and be attuned to the echoes and murmurs of his past' (Gordon, 2008) to make sense of some of his personal experiences of work and employment.

It is also worth revisiting Tom's narrative when considering positive connotations of haunting because as highlighted earlier, Tom experienced haunting negatively when it came to 'the ghost of school' but through a different story he revealed having also experienced being haunted positively by his home education:

> "*When I decided to home educate my daughter it was because the school was failing her. I said to her how for me, home education, was the best gift I ever gave to myself because I was able to transform my abilities and really pursue what interested me. It gave me hope when I thought there might be no hope for my future after getting into a spot of bother. After we started home educating her, it was incredible all the memories came flooding back to me from my own home education. I remember thinking how it was also the best decision I've made from a work point of view because there was no more being haunted by the school environment because me and my daughter together set the schedule, the rules, and there was no manager to tell us otherwise. Working in this environment made me happy and reminded me of why I left formal employment because I'd rather be reminded of my home education constantly than of school.*"

What these stories have revealed is how experiences of haunting can emerge as not only negative ghosts representing 'repression' in need of exorcising or struggling through but can also be representations of 'hope' and 'transformation' of what can be gleamed from our past in shaping our future possibilities (Gordon, 2011). It also has demonstrated how for some respondents there can be 'duality' in being haunted because as Tom's narrative showed he was haunted by the negatively connotated ghost of school in formal work environments but later in his life when he became a

home education tutor for his daughter he was haunted by positively connotated residues of his home education, even alluding to preferring the latter to the former if one or the other had to stay with him when engaged in work. Tom's story and experiencing duality is something that the next chapter picks up on in more detail to explore how respondents' experiences of work position them in terms of possessing a cleft habitus and how they respond to this.

5.4 Othering

As 'haunting' demonstrated, many respondents displayed dispositions suggesting that they struggle to 'fit' into organisational spaces because these spaces trigger residues of their past experiences with the institution of school causing a social haunting. This theme builds upon the previous in the sense that the respondents typically appeared to use 'othering' in multiple ways throughout their stories, which seemingly was attributed to their perceptions that having not been to school makes them different to their schooled peers. The use of 'othering' was evidenced in three ways with respondents being 'othered' by their peers and managers, 'othering' their schooled peers, and through 'othering' themselves.

The first way 'othering' emerged in the life stories was how respondents had seemingly been othered by their peers and managers in their respective workplaces. What was interesting about the respondents discussing being 'othered' by colleagues and managers was how for some respondents being 'othered' was positive, while for the rest being 'othered' was perceived as being a negative experience.

David was an example of a respondent who felt considerably positive about being othered by his manager explaining how he once had a manager who would compliment '*the differences in abilities'* that he saw in how David operated within the work setting, as opposed to how he saw David's schooled colleagues operating in similar roles within his organization. David elaborated on this stating how, *'the complaint was always how the entry level employees coming straight from school just waited to be told what to do and how to do it, and the compliment was, how they never had that issue with homeschooled employees like me'*. It could be argued how David's home education afforded him with a set of dispositions that might hold significant value for many employers regarding, *'planning, self-management, taking initiative, and being present'* amongst others highlighted by David, which maybe other forms of education

might not concentrate on developing in their pupils as much as some forms of home education seemingly does.

In contrast to David's view on being othered, Arthur was an exemplary example of a respondent who had been othered by an employer in a negatively felt sense, during an interview to become a trainee vicar:

> *"It came up a lot [referring to his home education], I remember when I went to meet the person who was positioned to kind of focus on the educational aspects of the training how they were very negative about my home education. They told me that they didn't think I would be able to train to be a vicar because they just thought I wasn't suitable for it at all based on my home educated background and in order to kind of overcome that, the solution was for me to go into basically what I'm doing now which was to take a 10-week educational course independently to prove my worth."*

> *(Arthur, aged 30, home educated for 4 years, possesses a bachelor's in theology and religion)*

Arthur's story demonstrates how the representative from the church conducting his interview is seemingly 'othering' him for his alternative personal experiences of the field of education. In this situation, the representative is taking on the role of the governor of accessing the religious field to gain entry for developing a career with the Church of England and was therefore responsible for evaluating Arthur's suitability for becoming a full member of their field (Bourdieu, 2001; Shilling, 2005). It is suggestive how the representative appears to be narrowly defining who can become a full member, as those who possess a school-based education, and in doing so, is implying that becoming a vicar is 'not for the likes' of Arthur (Bourdieu, 1990). Arthur also expressed how prior to this interview he had been motivated to pursue a career with the church because of his belief that *'the church is a place for people who are on the margins of society like me and feel as though they do not fit in society to come together and experience a judgement free environment'* but after the interview, he felt ambivalence in that his belief was contradictory to the reality he had just experienced because he had felt *'judged for not fitting with the norms of society'* and somewhat

like he was being *'punished'* for it. Hence, there was a real sense of the representative, as a dominant player within the field of the church, evaluating the extent to which possessing a type of 'otherness' is appropriate for the context of the church and its game (Bourdieu, 1990). It can be understood from Arthur's quote that his alternative education is not necessarily being evaluated as being equal to people who possess a school-based education for gaining employment within this field because of the representative's decision to send him on a 10-week educational course.

Some respondents like Pete and Della also highlighted how they have felt 'othered' by their colleagues in the context of discussing their home education with their colleagues. Pete said for example how *'when [he has] talked about homeschool things to other people, they will make comments about how [he is] able to talk to people and work with people despite the fact [he] didn't go to school'*. Pete further suggested how this response seems to *'imply that they consider people who have not been to school as subordinate in their abilities to themselves'*. Likewise, Della expressed how she has been *'laughed at'* by colleagues for being home educated, with a fellow colleague having implied she was *'a thick cow'* for having been home educated. This was not the only comment passed by colleagues, as Della was bullied by several colleagues over a series of months. Della highlighted how significant of an experience it was for her being bullied for being different as it shaped her expectations of how the workplace in general must be towards home educated people. The bullying also constituted a contributing factor to Della choosing to be unemployed because the bullying had triggered severe anxiety and depression that meant she felt she *'could no longer cope working in a toxic environment'* that she left.

While Della did not report challenging her colleagues on their comments, rather she just expressed wanting to remove herself from the situation, Pete made it clear that he was not going to *'accept'* his colleagues' categorization of him as the 'other'. For Pete, he does not define himself as someone who belongs to a socially subordinate social group of people because he sees himself as, *'triple what most people my age are like'* and so, his response was to reverse the imposed categorization to refer to his colleagues as the 'other' instead. He vocalized how they are *'the inferior ones' because they've been to school, and I haven't'*, an opinion that was also shared with Joan who commented how *'I personally say people who have been conditioned with*

mainstream education, for them, they've got blinkers on. They think we're the problem, and our education, but it's them, they and their education are the problem'. Joan went on to give an example of a situation in work where she felt her colleagues had '*blinkers on*':

> "*So, I'm in a meeting and I say something, and everyone looks at me funny because to me, it's so obvious, but to them it's like me and my ideas are an intrusion. Like let's not listen to her she's the weird one, or perhaps it's just that because of the blinkers they just don't understand my perspective. Yeah, I do think I get those moments from being educated differently to them.*"

> *(Joan, aged 36, home educated for 14 years, possesses credits from the Open University)*

It became evident how Pete and Joan were not the only respondents to 'other' their colleagues, as there was a considerable use of 'othering' language such as 'us' and 'them' prevalent across most of the respondents' stories. To illustrate, in talking about her approach to work, Betty implied how there is a 'we' and a 'them' stating how, *'it's like from our side, we understand each other and can understand why we behave in these ways, but the others just don't get it'.* Sylvia's thoughts on perceived differences she sees between herself and other people in work also illustrates an 'us' and 'them' point of view:

> "*I would say it's because the average kind of people I've encountered in work are different to those I've encountered during my home education. I can't always put my finger on it, but they are different to us. Perhaps it could be that home education gives us all very different types of educations where for them they have a very similar one from having been to school.*"

> *(Sylvia, aged 19, home educated for 9 years, possesses college-level education)*

What is different about Sylvia's experience is that she is also seen to be trying to understand why she sees her schooled colleagues as the 'other', suggesting it could be the differences in education but that she cannot say for sure. Whereas, as earlier quotes have shown, such as from Pete, most of the participants who have tended to

other their colleagues have been firm in stating it is the fact they have been schooled why they other them. These stories and opinions are therefore argued to constitute classic examples of the ways in which a person or group of people become 'othered' by being perceived as 'inferior' to another person or group of people (Brons, 2015). This suggests that home educated people are not only 'othered' by their colleagues and managers but they themselves engage in the act of 'othering' their colleagues and managers as well.

Interestingly, there was also evidence in the narratives to suggest that some of the respondents also 'othered' themselves in the sense that they moved beyond the *'us'* and *'them'* language referring to themselves and other home educated people as being of *'their own kind'*. Tom used this phrase to refer to how in his experiences employers who have themselves been home educated or have experiences home educating tend to prefer hiring home educated people. He remarked how a previous employer *'hired me because he said he liked that I was home educated for a while because he was home educating his daughter Amber'*. Wendy also shared a similar perspective, by highlighting how as a home educated person, who is also home educating her own children, she would prefer to hire other home educated people at her dance school because it is a case of *'I trust you rather than a random person for the job'*. When pressed to elaborate on why this is the case, Wendy explained that home educated people *'tend to support and rally their own wanting them to succeed'* because they have mutual respect for themselves being members of a minority community compared to *'random people'*. This opinion of Wendy's also shows parallels with the earlier discussion on the significance of home education and the centrality of being home educated for how people identify themselves and with others.

This was an unexpected finding because the home education literature does not offer any grounding as to the home education community as employers, and what they value and look for in potential employees, or general employers' perceptions of home educated people, as the literature review noted. Lola therefore provided a good example that gave some insight into how a general employer being a local bakery felt towards home educated people as potential employees:

> *"When I worked for the bakery, the reason that I kind of applied for*
> *that particular job was because a few other homeschooling families*

worked there, and the guy who owned it, Hal, he kind of regarded homeschooled people as very hardworking and kind of good employees to have. So, I think when I went for that job that probably had like, I'm sure that had some effect and Hal knew that I was homeschooled."

This example also highlights the previous opinions of how people within the home education community, whether having been previously home educated, currently being home educated, or being a home educator of children, there is a tendency to treat themselves as an 'self-othered' social group of people and they are *'proud of the things that make us different from having been home educated'* (Aurora).

What is clear through this discussion on 'othering' is how on the one hand, there is a considerable degree of inferiority sensed in the 'other' people experienced in work settings, and on the other hand, there is also a perceived difference between themselves and their schooled colleagues, which had led to an 'us' and 'them' narrative. This is suggestive of how the respondents overall appear to categorize their schooled colleagues as outsiders and do not see themselves as being the ones who should be in this category. In fact, several even alluded to schooled people not being welcome to participate in their experiences of work and employment, if they were the manager and could control this, which also supports Bourdieu's (1990) notion that outsiders are never welcome to participate in a field by those more dominant in the social hierarchy to them.

5.4.1 Judgement

A sub-theme of othering that was present in the narratives was how the participants seemingly tended to judge their colleagues and managers. In fact, Fiona openly admitted that she is *'very judgemental of those people who have multiple workplace relationships and hookups and the ones who are friends with everyone in work including all the customers'*. This was the most common way the sub-theme of 'judgement' emerged in respondents' discussions about other people's choices and behaviour in the workplace. For example, there were several comments passed in the narratives regarding their colleagues' *'inappropriate choices'* of conversation. Comments involved how colleagues wanted to discuss *'sheepish topics which just consist of dumb shit'* (Tom), *'topics which aren't all that meaningful'* (Pete), as well as

how *'one girl, Jo, just talked about where she got her eyebrows and eyelashes done'* (Della). The phrase *'ambition of a plant pot'* was also used by Tom when describing his *'schooled'* colleagues in more detail. He used the phrase in a way to suggest that they are *'plant pots with little ambition'* because *'they were schooled, rather than home educated'*. The idea of judging them as plant pots for Tom was a way to insult schooled people because he expressed often being on the receiving end of judgement by them calling him things such as *'a thick tosser for being home educated'* over the years. These comments mostly reveal a strong sense of judgement being passed by the participants of their schooled colleagues for having tastes and behaviours which are judged to be inappropriate by Tom. However, Tom was the only participant who seemed to try to justify why he judges people who have been to school as seeing his judgement of them being an *'eye for an eye'*.

Kamila discusses in greater detail a conversation that she has found herself repeatedly in, with several different male colleagues, regarding the topic of 'make-up':

> *"I've had a few conversations with male friends at work like "oh it's really refreshing that you don't wear makeup all the time". I've found it really strange because I was like, "I'm going to work, so why would I like wear lots of makeup? I'm not meant to look attractive to you". It baffles me how this kind of behaviour and these kinds of conversations seem a normal thing to do in work for other people."*
>
> *(Kamila, aged 26, home educated for 12 years, possesses a bachelor's in business management)*

What is interesting about Kamila's perspective, is despite judging the potential reasons behind her colleagues' comments, she still considers them to be friends. This suggests that despite the judgement being passed there is not necessarily implications on her relationship with them. Whereas, in the case of Tom's comments, there was a sense of him not being able to have a professional working relationship with his colleagues because in passing his *'plant pot'* judgement he was immediately dismissing and devaluing them as people he would want to work with. This is important to highlight because it shows how there is difference in the contexts in which the judgements are

being passed but also in the implications that could result from passing judgement for the participants' workplace relationships.

A further participant that was identified as passing judgement was Steven in his narration about how he approaches conversations with colleagues,

> *"When I have a conversation with somebody, I kind of want to have a proper serious conversation with somebody. I've kind of had to learn the art of small talk when it comes to work, you know, kind of just checking up on how they're doing, how's the kids, the dog, you know. I don't need to hear the whole life story; I just need to learn enough to get by with it."*

> *(Steven, aged 29, home educated for 15 years, possesses a bachelor's in computing)*

Steven's approach is interesting because while he is also passing judgement on the meaning of small talk and what he feels small talk consists of to his colleagues, he is also demonstrating a lack of interest towards his colleagues. For example, Steven also gave context to this story stating that sometimes he feels the only thing he can do when the small talk becomes *'excessive'* is to *'stand there with my cup'* to be seen to be listening and interested. While Steven appeared to be judging small talk, Ian was seemingly judging his colleagues *'favourite social activities'*,

> *"I've found that all the normal people in work just want to talk about who slept with who the other night, and how much they had to drink. They might think I'm being rude, but I just don't have anything to add to these kinds of conversations and especially not while I'm at work. It's just not professional. I certainly won't be involving myself in what seems to be their favourite social activities either."*

> *(Ian, aged 25, home educated for 4-5 years, possesses a bachelor's in business management)*

There was a clear sense across several respondents of them being judgemental towards social activities more generally, and not just topics of conversation. This form of judgement appeared to emerge predominantly when the respondents would explain why they do not like engaging in what appears to be the 'norm' around social activities

in the workplace. For example, several participants referred to how their colleagues appear to constitute *'going clubbing and getting drunk'* (Ian, Tom, Naomi, Gill, Steven, Lola, Pete), *'gossiping and talking behind each other's backs'* (Kamila, Aurora and Gareth), and *'Christmas parties and just generally parties with any theme'* (Tom and Gill) as enjoyable social activities in their respective workplaces. However, for the participants, they mostly felt the opposite effect and actively tried to avoid social situations that were based on these activities. For example, Gill expressed how she, *'definitely won't be going to the Christmas party, because it's nothing more than an opportunity for a bunch of people, who have work in common, to get together to get drunk'* but for others, such as Arthur, he noted how, *'I try and avoid the Christmas parties as much as I possibly can by coming up with a good excuse because I just feel like an imposter that is out of place in those situations. I'd much rather take a funeral than attend the Christmas party'.* What these examples reveal is some of the different rationales for why the participants choose not to participate in particular social activities in their respective workplaces, but also further demonstrates how they judge those that do choose to participate.

Steven's story regarding how he feels about workplace social activities also provided a different perspective on the ways in which the participants appeared to judge their colleagues through highlighting how,

> *"In my first job, we had a weekly football meet up and I was involved in that, but I probably didn't socialise as much as I could have done because pretty much everything that they did was around going and getting drunk and I was quite strongly opposed to that at the time. I've actually organised social events before though at other places I've worked at. So, company barbeques and like Christmas lunches and then the company I'm going to work for, one of the things I'm looking forward to is the fact that they're very social. It looks like they go paintballing, and they've got football teams and various sports teams as part of the community. I immersed myself in those kinds of social groups during home education and so I'm really happy that I get to continue those passions in my new job."*

What is evident in Steven's story is the significance of social activities experienced during home education being a key driver of what form of social activities he wants to participate in at his workplace. Steven is still seen as being judgemental without explanation as to social activities around *'going out and getting drunk'* as his other home educated peers have expressed, but he also demonstrates a sense of rationalisation that not all workplaces and colleagues he experiences will want to socialise in the ways in which he does. Steven ended up moving on from his current position being in the process of transitioning to his new role at the time of interview because he wanted to *'be in a workplace that culturally was more open to alternative ways of socialising to the norm that I've described not enjoying at my previous job'*. This felt like an important part of this finding because respondents, amongst there many comments of passing judgement, did demonstrate being able to consciously reflect on their own behaviour and to try to make sense of why they may have behaved in the way that they did or do as Slyvia demonstrated in the previous theme over why she perceives non-home educated people to be different to her.

What this theme has shown is how the respondents have tended to judge their schooled peers in work and employment settings through descriptions of how they do not want to fit into *'their'* social world because they are *'different to us'*. The stories highlighted in this section demonstrate how the respondents do not feel like 'social misfits' (Romanowski, 2006) who accept being categorized as the 'other' because to them, it is the 'other' people in work that are the social misfits for not wanting to consider alternative norms of socialising. This has also revealed that there could potentially be implications for the workplace relationships of home educated people because of their issue of having little to no desire to *'fit in to their schooled peers world'* (Beth).

5.5 Rules of the Game

As the last section demonstrated, most of the respondents did not feel as though they were the 'other' but rather they saw their schooled colleagues as the 'other' branding them as *'sheep'* (Joan) who seemingly *'follow what they are told to do, when they are told to do it, and don't question a thing'* (Tom), which seemingly made the respondents in question frustrated not being able to understand why their peers behaved like this. Building on this, Bourdieu argued (1990) how players who enter field games late can

become conscious players who question the game which has been imposed on them by those in dominant positions. For other players, who have what Bourdieu (1990) referred to as native inborn practical sense of game-playing, from having participated in field games from an early age tend not to question the rules of the game because they are taken-for-granted. As I argued in the theoretical framework, this raises the question of whether people who have never been to school or have limited experiences of the 'game' of school have difficulties being players in the 'game' of work and employment. This earlier argument also suggested how these issues could be because they may not only lack the practical sense required to play the 'game' but may also question the rules of it. Hence, there is the potential for a lot of variances in how the 'game' of work and employment is experienced and played by home educated people, especially given the variance noted earlier in this chapter regarding how the 'game' of school and perceptions of it had been experienced by several home educated people. This section therefore considers this question of whether home educated people do demonstrate a disposition for questioning the 'game' of work and employment from having little to no experiences of the 'game' of school.

Upon interrogation of the data, it became obvious that the respondents did demonstrate the disposition to question the 'game' of work and employment in much the same manner as they had earlier questioned the 'game' of school. In particular, the respondents seemed to question the 'practical sense' (Bourdieu, 1990) behind some of the rules experienced in their respective workplaces. One of the most prevalent rules observed in the narratives as being questioned related to having to participate in a hierarchical system and obey to the authority figures within the system. As the case of Joan very clearly demonstrates:

> *"I don't know if you find this too, but I've noticed it with people who've never been in school is that we have no sense of hierarchy. So, you know, you kind of understand the structure and you understand all the managers in charge, or whatever. Yeah, but you don't think they're inherently a better or worse person and you don't have any worries about talking to them as a human… but I think I do have this fear that is rooted in just having had this hierarchy stuff imposed on me. I just wanted to explore the world in which my work is in and remain curious*

while doing the job and to ask questions, but hierarchy and the unwritten rules that you're not supposed to ask questions often makes it impossible at times in certain jobs."

Ian also spoke quite strongly about questioning why the structures that are reproduced through hierarchical classification in the workplace exist because to him a name badge with a different title on, symbolically implying a difference in authority to himself, is something he does not subscribe to:

"You would have certain managers and supervisors who would refuse to help even if it got super busy and hectic, they would claim that they wouldn't stoop themselves to that level. To me, we are all in the same position physically, so don't pretend you have ideas above your station just because you have a different label on your name badge to me."

When asked why he felt this way, Ian connected his feelings towards management rules and their symbolism to how being home educated meant he had little to no experiences with hierarchical power structures. Gareth expressed having a similar perspective of how he *'[does not] necessarily agree with a hierarchy of different ranks or grades'* because this kind of symbolic power that hierarchical classifications signal to people of lower ranks was a leading reason as to why he was home educated in the first place to avoid such classifications in the 'game' of school. Interestingly, some respondents also questioned why… *'schooled people do not condemn the ridiculous rules on hierarchy, and I don't mean just the formal hierarchy but, you know, the informal ones around social behaviour and what's considered normal. I want to know how they don't get burned out by it like we do'* (Kay). These empirical quotes from Gareth and Kay do appear to give a clear sense of a pattern of 'questioning' the rules of the game of work particularly around hierarchy for some of the respondents.

It was also evident how for some of the respondents there was an advantageous element to being home educated when it came to understanding the rules of the 'game' of work and employment and how to play it. There was clear evidence to suggest for example that the participants had a good understanding of the importance

of needing to develop a social network of connections to gain and advance in the 'game' of work. In seeking to use social connections to gain work, Naomi was the most forthcoming regarding using family connections to get early work opportunities. Naomi's father worked for the fraud squad at the Ministry of Defence, and she told of how she got to shadow him *'playing with all the computer software stuff'* as well as *'watching the police recruits go through their training'*. Steven also reported having obtained employment as an electrician apprentice through his uncle for a few months. Drawing these two stories together, the meaning contained in these stories was how Naomi and Steven used their familial social capital (Bourdieu, 1986) to gain exposure to the workplace to develop an understanding of what different work environments are like. For example, Naomi also had experience working for the National Trust and Steven having been an office temp, a cleaner in a fish and chip shop, and a maintenance worker for his local graveyard. Regarding also using social connections to advance in the workplace, Dexter was a good example of this telling how he had been *'tipped off very early on'* by his parents and others within the home education community about the importance of networking because of *'how so many opportunities would come through the social connections'* that he already possessed but *'could also make in the future'*. Developing a network of social connections proved to be significant for Dexter's life story, as much of his employment across a 28-year period had been obtained through accessing his network of social connections that he had developed through acting on the advice given to him during his home education and through having developed the knowledge of how to exploit this network to his advantage (Bourdieu, 1986).

A few of the respondents also discussed the advantage of being positioned by their home education as an outsider, which provided them with a privileged view of how societal games work, and what their rules are, giving them crucial insight on how to use the rules to their advantage. Illustrative of this was Lily's discussion on bureaucracy and hierarchical work:

> *"I guess with bureaucracy and hierarchical work it's a bit like what we were saying before, were I just feel like I was like, almost a step removed from it, where I can see it. I can understand it. So, like when you get outside of the school system, and then you can look at it and*

be like, oh, this is what schools do. I can feel like I've got a better insight when it's like, oh, this is what organizations do etc. Yeah, I understand the layers of bureaucracy and my role in that. So, I can like see how I fit in and how to get the best of it, I guess."

<div align="right">(Lily, 34, home educated for 2 years, possesses a doctorate degree)</div>

This idea that home education positions people with a vantage point in which to evaluate societal games and their rules from an outside perspective is explored in considerably more detail in the next chapter through the stories of Lynda and Lily.

The previous quotes highlight the significance of home education in generating a habitus disposition of questioning the taken-for-granted rules and assumptions (Ingram and Abrahams, 2015) that dominant systems and their games rest on for reproducing their dominance (Bourdieu, 1990). Meaning how people who are home educated are *'generally happier to question things rather than just accept things than the general population who have been through the school system'* to use the words of Sophie.

Despite these stories highlighting being able to play the game with ease from having been able to evaluate and learn the rules from being on the outside, there where also respondents who felt at a disadvantage self-reporting having little grounding or knowledge of some of the unwritten rules of the 'game' of work and employment. Betty had termed the issues stemming from this disadvantage as *'home education fallout'* to refer to anything she felt she had missed out on from being home educated because of its significance for how she experienced transitioning into work and employment contexts. Betty described how one *'considerable issue'* she had faced when transitioning to her first role working in a cinema was how she was slow to pick up on social dynamics in the workplace. Betty explained how she felt she was involved in a boyfriend-girlfriend relationship with a colleague, but on reflection after having subsequent work experiences realised that this was an abusive relationship that she felt she had no grounding to understand or navigate at the time:

"It impacted work because he would just try to get me alone at work, so I was kind of on-guard and would pray he wasn't on the same shift

because literally he would corner me in the bin room. It definitely impacted on work and impacted on me not wanting to go to work, and even later on, after I left, it impacted on how little trust I had for colleagues in other jobs. I definitely didn't realise at the time just how bad the situation was and that what he was actually doing was a criminal offence and not a relationship. I also wasn't aware of my rights as an employee who was quite frankly being harassed. I knew I didn't like it, but I just put that down to being inexperienced. The inexperience in this situation is one thing I credit as something that I'm pretty sure was home education fallout. The one thing I would associate as a distinct negative to come out of that experience because at school, at the very least, there would be chatter and gossip like on the playground or similar, as well as consent related talks, which I would have benefitted from. It was just something I felt really unprepared for, I just had no grounding whatsoever for what happened. I think people in school at least get some kind of grounding in the basic principles of what to expect, what is right and what is wrong when it comes to these kinds of personal relationships."

(Betty, aged 26, home educated for multiple periods of time, pursing a doctorate degree in film and television)

Betty's story felt like an important finding to convey, because no existing home education or Bourdieusian literature has recognised how significant missing out on the everyday mundane experiences of social relations that are played out in school such as on the playground (Garratt, 2015; Biggs, 2016) are for a child. This is because for most people, school provides children with embodied cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) that prepares them (Bowles and Gintis, 1976) for negotiating the social and cultural relations of employment and wider society, but if a person lacks the commonly shared embodied cultural capital because their habitus has been socialised through alternative means, then as Betty's story has highlighted, there can be considerable mental health and wellbeing implications. For Betty, there were a series of employment-related detrimental implications including, mental and emotional wellbeing issues, her ability to form relationships with future colleagues, and being able to generate trust in those relationships. On the close of Betty's interview, she had explained how experiences like this resulted in her choosing to establish her own e-business that meant she could

work independently from home without the need for colleagues to protect her mental and emotional wellbeing.

Steven also raised feeling at a disadvantage from being home educated when transitioning into work and employment because he felt understanding the rules of the 'game' and the 'general system of things' was not a part of his skill set:

> *"I think a lot of the people who would have been your fellow students at school are the same people you end up being at work with or working for. These become the people you eventually have to associate with as co-workers and managers. But then in a similar fashion, co-workers are like the equivalent of your 'classmates' when you're in school and teachers are the equivalent of management. The thing with that is I never really had that, I never saw people that way and still don't. It has been quite difficult to adjust to that system in general because the system is just the same, and if you've never been a part of it, then you don't really know what to do immediately or even entirely understand it to be honest. Whereas a lot of my peers who went to school just adjusted right away and completely seem to understand what's going on and why things are the way they are. They just seem to get the things that aren't necessarily verbally expressed either like having a sixth sense of how to do things and how to get by without raising eyebrows for not knowing."*

What Steven's particular worldview on school and the skills it provides gives support to is Bowles and Gintis (1976) argument of how school prepares children for transitioning smoothly into the labour force post-schooling has some truth. This is because Steven, like Betty, had expressed how he did not find this transition smooth because he lacked the everyday practical sense of how the game worked from having not experienced anything like it before, for example by having a habitus that has not been socialised through the institution of school. It could therefore be argued how for people who have no experience of school, during their formative years, can feel as though they do not understand the rules of the game, and why the structures and practices embedded within the game are socially constructed in the way they are

(Bourdieu, 1990). This was also the case for David, who, for example, talked about his struggles with transitioning to work and employment contexts, particularly in understanding the practices and unwritten rules governing them related to politicking:

> *"the one thing I think is probably a downside is that as homeschoolers*
> *we aren't usually exposed to politicking in our educational*
> *environments, as opposed to our schooled peers, and so therefore,*
> *we are a little slower to pick up the dynamics of organisational and*
> *social politics because we've just never had to navigate such things.*
> *I found this quite difficult when I first started because you would see*
> *the dynamics, but not necessarily know how to play or respond."*

> *(David, aged 37, home educated for 14 years, possesses a masters in law)*

While David felt this issue only lasted during his transitioning into work, he still felt that it is something he has had to *'work at'* over the course of his career compared to his colleagues, who seemingly found it easy to play politics *'with relative ease and know-how, as though they had been doing it forever'*. David suggested how he did not know for sure if this is a skill that his colleagues had learned at school, but he was sure it was a skill *'not learned in homeschooling environments'* deducing that school was likely an opportunity through which people could learn the unwritten rules of politicking.

5.5.1 Spatiality

An unexpected finding prevalent in narrations of rules of the game, and not liking particular parts of the employment game, related to the spatial elements of the workplace. The rule regarding where work should be carried out was the most noteworthy spatial element raised, with several participants reporting their dislike for not being allowed to conduct their work in whichever space in or outside of the organisation that they should wish to. Sophie provided a good example of this because she embodied a strong disposition towards working outdoors, which she associated with both her familial and home education experiences:

> *"I think most of my employment preferences are linked to the things*
> *that I was encouraged to learn about and able to develop skills in*
> *when I was being home educated. For example, I played outside my*
> *whole life, you know, that's how I was educated, so that's what I love*

to do. There was a focus on sources of learning that you wouldn't necessarily learn in school. So, plants, gardening and how to manage your woodland and conservation techniques and things like that. So, I just continued essentially doing that with outdoor education and getting paid to do that in my adult life."

Sophie self-reported how she made the decision to go into outdoor education after graduation because she knew *'didn't want a job that was going to be inside'* and all the possibilities related to her degree would require her to work *'in office settings or the like'*. When asked to elaborate as to why, Sophie stated how she feels *'restricted by the requirement to stay inside all day in most office jobs, and especially, if the work that I need to do could be done outside'*. Many workplaces do not necessarily have formal written rules stressing that employees must stay at their desks, inside the building for their contracted hours, but it could be argued how it could be interpreted as an unwritten rule taken as a social norm by many. Sophie also added feeling *'frustrated'* with what is arguably a written rule around when breaks can be taken and for how long for because *'if the weather is nice out, then I just want to go and take a walk out in the open when the feeling hits, which might not be when my designated break is, but that shouldn't matter, if it's making me a more productive employee'*.

David's narrative also supported this finding highlighted in Sophie's story pertaining to management control around where work can and cannot be carried out, which he linked directly back to how he would 'work' when he was home educated:

"I particularly dislike control around not just being able to leave at any point of the day to go and take a walk outside to get some fresh air. Like I always did that when I was homeschooled, it was fine. No one told me otherwise, but the supervisors in work are going to be like, sorry, but you need to stay sat at your desk, and things like that really set me of internally. It's like managers don't trust people, it's like if I'm a higher performer then just leave me alone. If I'm getting you the

results and meeting the outcomes you want, then why can't I just do

it my way? Leave me alone."

In questioning managers logic behind the practice, David is interpreted to be reproducing his own logic of practice from what worked in terms of his performance when he was home educated and how leaving him alone to conduct his work how he saw fit was the best approach. This is similar to how Gareth's home education dispositions were seen as being generative of his work and employment practices earlier in this chapter. However, as David found during his experiences of work where he questioned their logic of practice was that his and theirs was irreconcilable because their logic was the norm within not only their organisations, but across the various 'games' of work and employment that exist in multiple industries and sectors.

Other participants, such as Tom, also connected his enjoyment of working in outdoor spaces to his experiences of home education, explaining how:

> *"when I stopped going to school, I realised I could learn outdoors*
> *about all sorts of stuff and not just the obvious like nature. Learning*
> *outdoors made me more relaxed so I did a better job of learning*
> *things. I've found this to be true in work as well, or at least for me*
> *personally, I get on much better in work when I can do it outside. I just*
> *love working outside like when I used to work on the mushroom and*
> *sprout farms or when I did landscape gardening, but when I've worked*
> *in warehouses for example, I've hated it because it feels like being in*
> *a prison with strict rules of how to do things, when to do these things,*
> *and where I should do them. It's restricting my freedom."*

Some of the respondents also wanted to discuss ambient space taking the form of stories regarding the importance of windows and noise in the workplace. A couple of respondents such as Sophie remarked how she would associate *'the rule of not being able to open windows in school'* with one of the many reasons why she would *'never want to work in an office environment'*. While there is typically no formal rule in most workplaces stipulating a window cannot be opened by employees, and in particular,

there is no rule about reproducing a rule that might have been enforced in schools, Sophie amongst several of her interviewed peers still appear to perceive that one exists. Sylvia was an example of this because she vocalised how *'I definitely don't like workplaces that don't have windows it makes me feel like I'm in a prison and school was a bit like that because you weren't allowed to open the window if you wanted air or swap to a desk near a window because you worked more productively being able to see outside than see a wall'*. She also branded these rules as *'nonsense'* and being associated with being seen as engaging in *'deviant behaviour if you break them'* but she did not care about the consequences of being seen as a deviant because breaking these rules made Sylvia *'considerably happier with [her] working environment'*. Other respondents such as Ian highlighted the importance of windows for his relationship to work:

> *"I like to be by the window, I like to see what's going on outside. If I can't be near a window, then I'd likely protest that someone swaps desks with me. If it just wasn't possible then I would likely weigh up how much I need to have a window against how much I enjoy the actual work. Now I've gone into consultancy with my dad it's fine because we selected our premises and I have a window in my office."*

Ian's story has a strong message conveyed within it regarding implications for his relationship with work if his working environment does not enable him to be near a window, which to some might sound trivial, but to Ian he was quite serious when conveying this in his interview. As the quote shows, when selecting premises for his and his father's consultancy company location of windows in proximity to what would be his office was factored into the decision. This is an interesting finding because none of the respondents indicated why they have such a strong disposition towards ambient space, and particularly windows, other than there had been some form of perceived issue in school with rules around access to windows. Divya was the only respondent who seemed to offer up a reason being that *'home education instilled in me, you know, a certain environment that I typically now would naturally require in my work because it's what I'm used to'* when referring to her need to be looking out of the window to be able to begin to think about *'my work and what I'm doing'*. As Halford (2004) has

argued individuals often link the meanings that they attribute in spaces of employment to spatial stories from their childhoods, which appears to be the case for the respondents discussed in this section.

There were also stories that supported some of the respondents taking issue with noise in the workplace. David reflected that he *'considerably'* does not like noise in the workplace because of being self-reported *'auditorily sensitive'*. He associates this condition with both his family as being auditorily sensitive, and with his home education because *'when you're being homeschooled things are quieter'*. This latter opinion was also shared by Tom who expressed how *'loud chatter in the workplace does bother me absolutely'* because when he was teaching himself *'there was only the noise of myself, rather than the constant unrelentless background noise of school environments and the idiots who couldn't shut up talking shit and piss farting about while I was trying to do my work. I think that is something that some workplaces have that same background noise of school'*.

5.5.2 Qualifications

While the previous sub-theme focused on the respondents questioning of the rules regarding organisational space, this sub-theme moves to consider how participants talked about rules concerning qualifications in relation to experiences of gaining employment. The topic of qualifications was interesting because while some respondents expressed quite strong feelings towards questioning their meaning in society and exploring why their alternative forms of qualifications do not have weighting with employers, other respondents expressed how yes, they had obtained the necessary qualifications required for employment in their respective areas, but they had nothing further to add because they did not see their qualifications as a significant barrier or enabler outside of the normal currency they possess. For example, Della discussed recognizing the social norm of needing certain qualifications, if she was to stand a chance of participating in the labour market:

> *"Yeah, I mean, I enjoyed being home tutored, but I realized that if I didn't go back to school and gain the necessary qualifications then I*

would be at a disadvantage when it came to my future. So, that's why we came back to England so I could sit GCSEs and get some qualifications. I went straight into year 9 at the local school and after that did sixth form and then college. I do think it was quite a lucky experience to kind of be home tutored don't get me wrong but then I thought about the exam side and felt that staying home tutored wouldn't be the right thing to do for my future."

<div align="right">

(Della, aged 27, home educated for 2 years, possesses several GCSEs)

</div>

While Della demonstrates unquestionable participation in the institutional process to gain the necessary qualifications, for use as currency in the labour market, her perspective was not shared by most of her peers. There was a strong pattern amongst Della's peers of questioning the meaning that society attributes to having particular qualifications (e.g., GCSEs, A Levels, BTECS etc.), alongside, contesting why their alternative personal experiences do not carry similar qualities. For example, several participants branded them as *'pointless pieces of paper'* that the government and employers use to *'quantify a person's life experiences into a grade'* that can be traded for employment opportunities. The following quote from Divya is the most reflective of this position:

"You know, in the home ed communities, everyone knows that going to university is a way that you can get a piece of paper that gets your qualification that proves yourself to other people. Like it's ridiculous that you have to prove it like that, but it's the world we live in isn't it. So, I guess I always feel like I have to prove myself. Yeah, and I have to prove the worth in my experiences. I've found that a lot of interviewers are not happy with life experience and want the academics and the pieces of paper to prove I can do x. I mean, in home education we just gain a lot of life experience and exposure to everything life based that those in school don't get, but then it's useless when it comes to getting a job because they often just dismiss it in preference of the academic piece of paper and that's just wrong."

As Divya's story clearly demonstrates, there was a questioning of the dominant discourse in society around qualifications and the meaning attributed to them by society, which implies that people must have state-valued qualifications from a reputable university, or at the minimum, they must possess several good level GCSEs from school if they are to gain entry to employment. Reputable qualifications are argued by Bourdieu (1986) to not only be transactional in that they can be used as recognition that one has been socialized through a state legitimated social space be exchanged for employment, but as an evidence base for people to demonstrate to employers, and other members of society, their credentials, and various capital gained through their experiences within qualification accrediting state-led institutions such as schools and universities.

Many of the participants whose narratives demonstrated a questioning of the qualification rules expressed a strong distaste and opposition towards this discourse, stating how in their opinion their *'diverse experiences of life'* afforded to them through their home education are *'far superior'* than the more *'common experiences'* that school affords to their labour market competitors, yet their experience has suggested that employers conceive of life experiences as having little to no value and are not tradeable in replace of *'having the academic qualification'*. In expressing the opinion that their life experiences are far superior to the common ones, is a reminder of how the participants tended to be judgmental of their schooled peers in certain employment related contexts, with qualifications evidently being one of these. What the participants are conveying through this overall position is how home education might cause a lack of opportunities to obtain state-valued qualifications and the cultural capital that the accrediting institutions affords people through their everyday personal experiences of their social practice and wider community.

Other participants whose narrative supported this argument recognized that possessing alternative cultural capital is not necessarily a *'death sentence'* meaning they will remain *'unable to gain employment'*. Instead, they felt that they could capitalize on their life experiences and the social and cultural practices learned during them to create their opportunities within the field of employment. For these participants, they understood the rules of the game, but instead of expressing disdain

as some of their peers have expressed doing, they instead found a way to insert themselves into the field with alternative qualifications by establishing a game that is governed by their own rules, such as was the case of Gareth,

> *"Yeah, I do think the home educated environment helps create this mindset where you can just self-teach yourself a skill or set of skills then start your own company or freelance doing that skill. I don't think you would get that from being in school, which is also why I would rather start my own games development company freelance from self-teaching than to go through the formal route because why would I do that when I can continue to home educate myself the same skills? I wouldn't want to work for an organization doing it but rather for myself because they wouldn't value how I acquired the skills."*

Pete also shared a similar perspective expressing how it was *'pointless to go and get a business degree or finish the mathematics one I started because the career I want to have doesn't require it'.* Pete wanted to establish a home education tutoring business in which he felt *'home educating parents value reputation and values, not your pieces of paper from mainstream education'.* This was interesting because it is reminiscent of the earlier finding of home educated people othering themselves and implying there is a 'we' versus 'them' when it comes to schooled people in work and employment contexts. Pete felt certain that his alternative cultural capital would be of more value to employers situated within the home education field than any institutionally accredited degree. Webb (2002) has argued how there are fields that do recognize the value in alternative capital such as she demonstrated through her example of the circus (see *field* in Chapter Three) meaning it is plausible that home education as a field may also value alternative capitals.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the work and employment experiences of home educated people through four interconnected themes which included: the significance of home education in shaping respondents' sense of 'self', othering and judgement, the haunting quality of the home education experience, and the experience of the 'game' of work and employment. Together these four themes have illustrated the importance

of developing an understanding of how home educated people experience work and employment, and some of the ways in which their home education plays a role in shaping these experiences. They have also revealed some of the shared commonalities across the narratives but also the extent to which there were self-proclaimed and observable differences in experiences contained within the narratives. These themes have further illustrated the utility of drawing upon Bourdieu's (1978) theory of practice concepts of habitus, capital, and field to understand the ways in which dispositions developed during personal experiences of home education become generative of home educated people's social practices used to gain work and employment, attitudes and relationships towards work and employment, and behaviour and ways of working when in work and employment contexts was made evident. Furthermore, my use of Gordon's (2008) notion of a social haunting was also evident to understand why respondents' felt haunted by their personal experiences and imagined perceptions of school as well as their personal experiences of home education.

This chapter *Work and Employment Experiences* has therefore provided the foundation for the following chapter *Responding to a Cleft Habitus*, as the themes and experiences discussed in *Work and Employment Experiences* are subsequently integrated as supplementary points in the next chapter *Responding to a Cleft Habitus*, to explore in greater detail what the implications of feeling out of place and marginalised in work and employment contexts are for the home educated respondents. The chapter also aims to reveal what these implications meant for how the home educated respondents navigated the various field games, their rules, and norms that they have been positioned in during their work and employment trajectories to date.

6. Responding to a Cleft Habitus

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter, *Work and Employment Experienc*es, presented empirical data on four significant themes that emerged from the data analysis to demonstrate an understanding of similarities and differences in how the respondents reported experiencing work and employment. This chapter, *Responding to a Cleft Habitus,* builds on the previous chapter's themes in particular 'haunting' and 'rules of the game' to demonstrate how the home educated respondents seemingly experienced disruptions in their *habitus-field* relationship during specific work experiences. In particular, it focuses on how home educated people have reported experiencing what Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) have referred to as a 'hysteresis effect' meaning the disruption they experience is between their originary personal experiences of home education and their subsequent personal experiences in the field and sub-fields of work and employment, which often leads to a cleft habitus developing. The most common way the respondents acknowledged this was by expressing their emotions felt in particular work environments and situations, such as feeling 'out of place' and as though they 'do not fit'. While Bourdieu's oeuvre (1979; 1999; 2000; 2004; 2007) has demonstrated how to experience a cleft habitus, it remains one in which people are largely unable to resist or intervene consciously in, as to alter their individual experiences of a cleft, which has meant that his views have tended to neglect the role of conscious agency at the mundane level of everyday experiences (Jenkins, 2002; Sayer, 2004; Mills, 2008). *Responding to a Cleft Habitus* therefore also demonstrates how respondents often demonstrated being conscious of experiencing a cleft habitus and of their various ways in which they responded to it. This is explored by drawing upon Ingram and Abrahams (2016) habitus positionality theorisations outlined in the theoretical framework chapter, which include positions of *dislocation*, *destabilisation*, and *relocation*. It is important to note that while most of the respondents appeared to align considerably with a particular position throughout their employment histories, they also demonstrated oscillation between multiple positions in moments of transition but also when immersed in a range of different situations within the same job. In total, twelve respondents fitted into the 'destabilised' position, ten into 'relocation', and the remaining nine into 'dislocation'; five of the thirty-one respondents demonstrated oscillations. Furthermore, the rationale behind the analysed narratives selected to be

discussed in this chapter is that they are exemplars at representing how these three positions apply to, and have been experienced by, home educated people. In particular, the selected narratives richly draw out some of the implications of being home educated for how work and employment have been experienced by the respondents. For example, how home educated people have experienced being recruited and selected by an organisation, how they negotiate and make sense of experiencing bullying and harassment in a workplace setting, and how they navigate and conceive of career progression and advancement.

The first section will explore how the respondents narrated experiencing a cleft habitus as being a painful process of 'identity displacement' (Hey, 2003), in which they felt like outsiders in their respective sub-fields of work and employment, leading them to positions of *dislocation*. The second section builds on this experience of *dislocation* by discussing positions of *destabilisation* in which the respondents reported at times feeling like they were dually located in both their originary field of home education and their respective sub-fields of work and employment. While these two sections are predominantly focused on the negative and painful experiences of a cleft habitus, the third section explores the ways in which the respondents became *relocated* through possessing the ability to reconcile the two competing field experiences and dispositions required, meaning their experiences were positive and empowering, generating a vantage point for them from which to see both fields.

6.2 Positions of Dislocation: *'There is no place like home'*

As defined in the theoretical framework, positions of dislocation refer to people possessing continued feelings of being outsiders because they find themselves in a field that is misaligned with their originary habitus. This means that people responding to a misaligned habitus, through a position of dislocation, cannot accommodate both their originary experiences and dispositions (e.g., acquired from their education) and those being generated by the current field they are in (e.g., employment). Therefore, people who are dislocated are either found to be reconfirming their originary habitus by rejecting those of the new field, or they alternatively reject their originary habitus in favour of internalising the new ones. The former being reflective of Willis (1977) lads and how they rejected school in favour of their own working-class male subculture. In this section, I therefore consider what happens when the respondents' habitus appear

to misalign with not only the habitus of their respective workplaces but also the habitus of the people that they were working with at the time, with reference to Harry, Beth, and Aurora's stories. These respondents are the most reflective of the 9 respondents who demonstrated a considerable 'misalignment' (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016) between their home educated habitus and the habitus of their respective workplaces.

6.2.1 Harry's Story

Harry was a 36-year-old unemployed home educated person, who was also a full-time Carer for his mother, at the time of interview. While Harry was officially unemployed and claiming welfare benefits, he self-reported making sense of his role as a Carer as a form of work. He had held this position since the age of 8 informally until he was of a legal age to formally become his mother's Carer. During this time, he had been home educated for four years between the ages of 14 and 18 having been a pupil at multiple schools previously. He also self-reported suffering from Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. Harry explained how he came to be home educated only between these years because his mother felt she had no other choice but to pull him out of school and home educate because he was being *'severely bullied in and by the school'* leading to being attacked and left with injuries on a regular basis. Harry expressed how the school in question would privilege certain children from particular social backgrounds and because he was from a council estate caring for his disabled mother outside of the school this meant his sense of self did not fit into the field of school. This meant that for Harry he seemingly was experiencing a cleft from being positioned in a field that expressed strongly how *'being from a council estate'* in a school, which *'privileged an elitist culture'* meant he *'wasn't welcome by the teachers or other kids'* because their game was not for the likes of Harry. This suggests that Harry might have been understood to be different by the other players because of his perceived dispositions being contradictory to their own.

This experience of a school-induced cleft proved to be significant for Harry's overall story because of how considerably it shaped his later experiences of new fields such as employment (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Ingram and Abrahams, 2016). As was seen in the previous chapter, regarding the theme of 'haunting', Harry reported how he had been *'deeply'* affected by his experience of school to the point that he *'struggled to stay in the system'* because every time he went back into the system he was

reminded *'of being back in school, only instead of being physically beat up, [he would] be emotionally beat up this time instead because colleagues would make it obvious [he] wasn't like them'*. Harry provided an extensive example of this, which can be seen below:

Me: You mentioned how you have tried multiple times to go back into the system to complete a qualification, so could you explain a little to me about your experience of getting your counselling degree?

Harry: Yes, I mentioned how, although I had trouble with my education in the system, the fact was I kept trying to go back and finish a qualification. I decided I wanted to do a counselling degree, which I had to do at the local college rather than at a university because of my background. I was proud to finish this qualification because I hadn't been able to before, because it was just too taxing on me, and the system would make it more difficult for me in some way, so I would just quit and leave. The only issue I had this time was while I was volunteering for the charity, counselling people who were trying to come off alcohol and drugs. It was interesting, but a very difficult working environment for me because the people there were very much about having their own way of doing things, and they were all best friends, and had known each other for years. I was a new guy that they didn't know and a couple of them didn't like my educational background, both because I was home educated, and because my counselling degree was from the local college that wasn't good enough for them.

Me: So, would you say this is why you didn't stay in counselling after you had completed the qualification? You know because of hostility you seem to be describing from colleagues.

Harryl: It was kind of the reason. There were quite a few places where I could have got placements, but they refused to take on any students that had been taught by my tutor because they didn't like him. I discovered how counselling is an extremely snobbish profession. For example, because we did our counselling degrees through adult

education at the local college and not through university, and even though it's the same degree and we had been doing the same work, and putting in the same amount of effort, they just wouldn't give it the same value. So, yeah, it was quite difficult to find a placement and meanwhile my physical condition got worse.

Despite Harry's efforts to operate like a 'fish in water' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, pg.127) during his counselling degree, Harry felt that the counselling profession was never a viable option for establishing a career because he was not seen by other members of the profession as a legitimate player possessing native membership (Bourdieu, 1990) in their field. In other words, he was not able to reconfigure his habitus through pedagogic action nor was he able to fully compensate for his lower stocks of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) resulting from his home educated background. What this meant for Harry was to re-experience a cleft habitus, like he had experienced in the elitist school he had attended years prior, resulting in him feeling like he was an 'imposter' (Hey, 2003). Ingram and Abrahams (2016) have argued how when a person feels like an imposter with little belief in being capable of reconciling their habitus, a tension often develops meaning that the person needs to either abandon or re-confirm their originary habitus. Harry has demonstrated the latter position in choosing to distance himself from the dispositions and structures of the field of counselling, as to protect the originary structures which have shaped his sense of self.

It could further be argued how Harry was acutely conscious of his habitus experiencing a cleft and how it was making sense of what to do when confronted with contradictory dispositions to how it had previously developed during his home education. This challenges an aspect of Ingram and Abrahams (2016) argument of how people can only be partially conscious of habitus operations with people often being unconscious of these. An illustration of this is how Harry made the conscious decision to leave all formal employment partially because of his cleft experience within the field of formal employment to return to his field of origin,

"I actually stopped working entirely. I never had intended to work as a way of earning money because I was still my mum's primary Carer and I've been caring for her since I was about eight or nine. So, it was more something to do, and to get me out of the house and doing something else. As I said, sadly, my physical condition deteriorated to the point where I couldn't work anymore though. This was due to both working in the system but also just due to general health as well. The rest of my 'work' has been in my role as my mum's primary carer. I mean, I've learned a lot like how to deal with stress and infection control, sterilisation, and things like that. So, I've learned quite a lot from the district nurses. In some ways, I have really enjoyed this 'job' because I have a love for learning new and different things. You know, things that aren't really the norm. I also don't have to deal with those same people I had been to school with or the snobbish counselling people. It's just me and my mum and the district nurses."

What this quote of Harry's reinforces is the importance of peoples' primary field of existence and how through its structures it not only shapes their dispositions and senses of self (Bourdieu, 1990), but positions them within the field regarding what is equally possible and not possible for them. For Harry, because he has become conscious that counselling is not possible for him, given his acute lack of appropriated cultural capital, he instead retreated to his field of origin to continue 'working' as his mother's Carer. Seemingly, Harry appeared to make this decision because he could not reconcile his dispositions with those of the field of counselling, whereas he felt he could in the context of being his mother's carer because the dispositions acted upon in this context was learned in parallel with his home education. For example, Harry self-reported how he became a carer for his mother while being home educated, which meant he learned skills such as infection control and how to dress wounds that could be transferred to a full-time position working as a carer, alongside, also learning the standard curriculum subjects. This could therefore be suggestive of the argument made in the previous chapter regarding how home educated people tend not to see or experience field boundaries because in the context of Harry's story, his education, and familial caring responsibilities, with the latter later becoming a form of work for

him, all took place in the same temporal space. Hence, Harry is demonstrating a conscious repositioning of his habitus through a re-confirmation response (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016). Harry concluded his interview by reiterating to me how he does not plan to return to any form of *'formal employment'* in the future because he has had enough of *'being failed by the system'* and the detrimental effect this has repeatedly had on his mental and physical wellbeing. He is happy being in *'informal work outside of the system'* reproducing the dispositions and structures of his originary habitus as a full-time carer (Bourdieu, 1979).

6.2.2 Aurora's Story

Aurora was a 22-year-old previously home educated person of 9 years from the ages of 4 to 13 who was working in 3 different roles at the time of her interview: as a part-time model, self-employed hairdresser, and as a planning member for a home education festival. Aurora's home education journey was different from other participants journeys because she was home educated before going to school for part of her secondary education. She expressed how this decision was partially because of the unfolding situation at home changing but also because she wanted to have an experience of school, including the gaining of GCSEs it awards you with. Aurora expressed regretting this decision afterwards when reflecting how, at age 15, *'the strict rules and the routine of it all had just broken me down completely to the point that I was having nervous breakdowns daily. I had no choice but to pull out of school just before my GSCE years began'.* On reflection of having been home educated previously and then experiencing this experience in school, Aurora made the decision that she wanted to go into teaching within schools for her future career in a bid to *'change things because [she] wanted them to be different for everyone, because not everyone has got to experience the things that [she] experienced through being home educated and [she] wanted so badly to change schools from the inside out'* but quickly realised that without her GCSEs and the alternative educational experiences she had that this dream would not work out. She felt the *'system would have broken her down'* all over again in her attempts to change it. These memories of being broken down by school proved to play an instrumental role in how she did go on to experience the field of employment in a couple of years' time, with an example being the mindset she approached the field with:

"When I first started working, I would try to convince myself I could do it because this is what normal people do. So, I would overwork myself and I think I still had the mentality of school in that I had to do whatever they gave me because that's what work was when I was in school. It was to do as much as you could to complete your work each day regardless of what else you might have going on in your life. So, I wanted to keep up this appearance of doing well and I didn't want to let them know about the mental health problems I have. I was trying to keep up this façade as a happy worker because that seemed to be what everyone else did."

Aurora explained how this mindset that she associated with her experiences of school is something that she would attribute as being a partial reason for having experienced some of her previous employment negatively. For example, she expressed how she felt she had to *'conceal'* how she naturally could not *'survive mentally or physically'* operating with a mindset of constantly having to perform a sense of self that was not compatible with who she felt she was when not in work. This issue seemed particularly prevalent when work ethic was involved because there seemed to be a dislocation between what she perceived her employers wanted her work ethic to be to what she came accustomed to during her home education in which she expressed how *'being home educated meant I didn't need to overwork myself because I could just set my own pace. I knew I wasn't going to be told off or was it implied I had to be quicker, do more, and not complain about doing more'*.

Aurora's earliest experience of work was for an independent café which she described as having, *'kind of set the expectations for me of what work was going to be like'* and was *'not on board with what they expected of me, I think there was a clear difference in our expectations of each other'*. For example, Aurora explained how one of the issues she experienced was the managers unwillingness to accommodate her need for reasonable adjustments because of her suffering from Chronic Fatigue Syndrome:

"There was no official contract which made things tricky for me. I made it work and I did it for about nearly four months until I was so exhausted that I just couldn't do it anymore. I don't do very well standing up for very long because of the CFS, but they wouldn't give me a stool to sit on behind the till, even if I'd done everything else that I was meant to do. I just wasn't allowed to sit that was the rule. They often didn't give me lunch breaks either. It just exhausted me. I mean you could eat a sandwich or something, but I'd have to eat it on shift. Yeah, and I couldn't leave until everything was done at the end of the day. The pay wasn't right either for these working conditions. I didn't think it was right that I was made to do everything. So, I said, "look if you're not going to hire anyone else to help me, then I quit" and so I quit because they didn't hire anyone."

It is imperative to draw out of this empirical example, how angry Aurora was at this experience and how she had been treated. Aurora did not understand why this rule regarding no sitting existed regarding it as *'pathetic'* and *'discriminatory',* but she also did not understand why negotiation was not a disposition that could be used in this context with her manager because this disposition was possible and even encouraged when she was in similar situations during her home education. Examples of situations Aurora expressed engaging in negotiation in during her home education consisted of what subjects she was going to learn, how she was going to structure her learning schedule in terms of the ordering of subjects or activities day-to-day and the timings, and in the discussions around eventually deciding to go to school. Aurora was therefore contesting the rule as illegitimate (Bourdieu, 1990) because it was not legitimate in her social world to treat people with disabilities and health issues in the way her manager had. This is not only demonstrable of someone experiencing a cleft habitus (Bourdieu, 2000) but also of how Hey (2003) has depicted of her own painful experience of a cleft as not understanding the world she found herself in but also being misunderstood by others positioned within the same field.

After having had enough of not feeling legally protected in her café job, Aurora believed the way forward was to obtain a job with *'a larger and more mainstream*

organisation that would offer legal protection and a formal employment contract' to avoid the issues she had experienced previously. This meant Aurora accepted a job offer with the expectations that she would be entering '*a more professional workplace'* and get a better experience of work. However, Aurora's expectations were not met:

> *"It was just a crazy environment but all too normal it seemed for the average people. A lot of the people there were already in relationships outside of work as well. This meant there was just so much drama at work and I kind of didn't expect it from a workplace. I didn't realise that work was just a repeat of the things I tried to avoid in school. I just couldn't be a part of that. You know, does a workplace exist where I can be professional and don't have to deal with drama and be treated right? I fell into that trap very early on with work politics and the type of socialisation that goes on in work. They would gossip, hook up with one another, and then gossip about that as well. I just don't expect that from people at work, I do expect it from people at school. I guess though the common kind of person you find at work have been to school and we haven't. I don't know maybe that has something to do with why they behave the way they do at work compared to us. It's so trivial to them but for us we just can't deal with the drama and don't see it as having a place in work but clearly, they do."*

Aurora depicted how despite having had a formal contract this time, and with a larger organisation within a different industry, there were still issues arising that impacted how she experienced her job. Aurora found it difficult to navigate the social culture of the store she was working in describing it as *'alien'* because not only did she not possess the necessary disposition to understand it, but it also contradicted her expectations of how people should behave in a workplace. She seemed to equate this experience with her negative experiences of school through recounting memories from her past experiences to make sense of her current experience. This can be likened to the earlier argument regarding social haunting in the previous chapter because Aurora is referring to residues from her time in school reappearing in the social culture of her workplace (Gordon, 2008, 2011), as well as Bourdieu's (1990) argument outlined in

the theoretical framework regarding school being reproduced in work and employment contexts. Aurora further elaborated on this by giving a more specific example:

> *"So just after New Years I just broke down completely. I'd had a fight with an old friend [Fadoua] from school who also happened to work at this job that I was working at, and she had spoken to the managers about our fight and told them a completely different reason than I had stated as to why I had been off for a week. So that was kind of the start of me deciding to quit my job. I'd called in and said "look, I'm really sorry but I can't make it in because my mental health is flaring". I'd been off for about a week and she apparently in this time told my managers that it was because I had an awful hangover. She was getting in my head to hurt me. It hurt me that she would do that because it put my job on the line because of it. It was at that point I decided nope, I can't stop this kind of behaviour that is going to keep happening in a job and I mean any job. I can't be a part of that, it was like being in school again and so I left. I still don't understand why people think it's acceptable to bring their personal lives into a so-called professional environment."*

Aurora displayed a clear disdain towards Fadoua's behaviour which was evident in her voice when she explained this experience to me. She was particularly bothered by the blurring of boundaries that she felt people who had been to school frequently did when it came to personal and professional social relations, whereas people who have been home educated would separate these boundaries from Aurora's experience. It was evident from Aurora's stories of work and employment and particularly those relating to her colleagues, how Aurora categorized schooled colleagues and home educated peers as two distinct categories of people but whereby both categorisations represented a homogeneous view of the world. It was either you are schooled and different to me or you have been home educated and therefore like me, meaning Aurora did not account for anomalies or individual differences within each categorisation. This could be likened to Bourdieu's (1990) argument of how habitus can be at odds with the roles that native players of games adopt but it cannot be known

if Aurora's colleagues felt the same way about her. It also resonates with the previous chapter's theme of 'othering' because this is blatant 'othering' of both her colleagues and of herself (Shilling, 2005).

After what was self-professed as a *'disastrous attempt to be normal'* Aurora expressed having changed her perspective on jobs in general *'because [she] went to this bigger company, kind of expecting it to be a more professional environment and it just wasn't'*. This led to her reflecting on a deeper level than previously as to why she was having these issues with work to try and understand what the best decision for her moving forwards would be. One reflection shared was how Aurora felt she would never understand why people behave the way that they appeared to in work, nor did she think she would ever find a workplace where she *'fitted in'* because of a continued sense of being *'the person who is different, not normal, and can't do work like the average people because being home educated makes me different'*. An example Aurora gave that made her reach this conclusion was how:

> *"When I was being home educated, I was able to go home whenever I fancied like whenever I didn't want to be with people. I could just say "mum, can we go home now" kind of thing but at work you just can't do that. You can't decide you're not feeling it today and leave right now. The people at work and the interacting it requires is like a chore that takes its toll on me, rather than something that I enjoy most of the time. So, I'd be really happy if such a workplace existed, and I could just leave because I need my own space to just recharge from these people and the routines of it all."*

These words of Aurora's regarding *'if such a workplace existed'* and *'needing her own space'* prompted asking what she was currently doing for work given she had expressed having not felt like she *'belonged anywhere'* when it came to the field of employment. Aurora responded by telling how she had tried freelancing for a while as a sports referee, model, and hairdresser with freelancing or self-employment as an area of work that she saw herself remaining in despite still somewhat feeling a cleft. It is understood that this was her way of coping with her perceived *'problem of work'* because of her desire to *'have a family someday and knowing that I need to be*

able to function properly, if I am to provide for them'. This word *'functioning'* and what it meant to Aurora was important because in her conclusion on her experiences of work she said how she *'wanted to be functioning but functioning on my terms and that means no to anymore in the system jobs'* to ensure she could fulfil her aspirations of wanting to have a family someday.

Evidently, what has been shown through re-telling Aurora's story is how her home education was not the only significant event that shaped her sense of 'who am I?' (Carroll, 1865) because school was also a significant influence, having shaped her habitus, and her experiences of work, including how she perceived and classified her colleagues. In using the word 'alien' earlier in her narrative she made apparent how her originary habitus became divided from her experiences in secondary fields creating a cleft in which her only way to cope with the psychosocial and physical implications of this was to re-confirm her habitus by rejecting everything about school and work that was not for the likes of her (Bourdieu, 1990).

6.2.3 Beth's Story

Beth is a 27-year-old Doctoral Researcher who works part-time as a Graduate Teaching Assistant. Beth's educational trajectory was more mixed than some of her home educated peers because not only did she spend time in various state schools but was also once enrolled in a private school. Previously, Beth had worked in Operational Risk Management and as an IT Analyst in the banking industry before making the decision to transition *'back to graduate education'* with the aspiration of pursuing an academic career. She has been home educated for 5 years between the ages of 5 and 10 partially because of locational remoteness but also because of parental views on education. This meant that like Aurora, Beth also has a different educational trajectory to most of the participants because of having experienced home education before being enrolled in school.

Beth's earliest experience of work was when she was 17 and working as a horse farm hand,

> *"I took a job on a horse farm, but it meant staying over and being away from home, but I thought it would be good experience for me. I had enjoyed my previous time working for a different horse farm locally,*

so I thought I'd like this one as well. So, there was just me, another woman, and our boss. It was a totally different setup to the previous farm. I think there was some kind of miscommunication and misunderstanding like failed expectations in a sense but also maybe that I wasn't quite mature enough because I was 17 at that point. My boss decided that she was going to leave me there looking after everything, while she went on an across the world honeymoon over the winter, and I mean, the other woman was going somewhere else for the winter so yeah it would have just been me. I said to her like no just no this is not at all what I signed up for when I signed up to work for you for a year. I had expected her to be here sort of mentoring me and being there if I needed something at least that's what I was used to at home. She told me yes; you're going to do this because you're just being a brat. I just completely didn't know how to handle that situation. I did feel that homeschooling meant I was kind of underprepared to handle situations like this at work. I do remember asking her, "oh can we not even talk this through and negotiate?" and I remember really struggling with her response because if anything was a problem when we were homeschooling like even within the wider homeschooling community, it would be discussed as a two-way conversation and there would be compromise."

This early experience of work for Beth constituted a steep learning curve in the sense that not only did she acknowledge how her young age and the naivety that can come with that could have been shaping this experience, but she also quickly recognized how the structures and dispositions her habitus had been socialised with during her homeschooling contradicted the ones she was encountering in this new field. She further expressed having felt conflicted at what to do when her tried and tested ways of responding in this situation were not working. This is a clear empirical example of a person experiencing a field in which they are not a product of (Bourdieu, 1984), as shown through how Beth's feelings seem to be describing a painful sense of having a conflicting habitus because her dispositions are being questioned by the 'governor' of the new field she is experiencing. Hey (2003) referred to this as 'identity displacement'

whereby Beth's originary dispositions and norms are irreconcilable with the secondary field (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016).

After this experience, Beth went on to study for her undergraduate degree in computer science that included a summer internship where she worked for a bank as an analyst. She had described this internship as something she enjoyed but knew that the financial sector was not really an appropriate fit for her long-term but did accept their offer to join their graduate programme because of not having been sure at that time what else she wanted to do. She therefore stayed with the bank for approximately a year and a half before quitting to return to university to complete her masters and PhD. The reasons leading up to this decision are explained in Beth's extensive detailing of her experiences while at the bank:

> *"When I started there, it was interesting because there was a group of us that got hired at the same time as part of the graduate programme and it was awful. I mean there was some wonderful people but there was also a really nasty cliquish element like when I was in the private school. There was kind of a lot of emphasis during certain parts of the training on like going out and being social. Thankfully for me one of the people never drank and so I could always hang out with him, but there was still a lot of emphasis on like doing stuff as a group and when the group was not nice to you and that's just not fun. So, I think again, like at the private school there was this whole weird social dynamic going on with how I should dress, who was allowed to fit in and who wasn't, but this was now in a work environment and much like that school most of my friends were kind of like adults or like who worked for the company and wasn't a recent graduate interning. I often just sat at my desk during the workday and didn't really have many friends."*

Interestingly, Beth drew out of her experience how the lack of socialisation regarding how she should dress in particular contexts (Bourdieu, 1986) was an element of work that she really felt at odds with. She further noted how this had also been an issue in school because she would, *'wear clothing passed down rather than brand new items that followed the trends'*, and her peers would make fun of her suggesting she *'was*

not normal like them'. For Beth there was a continued feeling of not being like her peers but also not wanting to be which became clearer when she went into more depth on why she thought she felt this way towards her recently graduated peers:

> *"I think it was the fact that I've just never been taught to fit in, and I also never have been taught to prioritize fitting in. I'd always been taught that values and being true to who you are as a person was much more important to be kind and to work hard and be respectful to people. Yeah, you know, to have a good attitude towards your work and that sort of thing and these things are not necessarily things that are at all rewarded by cliques or popular kids that become popular adults in work just like in school, which was the case at the bank. So not only did I not know how to fit in, I also had just been taught from an early age that like that's just not important. The thing was and still is, I guess, is that I would never just say ok and take it. I've always made it pretty clear that I don't care in the slightest what they think or have to say about me, my clothes or my way of life and I'm proud of myself for that. I definitely made life harder for myself but I'm still proud. I mean most of the time we didn't have to work together thankfully so it was just like on certain projects, and they would always be pretty childish. By that point, it wasn't just my experiences from homeschooling and the private school informing my responses, but I also had the life experience that kind of backed up my belief that their world of fitting in and being cool and being mean was really not legitimate. So, by then, I really just was like whatever, I'm not going to play by your rules anymore."*

Beth's rationale for why she thought this way is reflective of someone who is questioning the taken-for-granted ways of being, seeing, thinking, and behaving within a secondary field because of "not understanding as well as being misunderstood" (Hey, 2003, pg.326). She is demonstrating how movement across fields can be a painful process involving emotional implications for those who experience it (Reay, 2015). While Beth has already demonstrated the tendency to reject the alternative

dispositions she had been encountering, as being not for the likes of her (Bourdieu, 1990), as well as questioning the rules of the game present within the bank, it became increasingly apparent when she expressed quitting the bank and her reasons for this:

"I started to question how well it matched with my values, you know, I started asking questions like what is the financial industry really trying to achieve? What role does it play in financing climate change? How do these things fit together with the things that I care about deeply? Also, there was this pressure for career advancement and progression, and I was like I just like writing code and I don't want to be a manager like you. I don't want that for myself because I'm not like you. They were kind of like, what? Are you joking right now? And obviously they didn't understand so I was just like I'm leaving I'm going to do my PhD. I felt OK at that point with not fitting in because I realised that this isn't my world and I don't want it to be, so I'm going back to my world by going to grad school."

After having experienced this continued sense of *'not fitting in'* regardless of what job or industry Beth entered because of an ongoing cleft in her habitus, she seemingly appeared to engage in the process of repositioning her habitus within the field of employment by moving to a workplace that she thought would match her dispositions better. In moving to academia, Beth had assumed that she would potentially find her place without feeling *'out of place'* and like she needs to constantly defend who she is and her personal experiences of being home educated to her peers and managers. It was clear from her interview that she had a strong sense of self that was tied to her homeschooling, which meant she was displaying an evident *re-conformed habitus* throughout her several experiences of work to date. It was also clear, from how passionately Beth discussed her experiences of being a Graduate Teaching Assistant while studying for her PhD, that the move back to graduate-level education had been a success so far because of thoroughly having *'enjoyed working with the students'* and *'really lik[ing] the balance between teaching and research'*. This indicated that unlike some of her previous experiences of work that this time she might have found a place in which she finally felt at home somewhat within the field of employment (Hey, 2003).

6.3 Positions of Destabilisation: *'There is a sense of not knowing who to be'*

The previous section focused on positions of *dislocation* which meant that the home educated respondents demonstrated not being able to exist at all in two fields at once. This meant that respondents such as Harry, Aurora and Beth were often interpreted to have re-confirmed their originary habitus through rejecting the prevailing norms and dispositions of their respective sub-fields of employment. This next section focuses on positions of *destabilisation* which is different from *dislocation* because *destabilisation* means to exist in both fields at once despite the likely implications of having to internalise conflict and division. In this section, I will draw out the complexities in the respondents' narrations of how they view their senses of self and positionality within their social world during their experiences of work. In particular, I want to explore their relationship to home education and the field of work, but also their relationship with other people (notably, Betty and Tom) in their experiences of work. This is to highlight the internal conflict that is prevalent amongst several participants when they are faced with having to exist in two social fields simultaneously. This conflict appeared to manifest in certain jobs and under certain conditions within respondents' respective jobs and was mostly related to the other people present during their personal experiences.

6.3.1 Betty's Story

Betty is a 26-year-old autistic person who was previously home educated. Betty's journey with her education trajectory was complex in that she underwent a couple of different periods of home education because of family relocations as well as finding herself to be misaligned with the culture and practices of school. It is, therefore, hard to put a boundary around which ages and point in time these periods took place especially because Betty experienced blackouts to cope with what had been happening to her:

> *"When I was 5, we moved to Qatar, and I remember not particularly well my early years in school, but I did okay academically. But then, when I had to make the shift to upper school, it got more complicated, and I think this, in retrospect, had a lot to do with the autism because the social interactions were particularly difficult. Previously, I'd just*

sort of been able to get by, but in upper school, it became a bit of a hurdle. I started to get bullied by the girls in the class, and I was being excluded a lot. They would be talking a lot about me and then going quiet once I got near, but I honestly don't remember a lot of that period though. I developed school refusal, and apart from a few tiny pockets of this and that here and there, I largely don't remember or just completely blocked it out. Then eventually, my mum decided that it was easier for me to be out of school. She did her research about home education and things and decided that was the better way for me to move forward. Also, around this time, my sleeping schedule completely changed. I was very much like awake at night and sleeping during the day, which again is very much the same now. So obviously, that impacts quite a lot, not only on education at the time and things like that, but also when it comes to work. So, we came back to England when I was 15 and sort of continued to be home-educated, but this pretty much meant I just spent a lot of time on the computer in my room. I was extremely isolated. Then, when I was 18, I had to go to work, so I said, okay, well, you should get a job now, Betty. So, I went to work for the local cinema."

Betty explained how when she made this transition into work for the first time, she did not really have any expectations of what work would be like. Interestingly, the reality Betty described was that *'the same kind of mindset and feelings as [she] had with school refusal came back'* to her surprise:

"I just felt like I couldn't cope with it. I somehow just forced myself through and managed to some extent. I think part of it was because management could move you into different areas and roles within the cinema team at the drop of a hat and so you never knew from one day to the next where they would put you. There was always this degree of uncertainty, but I was good at talking to the customers and I think that helped develop on a personal level. You know I do think my autism played a significant role in why I was experiencing work this way much like at school, but I am open to the theory that my home education must have played some sort of role in it as well. So, you

know, working there became familiar enough that I sort of knew I could deal with whatever was going to happen, even though it would not necessarily be something I would know before. So, it became a comfortable enough space for me to operate in although I wouldn't say it was super comfortable."

Following this initial experience of work, in which Betty seemingly experienced haunting residues from her past experiences of school refusal, causing her to experience a 'social haunting' (Gordon, 2011), Betty left this position partially because of the issues related to feelings of *'being back in the school environment when I was in the cinema because you would not know from one day to the next what you would be doing in school and I couldn't cope with it there either'* but also after a serious incident involving another colleague occurred (see previous chapter on the rules of the game). It is important to note how Betty's original experience of school refusal was influenced by her autism because she explained how her autism makes integration into social systems like school difficult, as well as just being in certain environments. Betty further explained how part of why she wanted to change her job was because she wanted to explore what other jobs had to offer by way of experiences. She self-reported that this was because she was unsure if the job, she was in was just an unfortunate bad experience or if the negative experience had been shaped by her autism or home education. Betty therefore decided to accept a new position working for Woolworths:

"I worked for Woolworths Head office which was a strict nine to five job and not flexible in the slightest. It didn't matter how early I went to bed like even if I went at 8pm I was still exhausted all the time. This is the thing that makes me think that it's just because that's not my rhythm. I can't just get used to it because it's not actually my rhythm. I also didn't feel like I fit socially either because I've always felt like I'm quite intelligent and intellectual, so I wanted to talk about things that my colleagues didn't want to. They just wanted to talk about some dumb stuff and things like where they would get drunk on the weekend. Yeah, so that was a stressful job. It wasn't fun at all. It was

> *really hard to fit in and even now I feel like I've never really felt like I*
> *fit in in work really, if I'm honest."*

As Betty alluded to, she has felt like a continued outsider (Lehmann, 2013) not being able to 'fit' with the environment and routines despite having changed job, which for her meant she could not seem to reconfigure her habitus to be a 'fish in water' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) when in employment settings. Betty seemed to be consciously aware of this cleft noting how *'I can't be who I am at home when I've been in these workplaces because what the workplaces places want is not who I am'* demonstrating her strong and accepted sense of feeling as though she is located in two incompatible places at once (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016). It is clear from Betty's narrative that this sense of duality in her habitus continued when she tried a further job at a different organisation:

> *"While doing my MA I started working for Home Bargains to try to get*
> *some extra money and that was just terrible. Like, my mental health*
> *plummeted like within a couple of weeks. It was just, you know, I just*
> *couldn't get anything done outside of the job. I had really short shifts,*
> *but they were like, every day, it was only part-time, but it was a shift*
> *every day and I would be exhausted. After I did even just like three*
> *hours that was enough. I think I lost it mentally and physically, like,*
> *you know, like, two or three months after starting and that was it. I*
> *couldn't cope with it anymore."*

Betty's experience at Home Bargains depicts her having reached a final point with the 'unresolvable contradiction' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) that she has been feeling since starting work for the first time at the cinema. Despite having demonstrated being able to exist in some physical and mental capacity in multiple fields at once (Stahl, 2013), such as when she worked for the cinema, maintaining her job despite issues in her personal life spilling over into her working life, her subsequent experiences at Woolworths and Home Bargains have demonstrated a painful irreconcilable process of trying to reclaim the world she knew outside of work prior to entering the field of employment when she was home educated, suggesting her position was changing towards *dislocation* rather than *destabilisation*. The characteristics conveyed in the

latter experiences are therefore more in line with a person who is experiencing a *re-confirmation* of their originary habitus (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016) in which they reject the secondary fields dispositions and structures. Betty cannot be solely classified as having a *re-confirmed habitus* because despite having characteristics that are congruent with this position, they are also congruent with people who are experiencing a *destabilised habitus,* as noted earlier in Betty's story. This was reflected in how Betty went on to find a job in which she was able to become a 'fish in water' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) operating with ease because the environment was aligned with her originary field:

> *"A friend of mine, Maria, decided to start up a company and invited me in at the ground level of what was a startup. So, it was basically a job search and resume writing service. I was basically a manager of like managing the marketing and operations and overseeing the people that we hired to help with job searches for the clients we had. Um and that really a good experience. It was going great except we ran into a blip around summertime when everyone like didn't want a resume done or anything because everyone stopped searching. So, by Christmas when it started to slow down a bit again it put her in too much of a deficit and she had to close the company which was a real shame. But since that time, I've been freelancing through LinkedIn as a resume writer and earning a lot doing that because its pretty good. It sort of averages out about 70 quid an hour because I do them really fast. So only takes me about an hour and a half or two hours to do one. So that's been really lucrative. It's really good as well because I'm in charge of my own time and it's not front facing its digital. I can you know, like I said, I can operate to my own schedule and not have to deal with the exhaustion or social side of work like was the case at my previous jobs."*

What is interesting here is how the social connection (Bourdieu, 1986) of Betty's friend offering her a position enabled Betty to find a form of work that she could cope with and make a success out of personally and financially because of its structures of being

on a computer in her bedroom communicating digitally were already familiar and comfortable to her. She now had a sense of 'Who in the world am I?' (Carroll, 1865) that generated a less painful position for her minimising the psychosocial implications of her cleft habitus. This demonstrates a form of oscillation in Betty's narrative because in gaining this new job opportunity she is describing a sense of self that is more in alignment with this sub-field of employment than she experienced in other ones up until this point. This means that for Betty is resonating more with a re-confirmed habitus prevalent in positions of *dislocation* because she is being reminded of what dispositions and structures had been conducive to her in the past when her habitus had originally developed.

In the latter stages of her interview, Betty discussed how despite enjoying her resume writing business she had recently joined a PhD course with the ambition of potentially working in academia after completion. Her motivations were to research into mental illness within the film and television industry which was a topic close to her heart from having experienced mental illness herself. It was unknown at the time of interview whether Betty continued to feel like a 'fish in water' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) or rather an outsider because of the social haunting of school refusal that was present in her previous employment experience. This was because Betty was not sure herself but had considered what might happen during this experience:

> *"So yeah, with the PhD, there's been a total difference just in the way that I approach my own mental health. Like I was falling apart a bit by Christmas last year and, you know, I just sort of took a three month break and got support from the student support services and stuff and they're like really good. I still become overwhelmed if I'm not in control, so yeah, I think that's the biggest hurdle for me because when you're doing a PhD it's kind of all just up in the air really. Everything must come out of you and how do you make the ideas come and all this kind of stuff. I think that's just what the struggle is going to be for me because I need more order than that, but at the same time I kind of do rebel a bit against order at work because I feel like there's still certain elements of school refusal that is still a part of my personality. So, if something is too regimented, I can't take that either. Yeah, it's*

just kind of like I need the proper balance, and I need to just feel that I'm in control. I guess even if it is kind of all up in the air, it's still your interests you are following, so I cope by focusing on the media side like, "oh this is a new show how is mental illness represented in that" and that's how I can kind of approach it."

This shows how Betty still occupies a position of *destabilisation* (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016) but opts to immerse herself more fully in workplaces that are more in alignment with the structures and dispositions familiar to her from her originary field (Abrahams and Ingram, 2013). The role of her autism cannot be ignored or downplayed because as Betty has made apparent throughout the interview she sees her autism, school refusal and experience of home education as being three significant and intertwined elements in shaping how she has experienced employment. This is similar to Aurora's experience in that there are more factors than just a person's experience of home education that significantly impacts on their experiences of employment but at least with the element of school this is usually intertwined with why a person was home educated in the first place or at the very least left school.

6.3.2 Tom's Story

Tom is a 56-year-old previously home educated person who was unemployed at the time of interview due to his limited capability for work. He had been home educated for a two-year period during secondary school. Tom had previously held positions as a Warehouse Operative, Agricultural Worker, Landscape Gardener, and Cleansing Operative. Tom also embodies an unconventional habitus marked with a strong tendency to express a self-proclaimed *'anti-establishment attitude'* towards formal workplaces equating them with the game of school. He was the only participant to have experienced formal education in both school and a young offender's institution. Tom had described how he made the decision to take himself out of school because *'[he] didn't fit with school and its practices'* but also because he *'didn't fit with the other people and how they saw the world'*:

"I remember my mum taking me on the first day of infant school and saying to me "Go on Tom, go and sit over there next to your best friend Robert" who I'd never met before in my life, so really, how was

he my best friend? I do remember questioning everything about school since that first day. I hated being there. I hated the classrooms and how unconducive to learning the environment was. I hated the teachers; they treated people like me like shit because of my postcode, and because I was obviously different than the rest of the kids because I questioned them and the system."

As can be interpreted from this quote, Tom failed to submit to the taken-for-granted assumptions with which school children are expected to internalise such as respecting the teachers' authority, participating in classroom activities and socialisation practices (Bourdieu, 1984, 2000; Grenfell, 2011). Through Tom's narration of his experiences of school, it was clear how Tom's disposition towards 'school' at an abstract level could be seen to reproduce throughout his experiences including, his experience of 'schooling' which took place while in the young offender's institute. This questioning of the game of school is argued to constitute the first time Tom experienced a cleft habitus (Bourdieu, 1999) with his sense of self appearing to be experiencing ambivalence because of a habitus misalignment between his originary habitus, as developed through the familial field until he turned 4, and the institutional habitus of school that he was expected to align with over the course of his formative years in education.

This early questioning of a game, and the taken-for-granted assumptions that govern them, has proved to be an important part of Tom's narrative because of its significance for how he later experienced and made sense of his experiences of work and employment. For one, Tom exemplified how he sought out work opportunities where the environment and people aligned with the dispositions held from his family field and self-education on the one hand, while trying to actively avoid work opportunities that reproduced the game of school and was governed by *'the same people as school'* on the other hand because of his *'awful'* experiences of the latter. Tom illustrated this when discussing working in office environments, and through his example of a betting office:

"I hated working in office settings with people around me all day long, making unnecessary noise, talking about small talk nonsense that I

don't want to engage in conversation about, and having my freedom stripped away from me for the time I was there was just like school all over again. For example, I worked in a betting office, and they wanted me to upsell to vulnerable customers knowing full well they would bite, and I just couldn't do that. I wouldn't have felt right doing that. It goes against everything I taught myself to stand for all those years ago. You know, everyone sets their own rules and regulations that they sort of use to govern themselves and this was one of them that went against mine. You know, in comparison to when I have worked outdoors, or working to my own rules and time as self-employed, or something along those lines, then the difference is like the size of the Pacific Ocean for me. If I had to deal with the first example, I gave of the office setting it would be enormously detrimental to my mental health and physical wellbeing, I just can't handle those kinds of environments. Outdoors though or being self-employed it's just me, it feels right, and it makes me feel relaxed and like I'm doing something worthwhile for myself."

Tom also acknowledged how the opposite is in effect when he has worked in self-employment or in outdoor settings because he felt who he was seemed to be in perfect alignment with these work environments when compared to the office settings. This is demonstrable of how Tom tried to incorporate the structuring forces of two different fields into his habitus at once but could not achieve successful integration (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016) causing his habitus to become *destabilised*. Tom was interpreted to be displaying oscillation between the person he was before entering the field of employment and the person he was needing to become within the localised games he found himself in within this field. As Ingram and Abrahams (2016) argued people experiencing destabilisation tend to possess two sets of dispositions that vie for dominance, but ultimately, they cannot be reconciled meaning the individual is left with an ongoing oscillation between two dispositions forcing them to internalise conflict and division, not being sure of who they are after the *destabilisation* occurred. These experiences of a cleft left Tom with an ambivalent sense of self conflicted by division (Bourdieu, 2000) leaving him with long-lasting dispositions that altered his future work

trajectories including opposition towards specific jobs such as in office settings. An illustration of this can be interpreted from the below quotation from Tom's interview:

> *"I honestly ran out of energy pretending to be someone I'm supposed to be because I can't be who I am because being who I am is not valued by society or the people in positions of authority in formal workplaces like at the betting office. Home education or self-education as I did is still a backward way of doing things according to the so called 'experts' in the Department of Education and the media. I know my daughter expressed feeling like she has an identity crisis as well when she went out into work after I'd home educated her. They, out there, just don't get it. To some extent, we have to play the role of schooled person if we want to get on in 'formal' work because that's how the game works right? And I have done that in previous jobs, but I am so over doing it now. If I go back into work, it will be working for myself and only myself because at least I value my self-education."*

Tom has demonstrated how despite his ability to juggle dispositions of two competing fields at once (Stahl, 2013), it was considerably mentally demanding for him, which meant he could not find a way to overcome his cleft habitus leaving him in a continued position of *destabilisation*. This evidently demonstrates further how Tom's habitus has typically experienced a position of destabilisation during multiple periods of his employment history. Tom had told me how he left the betting office after only 4 weeks because he could not pretend anymore to be someone that he was not because of the toll it would take on his mental and physical health. Tom made the conscious decision to immerse himself more fully in a variation of the game of employment by taking up opportunities in the field of self-employment, as to protect himself from any further psychosocial harm. It can be argued how Tom's experience supports arguments in existing literature such as Abrahams and Ingram's work arguing how people who experience habitus duality often become 'more fully immersed within one field, while distancing themselves from the other' (2013, pg.11) as a coping mechanism aimed at making a cleft experience less painful for them.

It is important to also highlight how Tom demonstrates moments of oscillation between positions. An example of this is when Tom discussed how he approached decision-making when it came to making choices regarding what type of work and where to work:

> "I feel like home education gave me the ability to be self-aware which has been a big part of the decisions I've made when it's come to jobs. I know what I enjoy and what I don't. I can sense when I'm not wanted somewhere and I'm not going to stay in a job if I sense this. It's why I left school to self-educate because I sensed I wasn't wanted because I thought about the world differently to my peers and teachers. It's not a case of I just can't be bothered to work either because I actually like work itself it's just that I'm aware of what's best for me at any one time. I think that came from having had that time out of formal education and the system because I was exploring who I was and being very reflective of that, while also being sceptical of the person school had tried to make me into. I was able to see the system for what it really was and how I could benefit most from it by being on the outside learning how to play it to my advantage."

It is evident how Tom is describing the disposition of reflexivity that is often found in people who occupy positions of *relocation* according to Ingram and Abrahams (2016). While Tom clearly occupied a position of *destabilisation* throughout many of his experiences of employment, he also displayed being able to view the game from a third space perspective (Bhabha, 1994; Ingram and Abrahams, 2016) providing him with the ability to make informed conscious decisions regarding what types of work and workplaces would be most conducive for his habitus. This ability could be argued to be seen as a privilege in Tom's opinion because it has made him self-aware and self-conscious of his habitus dispositions as well as having given him the confidence to pursue whatever end he felt was necessary to make him happy and satisfied in his working life. This ability has arguably developed in Tom from having had the opportunity to step outside of the game to gain an understanding of how the game worked and how he could play it to his advantage.

6.3.3 Arthur's Story

Arthur was a 30-year-old trainee Church of England Vicar at the time of interview. He was home educated for 4 years after experiencing several issues in school such as developing anxiety, being unhappy with the environment, and not fitting in with the other children. What was interesting about Arthur's background is despite feeling that home education was the best option for him describing the opportunity as *'a weight being lifted from him'* because of feeling a complete *'discord'* with the school environment, he was not entirely positive of the experience of home education he went on to have having cited how he felt it was '*isolating at times'* and *'not the most productive way to spend 4 years'* because he did not get the opportunity to get formative qualifications that most of his peers in school did. Arthur admitted how he was unsure what this meant for him at the time other than being *'quite concerned about whether there was any possibility of me ever getting a job with being home educated and having no qualifications'.*

To alleviate this concern Arthur approached a college when he was 17 to see if he could enrol for an early years education diploma course given his home educated background:

> *"They said I could go onto the course but at a pre-entry level you know like pre-GCSE, they said they would need to do a pre-entry test with me, and they would grade me at that level. So, I did that and got level 3 and that was A level equivalent at that time, so they were quite happy for me to go straight on. I think this was really a lifeline for me thankfully because I did a two-year diploma in childcare education which was a college-based course and a lot of childcare courses are typically you work four days a week, and then you go to college one day, mine was the other way around. So, mine was I was at college three days a week and then I went and worked for two days, but it wasn't paid. It was kind of the work experiences I got through doing this that helped to reassure me I could get a job in the future. Through the course I worked in nurseries and schools from everything from children aged three months, up to age eight. So, it was kind of quite a*

broad thing, and I really enjoyed that. I did quite well kind of educationally as well, I came out with a good pass."

After college Arthur went on to apply for a teaching assistant post in a local primary school. He had explained how in the interview the deputy head expressed how they had no concerns regarding his home educated background and the fact he had been given a place at college and successfully completed his diploma to a good standard was good enough for them. This illustrates how Arthur was able to transform his trajectory from feeling like gaining a job was 'unthinkable' (Bourdieu, 1990) for him to the field of education providing him with the required institutionalised capital that could be exchanged for a position within the primary school (Bourdieu, 1986).

Arthur expanded on how he experienced working in the primary school by telling me the things he enjoyed the most about working there:

> *"I think I just enjoyed working with young children. I think there's a sort of natural compassion and the kindness that I have that I was keen to show. Also, because I'm good at kind of being with people and children and talking to them and helping them more so than I am doing lots of other things. I think this was definitely something home education instilled in me that I don't think schooled people get. So, yeah, I really enjoyed my experience working in early years education."*

Arthur enjoyed his role working in primary schools that he continued for 7 years across two different primary schools before deciding he wanted to make a career change to become a trainee Church of England Vicar. Arthur explained how he had decided to follow his disposition for helping people who like him might be perceived as different as well as his faith. He had attributed these dispositions to the experiences he had of volunteering in his local church while being home educated, *'I used to volunteer at the church doing some admin for them like answering the phones and doing some photocopying etc one or two mornings a week. I really enjoyed it and it felt like the experience gave me a really good grounding in the real world. It was the best thing to*

come out of home education'. This demonstrates the importance of dispositions developed during our formative years of education because for many of the respondents there was a clear linking of their experiences during their home education and what they chose to do for their careers. It could be argued that this is also the case for people who have been to school because like the respondents their dispositions from their educational experiences can be long-lasting and enduring over the course of their lives (Bourdieu, 1990).

The first thing Arthur reflected on regarding the career transition was the social relations that took place during his interview for the trainee role:

> *"The selection process to be given the chance to come to train to be a vicar is really, really rigorous and really complicated and so the Church of England basically interviews you for two years. They get lots of different people to interview you within those two years as well. So, you meet with three different people who each interview you four times and it's not a formal interview, but it is classed as an interview. The whole time they are writing down the things you say and they're kind of forming an opinion from the things you say on whether you are a suitable person to train or have the potential to be a suitable person. So obviously, my home education came up a lot in that I remember when I went to meet the person who was positioned to kind of focus on the educational aspects of training, they were very negative about home education. They told me they didn't think I would be able to train to be a vicar because they just thought I wasn't suitable for it at all based on my home educated background and to kind of overcome that, the solution was for me to go and take a 10-week course independently to prove my worth. I remember not having a clue what I was doing. I had no idea how to write essays. I don't know how on earth I got through that, I don't know but I did, so that's good."*

What this demonstrates empirically, is how unlike Arthur's experience of being interviewed for a teaching assistant position in the primary school in which his institutionalized cultural capital from college-level education appeared to be valued,

he had the opposite experience when interviewing with the Church of England. In referring back to the analogy used from Alice in Wonderland in the theoretical framework, Arthur's experience of the interviewing vicar is similar to how the caterpillar in wonderland could not fathom the practical sense that Alice possessed from her own personal experiences in her field of origin because it was not a product of her field of origin but of its own (Carroll, 1865).

Arthur also expressed how he *'really got on well with several members of staff'* meaning he did not have much issue with his colleagues despite the rough start in the interview with one of the members of staff. However, he tended to concentrate on the aspects of the job that he did not like:

> *"It's been interesting because there are lots of times where I have to go and do stuff that I don't want to do. Like from the social side, you know, there'll be a, I don't know, like something just horrendous that you just totally end up having to do that you don't want to go but you end up deciding how you have to go. If it was 15 years ago, I would have hidden away from that and like now I have to kind of almost think, well, this is part of my job, I have to do it. I'd much rather take a funeral than attend the Christmas parties. I have always tried to come up with an excuse for the Christmas parties and they aren't usually good ones [laughs]."*

This part of Arthur's narrative stood out for its demonstrable evidence of a person who is evidently *destabilised* by their *habitus-field* relationship because, through Arthur revealing how he internalises division when deciding which aspects of the social side of the job he is going to participate in, it becomes evident that he is suffering from psychosocial implications that arise when a person's habitus is *destabilised* by field experiences (Reay, 2015). This further showed how, for Arthur, he could be likened to the working-class students studied by Lehmann (2013), Reay et al (2009), and Abrahams and Ingram (2013) in that he showed capability in being able to navigate two completely different social worlds within his job successfully and even being seen to develop a sense of 'loyalty' (Reay et al, 2009) to the ones he did not necessarily

want to participate in, rationalising that this was a part of his job that he must at least be seen to be participating in the activities that he felt misaligned with on a personal level.

Towards the end of the interview, I asked Arthur what he felt had impacted the most on these experiences of work he had discussed with me:

"I do feel like my home education has impacted what I do for work probably the most. I think it's definitely impacted the path I've chosen in terms of going to college to do this and working in early years education. I never would have if I'd have gone to school and got even some half decent qualifications. I wouldn't have done the volunteer work I'd done. It's massively impacted my life and work. I think I probably would have still ended up trying to be a vicar I like to think. I think that probably would have been the case with school or not, but I know it's a very presumptuous thing to say. But I think I will be a better vicar because I hadn't been to school. It's like you know if when you have suffered bereavement you can empathise with those people who also have because empathy is not taught in school, but I was taught empathy while being home educated. Although there was a lot of negatives to overcome, you come to understand a bit more about mental health issues about feeling excluded for being on the margins of society and in my mind that is what the church is for. The church is there for those people who feel like they don't fit anywhere else and that's what I'd like to do in my ministry is to kind of help those people who don't fit because that's the kind of person I am. So, yeah, it has been a massive impact on the work I do, and I don't think I'd want to change that either."

In linking back with the previous chapter's theme on *Significance of Home Education*, Arthur demonstrates how significant he feels his home education has been for not only how he has experienced work and employment, but also for his sense of self and sense of his position within the world. He had a clear sense of who he was and the

trajectory that he was going to continue to pursue over the coming years expressing the hope that he would soon be placed in his own parish. This meant that on close of the interview there was a sense that Arthur still experienced a cleft habitus sometimes in his role as Vicar, but it did not hold him captive to strong feelings of ambivalence and conflict because he had internalised several of the structures and dispositions of this new field seeing it as a place in which he does 'fit'. This would suggest that Arthur could be viewed as having reconciled the structuring forces and dispositions meaning he is likely moving towards a position of *relocation* rather than being *destabilised* as he had demonstrated at the beginning of his employment trajectory.

6.4 Positions of Relocation: *'There is privilege in not fitting'*

The previous sections of this chapter have explored how for the alternatively educated participants of this research they have not only been interpreted to have experienced a cleft habitus because of a perceived mismatch between their originary home educated habitus and their chosen sub-field of employment, but have also described frequently throughout the interviews of how these experiences have mostly been felt negatively, creating a sense of ambivalence in their identities, much like Bourdieu had experienced. This final section therefore considers how there was evidence in the participants narratives of moments that could be categorized as neither a position of *destabilisation* or *dislocation* for their habitus. These moments are most reflective of reconciliation in which the participants experienced being neither a 'fish in water' or a 'fish out of water' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1977) but rather they could successfully navigate both worlds with little to no ambivalence being felt.

6.4.1 Lynda's Story

Lynda was a 36-year-old Civil Service Lawyer for the Crown Prosecution Service but had just been appointed as a Deputy District Judge prior to interview. She had been home educated for 3 years during secondary school *'mainly because the school didn't academically challenge me enough'* so she told her parents she wanted to be home educated to challenge herself academically. When it came to Lynda's previous employment, she did detail having worked in the fast-food industry for a few months and had also been a Chef at an airport but did not elaborate on how she experienced these jobs and made no reference to her experiences of school or home education. Lynda's interview was therefore different in many respects to the other participants,

as despite being forthcoming regarding her experiences of work and home education, she tended to focus on her career in Law. She specifically discussed in considerable depth how she used her experiences of home education on multiple occasions to gain an advantage in entering and progressing in this field. For example, expressing how when initially breaking into the industry she tended to bring her home education up *'as a showing off type thing, you know, like oh look at me aren't I brilliant, I'm not like everyone else because I was home educated. I work off my own esteem, and I'm used to self-directive work type thing'.* Lynda was evidently self-conscious of her position as a home educated person but also of how she could exploit her experiences to *'play the game'* within the field of Law to her advantage:

> *"It really was within the home education and getting to view the system from the outside and being told like by my parents how you just needed to jump through these hoops to get to x. I probably learned more about the system from the outside. I think if I hadn't been home educated, I wouldn't be as confident using it to my advantage or know how to play it the same as I do. I think I would have felt more a natural part of it and not really questioned anything but would have just played my part and gone along with it. I think when you are in the system and you are in it every day, you're taught to follow the rules, so you do, you don't question them. Whereas, when you are outside of it you can look at it and go well those are the rules but I want to get to point x so what is the fastest way to get to that point there rather than just doing the norm and following the rules. So, it has always been the case that I knew how the system worked and I knew how to play to my advantage I also have been very aware of how I can fit into it in a way that works for me, and I can use whatever parts of it that is available to me to advance and exploit."*

This empirical example from Lynda was exemplary of depicting how a person can move with considerable ease across fields being able to draw on both sets of dispositions depending on what field she was in (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016). This meant that Lynda was characteristic of occupying a position of *relocation* in which she

could reconcile her habitus without feeling considerable pain. This experience of being *'outside of the system'* also depicted was arguably a significant event for Lynda's future work experiences because from being able to evaluate *'the system'* as an outsider she was able to consciously strategize about how to get the best out of it for her personal circumstances and aspirations. As Lynda stressed, having had *'the privilege of being an outsider'* meant she was able to create her "own structures of authority" (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016, pg.155), as to not only fit herself into the system but to exploit its existing structures to progress within her area of it, for example:

> *"From an employment perspective, I've just been appointed as a Deputy District Judge but that's quite unusual for someone under 40 to get appointed and while they are getting better with women it's still typically rare for a woman to also get appointed and when you consider I didn't go to a red brick university or boarding school either I'm definitely ticking some sort of diversity box for sure [laughs]. My home education was very useful in this diversity sense because it does make you stand out from the crowd and certainly for me it instilled a lot of confidence in me enabling me to put my mind to whatever I wanted to do. As I said earlier, being on the outside before made being on the inside now easier because I knew how to play the system. So, I do think my home education definitely played a massive role in getting appointed because it greatly shaped how I view myself and therefore shaped how I present myself to the world."*

There is a clear sense of Lynda using existing structures of inequality through diversity policies to exploit her background as a white woman, under the age of 40, married with children, and home educated to get the position she wanted. This shows how Lynda was resisting the position that the system would naturally have placed her in because of it "privileging the cultural reproduction of the dominant class" (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016, pg.155), which as Lynda suggests is the opposite to what she is within the field of Law. Also noteworthy is how Lynda talked about her home education

having greatly shaped how she presented herself to the world showing how she had adequate levels of embodied cultural capital from her home education (Garrett, 2015).

Despite Lynda having only reported experiencing a cleft habitus as a positive and advantageous position until this point in the interview, she did later reflect on how she had felt ambivalence and conflict in the workplace when it came to her desire to be a mother in an industry that did not value women as mothers, nor make returning from career breaks easy:

> *"When I first started out as a practicing lawyer, I was in private practice as a criminal lawyer and private practice is really not very family friendly. I was in my late 20s, in a long-term relationship and knew I would want to have children in the not-so-distant future, so I decided to leave private practice and go into the civil service in working for the Crown Prosecution Service. They have good pay, they have good flexible working hours, and are very supportive of part-time staff and very friendly. I switched jobs before having children knowing that that is something I wanted to do err yeah. I would say for me having children and the desire to have them in the first place massively impacted on my career and what I chose to do with it. Having four lots of maternity leave definitely puts the breaks on your career uhm entirely (laughs). It's very very difficult to progress in a job when you are having career breaks and the most common one of course is maternity. Even the job I'm in is massively supportive and I get very good maternity pay and days for checking in with me. I can take up to five years if I want to and still remain in the same job upon my return, so it is really good like that in this job. Although even with all of that in place because you're not there day to day your face isn't seen so your work isn't seen because you're not there you just can't progress really. For example, I'd just been on a period of maternity leave and got pregnant pretty much straight away when I came back, but when I had come back, I was put into a new team and the team was very much aware I was leaving again to have another baby. There were quite a few childless career-oriented people in that team and while they didn't*

explicitly say anything to me, I could tell they disapproved of me having so many children and having so much time off related to having children. Uhm yeah so although the current workplace is very supportive and family friendly, individuals don't necessarily share the same attitude so that was a very unpleasant year for me in that team."

After detailing this experience, Lynda was vocal in how she saw the *'significance'* of being a mother as manifesting *'differently'* to how it had with her home education. With latter the significance manifested as an advantage in what she did for work and how she operated within the system to exploit it to get what she wanted from it. With the former, the significance manifested as a detriment to her progression and everyday experiences of working with colleagues within the job causing conflict between who she was in work and who she was in her familial field outside of work. This is interesting because Lynda is therefore making the argument how being a mother held her back more than her home education did when it came to 'fitting' into a workplace and trying to progress within it causing a negative experience of a cleft. This contradicts what other participants have expressed because the majority felt home education was a significant event that caused a negative experience of a cleft meaning they could not be a part of the system with ease, when for Lynda she was *'fine being part of the system' even opting to go into the civil service which 'doesn't really get any more bureaucratic than that [laughs]'*. This highlights how there is difference in how people who are home educated make sense of their experience of the phenomenon regarding its significance or not in shaping their experiences of secondary fields such as employment.

6.4.2 David's Story

David is a 37-year-old Program Analyst for a Government Agency, who had been home educated for the entirety of his childhood education. After being home educated, he went on to complete university-level education by undertaking an undergraduate degree in History and a doctorate degree in Law. The first thing that David drew attention to was how he found the initial transition to university and work difficult because *'I sort of had to start structuring my life very differently in terms of deadlines and schedules, which was difficult to adjust to after having a pretty freeform education'*.

David also reported having initial difficulties with *'reading group dynamics and social situations'* because he had *'no sort of understanding like what's appropriate to talk about with different sets of people'* making him feel like a *'social outcast in the beginning'* of his working life.

David, like Lynda, displayed a heightened sense of feeling as though his home education, and the experiences it had afforded him, had given him an *'advantage'* in the working world especially when it came to *'being a self-starter, self-motivated, and knowing how to network to progress his career'*.

David's first experience of work that he discussed was a research assistant internship obtained through the Law department while doing his doctorate degree within the same department. This internship was a significant event in David's employment history because it proved fundamental to obtaining a later position because the capital accrued from the internship was valued and exchangeable in the field of employment (Bourdieu, 1986) that he wanted to move into for a long-term career. David explained this as well as how his career has played out to date:

> *"After university I joined the government. First, I joined the Home Office. It was somewhat random like I joined in part because I had experience in the field of security through the research I had been doing at the internship and it ended up being an amazing experience. I got the job through like the official portal for hiring. After that I went to a different department and I changed duties and positions a couple of times within the original department within the Home Office and that was sort of done through internal networking, like I took on developmental projects and like short term rotations and so on. Then because I had met people and impressed them, the way I think most people get promotions, I got a promotion. So that was about 3 years and then this year I left to start at my current department. So, I think the methods I used are similar to what anyone else in my position would have done like if you know somebody or if you have a network then great. If not, you just apply through the portal and general job postings. I don't think being homeschooled really impacted that much because the network's I was using were, you know, the same kinds*

that anyone else who had gone to university would have used, you know, like alumni networks. I do think my career planning was made easier because I always have kind of been someone who always had a well-defined idea where I wanted to go. So, I don't think being homeschooled changed my trajectory as much as it might have for somebody who had less certainty."

What is interesting is how David conveys a strong sense of being conscious of how he had used social networks to advance his career that were no different to the ones his schooled peers would have used such as an alumni network, which meant in David's experience his home education was not a significant enabler in his career progression. He also draws out how he had decided on what area of employment to go into irrespective of his home education. These are important differences to highlight because as Tom's story has shown other previously home educated people feel their home education has significantly shaped their decision of what to do for a career. With Lynda, she demonstrated how she felt she progressed within her career because of her home education whereas for David he is self-conscious that his home education was not significant in this aspect of his employment. However, David seemingly demonstrated a contradiction, because despite his claims above, that his home education had not been a significant enabler in his career progression, the below quote suggests that David had a significant advantage in his career and how it progressed because he was home educated:

"I think generally in the working world, several characteristics that at least for me, I have associated with my professional success, come at least partially from homeschooling. I have found that like, being able to self-direct, not just goal setting within careers, but like, okay, I have this job, what's the most important things to be doing overall on any particular day? Those are things that I find easier to do because I have the homeschooling experience and being very self-directed. I have gotten feedback from managers about a lot of entry level employees where it's like, they just kind of sit and wait for their superior to tell them what to do. Like it was easy for me early on to figure out what

my bosses needed was me to know what they needed before they needed it. So, like, I think this is actually something I give a lot of thought to, like, just in general. I think there's a particular mindset that I think homeschooling helped me achieve that I don't think people who have been school educated get to achieve. I mean, yeah, I'm going off anecdotal evidence, but whenever I talk to colleagues or supervisors they always say like, "I just wish like they understood like you do David" and they say this over and over again. The complaint is that entry level employees, you know coming straight from school, just don't get it. Like, I've had the thesis for a long time now that being homeschooled was an advantage in the working world."

David further explained how he felt like people who had been to school *'are the sheltered ones only experiencing their peers and what life is like in the box of school as opposed to being immersed in the real adult world that is always there, but they just don't tap into it the same as homeschoolers do'*. This view of the working world and of his peers is congruent with Ingram and Abrahams (2016) argument of how people who have been outside of mainstream often see the world with different eyes to those who have only ever known the privilege of that world.

A further aspect of work that David thought might be contributed to his homeschooling experience and particularly, the mindset he talked about achieving through this experience, was how he finds fulfillment in his life:

"I have this theory that it's possible that maybe I find more over fulfillment because I was homeschooled, if only because there's a great quote I heard once from someone who said, "there's no such thing as work life balance, there's just life and work as a part of life" and I think because when you are educated at home, there's not a barrier between your academic life and your home life at all, and so maybe, and I speculate it's possible that it's easier for me to kind of like view my life as like one picture and like, adjust things to be happier. For example, when I have had stints of work that weren't particularly fulfilling, I've done more volunteer work outside of my job.

It's possible that thought occurred to me in part because I'm treating my life and its level of fulfillment as one overall thing and that mindset comes more easily to a homeschooler, but I definitely know other people who think like that who are not homeschoolers, so I'm not saying only homeschoolers feel this way or have this ability, but I do think they have more of it or are more likely to think this way and be reflexive of how they find fulfillment."

David's ability to be reflexive in all aspects of his life has been mostly unmatched in the other narratives except for Dexter. For David, as shown in the above quote, reflexivity has allowed him to reconcile two worlds (his home life) and (his working life) in terms of fulfillment and seeing the two as intertwined and not being easily separated from the other. This is also arguably the situation for his sense of self as well because throughout the earlier quotes he is not always aligning with either field but rather describing being able to evaluate the different fields he is passing through and existing in from the vantage point of an entirely new space, which has been referred to in the literature as a 'third space' (Bhabha, 1994; Ingram and Abrahams, 2016). For example, as outlined in the theoretical framework, Ingram and Abrahams (2016) argued how a person who becomes positioned in a third space is capable of navigating multiple fields with ease, drawing on different sets of dispositions depending on what field they are in. They create their own structures of authority that they hold themselves accountable to, which means they can be both a 'fish in water' and a 'fish out of water' to quote Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992). David demonstrated this ability when he felt like a 'fish out of water' during periods of less fulfilling work but through creating his own structures of authority he sought out fulfillment in becoming a volunteer outside of the field of employment which he came across as feeling like a 'fish in water' when engaged in. These two distinct field experiences also would have required David to draw on different sets of dispositions (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016), which David never once expressed feeling like he could not manage or reconcile because he was self-conscious of this ability he had and was on record linking it to his home education, noting how:

"I think I have an easier time understanding and seeing things through different perspectives because I had more opportunities for stillness and quiet and being comfortable inside my own head as a kid because I was homeschooled. So, I would argue that probably most varieties of homeschooling are going to bring an advantage in terms of instilling mindfulness and reflection. So, you're changing the knowledge out in the world, but you're also changing yourself at the same time. I would argue we are better because we recognize this more, I think, because we're so used to learning it helps us to be more tuned into what's happening to use and be reflective of it. I'm evaluating it in my head, I'm always in my head. So, it's like you're having a conversation with yourself and you're like, "oh, well, I reacted a bit differently to that today. I wonder why that was and you know you're constantly evaluating yourself and reflecting on why you are behaving or thinking how you are but in a way that is advantageous and positive."

These words clearly indicate that for David his homeschooling has not created a painful cleft habitus that meant he could not reconcile his habitus when moving into the secondary field of employment. Instead, David has depicted a bigger picture congruent with Bourdieu's critics (Mills, 2008; Reay, 2015; Jenkins, 2002) how a cleft habitus can be a positive framing of a habitus interruption in which something new can be created (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016). For David, his world remains one in which he can intervene through reflexive thought and action in his destiny, rather than a world in which things happen to him unable to be changed or reflected upon.

6.4.3 Lily's Story

A further participant, Lily, was a 33-year-old Postdoctoral Researcher in Health Sciences, who had been home educated for two years because of experiencing bullying and social class issues in her local comprehensive school. This experience was a significant event in Lily's life because it constituted the first time, she had felt a cleft habitus when strongly sensing how her originary habitus did not fit with the habitus of the comprehensive school like how Ingram's (2011) working class boys clashed

with their local Grammar School, which led to her removing herself from the school. At this point, Lily was strongly occupying a position of *destabilization* in that she needed to re-confirm her habitus to be able to complete her formative educational years.

What this early experience of a cleft provided Lily with was a strong sense of reflexivity and self-awareness from having tried to make sense of why she did not seemingly 'fit' with her peers and the culture of her local comprehensive school. These dispositions of being self-aware and reflexive are also something which Lily saw as having been heightened by her home education and which have also carried through into her working life:

> *"I mean, home education definitely will have shapes my experience of work both in terms of getting on with things myself and being largely self-structured. So, the way I learned to work when I was home educated or like what that emphasized to me, I would say has carried through into work. And then, I guess it has made me just yeah, a bit more intuitive and reflective. Like I had to make choices for myself, so learned how to constructively do that from an early age. Like I would think carefully about what I wanted to do and why I didn't want to do certain things in certain environments, which remains true when selecting work and getting on in work. So, I guess I just got into a pattern of thinking about those things that have stuck with me and have influenced my life. It has probably made me like much more socially aware."*

This is significant in that Lily is self-conscious of the exact ways in which her home education has shaped her experiences of work most evident in her disposition towards how she approaches her work in terms of self-structuring and being adept at making decisions without needing to be advised. This was not the only aspect of her home education that Lily saw as having shaped her experiences of work. She detailed how she can *'game the system'* when it comes to the field of employment from having been positioned *'outside of the system'* during her education:

"I think the way that our family approached home education was more about gaming the system to get good jobs at the end. I think because in home education there is that degree of freedom and you've sort of been outside of the system then you see it for what it is. I do think there's a lot of privilege in that, you know, to be able to see it and to be able to step outside of it and then to be able to know how to game it does involve a huge amount of privilege."

Evidently Lily is conveying characteristics similar to those Lynda did in her story regarding occupying a position of privilege (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016) from being on the outside of the system. Like Lynda, Lily also displayed knowing how to fit into the system when she returned to it in the form of employment because she had been able to evaluate how to *'game'* it as an outsider. Lily went on to draw out of this ability how she sees bureaucracy and hierarchical work from a different perspective to many, as:

"something I was almost a step removed from meaning I could see it and understand it. So, like when you get outside of the school system, and then you can look at it and like, "oh, this is what schools do". I can feel like I've got a better insight when it's like "oh, this is what organizations do etc.". Yeah, I understand the layers of bureaucracy and I can see how I fit in and how to get the best of it, I guess. Like I was part of a movement of people who were unhappy with the workplace and what was going on. So yeah, I've always been quite happy to, like, vocalize concerns about things and you know, I'm quite involved with like the unions, and you know, essentially, again, like the bureaucratic structures of like, democratic change, you know, quite happy to be a part of those things in the workplace."

Lily appears in her explaining of this work activity that she enjoys how she might still be occupying a privileged position in the fact she is now an outsider within the system of higher education engaging in social action through her union to make her workplace

a better place for her and her colleagues. Social action through resisting the pull of governance within society or an organisation which privileges their dominant ways of structuring and seeing the world is a core component of someone who is occupying a position of *relocation* according to Ingram and Abrahams (2016). Lily came across in her interview as having accidently taken on the role as a union rep but a role she very much was enjoying despite being on a string of temporary contracts being one of the things she disliked about her workplace and was challenging through the union.

Lily also reflected on other parts of her work that she enjoyed highlighting how some of it is linked to her previous experiences of being home educated:

> *"I've actually always liked the process of applying and then interviewing through to starting new jobs. I've always enjoyed those parts of work ever since being educated at home. I've always enjoyed new and exciting things because that's how it was when home educating. I do like some things about office life and the kind of relationships you can have in the workplace. Like you can get to know someone without it being personal. You know, I mean, so you can know a lot about someone's like daily routines, what time they need a coffee, or like what like gets them riled up, but you don't need to know like, you don't necessarily know things about their actual life outside of the office. So, I like the different kind of relationships that the workplace allows. I also like the shift of autonomy that academic work brings, which means that you can be a bit more in control of making sure that you're like working towards what matters to you."*

How Lily expresses what she enjoys about work is consistent with how she predominantly discussed her experiences of work throughout her interview, giving a sense of a person who did not necessarily struggle or feel conflict when transitioning to the world of employment having been home educated. There was not a clear sense of a cleft habitus being detected in Lily's narrative other than when she discussed why she had left a previous place of employment:

"I've never liked kind of bad management or doing things I didn't believe in so one of the reasons why I wanted to leave my job at the dementia charity was because I felt like I was doing the job to make a difference because that's what I cared about, but I didn't feel like the organisation was doing very well with the cause as much as I was. It wasn't like delivering on what it should have been. I didn't feel like it was actually helping people with dementia or at least some of the things they had me doing definitely wasn't about helping people with dementia. So, like, I just didn't want to be working so hard for something that I didn't think was helping anyone."

Lily's negative experience of working for the dementia charity could be seen as a slight *cleft* in that her expectations did not match the reality of working for this organisation. When Lily had engaged in charity work during her home education, she self-reported her expectations of what this meant to her and therefore what she thought it would mean to her in the present, so she was disappointed when she had a different experience as an adult. In trying to make sense of why she had different experiences of charity work in two different time periods, Lily suggested that *'maybe it is because when I was a child, I might not have seen through the politics of what some organisations do versus what they say they are doing'*. Lily felt that through her personal experiences of being home educated that she had become over time more aware of this because she had the opportunity to observe organisations from being on the outside. This therefore raises the question of whether Lily saw this experience as a cleft habitus herself or rather just was evaluating the experience from her vantage point as an outsider. Overall, it can be concluded that Lily was displaying a predominance towards a position of *relocation* because she displayed little to no characteristics of a *dislocated* or *destabilised habitus* resulting from her home education or other life events such as motherhood, health conditions, or caring responsibilities as has been seen in other participants narratives rather, she depicted a strong sense of a person who had a reconciled habitus being able to navigate multiple worlds at once remaining in the vantage point of the third space (Bhabha, 1994; Ingram and Abrahams, 2016).

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the implications of feeling out of place and marginalised in work and employment contexts because of possessing an alternative educational trajectory, as well as some of the ways in which the home educated respondents have responded to these feelings. This was achieved by drawing on nine of the respondent's exemplary life stories to reveal the complex and differentiated ways in which experiencing a cleft habitus has shaped home educated peoples personal experiences of work and employment but also their responses to being marginally and awkwardly positioned by peers and managers. Together these nine stories have illustrated the importance of developing an understanding of the implications home educated people experience in work and employment contexts because of having been home educated. The stories also revealed how most of the respondents appeared to become positioned in one of three ways, with their responses also corresponding largely with their positioning throughout their employment histories but did demonstrate oscillation in terms of displaying dispositions and attitudes that would position them in more than one of these positions.

The next chapter of this thesis is the final chapter (7) which will present the concluding discussions from the previous two chapters (5 and 6) to demonstrate what the contributions of these two chapters are in meeting the research objectives of this study.

7. Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis was to explore the different experiences of work and employment of previously home educated people to develop an understanding of how they experience work and employment. In doing so, the empirical findings of the thesis have brought to light the often undervalued and underrepresented voices of home educated people to challenge and advance the theoretical literature reviewed in '*Literature Review: Socialisation, Education, and Employment'* (Chapter 2) and '*Theoretical Framework: Employing the Concepts of Bourdieu*' (Chapter 3). Consequently, this chapter will conclude the thesis by revisiting each of the research questions from '*Introduction*' (Chapter 1), examining how the empirical findings and discussion from *'Work and Employment Experiences'* (Chapter 5) and *'Responding to a Cleft Habitus*' (Chapter 6) have addressed them. The chapter also aims to discuss the original contributions of the thesis through the revisiting of the research questions. Finally, the chapter will end by critically reflecting on the research process in bringing this thesis together and the limitations it has presented before offering suggestions for potential future research avenues.

7.2 Research Questions

The ensuing discussion will address each of the research questions in turn to demonstrate how the empirical findings of this research outlined in '*Work and Employment Experiences'* (Chapter 5) and '*Responding to a Cleft Habitus'* (Chapter 6) challenge or contribute new knowledge to the existing literature earlier outlined in '*Literature Review: Socialisation, Education, and Employment'* (Chapter 2) by drawing a conclusion on the original research aim of exploring how home educated people experience work and employment.

7.2.1 How do home educated people experience work and employment?

The thesis has addressed the first research question throughout several of its chapters, including *'Literature Review: Socialisation, Education, and Employment'* (Chapter 2), *'Work and Employment Experiences'* (Chapter 3), and '*Responding to a*

Cleft Habitus' (Chapter 4). The literature review highlighted how there has been little academic or societal attention paid to the personal experiences of home educated people (Fensham-Smith, 2021a; Nelson, 2013) in general but more specifically when it comes to how they experience work and employment. As this chapter has demonstrated, the limited research (Webb, 1989, 1999; Knowles and Muchmore, 1995; Ray, 2004; Neven Van Pelt et al., 2009) that exists on home educated people's work and employment experiences is limited in terms of 'work and employment' being but one of several themes related to home education outcomes. While some of the findings of the thesis do support and advance the findings from these existing studies, other findings surpass them by providing novel empirical evidence on the realities of being home educated and how employment is experienced.

The most prevalent findings that supported those revealed by existing studies are the ones closely related to the 'Rules of the Game'. In '*Rules of the Game'* (Section 5.4, Chapter 5), the empirical findings revealed how respondents took issue with authority figures and hierarchical designs to work because these are often not features of home education environments. The respondents found themselves questioning these structures when in employment contexts because their dispositions and previous experiences did not align with working in such ways. There was also a clear demonstration of the ability to question 'conformity' and alter ways of working to be more conducive to how the respondents had been used to working during their home education. These findings on 'questioning' authority and conformity seemingly support the outcomes of Webb's (1999) study, which revealed how her home educated interviewees had difficulties with regimented work environments and pressures to conform in a professional and social context. Conformity for Webb's respondents was about conforming for the sake of it, but for the most part they questioned why these structures and rules existed, which is much the same as how my respondents reported finding hierarchical structures and authority figures. Webb's respondents also connected these difficulties with their home education backgrounds much like my respondents had, which provides an evidence base to suggest that the environment and structures embedded in many workplaces are misaligned (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016) to those experienced by home educated people during their education. This, in some ways, has put some respondents at a disadvantage in experiencing work and employment, but for others, it has simply cemented for them who they are, what they

are willing to stand for, and just how much of their home educated backgrounds have an influence over their current circumstances and how these are experienced. Hence, it can be concluded that there is variance in how people's home education has impacted how they experience and respond to the workplace.

Another important aspect of the empirical findings to revisit for providing an answer to this research question is how the first analysis chapter '*Work and Employment Experiences*' (Chapter 5) revealed a sense of duality (leading on from the previous point on variance) in how home educated people experience work and employment. This is a significant finding because it demonstrates how home education is a multifaceted phenomenon that generates a variety of individual experiences in terms of both how home education is experienced and what it includes, but also how home education influences subsequent life fields and courses (including employment). The current consensus amongst academics, government agencies, and the general public is that home education tends to either be seen as a brilliant practice that is suitable for every child or, rather, from an alarmist perspective, that views home education as a deviant act that goes against the social fabric of how a child should be educated and, in turn, can lead to safeguarding concerns or the child themselves facing difficulties such as gaining and entering employment as an adult. This thesis therefore contributes evidence that neither of these positions are wholly accurate because the respondents have demonstrated a complex mixture of these perspectives, with neither position necessarily taking precedence in their narratives of their lives. Betty's story in '*Responding to a Cleft Habitus'* (Chapter 6) was an exemplary example of this because, despite feeling as though her home education had blindly led her into enduring an emotionally painful experience in the workplace from having missed out on playground politics, gossip, and more formal topics that the national curriculum would have covered (e.g., regarding 'consent'), she still felt that home education gave her more than it took away from her. As a person with autism, she found it immensely difficult to be in a school environment at times, and the skills she learned once being home educated gave her capital, skills, and the right social experiences for becoming self-employed in the future to avoid some of what she had experienced in formal employment contexts. This was often the case for many respondents, who, just like people who had been to school, experienced a spectrum of good and bad experiences, highly emotive situations, and everyday normality at times in their

respective workplaces across various periods of time. Hence, it is in analysing and understanding the complexity embedded within being a home educated person in the workplace that the most learning can be gleamed because, as Betty's story, amongst several others, has tried to highlight, home education is not a simple dichotomy between being a positive or negative experience despite the literature, government agencies, and the media often portraying it to be.

Overall, the findings of the thesis have helped to develop a unique understanding of how home educated people conduct themselves in the workplace and what their everyday experiences are within the workplace across different roles and industries, given that they are missing experiences of the formative event of school, which the literature has argued (Bourdieu, 1973; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Bowles and Gintis, 1976, 2002; Willis, 1977; Ingram and Abrahams, 2016), for most, is the secondary fundamental way in which people are socialised into the prevailing norms and values of society in preparation for their roles as adults in the workplace. A more thorough conclusion on how this thesis challenges this conventional view on school being the dominant way in which youth are socialised in preparation for their futures can be found in the last sub-section, '*What are the implications of the empirical findings for theory and policy?*' (Section 7.2.3), which concludes on the final research question of the thesis.

7.2.2 Do home educated people consider their experiences of home education as significant in shaping their employment experiences?

In addressing this second research question, the research findings presented and explored in '*Work and Employment Experiences'* (Chapter 5) have revealed how previously home educated people do consider their experiences of home education as significant in shaping their experiences of work and employment. This was one of the most significant findings because of the rich detail revealed by respondents regarding the connections that they saw between their experiences of home education and their experiences of work and employment. As discussed previously, the empirical findings demonstrated that for home educated people, their experiences obtained during their home education were significant for not only what they chose to do for work as adults but also for who they became. For example, the respondents strongly

expressed how their home education was bound up with their identities, stating that being home educated is 'who they are' and not just 'who they once were'. It became apparent how home education was more than just a form of education for many of the respondents, with most having described home education as being a 'lifestyle' and not just 'a choice to be made' by themselves or their parents on their education. There was also evidence to suggest how the respondents continue to structure their lives around the practices and values they had been exposed to during this 'lifestyle' by actively seeking out or setting up their own sources of work and employment in the present. This meant that often the respondents described not being able to get along in certain work and employment environments because of their structures and practices being perceived as 'strikingly similar' to how school had been structured and practiced. The respondents described several different types of work and employment (such as corporate environments, hospitality, sales, counselling, and social work, amongst others) that they felt had been mere reproductions of the structures, hierarchical practices, roles, socialization activities, values, and rules that are embedded in 'school' environments in their personal experiences of working in roles in these areas. The respondents reported that instead of subjecting themselves to endure in these uncomfortable and misaligned environments long-term, they opted to remove themselves from these types of environments in favour of seeking out or self-establishing work environments that aligned with their previous personal experiences while engaging in the 'lifestyle' of home education.

This idea of 'alignment' and 'misalignment' of experiences was explored in considerably more detail in '*Responding to a Cleft Habitus'* (Chapter 6), revealing the complexity and variation encompassed within and across each of the 31 narratives. What was revealed for answering this research question on the 'significance' of home education was how personal experiences gained through being home educated had acted like glue that underpinned most of what the respondents went on to do for work and employment after their home education had 'officially' ended. This included respondents who felt the 'significance' was positive because they felt their home education had enabled them to position themselves advantageously in society and in their respective employment contexts, as was the case for Lynda and Lily, as well as being central to who they were as people professionally and personally, their ability to know how the system works and how to use it to their advantage for personal gain,

and of fundamental importance for this thesis, what they chose to do for work and employment as adults. However, there were also those who felt the 'significance' was negative because they felt it had put them on a trajectory for failure in employment because of their inability to deal with environments that can be likened to school, such as was the case for Harry and Tom. Negative attributions also took the form of feeling as though they lacked particular dispositions to navigate certain aspects of work, such as in the case of organizational politics, as was the case for David and Aurora, but also the informal know-how of what is normal and what is not, in particular contexts that can spillover into the workplace, such as the situation Betty found herself in when she was harassed by a co-worker under the guise of being in a personal relationship with her. What these findings highlight is the large variety of ways respondents attributed 'significance' to their personal experiences of home education for how they have experienced work and employment, but also what some of the perceived drawbacks are of being home educated for experiences in work and employment post-home education.

A further way this research question was answered through the thesis was by the analysis of the empirical data presented in '*Work and Employment Experiences'* (Chapter 5) related to 'Haunting' and how the respondents reported an on-going issue of feeling 'haunted' by the 'ghosts' of 'school' and 'home education', the latter aligning strongly with the previous discussion regarding respondents removing themselves from 'school'-like work environments in favour of 'home education'-like environments to avoid negative mental and psychosocial implications (Reay, 2015) of continuing to be haunted by the 'ghost' of 'school' in the workplace. Those respondents who identified being haunted by the 'ghost' of 'home education' expressed strongly how this was a positive experience because it brought back to them residues of their past experiences that they loved and wanted to be reminded of. A crucial set of residues that seemingly 'haunted' respondents and which had relevancy for the workplace were those relating to self-cultivated skills such as self-discipline, self-motivation, self-worth, and self-awareness that they felt they had only been able to cultivate through having been home educated. Respondents made it clear that these skills had put them in a good position with employers for navigating employment situations and when it came to recruitment, selection, and promotion processes. These residues relating to self-cultivated skills can be likened to those reported by respondents in previous studies

(see Knowles and Muchmore, 1995; Webb, 1989; Ray, 2004; Neven Van Pelt et al., 2009), as discussed in '*Literature Review: Socialisation, Education, and Employment*' (Chapter 2). For example, there was a common pattern in Knowles and Muchmore's (1995) respondents having selected occupations based on being able to use skills associated with their home education experiences, such as self-discipline, self-motivation, and self-awareness. Gareth, for example, demonstrated a like-mindedness with Knowles and Muchmore's respondents when discussing how he could use the skills he learned during his home education, such as self-motivation and self-discipline, to teach himself the necessary skills required to develop a career in game development. Other respondents also shared their desire to find work that resonated with the skills they had acquired during their home education, such as Dexter, who prized entrepreneurial opportunities to establish a portfolio career by utilising his self-discipline and self-motivation. Overall, this was an unexpected finding on the effects of 'Haunting' and how it was related by respondents as a 'significant' element in the narrative of their lives, which ultimately, they related back to their reasons for home education and being home educated in and of itself.

Finally, in revisiting the earlier concluding point on 'lifestyle', it warrants further discussion in the conclusion because of its importance for how significant home education is to my respondents. In fact, all respondents except one attributed their home education to the word and meaning of 'lifestyle'. 'Lifestyle' for the respondents was a way to explain how their home education was entangled with every other aspect of their lives; it was not merely a choice made by themselves or their parents as an alternative to school. Instead, it was a way of living and existing in the world that was underpinned by a philosophy of learning that focused on the child as a person with individual needs, wants, and interests that can learn through a multitude of mediums embedded within the home and their wider community. As noted earlier, respondents made it clear that they could not separate their experiences of home education from any other facet of their lives (including work and employment) because if it were not for the self that home education helped to shape and cultivate them into, they would not be the person that they had become, nor would they be experiencing their work and employment in the ways in which they had and currently are. It was therefore imperative for this thesis to draw out the 'significance' of home education as a 'lifestyle' because of how 'significant' it was being reported as by the respondents. There was

a strong sense across the narratives that there was 'no place like home education' for people who have had the opportunity to experience the 'magic' that it encompasses for how a whole life is subsequently experienced; being a home educated person is who the respondents describe themselves to be, despite some of the respondents having not been home educated for a significant period of time (e.g., more than 35 years ago). In fact, home education as a 'lifestyle' was so significant to most of the respondents that they did not foresee their 'home education' and everything it encapsulates as ever leaving their identity to the extent that they believe they will practice elements of the lifestyle for the rest of their lives (e.g., lifelong learning, questioning the status quo, and being advocates for the phenomenon that significantly influenced their lives). Despite the importance of the above finding, the current literature on home education and employment has not raised this as a finding, meaning it is novel to this body of research and contributes to ongoing discussions on the outcomes of home education (Fensham-Smith, 2021a).

7.2.3 What are the implications of the empirical findings for theory and policy?

The empirical findings provided several important implications for theory and policy. The primary contribution of this thesis is the development of new knowledge and insights to the field of organisation studies on how home educated people, as an under-researched group of people, experience work and employment given they possess experiences of an alternative form of education, including alternative dispositions and capital (Bourdieu, 1986). These insights are novel and different from what previous studies have done before because, as Fensham-Smith (2021a) has argued, there has been no single, systematic, or longitudinal study that has focused on the personal experiences of home educated people in their adult lives as told through their voices. Hence, the research has contributed new empirical insights to the field of organisation studies on how employees with home educated backgrounds experience and perceive management, their colleagues, sociability in the workplace, hierarchy, management control, terms and conditions of employment contracts, organisational cultures, workplace spatiality, and qualifications for gaining entry to the labour market. In achieving this, it has also contributed to and advanced existing literature within the home education community and more practice-based literature,

given that no previous study has explored the work and employment experiences of previously home people through their voices in as much depth as this thesis has.

Significantly, the research has also challenged conventional ideas of school socialisation and what this means for young people's trajectories post-education. The thesis has demonstrated how school socialisation is not the only way to develop core dispositions that position youth to contribute to their communities and wider society. It has further demonstrated that it is also not the only way to accrue cultural and social capital that is used in adult life as a form of negotiation and entry into the labour market, amongst other significant aspects of social life. The people interviewed for the thesis made explicit that despite possessing little to no school experience, they mostly have not felt at a disadvantage or like they could not succeed in their adult lives measured by societal standards. As noted earlier in the conclusion, home education was central to their identities and who they became, to the extent that several felt that if they had been socialised in the conventional way through school, they would have been considerably 'worse off' and not been enjoying their current lives in the ways in which they seemingly were. This contributes to the body of literature (e.g. Bowles and Gintis, 1976, 2002; Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Ingram and Abrahams, 2016) that speaks to the connection between school and the workplace that was previously outlined in '*Literature Review: Socialisation, Education, and Employment*' (Chapter 2) by demonstrating that there are alternative ways to be educated and socialised into society without the need for a 'school-based' programme to achieve these goals, such as through the medium of home education.

This is also an important contribution at a time when there is much debate over whether a register is required for children who are not in school-based education (Department for Education, 2022b). The 'children not in school' schools bill outlines how "all children are entitled to a world-class education that allows them to reach their potential and live a fulfilled life… [which] might be achieved through attendance at school or otherwise" (Department for Education, 2022b, pg.4) but argues how some children who are being educated 'otherwise' might not be receiving a suitable education. At least for the home educated respondents in this thesis, they vocalised feeling as though being educated 'otherwise' was not only suitable for their needs, the legalities of children being entitled to receiving a world-class education, and preparing

them for entering the labour force, but that being home educated went above and beyond what they would have received if they had stayed in or gone to school. Most felt as though being in school would not have provided a 'suitable' education because of several reasons including, the hierarchical and game-like structures and practices inherent in the environment, the bullying by other pupils and sometimes teachers leading to emotional and physical health issues, the national curriculum and pace in which it was taught having not being challenging enough for their abilities, having special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) that schools do not always accommodate for, the philosophy behind a school-based education being misaligned with seeing a child as a whole person in need of an individualistic approach to learning, and wanting to focus more on learning through play. Hence, this thesis tries to show through the voices of people who have been home educated that they do receive a suitable world-class education that prepares them for their future roles and experiences in society.

The empirical findings of this thesis have also provided evidence to suggest that organisational policies need to be reconsidered to be more inclusive of home educated people because current diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I), recruitment and selection (R&S), and performance management (PM) policies do not include home educated people. The findings have demonstrated a number of situations in which the home educated respondents have had issues with current policies including, when Arthur was going through the recruitment and selection process to become a trainee vicar and it was implied by the recruiter that his alternative education was not considered equal to a school-based education, when Betty was being emotionally and physically harassed by a colleague and felt helpless in the sense that she did not know whether the employer would support her or not so remained silent to what was occurring, and when most respondents have described feeling discriminated against on a number of occasions by several different employers when it came to asking for flexible working arrangements both in and outside the organisational work space (e.g. wanting to work from home, outdoors, different times of the day, and redesigning their office space and how they use this space). All these situations could have benefitted from inclusive policies that acknowledge how home educated people are a group of people who exist in the world but whose habitus dispositions, capital, and experiences of the social world are varied and different from most typical employees. The latter

situation regarding flexible working is significant because it is no longer something that is contained to this group of people, who in the past might have been regarded as being 'difficult' or 'deviant' for requesting flexible working options because the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic meant that a conversation was opened regarding the need for flexible working arrangements in workplaces. This discussion has further been validated most recently with King Charles announcing a new Employment Rights Bill (Gov, 2024) that will make flexible working "the default from day one for all workers, with employers required to accommodate this as far as is reasonable" (CIPD, 2024). Hence, this thesis calls for action from employers to reconsider their policies in the outlined areas to make them more inclusive to support home educated people or people who have been educated alternatively by other means.

Further to this previous point, employers can also benefit by acknowledging and accommodating the needs, unique experiences, and various capital of home educated people, as David's story highlighted. David's employer recognised his intelligence, innovative mindset, ability to be self-disciplined and self-motivated, and how he excelled in terms of productivity because he 'very much felt at home' in the environment he was working in and so sought to acknowledge this with David to ensure continuity in his performance. If employers, therefore, gave home educated people more credit and recognition than they currently do, they would be able to harness their uniqueness as a potential competitive advantage in the workplace. This is also imperative for employers of the future given that the requirement during the COVID-19 pandemic to educate children from home has meant that the current generation of children who are moving from the overall field of education to employment all have experiences of being home educated to a certain extent, with a sizable proportion having opted to continue to home educate post-pandemic (BBC, 2024). This means that if employers do not take notice and start to consider the differing experiences and abilities that home educated people bring with them to the workplace, then they might find themselves at a competitive disadvantage.

It is also important to acknowledge the theoretical contributions this thesis makes. The main theoretical contribution is by having used a revised application of Bourdieu's theory of practice, including his lesser-known concept of 'cleft habitus' to develop an

understanding of how previously home educated people experience work and employment. Bourdieu's original theory was premised upon exploring the structures and practices of the primary field of education within the French context, but this thesis found utility in using it to explore the structures and practices of home education as a sub-field of the primary field of education within the UK context. In fact, the empirical findings revealed an in-depth understanding of how this alternative sub-field to that of mainstream schooling is constructed in terms of how young people's dispositions develop, that they do have access to opportunities to gain the necessary forms of capital necessary for exchange in other fields such as employment as well as how they do accrue capital, how people who have been home educated seemingly question and contest the rules and boundaries of other prominent sub-fields and primary fields such as employment in much a similar way as they contested the mainstream sub-field of school (and still do), and also how they cope and respond to moving from the sub-field of home education to the more prominent mainstream field of employment and its various sub-fields. The thesis therefore argues that these empirical findings advance Bourdieu's work on his theory of practice by contributing knowledge on a sub-field of the primary field of education within the UK context that has not previously been analysed through his work to the extent in which this thesis has.

A further theoretical contribution is made through having used Bourdieu's lesser-known concept of cleft habitus by drawing on the work of Ingram (2011) and Ingram and Abrahams (2016). This concept was used to explore and explain how the respondents responded to movement between the home education sub-field and the more prominent mainstream field of employment and its various sub-fields in Chapter 6, '*Responding to a Cleft Habitus'*. The chapter revealed how the respondents often felt 'out of place' and like they do not 'fit in' when in work and employment contexts, meaning they at times had a split in their habitus that caused them psychosocial implications (Reay, 2015), which they attributed to their personal experiences of home education. As such, this thesis identified three theoretical positions in the existing Bourdieusian-inspired literature (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016; Ingram, 2011) on the cleft habitus that helped to explain the respondents' responses, which included 'dislocation', 'destabilisation', and 'relocation'. These theoretical positions provided an invaluable way to interrogate not only the differences in the individual experiences of

respondents but also the degree of similarities that emerged from across the narratives pertaining to how they responded to tensions and ambivalences that had arisen in their respective workplaces over time. For some of the respondents, there was clear oscillation occurring between these three positions within an individual experience of work but also across experiences at different points in their work and employment history, while for others, their position remained fixed over the duration of their employment experiences reported. It is noteworthy to acknowledge how previous work on 'cleft habitus' has been used to explain classed experiences of the social world (Friedman, 2016; Ingram, 2011) or students transitions to university (Abrahams and Ingram, 2013), but has yet to be used to explore how a group of people whose educational backgrounds are atypical to the norm experience field movement. Hence, the use of 'cleft habitus' in this thesis has produced an additional and significant perspective to the field of Organisation Studies and Sociology of Education and Work on how people with atypical educational backgrounds report experiencing transitions between education and employment as well as from one employment sub-field to another.

The final theoretical contribution made was by advancing Gordon's (2008) concept of 'haunting' through the work of Morriss (2018) in tandem with the empirical findings of the thesis. Gordon's (2008) conceptualisation of 'haunting' enabled me to bring to the fore the complexities involved in how the home educated respondents made sense of the connections between their past and present experiences of the social world. Respondents had indeed been 'haunted' by a 'ghost' in a negative sense, being confronted with the need to 'exorcise' the 'ghost' (Gordon, 2008). However, as a point of difference to Gordon's (2008) theorisation as alluded to in *'Literature Review: Socialisation, Education, and Employment'* (Chapter 2), Morriss (2018) argued that people who are haunted by social ghosts can re-narrativize them as a magical and transformative experience to experience 'haunting' as positive. The empirical findings supported Morriss's argument through detailing how their memories of being home educated 'haunted' them positively. The respondents recalled how residues from their experiences of home education have emerged during their working lives, reminding them of the structures, practices, dispositions, and environments that they not only work best in but align with their values and beliefs to the extent that the hauntings influenced their conduct in their respective workplaces. Gordon (2008) had implied

that being haunted is in fact a terrifying experience that people could exorcise, but most struggle through and live with the ghost. There was little evidence in her work to suggest that people can be positively haunted in the first instance, as opposed to experiencing the ghost positively after transforming it from having been a negatively received one. The empirical findings in this thesis therefore contest aspects of Gordon's (2008) theory and somewhat align with the perspective put forward by Morriss (2018) yet still advances both perspectives through contributing a novel third perspective that people can be haunted by a positive ghost in and of itself.

The second-to-last section will now present the *'Critical Reflections'* (Section 7.5) of the thesis with a particular focus on my insider positionality. This section will also discuss the limitations of my research.

7.3 Critical Reflections

As noted in '*Research Methodology'* (Chapter 4), reflexivity is an important part of the research process for researchers who are positioned as an insider (Collins and McNulty, 2020) because it provides a way for researchers to make the politics of their research transparent, given their closeness to their respondents and their personal experiences (Mortari, 2015). On drawing this thesis to a close, it is therefore important to critically reflect upon the research undertaken as an insider researcher and the potential limitations of this and the research more broadly.

Firstly, it is imperative that I critically reflect on the fact that I share several characteristics and experiences with my respondents. As outlined in both '*Introduction'* (Chapter 1) and '*Research Methodology'* (Chapter 4), I was home educated for 9 years before experiencing a series of different work and employment contexts in similar industries and roles to some of my respondents. For example, I was home educated because of issues with 'school' such as being bullied and a feeling of not being taught in a way that was conducive to how I learned. The issues I had with 'school' I would also express as having 'haunted' me when I transitioned to work and employment contexts. I also found that I did not understand how to play the 'game' of social politicking in the work environment. I have always questioned whether these experiences have been because I was home educated and whether other home educated people have experiences like mine. The motivations behind this research were therefore in part due to my own unanswered questions about how I perceived

my experiences of employment to be related to some extent to my prior experiences of being home educated. Hence, I wanted to know the extent to which my experiences of employment including the difficulties encountered had been mine alone or were more broadly shared across the home education community. It could be argued that despite the strengths in having insider status that some might suggest that having this could create bias. I would maintain that as a qualitative researcher each individual life including that of the researcher is important in its own way for answering research objectives and there is bias inherent in all research because we all come to it from a position of interest in our topics (Vickers, 2002).

Secondly, these unanswered questions about my own 'personal experiences' undoubtedly have impacted the interviews and data analysis because as Riessman (1993) noted the elements of a respondent's narrative that the researcher chooses to write about are ultimately connected to the researchers own personal lived history. This meant I spent a considerable amount of time refining my approach to collecting and analysing the data. As Dwyer and Buckle (2009) have argued respondents' stories are immediate and real to the insider researcher motivating them to ensure the individual voices from the life story interviews are not lost in the writing up phase. This resulted in trying to give as much space as possible in the relevant chapters to their voices. This is how I decided to present the data in the rich descriptive narrative form exactly how the participants had told their stories, which can be seen significantly in the second analysis chapter in which I presented nine respondents' stories in greater depth on how their experiences of work also revealed a cleft habitus. This is a finding that I believe could not have been revealed if it was not for a narrative-based approach to both data collection and presentation of the findings in the final write up. Despite being transparent about my role as a co-constructor of the narratives (see '*Research Methodology*', Chapter 4), throughout the writing process, my home educated background will inevitably have impacted on my role as a researcher creating a sense of duality, as both researcher and as a previously home educated person. Overall, this duality enabled me to engender greater trust and rapport between myself and my participants that I believe an outsider could not have achieved to the same level (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). Hence, the interviews for this research were clear social interactions through the medium of conversation resulting in the co-construction of knowledge between myself and my participants (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004).

Thirdly, during the period through which this research was conducted, I also became a full-time member of staff within my department as a Senior Teaching Associate (STA), while still being a PhD student. In becoming a staff member, I felt like I was occupying a world that I did not belong to and had little grounding in how to begin to belong (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016). I felt I knew how to belong to the PhD community at this point, but how did I now navigate being colleagues with my previous teachers? and my PhD supervisors? How do I conduct myself when I am asked to represent the department in a leadership role at a meeting? Should I contribute my views to these meetings? What is the correct way to articulate them? This feeling even extended to not necessarily knowing what to say in social contexts making my body language sometimes awkward and how to dress for events such as conferences and the Christmas party. Hence, I felt that this was more than a mere 'imposter syndrome' as my colleagues suggested because on reflection during the research process, I concluded that these feelings I was harbouring were likely due to experiencing a cleft habitus and not necessarily possessing the right sort of capital to trade in the new world I found myself in. Hence, the research conducted helped to shape my understanding of my own experience in work. As Morrin (2015) reflects, having come to Bourdieu's work on his theory of practice and cleft habitus there is an immediate affinity felt with how much of his work resonates with your own experiences.

Fourthly, in coming to Bourdieu's work for this research, my own perceptions of my experiences of having an alternative education connected with how I had gone on to experience employment changed. I began the PhD with perceptions that my experiences were considerably the same as other home educated people and neglecting to see that people's experiences are vast and complex, with outside forces such as their classed backgrounds, geographical locations, personal characteristics, disabilities and health conditions, and personal life events outside of education being as and if not more significant influencers on their life courses and experiences of employment at times. For example, some of what I expressed feeling in my new position as a STA could be attributed to being working-class or being a self-declared introvert, rather than purely because I was home educated. I now see aspects of my personal experiences in most of my participants, and through the interviews, they also reflected on how this research has impacted on their perceptions of their home education and its significance for their experiences of employment, which they had not

seen previously. For example, at the end of Betty's interview she reflected on how this was the first time she had considered that her experience of an abusive workplace relationship was something that could have been shaped by being home educated.

Fifthly, a potential limitation of this research identified is my use of the timeline instrument to exclude the respondent from co-constructing it (Glasner and Vaart, 2009). For this study, there was not really a choice to introduce the timeline as something we could co-construct together because many of the interviews took place over the phone and through Skype. I could have used computer software to get around this issue, but this felt like it would lose some of the meaning and richness of the respondents lives because of the mechanical population this method would require. I view this as a limitation because it felt on reflection that they could have been used as part of the analysis if they had been co-constructed because it could have provided different insights on issues raised during the interview itself. Therefore, if this research was to be followed-up on it could be worth trying to see what different perspectives or insights could be gleamed from employing a co-constructed timeline approach with the respondents (Glasner and Vaart, 2009).

Sixthly, the use of innovative methods for collecting data, such as the previously noted timeline instrument, on this underrepresented group of people could yield further interesting insights into their experiences. Vince and Broussine (1996), for example, employed a visual data method to enable managers to bring out conflicting emotions regarding experiencing organisational change. They found that this enhanced their participants capacity to make sense of their experiences and to attribute meaning to significant events. Similarly, Ingram (2012) also demonstrated the utility of visual methods by employing a self-representational plasticine model-making method to engage young participants in a 'fun way' in the research process. Through this method, she was able to collect data on how educationally successful working-class boys viewed their identities, which helped her reveal how the boys appeared to be experiencing a cleft habitus because of their home life and school life being contradictory. Hence, especially with the utility of visual methods for Ingram's Bourdieusian-based study, it is in hindsight that I could have found utility in designing the research to include a self-representational visual method such as drawing to supplement the interviews. By asking home educated people to draw, it could have

helped me reveal how the respondents felt about experiencing their cleft and, subsequently, how they responded. While this is only a minor limitation, it is something that feels significant in the context of collecting data from people within the home education community. Given that drawing or visual methods of learning and interacting are significant parts of home education for many home educating families (Rivero, 2008), it could be a method that they are more willing to engage in with a researcher than the standard methods of collecting data.

Finally, an unexpected area of this research that requires critical reflection is the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the research process and the findings presented in this research. On the one hand, from a research process perspective, I was able to finalise my data collection just before the first lockdown was imposed in March 2020. However, during the first and second lockdowns, I had to complete the transcription of interview data and the subsequent analysis of the transcribed data in isolation from home. I found this to be a daunting task as it was the first time having to conduct an in-depth analysis of such a large amount of data, which I felt was made worse by having no separation between my workspace and home space to offload. This had a considerable impact on me personally because I felt isolated from my supervisors and my fellow doctoral peers, who would usually have been an easily accessible form of support when in the doctoral office. On the other hand, from a findings perspective, when the fieldwork began for this research in September 2019, the world did not know that in a few short months a pandemic would bring UK society to a halt and would require all school-aged children to engage in some form of home education (Price, Peersman and Matherne, 2021; Cattan et al, 2021). This meant that the often-invisible practice of educating a child from home became a lot more visible because parents and young people were having to develop an understanding of how to practice it for the first time. While the data that led to the findings of my research was collected in the months prior to the pandemic, they are arguably more relevant than ever for bringing to the fore the value of understanding how this often-invisible group of people experience employment, especially considering that the pandemic home education requirement means that future generations in the workforce will consist entirely of people who have experienced being home educated.

7.4 Future Research

As discussed in '*Critical Reflections*' (Section 7.4, Chapter 7), the COVID-19 pandemic has meant that the forthcoming generation of workers will all have experiences of being 'home educated' to some extent. Evidence since the pandemic has also suggested how the number of families opting to home educate their children has increased from 78,000 pre-pandemic (ADCS Report, 2019) to 116,300 in the year after (Gov.uk, 2023) meaning that on average the workforce will see an increase in employees who have even more extensive experiences of home education than just those with short personal experiences from the pandemic. This would suggest that there is a pressing need for employers to begin to develop an understanding of how people who have experiences of home education approach their work and employment, are motivated when in employment, interact and socialise with their colleagues, engage with management and organisational rules, and what unique skills or attributes they might bring to employment contexts because an employee possessing experiences of home education are no longer going to be in the minority in the workforce. While this thesis has developed an understanding of some of these issues, the findings are based on people who had been home educated before the pandemic meaning the findings might not necessarily be reflective of how future generations of home educated people experience work and employment. It is also worth considering that my respondents chose to be home educated for the most part, for part of the upcoming generation of young people entering employment, they were forced into being part home educated because of an unexpected external force. This might also alter how they feel towards their experiences of home education and employment as well as how significant they feel their experiences of home education are for how they experiencer work and employment.

Further research that would be helpful in developing an understanding of how home educated people experience work and employment could include exploring their 'transitions' from home education to employment in greater detail. Transitioning was a theme that emerged during the analysis process that felt like it had significance to be explored further but there was not enough data from my interviews to support the theme being developed in the final thesis. The data that was there indicated how significant a home educated person's first experience of employment seemingly was for how they experienced subsequent experiences of work and employment. For

example, those who had good first experiences with an adequate induction and socialisation into their respective workplaces went on to develop a trajectory of mostly positive experiences of work and employment, but for those whose first experiences appeared to have a mixed induction and lacked integration through socialisation practices seemingly demonstrated going on to develop a trajectory of mostly negative experiences. The chapter *Responding to a Cleft Habitus* revealed some of the data related to this theme such as how Aurora seemingly proceeded to experience workplaces negatively after having had initial bad experiences working in a café reaching a point of feeling like she could not put herself back into employment contexts that where not self-employed based. Studies have looked at the importance of induction programmes and organisational socialisation practices for new starters to successfully integrate into workplaces (see Cooper-Thomas and Anderson, 2006; Ardts et al, 2001; Allen, 2006) that could be used as a starting point for research into experiences of transitions from home education to the workplace for home educated people.

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9. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Interview Schedule

Interview Guide: Exploring Home Educated Participants Experiences of Work

N.B. The interviews are to follow a semi-structured format and therefore the questions within this schedule form a question bank from which to draw upon. The question bank forms a pool in which questions and probes can be drawn from during the interviews. It is not my intention to use every question in every interview. The main aim is to explore participants work and employment narrative during the first part of the interview to understand in depth what these participants have experienced and perceived in work and employment contexts, how they have made sense of these experiences and what/how contextual factors from any other aspect of their lives have contributed to these experiences. The questions are intended as prompts for the researcher to ensure particular elements are covered but it is anticipated that some of these will emerge naturally from the initial discussion intending to elicit their work and employment narrative and critical incidents within this, and outside of this.

To Start

The participants are briefed as to the nature of the study, specifically:

Introduction:

- Brief intro on what the research is about

Housekeeping:
- Explanation of the recorder and participant information sheet
- Confidentiality of their responses is explained – signing consent form
- Any questions

<u>Exploring how Previously Home Educated Individuals Experience Work and Employment</u>

Introduction:

My name is Rachael Barrow, and this research is part of my PhD thesis within Lancaster University's Management School. My research is looking at work and

employment and particularly how individuals who have been previously home educated experience them. I would like to understand the types of work and jobs you have experienced and the reasons behind these. Also, I am interested in the more interpersonal and everyday social aspects of work and how you have experienced these i.e. relationships with colleagues, daily routines, meetings etc. I have been researching in this area since commencing my PhD studies because it is of an enormous interest to me, having been previously home educated myself for seven years.

Housekeeping

You have already received a copy of the participant information sheet when I first reached out to you as a potential participant in this research which provides further details of this study, do you have any additional questions about this? Or is there anything that was not clear? I should also make you aware that your data will be anonymised, and you will not be identifiable in the final thesis or any journal article that might stem from this study. You are welcome to choose your own pseudo name if you should wish to do so. Please can you now sign a copy to evidence that you are voluntarily consenting to partake in this study and are happy with everything I have said so far. Also, as a reminder, I am going to be recording this interview and would like to check you are aware of this and happy for this to happen. Lastly, if I ask you a question that you are not comfortable answering then please let me know and we can move on.

Section One – Life Overview

(The first section of this interview will be framed as an open dialogue narrative to understand how participants interpret their own experiences of home education, employment and the events/incidents (known as 'critical incidents') they consider to be significant to their narrative).

> ➢ Please could you begin by telling me about your employment and education history, starting from the beginning or at any point you feel like starting from through to your current circumstances (participants may begin with education or might opt to begin with their work history and work backwards etc.)

***N.B.** Introduce participants to the timeline technique. Briefly explain that you will construct a visual timeline on a piece of card as they narrate their stories to you. Note

that they will be able to see what you are putting on this timeline as the interview progresses and are encouraged to add/delete/or change anything on at any time.

Researcher Prompts:

➢ So, when you left school/home school/college/university, what work did you want to do? what qualifications did you have? how did you get these qualifications? did you have any goal or path in mind for your career/future work?

➢ What was your first job? Why did you do this? How did this come about? How did you feel about this? What were your long-term aspirations?

➢ What about some of your other jobs you have mentioned? What roles did you hold in these jobs (if not already answered)? Why did you choose these roles/types of work? (if the participant had the choice)

➢ What is your current job title/role and employer? How did you end up in this job? How do you find this particular experience of work?

➢ What was your experience of school/home school/university/college like? What where your reasons for being/going to school/home school/university/college?

Section Two – Life Events/Moments of Significance

(The second section of the interview is a continuation of the open narrative discussion from section one. This time the focus is on understanding what key life events or moments of significance participants interpret to have impacted or shaped their experiences of work and employment).

➢ Thank you for sharing with me your work, employment and education history it was really interesting. Now going back to the timeline *(if appropriate)*, what other events or moments in your life have occurred during this history (point at timeline) which you feel might have directly or indirectly impacted upon your experiences of work and employment? i.e. marriage/family-related/relocation/injury/unexpected events.

➢ Subsequently, why do you feel these events or moments in your life are significant/important in relation to your work and employment experiences? Please can you tell me more about these events/moments?

Researcher Prompts:

➢ How did these events/moments impact upon your experiences of work and employment? In what way? How did you feel about this at the time/on reflection?

➢ What did this mean for you? Did this event/moment have other consequences? Did it change how you thought about work? (i.e. aspirations might have changed, likes/dislikes might have changed). In what way did your thinking change? (if applicable)

Section Three: Exploring the Work and Employment Experiences in more depth

(The third section of the interview will be framed around the following semi-structured questions aimed at eliciting greater depth from participants around specific aspects of their experiences of work and employment).

➢ Thank you for sharing these events and moments with me (if they shared some). Now I'm going to ask you questions regarding the experiences of work and employment that you have told me about thus far. These questions will be done in sections and have a specific topic of focus. Again, going back to the timeline *(if appropriate)*. Stress to participants that we might have already covered some of the topics of my questions and therefore I probably will not be asking them every question that I have listed on this paper.

Researcher Questions:

Schooling Experiences

*** The following question bank on schooling experiences is a guide. The exact phrasing of the questions and which ones will be asked is dependent on the narrative produced by participants in section one of the interview. It is anticipated that participants will have a complex educational narrative which will require rewording/reworking of the questions that follow. For example, some participants might have spent some time in a formal school context e.g. primary/secondary, but others might not have. Likewise, some*

choose to go on to further and/or higher education, while others choose to go straight into work and employment. A degree of flexibility and reflexiveness is required on this aspect of the interview.

Home Education Experiences

➢ Can you tell me about your experiences of being home educated? What did home education look like for you/in your family?
- o What lessons did you learn? What topics did you learn about?
- o Who taught you? (i.e. tutors, parents, self-taught etc.) Through what mediums and materials where you taught? (i.e. the internet, documentaries, textbooks, practical methods, day trips or other materials and mediums)
- o How would you describe your daily schedule and routines for home education? (i.e. was it structured/unstructured/semi-structured)

➢ Can you tell me about why you were home educated? How involved were you in the decision-making process?
- o How did you feel about your level of involvement in this decision-making process?
- o Would you say the level of involvement you had changed over time? *(if the answer is yes, I will ask the participant to explain and give details about why their involvement changed and when it changed)*

➢ How long/in which periods of education where you home educated for? *(if there are gaps in their home education, which will be evident from the timeline prop, then ask the question in a way which reflects this)*

➢ What was your level of involvement with other people your age? Did you attend any youth or extra-curricular organisations for example?

➢ How prepared/unprepared do you feel home education made you for higher education/work/employment *(delete as appropriate depending on the path the participant has taken in their narratives and if more than one is applicable ask participants about them separately)*? Can you give me any examples of this?

Formal Schooling Experiences (i.e. state/comprehensive/academy/private etc)

- ➢ Can you tell me about your experiences of formal schooling? What was primary/secondary school like for you?
  - o What where your experiences with other children like?
  - o What about your experiences with teachers?
  - o How did you feel about the routines and rules present in formal schooling?

- ➢ How long where you formally schooled/in what periods where you formally schooled? *(this should be evident from the timeline tool so ask the question in a way that reflects this)*

- ➢ What where the reasons for you going back to a formal school environment? *(ask if the participant returned to formal schooling after a period of home education)*

  - o How did you approach readjusting? How did you find this?
  - o Did you encounter any issues going back into a formal schooling environment?

Further Education/Higher Education Experiences
- ➢ Can you tell me about your experiences of college/sixth form/university? What was college/sixth form/university like for you?
  - o How did you decide whether to go to college/sixth form/university?
  - o What subjects/courses/qualifications did you decide to take? How did you decide on these subjects/courses/qualifications?

- ➢ How did you prepare for the transition from home education to college/sixth form/university? What was this transition like for you? How prepared would you say you felt?
  - o What aspects would you say you struggled with/disliked the most?
  - o What aspects would you say you liked the most/found the easiest?

Work Experiences

Recruitment and Selection Experiences

- ➢ Can you tell me about what experiences you have had of recruitment and selection practices? What have the processes involved for your current and previous jobs? (I.e. interviews, assessment centres, psychometric tests, etc.)

- o Have you encountered any difficulties during this stage of work? What were they?

➢ How do you prepare for recruitment activities? How do they make you feel? How did you discover how to approach them/what their aim is?

➢ How would you say you conduct yourself during recruitment activities? Would you say that you are yourself in these contexts? Does this differ depending on what the job is?

Appraisal Experiences

➢ Have you had any experiences with appraisal processes? What did they involve? Can you give me some examples of how you found them?

➢ How did you prepare for these appraisals? Did you encounter any difficulties?

➢ How do you feel about appraisals processes? What do you see as their purpose?

Experiences of Work Environments

➢ Can you describe the kind of work environment you enjoy/do not enjoy? (i.e. natural lighting, own office versus hot desking, autonomous versus disciplined ways of working etc.)

➢ What is the environment like in your current department/organisation?
- o How much autonomy would you say you have? Do you set your own agenda?
- o What are the rules and regulations? Is there a code of conduct for example?
- o How do you feel about these aspects?
- o How do you find staff meetings? What do you think about them?

➢ What about other jobs you have held? What would you say the environment was like in these other roles? How did the autonomy, rules and regulations differ for example?

➢ What about socials and social activities? Have any of the departments/organisations you have worked for held social activities? What where they? What did they involve?

- o Did you partake in these activities? What where your reasons for partaking?

- o Do you/did you enjoy these kinds of social activities? Why did you/did you not?
- o How do you feel about these aspects?

- ➢ What about during your educational years in school/home school/college/university was there organized social activities? Did you partake in any of these?
  - o What kinds of social activities where these? What did they involve?
  - o How did you find these activities? Did you enjoy them/dislike them?

Experiences of Interpersonal Relationships and Group Work

- ➢ What about your current/previous relationships with colleagues and managers? How would you describe your relationships with them?
  - o Have you experienced negative/unpleasant/political or unfriendly people during your various roles? How did you navigate this?
    - ▪ What about positive/pleasant/easy-going and friendly people?
  - o How do you feel about other people in these contexts? Do you enjoy/dislike being around other people?

- ➢ What about your prior experiences to work? What kinds of interpersonal relationships did you have at home/school/college/university?

- ➢ Would you say that you have had disagreements/issues with management/your colleagues/customers or clients in any of your jobs? If so, why did these occur? What happened?

- ➢ Would you say that you have felt included at work? How would you describe what inclusion means to you? Likewise, have you felt excluded at work? How would you describe what exclusion means to you?

- ➢ What about prior to work? Would you say that you felt included/excluded in school/home school/college/university? What where your experience of this?

- ➢ What about your experiences of working as part of a group? Have you had to work on projects collectively with your colleagues at your current or previous jobs?
  - o How do you feel about working with other people in this context?
  - o What aspects do you enjoy/dislike?
  - o Do you feel as though you 'fit in' when working as part of a group?

- ➢ What about your prior experiences before work? Was there ever a time/s when you had to work as part of a group? If so, how did you find that?

- ➢ How do you feel other people perceive/have perceived you? How do you feel that your colleagues/managers/peers have found you? Have they ever told/expressed/gestured any feelings to you?

Connecting Narratives

- ➢ How would you describe the relationship between being home educated and your experiences of work? Do you think home education had an impact on your experiences of work? *(probes might include the type of work the participant has gone into/had access to or narrowing in on particular aspects of work such as being selected for a job or establishing social relationships with colleagues).*

- ➢ How much of your work-related experiences would you say relate to your time spent in formal schooling? What aspects would you say relate? Can you give me some examples? *(only ask if the participant has spent some time in formal schooling prior to further/higher education)*

- ➢ How much of what you did at university/college would you say relates to your experiences of work so far? What aspects of work would you say relate to your experiences of university/college? Can you give me some examples?

- ➢ Would you say you have seen any similarities/dissimilarities between your experiences of work and home education/formal schooling? If so, what are they? How did they make you feel? Can you give me some examples? *(this question, when asked, needs to reflect the already given information on what type of schooling the participant had and in what periods i.e. if a participant has been in formal schooling and home educated then both aspects of the question will need to be addressed but not at the same time.)*

Close

• Do you have any further questions for me? Is there anything that you did not have the chance to talk about regarding your work and employment experiences, but which you feel is important to you or occurred to you during the course of this interview?

- Clear any anxiety
- Any issues they had with the interview and any need for further support?
- Confirm if you can follow up with participants post-interview if you should think of any more questions/need to clarify anything.

*Ask if they know anyone who would be willing to take part in my research for snowball sampling.

"Thank you for your time today and for sharing your experiences with me. The thoughts and experiences that you shared with me today are interesting and insightful. I would now like to take some time to reflect on what we have discussed. If I should have any more questions or need any more clarification from you on your experiences, would it be ok to contact you again? (If so, what would be the best way to remain in contact with you?. "

Appendix 2 – Example Timeline (Naomi)
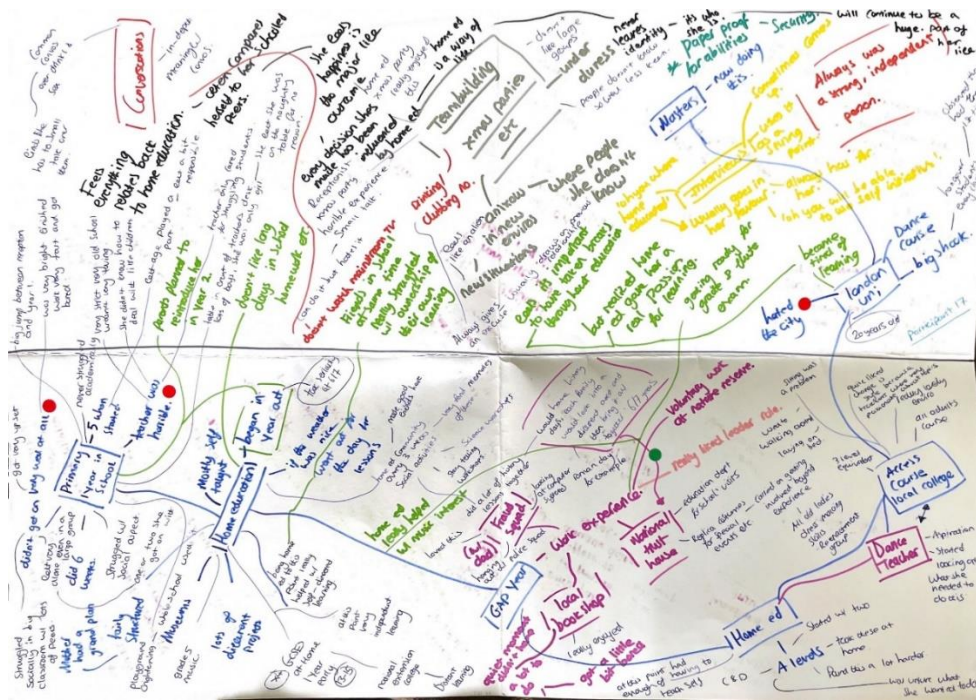
Appendix 3 – Coding Process

Parent Code	Sub Code
Interpersonal Relations in Work	

Conversations
- Inappropriate
- Small talk
- Gossip

Relationship Management
- Relationships with colleagues
  - Relationships with academics as students
- Relationships with managers
- Relationships between colleagues
- Working with friends/partners/children
- Relationships with clients

Workplace Socialisation
- Teambuilding
- Social activities
  - Clubbing
  - Drinking
  - Christmas parties

People
- Dislike them
- Othering
- Judgement
- The problem

Politicking
- Social dynamics
- Organisational politics
  - Favouritism
  - Game-playing

Identity and Work

Character and Values
- Significance of home education for who they are
- Strong moral compass

Identity Work
- Pretending to fit
- Concealing their home educated backgrounds

Identity Conflict
- Not fitting in

Organisational Structure

Rules

Management Control
- Dislike of authority
- Dislike of being told to do something in a way they aren't comfortable with

Hierarchy
- Do not agree to the separation through role status
- Do not agree to certain people being seen as better than others
- Do not understand ranking people
- Form filling
- Box ticking

Workplace Spatiality

Personal Space

Outdoors
- Rules governing workspace
- Breaks outside

Ambient Space
- Noise
  - Loud chatter
  - Quiet
- Windows
  - Desk needs to be next to one
  - Flexibility to open them
- Escape route

Self

Self-presentation

Self-discipline

Self-motivation

Self-directive

Employment Contract

Entrepreneurial/self-employment

- Started own business
- Networking

Uniform
Flexible working
- Leave when bored
- Leave when finished early
- Flexible hours
- Absence

School

Culture
- Alienating

Rules
- Uniform
- Toilet breaks
- Routine
- Time
- Homework
- Absence

Bullying
- By pupils
- By teachers

Appendix 4 – Participant Information Sheet

Lancaster University

Participant information sheet

An Exploration of How Previously Home Educated Individuals Experience Work and Employment

<div style="color:red; border:1px solid black; padding:10px;">
For further information about how Lancaster University processes personal data for research purposes and your data rights please visit our webpage: www.lancaster.ac.uk/research/data-protection
</div>

I am a PhD student at Lancaster University, and I would like to invite you to take part in a research study about how previously homeschooled individuals experience work and employment. I am particularly interested to explore how home educated individuals perceive and experience management and organisational processes such as interviews, appraisals, social practices and engagement in everyday work-related activities.

Please take time to read the following information carefully before you decide whether you wish to take part.

What is the study about?

This study aims to explore the perceptions and experiences of previously home educated individuals of work and employment.

Why have I been invited?

I have approached you because you were identified as possessing the relevant background and experiences to provide valuable insights into the employment experiences of home educated individuals. For example, I am interested in understanding how home educated individuals perceive and experience work and employment processes encompassing social activities, recruitment and selection processes, and the work environment more generally.

I would be very grateful if you would agree to take part in this study.

What will I be asked to do if I take part?

If you decided to take part, this would involve the following:

Participation in one to two interviews of approximately 1 hour in length each. This is dependent on your availability. If you are available to conduct the interview in one sitting this can be arranged or it can be split over two sessions if this is more convenient for you. The interview itself is based on asking you to discuss your educational history with a focus on home education and what your experiences of education were and how you felt about them. They also ask you about your work history and your experiences of being in work. You can say as little or as much as you like. The interviews are more like informal chats and not meant to be interrogative. They are also conducted in person, via Skype or over the phone depending on your location and availability.

What are the possible benefits from taking part?
Taking part in this study will allow you to share your experiences of work, employment, and home education. Overall, your insights on these topics will contribute to our understanding of how home educated individuals (from their own perceptions and experiences') experience work and employment.

Do I have to take part?
No. It's completely up to you to decide whether you take part. Your participation is voluntary.

What if I change my mind?

If you change your mind, you are free to withdraw at any time during your participation in this study. If you want to withdraw, please let me know, and I will extract any ideas or information you contributed to the study and destroy them. However, it is difficult and often impossible to take out data from one specific participant when this has already been anonymised or pooled together with other people's data. Therefore, you can only withdraw up to 2 weeks after taking part in the study.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

It is unlikely that there will be any major disadvantages to taking part. Taking part will mean investing up to 2 hours of your time for one/two interviews to be conducted. This is the maximum you will be asked to participate. If a topic should arise that you do not wish to talk about then you do not have to, and the interview will move on.

Will my data be identifiable?

After the interviews, only I, the researcher conducting this study will have access to the ideas you share with me and my supervisors (Dr Pete Thomas and Dr Kay Greasley) who will inevitably see the data during supervision meetings.

I will keep all personal information about you (e.g. your name, employing organisation, previous employers and other information about you that can identify you) confidential, that is I will not share it with others. I will remove any personal information from the written record of your contribution. In fact, during the interview process I will ask you if you have a preferred pseudo name that you would like me to adopt for you.

How will we use the information you have shared with us and what will happen to the results of the research study?

I will use the information you have shared with me only in the following ways:

I will use it for research purposes only. This will include my PhD thesis and other publications, for example journal articles. I may also present the results of my study at academic conferences.

When writing up the findings from this study, I would like to reproduce some of the views and ideas you shared with me. I will only use anonymised quotes (e.g. from my interview with you), so that although I will use your exact words, you cannot be identified in our publications.

How my data will be stored
Your data will be stored in encrypted files (that is no-one other than me, the researcher will be able to access them) and on password-protected computers. I will store hard copies of any data securely in locked cabinets in my office. I will keep data that can identify you separately from non-personal information (e.g. your views

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on a specific topic). In accordance with University guidelines, I will keep the data securely for a minimum of ten years.

What if I have a question or concern?

If you have any queries or if you are unhappy with anything that happens concerning your participation in the study, please contact myself or my supervisors:

Rachael Barrow, email: r.barrow@lancaster.ac.uk
Dr Pete Thomas, email: p.thomas2@lancaster.ac.uk.
Dr Kay Greasley, email: k.greasley@lancaster.ac.uk.

If you have any concerns or complaints that you wish to discuss with a person who is not directly involved in the research, you can also contact:

Professor James Faulconbridge, email: j.faulconbridge@lancaster.ac.uk.

Department of Organisation, Work and Technology, Lancaster University Management School, Lancaster, LA1 4YW.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Lancaster Management School's Research Ethics Committee.

Thank you for considering your participation in this project.

Appendix 5 – Example Consent Form

Project Title: An Exploration of How Previously Home Educated Individuals Experience Work and Employment

Name of Researcher: Rachael Barrow
Email: r.barrow@lancaster.ac.uk

Please tick each box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily	☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time during my participation in this study and within 2 weeks after I took part in the study, without giving any reason. If I withdraw within 2 weeks of taking part in the study my data will be removed.	☐
3. I understand that any information given by me may be used in future reports, academic articles, publications or presentations by the researcher/s, but my personal information will not be included, and I will not be identifiable.	☐
4. I understand that my name/my organisation's name will not appear in any reports, articles or presentation without my consent.	☐
5. I understand that any interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed and that data will be protected on encrypted devices and kept secure.	☐
6. I understand that data will be kept according to University guidelines for a minimum of 10 years after the end of the study.	☐
7. I agree to take part in the above study.	☐

_____   _____   _____

Name of Participant   Date   Signature

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent   **Date 14/12/20** Day/month/year

One copy of this form will be given to the participant and the original kept in the files of the researcher at Lancaster University