Place, space and imagined futures: how young people's occupational aspirations are shaped by the areas they live in

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Abstract

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During the course of the last decade successive governments in the UK have placed young people's aspirations at the core of their attempts to address poor outcomes within the education system and the labour market. An area-based approach to policy has come to the fore which links 'low aspirations' with particular community- and neighbourhood-level factors, in particular area-level deprivation. This area-based focus on the determinants of aspirations has faced intensifying critique from the academic research base. Responding to this policy and research debate, this thesis examines whether, and how, young people's occupational aspirations are shaped by the areas they live in.

The thesis is based on a mixed methods research design and has two sections: an extensive phase and an intensive phase. The extensive phase of the research consists of logistic regression analysis of data from the Understanding Society Youth Questionnaire, and considers whether the types of occupations young people aspire to vary between different types of area. The intensive phase of the research consists of phenomenographic analysis of semi-structured interviews conducted with young people in a deprived, outer-urban neighbourhood in Manchester, and considers how young people's subjective orientations towards the area they live in produce different forms of aspiration.

The thesis finds compelling evidence that young people's occupational aspirations are shaped by the areas they live in, but does not corroborate the claim at the core of current government policy, that aspirations are lower in more deprived areas. The extensive phase of the research instead identifies area type,

rather than deprivation, as the primary area-level factor shaping young people's aspirations, with young people from particular inner city area types almost five times as likely as their peers from deprived outer-urban areas to aspire to 'higher' professional, managerial and technical occupations. Meanwhile, the intensive phase of the research finds evidence that experiences of neighbourhood and family life in an area of concentrated deprivation can lead young people to adopt particular forms of aspiration that require lower levels of skill and further training, but on closer examination of the motivations for these forms of aspiration, finds little evidence that these aspirations are straightforwardly 'low'. Above all, the research demonstrates that young people produce multiple different senses of place, and myriad forms of aspiration, from within the same deprived spatial context: they do not simply reproduce what they see around them when imagining their futures. While there is compelling evidence that young people's occupational aspirations are shaped by the areas they live in, these area effects demand more nuanced research alongside policy approaches that are more receptive to young people's constructions of place.

Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

Copyright statement

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The author

Sam holds a BA in Politics, Philosophy and Economics from the University of Oxford and an MSc in Social Change from the University of Manchester. He discovered his interests in youth research, aspirations and area-based inequalities whilst writing his Masters dissertation, which explored the ways in which young people's occupational aspirations are shaped by social class and cultural capital, based on fieldwork in a suburban primary school. Sam works as a researcher for a youth and education think-and-action-tank and has also worked with the ESRC Knowledge Navigator for Local Government. His first published paper argues for a more embedded approach to social science which involves closer collaboration between academics and wider public organisations.

In memory of Roger Baars

1947-2005

Introduction

This is a thesis about the ways in which young people's occupational aspirations are shaped by the areas they live in. During the course of the last decade, successive governments in the UK have placed young people's aspirations at the core of their attempts to address poor outcomes within the education system and the labour market. Policymakers have become increasingly concerned that young people suffer from 'low aspirations', and that these are implicated in producing low attainment at school and poor transitions into the world of work. The focus on aspirations as a determinant of important outcomes for young people, and the concern that many young people's aspirations are presently too low, has led to the formulation of policies designed to 'raise aspirations' and, subsequently, to a renewed research focus on their determinants. An area-based approach has come to the fore, linking 'low aspirations' with community- and neighbourhood-level factors. Adopting a mixed methods approach, this thesis sets out to examine these postulated area effects on young people's occupational aspirations in greater detail.

The research is conducted in two complementary phases: an intensive phase, based on semi-structured interviews with young people in Wythenshawe, and an extensive phase, based on logistic regression analysis of national level survey data. The thesis makes two foundational distinctions, which define these two phases of the research. Firstly, in relation to area, the thesis sets out to examine the role of both 'space' and 'place'. 'Space' is understood as the objectively-defined characteristics of an area such as its level of deprivation and labour market characteristics, while 'place' is understood as young people's conception of their area – the ways in which they themselves interpret and define the area they live in. The intensive phase of the research focuses on the role of area-as-place, while the extensive phase of the research focuses on the role of area-as-space. Secondly, in relation to occupational aspirations, the thesis sets out to consider both the content of young people's aspirations and their conceptions of their aspirations, where the content of their aspirations relates to the types of job they voice an interest in doing when they finish full time education, and their conceptions of their aspirations are defined as the ways in which they understand and talk about these aspirations. The intensive phase of the research focuses on young people's conceptions of their aspirations, while the extensive phase of the research focuses on the content of young people's aspirations.

This thesis aims to answer one top-level research question: how are young people's occupational aspirations shaped by the areas they live in? The intensive and extensive phases of the research address this question in two different ways, driven by two different foci. The extensive phase of the research considers whether the content of young people's aspirations is shaped by area-as-space, while the intensive phase of the research considers whether, and how, young people's conceptions of their aspirations are shaped by area-as-place.

The first half of the thesis – the intensive phase of the research – is based on phenomenographic analysis of semi-structured interviews with fifteen Year 10 and 11 boys, grouped by predicted attainment, at a school in Wythenshawe – a deprived outer-urban area of social housing to the south of Manchester. Firstly, a typology of four conceptions of Wythenshawe is developed, capturing the ways in which the boys construct varying accounts of place. Secondly, a tripartite thematic schema of materiality-specificity-agency is developed to define their conceptions of their aspirations. Finally, the associations between particular conceptions of Wythenshawe and particular conceptions of aspirations, and the mechanisms driving these associations, are examined.

The second half of the thesis – the extensive phase of the research – is based on logistic regression analysis of data from the Understanding Society Youth Questionnaire. The effect of area-level deprivation, educational deprivation and area type on the level and specificity of young people's aspirations are considered alongside a host of individual- and household-level variables.

The thesis consists of ten chapters. Chapter 1 reviews the existing literature, Chapter 2 outlines the methodology underpinning the research, Chapters 3-6 cover the intensive phase of the research, Chapters 7-9 cover the extensive phase of the research, and Chapter 10 concludes the thesis. In its review of the existing literature, Chapter 1 examines the importance of aspirations in academic and policy circles, the way in which aspirations are defined, and the types of factor that shape them. The chapter ultimately focuses on the existing knowledge base concerning the relationship between aspirations and area, including an examination of the definition and nature of area effects, and concludes by establishing the two research questions that drive each phase of the research. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the critical realist methodology underpinning the research – the foundational statements about the nature of social reality, social scientific knowledge, and method, upon which the thesis is based, alongside the normative and ethical beliefs that guide the conduct and goals of the thesis.

The intensive phase of the research begins with Chapter 3, which outlines the design of the intensive phase of the research, including the sourcing and conduct of the semi-structured interviews used for data collection, and the phenomenographic method used for data analysis, before considering the steps taken to maximise the validity of the findings from this phase of the research. Chapter 4 then provides a step-by-step review of the processes underlying the phenomenographic analysis, while Chapter 5 maps out a historical and contemporary account of Wythenshawe, in order to establish the spatial context within which the findings from the intensive phase of the research can be interpreted. The findings from the intensive phase of the research are presented in Chapter 6, which describes the conceptions of Wythenshawe voiced by the young people I interviewed, their conceptions of their aspirations, and concludes with an analysis of the ways in which the former are associated with, and shape, the latter.

The extensive phase of the research begins with Chapter 7, which provides an overview of the Understanding Society dataset, justifies the choice of variables used in the analysis and presents

the specifications of these variables. Chapter 8 presents descriptive statistics of the variables included in the analysis, as well as a bivariate analysis of the relationship between the outcome variables and each explanatory variable. A multivariate analysis then follows in Chapter 9, based on four binary logistic regression models which allow an examination of the extent to which area-level factors are associated with particular forms of aspiration, when a range of individual- and household-level factors are accounted for. Chapter 10 then concludes the thesis by summarising the main findings from the intensive and extensive phases of the research and outlining their combined contribution to answering the research questions established at the outset, before making a range of recommendations for future research and policy.

1 Aspirations and area

This chapter begins by introducing the way in which young people's aspirations are positioned within current UK policy and research. Past and contemporary literature is called upon to explore the significance of occupational aspirations as an object of study, and the way in which they are defined and measured. The chapter then turns to consider the determinants of aspirations, with the focus ultimately coming to rest on the role of area effects, aligning with the government's current area-based approach to aspirations policy. After providing an overview of the area effects literature, the chapter outlines how area can be conceptualised in terms of both 'space' and 'place', and considers how area effects are composed of both compositional and contextual factors, before examining the existing evidence base on the effect of space, and place, on young people's occupational aspirations. In terms of space, limited evidence is found in the literature to support the government's claim that aspirations are lower in deprived areas, while the effect of area type appears to have received little attention despite potentially having greater explanatory utility. Meanwhile, the role of place in shaping aspirations has so far received little consideration, and is therefore a research priority. These two conclusions form the research agenda for the remainder of the thesis, which sets out to explore how young people's occupational aspirations are shaped by space and place.

1 The significance of aspirations

During the course of the last decade, successive governments in the UK have placed young people's aspirations at the core of their attempts to address poor outcomes within the education system and the labour market (Department for Education and Skills 2005a; b; HM Government 2009; Department for Education 2010; Department for Communities and Local Government 2011). Policymakers have become increasingly concerned that young people suffer from 'low aspirations' which are implicated in producing low attainment at school and poor transitions into the world of work (Cabinet Office 2008; Department for Education 2010: 4). The government's 2009 *New Opportunities* White Paper was grounded in the premise that "young people's aspirations – the goals they set for the future, their inspiration and their motivation to work towards these goals – have a significant influence both on their educational attainment and their broader life chances" (HM Government 2009: 95). This belief that aspirations have a significant impact on later life outcomes has been held with sufficient conviction to warrant large scale policy intervention, in the form of the *Inspiring Communities* programme which was introduced in 2009 by Gordon Brown's Labour government and survived the coalition government's 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review, before being discontinued. The view of the previous government that "aspirations are important because they influence outcomes" (Cabinet Office 2008: 9) is still clearly present in the present government's thinking, however: a recent report on the *Inspiring Communities* programme argues that "young people's ambitions, and those of their parents, influence their success in

education and employment" (Department for Communities and Local Government 2011: 6), and in a 2013 speech the Prime Minister argued that raising the aspirations of young people from poorer backgrounds is the key to improving social mobility (Wintour 2013).

Academic sociology's interest in aspirations, meanwhile, traces back at least to the 1960s to the work of Sewell, Haller and Portes (1969), with recent government concerns about the state of young people's aspirations coinciding with renewed research activity into their impact on a range of outcomes (see for instance Goodman and Gregg 2010; Lupton and Kintrea 2011; Gorard, See and Davies 2012). As within policy circles, academic interest in aspirations has tended to be driven by a view of aspirations as important predictors of educational and labour market outcomes (Andres et al. 1999). As St. Clair et al. summarise, "aspirations are, at minimum, an important component of the imagined future towards which young people orientate themselves and their current efforts" (St. Clair, Kintrea and Houston 2013: 3). As a form of desire, aspirations are vectorial – that is, they are action-guiding (Gewirth 1998: 37), and so aspirations have the potential to act as predictors of a variety of important social phenomena which are defined in educational and occupational terms, such as educational attainment, qualification level, status attainment, social mobility and broader life chances.

The extent to which aspirations do, in fact, influence educational and labour market outcomes is subject to continuing debate in the literature. Early sociological empirical work on status attainment in the US by Sewell et al. found that occupational aspirations have a substantial effect on occupational attainment (Sewell, Haller & Portes 1969: 88). The authors comment that aspirations appear to mediate between anterior factors such as parental occupation, academic performance and the influence of significant others, and subsequent behaviours – namely, occupational attainment (1969: 90). While this early study by Sewell et al. looks at occupational aspirations and outcomes, the contemporary literature tends to focus on educational aspirations and outcomes, and tends to conclude that the two are strongly related. In their review of contemporary research on aspirations, Gutman and Akerman conclude that "the aspirations of young people are powerful predictors of their educational attainment" (Gutman & Akerman 2008: 16) citing, for instance, work by Strand which finds that a pupil's intention to remain in full time education after the age of 16 boosts Key Stage 3 scores by 1.6 points (Strand 2007: 56). These studies feature prominently in a Cabinet Office report which formed the foundation of the *Inspiring Communities* programme, which argues that "there is robust evidence to suggest that young people with higher educational aspirations have greater motivation and higher educational attainment than their peers" (Cabinet Office 2008: 9). In a more recent review of the evidence, Gorard et al. find evidence to confirm the association between young people's educational aspirations and their educational attainment, but not a causal link between the two (Gorard, See and Davies 2012).

Of the contemporary literature that focuses specifically on occupational aspirations and outcomes, the findings are less clear-cut. In their study of over 17,000 individuals from the National Child Development Study (NCDS) and Birth Cohort Study (BCS), Schoon and Parsons

find that "teenage aspirations are a good predictor of adult occupational attainment: young people with high aspirations are more likely than their less ambitious peers to enter a professional or managerial career" (2002: 278). Likewise, using a longitudinal approach with a sample of 7649 individuals from the NCDS, Schoon finds that occupational attainment at the age of 33 is significantly related to job aspirations expressed at 16 (Schoon 2001). However, Polavieja and Platt (2010) find that by the time they have entered the labour market only six per cent of young people are working in the exact occupation they aspired to when they were still at school. Gottfredson (1981) suggests that aspirations are better seen as reflections, rather than determinants, of young people's employment opportunities and experiences. Meanwhile Roberts (2009) argues that at a time when so many young people are not in education, employment or training, talk of such outcomes being driven in any way by 'aspirations' seems perverse. In a similar vein, Sinclair et al. find no evidence of low aspirations in a deprived community in Glasgow, suggesting that aspirations are not the driver of the poor labour market outcomes prevalent in these areas (Sinclair, McKendrick and Scott 2010). The literature indicates that whereas educational aspirations appear to have a significant impact on educational attainment, the same claim cannot be made with equal confidence in relation to occupational aspirations and occupational attainment. As a predictor of individuals' later labour market positions, the utility of occupational aspirations appears to hang in the balance.

This thesis is concerned with the determinants of young people's occupational aspirations rather than the power of occupational aspirations to determine other outcomes. However, it is important to secure a rationale for exploring the determinants of occupational aspirations, by demonstrating that the explicandum – occupational aspirations – is 'worth explaining'. Given the ambivalence in the literature regarding the utility of occupational aspirations as a predictor of occupational outcomes, the discussion now moves on to consider alternative ways in which the importance of occupational aspirations might be established.

2 Refounding the significance of occupational aspirations

Faced with an existing literature that is markedly undecided on the role of occupational aspirations in shaping young people's labour market outcomes, two possible responses arise: firstly, aspirations are of worth in predicting young people's future labour market trajectories but only if these trajectories are more broadly construed; secondly, occupational aspirations may function as markers of other phenomena, in addition to later occupational attainment.

The first possible response to the apparently limited capacity of occupational aspirations to predict young people's labour market outcomes contends that aspirations may well have some predictive power in terms of labour market outcomes, but only when they are understood as markers of an occupational territory, rather than indicators of specific jobs (Gottfredson 2002). The extent to which young people's aspirations correlate with their labour market position later in life, and therefore the extent to which occupational aspirations can be considered reliable indicators of those labour market outcomes, depends on the level of detail we choose when categorising

occupations. At the strictest level of measurement a young person's occupational aspirations would only be seen to relate to a later labour market outcome if the specific job stated at the earlier time point was achieved at the later time point, whether teacher, biochemical engineer or data clerk. By classifying occupations using a standard schema, on the other hand, there is a greater chance of correlation between aspirations and outcomes, and the fewer categories we deploy in that classification, the greater the probability that aspirations may align with later labour market positions. Moreover, such a condensing strategy is fundamentally meaningful. Just as the long sociological tradition of constructing occupational classifications, embodied in the work of Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992) and Rose and O'Reilly (1998) suggests that there is a firm conceptual and empirical basis for understanding occupations as things that can be grouped into a relatively small number of categories, Gottfredson's latest contribution to her theory of aspirations argues that occupational aspirations should be seen in the same way:

> *"Single aspirations are but shifting and fallible indicators of the center of a set or array of occupational niches that the individual is willing or eager to consider. The theory thus requires thinking in terms of (and measuring) territories rather than single points of reference."*
>
> (2002: 92)

Returning to earlier work on the role of aspirations in shaping outcomes, Haller and Portes express much the same thought:

> *"The hypothesized impact of aspirations on status attainment does not mean that all or most specific goals must be fulfilled but, more generally, that initial plans set limits to the range where eventual attainment levels are likely to be found."*
>
> (1973: 68)

In any case, sociology's interest in occupational attainment is driven by the attributes that attach to jobs – status, remuneration, responsibility – rather than the occupations themselves and the roles they consist of. As Atkinson argues, Wright and Goldthorpe have presided over an era of occupational and class analysis during which "the *content* of work was no longer considered as important as the objective relationships between occupations in an overall structure" (2009: 899). Contemporary sociology deals with a small group of occupational categories, each of which function as a container for hundreds of forms of labour which are seen to have important features in common. This same thinking should drive our theorising about aspirations, partly because, as orientations towards occupations, it makes sense to conceptualise them in the same way that we conceptualise occupations themselves, but also because theories of aspirations tell us that aspirations should be seen as markers of a broad territory rather than indicators of a particular occupation. Guided by these insights, and by the distribution of aspirations in the data, the

extensive phase of this research deploys just two occupational categories, which distinguish between professional, managerial and technical, and all other occupational types, when classifying young people's aspirations. Recent research into occupational aspirations in the UK demonstrates that such a reductive strategy is both useful and meaningful (Croll 2008).

The second response to the apparently limited capacity of occupational aspirations to predict young people's labour market outcomes argues that aspirations have alternative explanatory worth, quite apart from their ability to predict future labour market outcomes. The idea that aspirations are performative in nature suggests that young people may give voice to different aspirations depending on the situation in which they are asked to do so (St Clair and Benjamin 2011). The performative view of aspirations opens up the possibility that aspirations may function as markers of other phenomena than future occupational attainment. Such phenomena may include how young people wish to be perceived by others and how they assess the status of different occupations – in short, aspects of young people's social identity. Crucially, this stance does not close down the possibility that the occupational aspirations young people voice may have some worth when it comes to predicting their later life outcomes. The aspirational narratives they produce, even if highly context-dependent, will always allude to particular underlying affectations that potentially have a high degree of importance for future life transitions. Over five separate interviews on their occupational aspirations, a given young person may talk on each occasion about different jobs to which they aspire. However, it may be the case that these different occupations all share common features relating to that young person's identity: a desire to get away from their local area; a desire to use a particular set of skills; a desire to achieve a particular form of recognition. As St Clair and Benjamin suggest, "there are no 'true' aspirations, simply responses that young people find effective to utter in particular situations. This does not imply that aspirations are trivial or insignificant" (2011: 504). The performative view of aspirations also aligns favourably with the 'new' sociology of childhood pioneered by James and Prout (1997) which, as Elliot and Morrow summarise, "involves moving away from the focus of socialisation and child development and the study of what children will become – to a sociology that attempts to take children seriously as they experience their lives in the here-and-now" (Elliott and Morrow 2007: 4). Guided by these insights, the intensive phase of this research uses semi-structured interviews to explore young people's conceptions of their aspirations, rather than the content of those aspirations. By focusing on the way in which young people think about, make sense of and talk about their desired futures in the labour market, rather than simply enquiring as to the jobs they want to do, the intensive phase of the research aims to demonstrate the broader insights into young people's lives that aspirations allow.

There are, then, two ways in which the significance of occupational aspirations can be defended against the somewhat slim empirical evidence for their significance as predictors of future labour market outcomes. Firstly, aspirations may at the very least serve as markers of the broad occupational territory towards which a young person is aiming, or the types of work they aspire to do. Secondly, aspirations may give more or less stable insights into aspects of young people's social identity, including affective orientations towards their area, opportunities, personal

attributes and desires – some of which may well have a bearing, among other things, on their likely future labour market trajectory. There is certainly scope, therefore, for maintaining a case for the importance of occupational aspirations in social research, but this case needs to be constructed broadly rather than narrowly. The strategies pursued by the extensive and intensive phases of this research acknowledge this agenda directly. With the case made for the explanatory worth of occupational aspirations, there is a legitimate basis for exploring their nature and their determinants.

3 The nature of aspirations

The study of the nature and determinants of aspirations has been an interdisciplinary affair, with a division of labour between psychology and career development on the one hand, and sociology and education on the other. During the 1950s and 1960s the psychology and career development literature was producing a number of theories of labour market transitions that dealt in various ways with the process by which aspirations are formed and developed. The most influential of these theories were Ginzberg's and Super's developmental approaches, Holland's trait theory, Lofquist and Davis' work adjustment theory and Krumboltz' social learning theory (see Brown 2002; Osipow 1990). Later, synthesising developmental approaches with a more sophisticated appreciation of the role of structure, Gottfredson developed her Theory of Circumscription and Compromise (1981b, 2002), which gives primacy to the ways in which individuals circumscribe their occupational preferences in accordance with their perceived social identity. This identity is defined by an increasing appreciation of social class and gender roles, as well as self-assessments of ability. Of the four stages of development that all children pass through, the two later stages – circumscription and compromise – occur during secondary school age. Circumscription describes the progressive elimination of least favoured options in accordance with perceived gender roles and prestige, while compromise describes the progressive relinquishing of most preferred options in accordance with perceived compatibility with life circumstances.

This process, whereby a young person's occupational aspirations become tempered by their increasing knowledge of the world around them – its structures, norms and opportunities – is the basis of a distinction, widely drawn in the existing literature, between aspirations and expectations. Gutman and Akerman's contemporary review of the aspirations literature, for instance, draws a distinction between aspirations and expectations in this way: "the concept of aspirations (idealistic aspirations) is distinguished from expectations (realistic aspirations)" (2008: 5). This conceptualisation of aspirations and expectations is rooted in Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise, which defines the two in this way: "aspirations are called expectations or realistic aspirations when they are tempered by knowledge of obstacles and opportunities. They are called idealistic aspirations when they are not" (Gottfredson 2002: 91). What these conceptualisations of aspirations and expectations have in common is thus: expectations are a form of aspiration; they are realistic aspirations.

This thesis supports a conceptual distinction between aspirations and expectations. Indeed, research has revealed the utility of such an approach: Furlong and Biggart (1999) find that area effects shape young people's expectations but not their aspirations. However, the way in which Gottfredson and, in turn, academics such as Gutman and Akerman, define the distinction between aspirations and expectations is problematic, due to its violation of a central position in the philosophy of action which stresses the importance of keeping desires and beliefs conceptually distinct. While desires are preferences for particular future states of affairs, beliefs are knowledge of the present or expected future state of the world (Radcliffe 2008: 477), and within this framework, aspirations are clearly an instance of desire, and expectations are clearly an instance of belief. Aspirations, as desires for future states, and expectations, as beliefs about future states, should be kept conceptually distinct. As a Cabinet Office analysis and discussion paper puts it, "aspirations are distinguishable from expectations; there is a difference between what people hope to achieve and what they expect to achieve" (2008: 8). Beliefs shape our aspirations to a greater and lesser degree, producing some aspirations that are 'realistic' and others that are 'idealistic', but expectations are not the same as realistic aspirations. With the nature of aspirations specified, the discussion now turns to their determinants.

4 Determinants of aspirations

Various determinants of young people's occupational aspirations are identified in the literature. These determinants appeal to five broad explanatory factors: material hardship; human capital; socialisation; opportunity structures, and social capital. The discussion of these determinants in the existing literature is now considered in detail.

4.1 Material hardship

The first set of determinants capture the ways in which young people's aspirations are shaped by the extent of the material resources in their lives. In the existing literature this concern with the effect of material hardship is embodied in studies that focus on the impact of material scarcity at home, the extent to which parents are engaged with the labour market and the flows of financial remuneration that engagement brings. Determinants based on material hardship are operationalised by factors such as socioeconomic status, class and parental occupation. In their longitudinal study of Canadian young people's occupational aspirations, Andres et al. find that social class continues to have a strong effect on occupational goals, despite dramatic upheaval in the structure of the labour market, concluding that "regardless of the economic climate encountered by a given cohort, the higher the status of the father's occupation and the higher the parents' education, the higher the occupational aspirations and expectations of youth" (Andres et al. 1999: 271). In their study of the determinants and outcomes of young people's occupational aspirations in the UK based on longitudinal analysis of the 1958 NCDS and 1970 BCS, Schoon et al. find that parental social class, and the experience of economic hardship, have a significant effect on young people's occupational aspirations, particularly among boys (Schoon, Martin and Ross 2007: 89). Using more recent data from the British Household Panel Survey, Croll reaches

similar conclusions: young people from more occupationally advantaged families have higher occupational aspirations, where 'high' aspirations are those for professional, managerial or technical occupations at the top of the Standard Occupational Classification (Croll 2008). Based on a longitudinal study of US data, Rojewski and Yang find compelling evidence that young people's occupational aspirations are shaped by parental occupation, although as they are careful to point out, it is unclear which precise mechanisms produce this association (Rojewski and Yang 1997: 404). The role of material hardship in steering young people's occupational aspirations is confirmed by Threadgold and Nilan in their study of 380 Australian high school students, split across three schools with widely diverging socioeconomic status intakes. The authors find that students from lower SES families have less specific aspirations, and are more influenced by material considerations such as pay and job security in forming their occupational desires, while young people from higher SES families tend to foreground post-material considerations when talking about their aspirations (Threadgold and Nilan 2009: 55). Threadgold and Nilan's work makes an important contribution to the field, as it turns its attention to the ways in which young people think and talk about their aspirations, as well as just their content. In general, there appears to be a broad consensus in the literature that material hardship, most commonly operationalised through parental occupation, has a significant impact on young people's occupational aspirations.

4.2 Human capital

The second set of determinants identified in the literature broadly captures the way in which young people's occupational aspirations are related to their skills, their perceptions of these skills and those of their peers. Determinants based on human capital are identified in the literature by factors such as self-efficacy and parental self-efficacy (Bandura et al. 2001), school motivation (Schoon, Martin and Ross 2007), educational aspirations (Gutman and Akerman 2008), and educational attainment (Bond and Saunders 1999; Croll 2008).

Based on path models of the occupational trajectories of over 4000 British males from the 1958 NCDS, Bond and Saunders find that doing well academically raises a young person's aspirations, with ability at age 11 significantly shaping aspirations at age 16 (Bond and Saunders 1999: 237), a finding corroborated by Schoon et al. (2007: 90), who also suggest that the effect of educational attainment on occupational aspirations is stronger for men. Likewise, Croll finds a strong association between young people's educational attainment and their occupational aspirations: "young people aspiring to jobs that require advanced educational involvement and accreditation were much more likely to have made choices and achieved qualifications that will lead to this than have other young people" (Croll 2008: 250). In an interesting addition to the literature linking educational attainment with occupational aspirations, Bandura et al. find that young people's self-perceptions of their academic ability are equally, if not more, important at determining their occupational aspirations than their actual academic attainment. In their study of the occupational aspirations and career trajectories of 272 young people aged 11-15 in Rome, Bandura et al. find that "children's perceived efficacy rather than their actual academic achievement is the key

determinant of their perceived occupational self-efficacy and preferred choice of work-life" (Bandura et al. 2001: 187). The authors find that young people's sense of academic efficacy – defined as a young person's perceived capability to manage their own learning, master academic subjects and fulfil personal, parental, and teachers' academic expectations (Bandura et al. 2001: 192) – is a particularly significant determinant of their aspirations. This finding is corroborated by Schoon, who finds that young people's occupational aspirations are significantly related to their self-ratings of ability (Schoon 2001). Bandura et al. also find that parental self-efficacy, defined as the extent to which parents feel they are able to influence their children's attainment at school, is a significant determinant of young people's occupational aspirations, with young people whose parents have greater self-efficacy having higher aspirations. As well as educational attainment and perceived academic self-efficacy, school motivation appears to be a significant determinant of occupational aspirations. Schoon et al. find that the higher the school motivation, as measured by a 5-point self-completion scale, "the higher are the job aspirations and the exam performance of the teenager" (2007: 89). Finally, as Croll argues, there appears to be a link between educational and occupational aspirations, with young people who intend to stay on in education post-16 more likely to have professional, managerial or technical aspirations, although the direction of causality between the two is difficult to discern (2008: 249).

4.3 Socialisation

The third set of determinants identified in the literature captures the way in which young people's occupational aspirations are shaped by the observation, interpretation and acquisition of occupational norms. These norms are based on young people's observations of the types of occupations held by significant others around them, their appraisal of the desirability and attainability of these occupations and their internalisation of these same judgments on the part of significant others. Determinants based on socialisation are identified in the literature by factors such as age (Gottfredson 1981b, 2002; Calder and Cope 2005), gender (Schoon 2001; Schoon, Martin and Ross 2007; Turok et al. 2009; Andres et al. 1999), ethnicity (Gutman and Akerman 2008), and class (Andres et al. 1999), alongside young people's perceptions of local historical patterns of employment, often grounded in particular gendered and classed norms (McDowell 2000; Bright 2011; Burke 2006).

Gottfredson's theory of circumscription and compromise is widely cited in the aspirations literature as a basis for understanding the way in which young people's occupational aspirations change over time as they get older. Broadly speaking, circumscription refers to the process whereby young people reject least-favoured options, while compromise refers to the process whereby they reject favoured options because of their incompatibility with societal norms as to the types of work that are 'appropriate' for them. As young people get older their knowledge and understanding of societal norms, and their own identity within these norms, develops, leading to the progressive adaptation and elimination of occupational preferences. Gottfredson argues that as young people get older, their aspirations become more realistic and, for many young people, this equates to a 'lowering' of aspirations (Gottfredson 1981b, 2002; Gutman and Akerman 2008),

although as I argue on page 157 aspirations do not always move downwards in the occupational hierarchy as they become more realistic. In their study of 900 14-25 year olds, Calder and Cope find that other elements of young people's occupational aspirations, such as their materiality, also change as they get older, with 14-17 year olds tending to focus more on occupations they find interesting, with priorities shifting to "having lots of money" as they get older (Calder and Cope 2005: 17).

In her longitudinal study of occupational aspirations and career attainment based on 1974 and 1991 NCDS respondents in the UK, Schoon finds that aspirations for jobs in science, health and engineering voiced in adolescence are significantly gendered (Schoon 2001), and in a later study, Schoon et al. discover a more general gender effect on occupational aspirations, concluding that "teenage girls appear to have higher occupational aspirations than boys of the same age" (Schoon, Martin and Ross 2007: 90). Based on surveys of 12-13 year olds in three schools in Glasgow, Nottingham and London, Turok et al. uncover distinct gender differences in both realistic and idealistic aspirations, with girls more likely to desire professional, managerial and personal service occupations and boys more likely to desire associate professional and skilled trades occupations (Turok et al. 2009: 33). Finally, Andres et al. demonstrate how, at least in Canada, gender differences in aspirations have changed over time: "in the early 1970s more men than women aimed for higher status positions, particularly those in the professional and managerial spheres… by 1989, 14% more women than men reported that they wanted such high status jobs" (Andres et al. 1999: 274).

Existing research on ethnic differences in aspirations, such as the extensive body of research in this area by Steve Strand, has tended to focus on educational, rather than occupational aspirations. However, to the extent that research has focused specifically on occupational aspirations, it has found that Asian students tend to have the highest occupational aspirations of all the minority groups (Gutman and Akerman 2008: 12).

The effect of class on young people's occupational aspirations receives divergent forms of treatment in the literature. Some studies, generally quantitative, operationalise class as parental education or occupation, as is standard in survey-based sociology. As section 4.1 above summarises, these large-scale studies tend to identify a strong relationship between the level of young people's occupational aspirations and their parents' level of education or occupation. Other studies, generally those using qualitative methods, operationalise class more richly as norms, localised within the family or neighbourhood, which steer aspirations in line with dominant discourses and identities portraying certain occupational trajectories as more desirable than others. In the UK, qualitative studies into the way in which class impacts on aspirations have tended to focus on how white working class boys' aspirations have either adapted or persisted in the wake of structural upheaval in the labour market. As Nayak argues, class distinctions do not cease to be salient simply because the occupational structure that once supported them no longer exists: "despite major economic transformation and media rebranding, the cultures of the old industrial city and the identities therein refuse to be written out of existence" (2006: 828).

Some studies observe how resilient working class identities distance young men from the labour market that surrounds them, particularly in deprived areas, where they aspire to direct entry into employment upon leaving school in much the same way that their fathers would have (Abrams 2010). However, other studies have found that young men from working class families do have a clear appreciation of the changes that have taken place to the world of work since their parents left school and the kinds of pathways they must consider in order to maximise their chances in the new economy, even if aspirations do still reflect historical gender divisions (McDowell 2000).

Just as occupational aspirations can be shaped by the extent to which working class 'worker identities' align with the opportunities available in the contemporary labour market, they are also shaped by the extent to which working class identities align with the values of the education system, which is arguably dominated by middle class conceptions of educational and occupational success (Lareau 1987; Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). In his study of the aspirations of working class teenagers growing up in former colliery villages in Derbyshire, Bright discovers a form of 'resistant aspiration' which is "aimed at the world beyond the village generally but specifically at that world as it is represented through compulsory schooling" (Bright 2011: 71). The failure of some working class young people to hold occupational aspirations which fit the 'model' put forward by the education system, whereby 'high' aspirations are epitomised by a particular set of skilled professional jobs, "amounts to what seems to be a straightforward, unambiguous *refusal* by young people of the education project *as a whole*, its values and practices, its visible and hidden curricula" (2011: 71). In her study of 38 young men undertaking foundation programmes in London, Burke emphasises that "aspirations are not constructed exclusively at the individual level but are tied in with complex structural, cultural and discursive relations and practices" (Burke 2006: 731). Young people's aspirations are shaped by identities which reflect the intersection of gender, class and ethnicity.

4.4 Opportunity structures

The fourth set of determinants identified in the literature captures the way in which young people's occupational aspirations are shaped by the types of jobs available in a given locality and the ease with which these jobs can be accessed – the quality and quantity of both local labour demand and facilitative infrastructure. Determinants based on opportunity structures are identified in the literature by factors such as the composition of the local labour market (Furlong, Biggart and Cartmel 1996; Furlong and Biggart 1999; Roberts 2009) and connecting infrastructure such as transport networks (Green and White 2008).

Analysing data from the 1989 Scottish Young People's Survey, Furlong and Biggart (1999) find little relation between young people's occupational aspirations and the composition of the local labour market – defined by the proportion of the workforce in managerial and professional occupations. As the authors explain, the areas from which the study draws its sample "were chosen to reflect a variety of opportunity structures; rural and urban, and buoyant and depressed labour markets" (1999: 23). Using multivariate analysis to examine the relative importance of area,

social class and expected attainment on the occupational aspirations of teenagers from four different towns in Scotland, the authors find that "social class and area can affect educational attainment, but neither of these factors tend to have a significant *residual* effect on occupational aspirations… there [is] little significant area effect on the aspirations of either males or females" (1999: 32). This is in line with earlier work, (Furlong, Biggart and Cartmel 1996) which also finds that local labour market conditions impact weakly on young people's occupational aspirations. While the labour market opportunities in an area clearly restrict the possibility of fulfilling particular occupational aspirations, it appears from the work of Furlong and his colleagues that localised labour market conditions do not have a significant impact on shaping these occupational aspirations.

Drawing on research in three deprived neighbourhoods in England, Green and White consider a different element of local opportunity structures – facilitative infrastructure such as public transport. The authors note that "experience of and confidence in travelling outside the local area are all important factors in widening horizons" (Green and White 2007: 79), and also note how the interplay of social networks and transport networks can either augment, or curtail, the set of occupational possibilities that young people perceive to be open to them. The quality of transport networks, but also, and perhaps more importantly, young people's perception of the quality of local transport, can be significant shapers of their occupational aspirations.

Roberts, who has been instrumental in foregrounding the importance of opportunity structures in the career development literature since the late 1960s, argues that "young people today are excessively ambitious relative to the jobs that the economy offers. There is a wealth of talent and a wealth of ambition, and an overall shortage of jobs, not least good jobs" (Roberts 2009: 365). Where aspirations are 'low', this is an entirely rational response by those with the least resources, who attach a high risk to the prospect of aiming for the limited number of 'decent' opportunities that do exist (Roberts 2009: 364). Roberts seems to suggest, then, that taken on aggregate young people's occupational aspirations are not limited by the arguably parlous state of the contemporary youth labour market – aspirations are not significantly shaped by opportunity structures. However, particular groups – those from less affluent backgrounds; the working class – do often adjust their aspirations downwards in response to the opportunity structures facing them. The importance of opportunity structures as a determinant of occupational aspirations therefore seems to be conditional on individual young people's location within those structures (Furlong, Biggart and Cartmel 1996: 552–553).

4.5 Social capital

The final set of determinants identified in the literature captures the way in which young people's occupational aspirations are shaped by the social structures of which they are a part, and the potential of these structures to deliver norms, information, personal connections and material resources – in short, their social capital. As a determinant of occupational aspirations, social capital is identified in the literature by the role of both family and broader peer-based social

networks (Turok et al. 2009; Raffo and Reeves 2000; Green and White 2008). In their study of the aspirations of teenagers in the UK, Turok et al. found that families, and particularly parents, were "a very important source of occupational ideas for young people. Many cited family members as giving them ideas for their preferred job; either there was someone in the family who already had that job… or the idea for the job came from parents" (Turok et al. 2009: 37–38). The authors found that, in comparison, friends and peer networks had a less significant influence, although they may become more important with time (2009: 41). In their phenomenographic analysis of 31 interviews with 15-24 year olds in Manchester, Raffo and Reeves reveal how young people's occupational aspirations can be linked to individualised systems of social capital which both support and constrain young people's aspirations and their attempts to translate these aspirations into action. The authors note how, through their individualised systems of social capital, "young people are provided with an opportunity to gain information, observe, ape and then confirm decisions and actions with significant others and peers" as they develop their occupational aspirations (Raffo and Reeves 2000: 151). Green and White consider how social capital shapes young people's decisions about education, training and work in three deprived areas in England, demonstrating how young people's social networks can delimit the geographical space within which they are prepared to construct their aspirations. In some instances, young people's aspirations might attach to broad spatial horizons, if they have peers or family members who normalise or facilitate this, such as knowing someone who travels some distance to work. However, in other cases networks can operate to curtail horizons, if, for instance, a young person is positioned within a group of peers and family members who rely entirely on the local area for education, training or employment (Green and White 2008: 220).

In summary, the existing literature identifies a range of determinants of young people's occupational aspirations. These determinants appeal to five broad explanatory factors: firstly, material hardship, which captures the extent of the material resources in young people's lives; secondly, human capital, which focuses on young people's skills, their perceptions of these skills and those of their peers; thirdly, socialisation, which centres on the observation, interpretation and acquisition of occupational norms; fourthly, opportunity structures, which capture the types of jobs available and the ease with which these jobs can be accessed, and finally social capital, which refers to the potential of the social structures within which young people are located to deliver norms, information and material resources. This thesis sets out to focus explicitly on the way in which young people's occupational aspirations are shaped by the areas they live in. Before assessing the existing evidence relating to area effects on occupational aspirations specifically, the discussion now briefly reviews the area effects literature in general, before turning to consider the notion of 'area' in more detail, setting out the distinction between area as 'space' and area as 'place', upon which the analysis in the remainder of the thesis is grounded.

5 Area/neighbourhood effects

Social science's engagement with the role that neighbourhoods play in shaping young people's outcomes can be traced back to the 1940s (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000: 309). Although the

neighbourhood effects literature was predominantly US-based during much of the 20th century, since the 1990s there has been a resurgence in the study of neighbourhood effects in both the US and the UK (Sampson, Morenoff and Gannon-Rowley 2002: 444), with the latter driven in part by the former Labour government's area-based approach to tackling disadvantage, which was underpinned by the explicit premise that people's life chances are affected by where they live (Atkinson and Kintrea 2001: 2277).

The central concern of any research into area or neighbourhood effects is to ascertain whether the characteristics of a neighbourhood exert an effect on the people who live there, once their individual characteristics have been taken into account (Friedrichs, Galster and Musterd 2003: 797). This is reflected in Atkinson and Kintrea's definition of area effects as "the net change in the contribution to life-chances made by living in one area rather than another" (2001: 2278), and also in Buck's claim that "to show that there are area or neighbourhood differences is not the same as showing that there are neighbourhood effects" (2001: 2252) because such differences may be due to concentrations of particular individual-level characteristics which are not produced by features of the area itself.

The existing research base contains a number of studies supporting the existence of area effects. In a wide-ranging review of the area effects literature Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn find broad evidence for a consistent, if modest, neighbourhood effect on a range of young people's outcomes, as measured by the proportion of the variance in these outcomes accounted for by neighbourhood-level factors when competing individual- and household-level factors are included in the analysis (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000: 328). In his most recent book, which tests the integrity of the 'area effect' both theoretically and empirically, Sampson argues that "spatially inscribed social differences… constitute a family of 'neighbourhood effects' that are pervasive, strong, cross-cutting, and paradoxically stable even as they are changing in manifest form" (2012: 6). Meanwhile, UK-based studies find evidence that area effects shape individual outcomes relating to social exclusion, feelings of stigma, employment and health, above and beyond the effect of individual-level characteristics (Atkinson and Kintrea 2001; Buck 2001).

The existence and operation of area effects is, however, contested. Evidence that individual-level outcomes are shaped by neighbourhood context is less forthcoming in studies that use quantitative methods than it is in those that use qualitative methods (Andersson and Malmberg 2014: 2). Some argue that quantitative studies of area effects are hampered by research methods that operate with crude definitions of area based on fixed statistical units which are often selected on the basis of the availability of data rather than any meaningful foundation in the theorised operation of a specific 'area effect' (Lupton 2003), with others contending that these methodological weaknesses can lead to the underestimation of area effects compared to approaches which are more sensitive to the scalable nature of the neighbourhood and its effects (Andersson and Malmberg 2014; Kearns and Parkinson 2001). Multilevel modelling is a popular technique for producing a more precise estimation of the variance in an outcome which can be accounted for by specifically area-level factors, but this modelling approach is criticised in the

literature for demanding a clear separation of factors which are individual-level and those which are area-level – a distinction which disregards the relationship between the individual and the area which is central to understandings of 'place' (Mitchell 2001: 1358).

Even when area effects are identified, the causal mechanisms which link area-level features with individual-level outcomes are often poorly specified, in both qualitative and quantitative studies alike (van Ham et al. 2012: 3). Moreover, a tendency to estimate area effects using fixed statistical geographies leads to a simplified understanding of area-based mechanisms as forces that operate uniformly at different scales (Andersson and Malmberg 2014). A number of studies have endeavoured to explicitly outline the types of mechanisms through which area effects operate (Jencks and Mayer 1990; Sampson, Morenoff and Gannon-Rowley 2002; Atkinson and Kintrea 2001). Together, these typologies identify six broad area-level mechanisms: firstly, they identify the role of institutional resources, such as the presence of local amenities, their quality and capacity; secondly, they identify the role of norms, or collective socialisation, which function to inculcate particular patterns of expectations and behaviour within a given community; thirdly, they identify the role of relative perceptions – the way in which people's individual identities are shaped by their understanding of their neighbourhood's characteristics (and reputation) relative to other areas; fourthly, they identify social capital, such as that which is instantiated through the social interactions between neighbours; fifthly, they identify 'routine activities' – the way in which land use patterns and transport networks organise and constrain how and when people come into contact with each other; sixthly and finally, they identify the dynamics of local labour and housing markets as a mechanism through which area effects are realised. Whilst covering a range of explanatory terrain, these mechanisms share one feature in common: rather than being reducible to individual-level characteristics they are grounded in features of the neighbourhood, be they concrete amenities and services, or less tangible collective identities and norms.

This thesis endeavours to assess the specific role of area effects on young people's aspirations in two ways. Firstly, the extensive phase of the research acknowledges the literature's definition of area effects by pursuing a modelling strategy which is able to assess the net effect of area-level factors on young people's occupational aspirations, once a range of individual- and household-level variables have been taken into account. While this phase of the research makes use of fixed statistical geographies, this allows the claims of current government policy, which link particular types of area with particular types of aspiration, to be directly assessed on their own terms. Secondly, in order to identify causal mechanisms linking area effects with aspirations, the intensive phase of the research assesses whether young people themselves attribute their neighbourhood with any causal influence over their aspirations, and, if so, how they understand their local area context to be implicated in shaping these aspirations. As well as meeting the demands of the literature to uncover mechanisms, rather than simply effects, this phase of the research also heeds the call to work with looser, more meaningful, scalable notions of 'place', by exploring young people's own understandings and definitions of the neighbourhood they live in.

6 Space and place

The notion of ‘area’ contains an important conceptual distinction between ‘space’ and ‘place’ which underpins the two-part structure of this thesis. The concepts of ‘space’ and ‘place’ are fundamental to geography and, more broadly, any study which involves asking questions involving the notion of area. Space and place have gained greater conceptual exposure in sociology since the ‘spatial turn’ executed by the social sciences in the latter half of the twentieth century, although this proliferation of the use of spatial language has not always been accompanied by a solid appreciation of the lineage and contested meanings of space and place, and has often invoked these new concepts as metaphors “rather than as complex theorizations of material and symbolic life” (Gulson and Symes 2007: 99). As Smith and Katz elaborate, metaphors operate by enacting one meaning system which is familiar and concrete (the source domain) to explain or clarify another which is opaque and elusive (the target domain). The apparent familiarity and fixedness of terms such as ‘space’, ‘locality’, ‘place’ and ‘position’ make them appealing concepts for deployment as metaphors to explain aspects of social life, but this metaphorical language detaches spatial concepts from any substantive roots they may once have had. The result is that phenomena in the target domain are never directly addressed or scrutinized, preventing us from ever properly comprehending them (Smith and Katz 1993: 67-70). This research adopts specific notions of space and place in order to avoid the sorts of metaphorical obfuscation outlined above. Space and place are deployed here in a manner that reflects the more established usage and meaning these terms enjoy in the field of geography.

‘Space’ and ‘place’ represent, as concepts, different approaches to understanding the notion of ‘area’. Whereas space is regarded “as a dimension within which matter is located” (Agnew 2011: 316), place is “a distinctive coming together in space” (ibid: 317); it is seen to have a different set of characteristics that make it conceptually distinct. If space is an objective domain defined by its geometric location alongside characteristics such as its labour market composition, institutional setup and aggregate-level demographic attributes, then place is a subjective phenomenon arising from the experience of occupying such a space. As Thrift states, “the difference between location and place is that places have meanings for us which cannot be reduced to their location” (1997: 160). In a similar vein. Massey sees places as “articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings” (1993: 67). Hence the need, if we want to gain an understanding of a place, to analyse “the particularity of the social interactions which intersect at that location and of what people make of them in their interpretations and in their lives" (Massey 1994: 117).

Places, as subjective phenomena arising from the meaning attributed by humans to the spaces they occupy, rely on people for their existence. It makes no sense to talk of places without people. But it also makes no sense to talk of people, and agency, without places, given an understanding of human action predicated on the idea that actions stem from some kind of affective disposition towards our surroundings – an idea common to a diversity of social scientific schools of thought from Humean philosophy to rational action theory and the *verstehen* school. As Thrift argues: “people mean places. But in turn, places also mean people” (1997: 160). But places also mean

spaces, for an individual's sense of place is a subjective response to *something* – some external, located reality. People are shaped by their location – their actions are constrained, and supported, by the constellation of people, resources and opportunities that exist in a particular area, but these 'external' features of the world, the features that make up our notion of 'space', do not impact directly on individuals. Instead, it is the perception, assessment and understanding of these features at the individual level (a sense of place) that frame and shape action. In short, space shapes individuals via their sense of place. Much as Roberts argues in his work on opportunity structures, a given area may have a particular set of labour market attributes, but young people in that area will perceive these attributes differently in the process of perceiving 'opportunities'. Those whose material circumstances are favourable may feel able to exploit the few high-paying, high-skilled opportunities that exist, whereas those whose material circumstances force them to be more risk averse may not even hold these opportunities in their field of vision (Roberts 2009). The result is that the same space gives rise to different places, for different individuals, and therefore to different sets of beliefs about, and courses of action in response to, that space.

What emerges is a system in which space, place and agency are inextricably bound together through bidirectional ties of influence. Places are the product of people and spaces: they arise whenever there are situated people. But people are the product of places, to the extent to which our attitudes and actions are shaped by our understanding of, and affective orientation towards, our physical environment. And given that the physical environment conditions our agency, via place, it follows that spaces shape people. This thesis will consider all three of these processes in its exploration of area effects on young people's occupational aspirations. Firstly, in terms of places being the product of people and spaces, the research considers how young people produce a sense of place from the physical reality of Wythenshawe. Secondly, in terms of people being the product of places, the research then considers how young people's aspirations are shaped by their sense of place. Thirdly, in terms of spaces shaping people, the research considers how young people's aspirations vary between different geographical areas, defined in terms of their objective (spatial) characteristics.

In order to contextualise these three research questions, the chapter now turns to consider how the existing literature has dealt with the questions of how space and place shape young people's aspirations. The literature on the effects of area on aspirations tends not to consider the distinction between space and place explicitly, reflecting the underdeveloped appreciation of the concept of 'area' discussed above. Nonetheless, a distinction can easily be drawn between those studies that consider the impact of area on aspirations from a spatial perspective, and those that consider the impact of area on aspirations from the perspective of place. In terms of the quantity of research in existence, there is a bias in favour of studies that consider the role of the objectively-defined characteristics of areas, or space. This literature will be considered first.

7 How space shapes aspirations

Studies into the impact of area on aspirations that interpret 'area' from a spatial perspective fall into three broad camps: studies that look at the effect of local labour markets, those that look at the effect of deprivation, and those that look at the impact of geodemography.

7.1 Local labour markets

There are only two existing studies in the literature that explicitly set out to consider the impact of labour markets on aspirations, both by Andy Furlong and colleagues. As outlined in section 4.4 above, labour market characteristics fall within the set of determinants classified here as 'opportunity structures', and the substance of Furlong et al.'s findings – namely, that area-level labour market characteristics appear to have a negligible impact on young people's occupational aspirations – have already been considered. Summarising their findings, Furlong et al. argue that "it is neighbourhood [deprivation] rather than labour markets which are important in shaping young people's aspirations" (1996: 561). Taking cue from this, the discussion now turns to consider the role of area-level deprivation on occupational aspirations.

7.2 Area-level deprivation

Most studies into the effect of area-level deprivation on aspirations find little evidence of the alleged inverse relationship between the two, on which the government's *Inspiring Communities* programme was based. Based on 490 interviews with young people in Newham, Nottingham and Glasgow, Kintrea et al. (2011) find that deprivation on its own has limited explanatory power over young people's aspirations – deprived areas do not uniformly harbour low aspirations. The authors selected Newham, Nottingham and Glasgow on the basis that each of these city areas are characterised by "a considerable level of disadvantage but with variation in the form of that disadvantage and the reasons lying behind it" (Kintrea, St Clair and Houston 2011: 18). Thus, the three research sites were purposively sampled in order to be able to explore the full range of ways in which area influences aspirations, reflecting the view of the authors that not all areas of deprivation are the same. The study explores 13- and 15 year-olds' educational and occupational aspirations, both idealistic and realistic. Almost all (96%) of 13-year-olds questioned could name a job they would want in an ideal world, and the ideal jobs aspired to were notably ambitious, skewed towards those occupations requiring more education and experience (2011: 28). When asked whether their idealistic aspiration was attainable, two thirds stated that they believed it was. Among the 13-year-olds studied, both idealistic and realistic occupational aspirations were strong, with no evidence of their being suppressed by area-level deprivation. At 15, young people's aspirations had become more realistic, tempered by beliefs about the difficulty and availability of the jobs they had aspired to at 13, as well as beliefs about their own aptitudes and the expectations of family. However, overall the authors find that the aspirations of 15-year-olds have stayed high, and, indeed, that "they are much higher than the current distributions of education and occupation outcomes in the UK and especially in comparison with the local areas"

(Kintrea, St Clair and Houston 2011: 38). These final comments reflect Roberts' argument that "young people today are excessively ambitious relative to the jobs that the economy offers" (Roberts 2009: 365).

The findings of Kintrea and his colleagues are corroborated by others. Turok et al. find that "there is little evidence in the data of a link between pupil background and aspirations… the linkages between living in a disadvantaged area and aspirations [are] very weak" (2009: x). McKendrick et al. find in their study of the Drumchapel estate in Glasgow that "the majority of young people in Drumchapel were engaged in their school and community, ambitious for their futures and were not bound in their horizons nor discouraged by their immediate circumstances or experiences" (2007: 155), while Sinclair et al., also studying a deprived area of Glasgow, find no evidence of depressed aspirations among a survey of 307 young people for the Scottish Poverty Information Unit's Aspirations Study. The authors found that "most [young people] were keen to continue their education or training after school, aspired to jobs of high standing and were optimistic about their chances of getting the kinds of jobs they wanted" (Sinclair, McKendrick and Scott 2010: 16). St Clair and Benjamin, using data gathered as part of a large scale study of schoolchildren in three cities in the UK conclude that "contrary to the current policy discourse, we found that young people of both genders, from deprived and non-deprived neighbourhoods and from different ethnic groups all have high educational and occupational aspirations" (2011: 502). Reviewing the existing research on the effect of area on aspirations, in direct response to the government's current focus on community-level aspirations, Lupton and Kintrea (2011) do not find adequate evidence to support the claim that aspirations are lower in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. It is important to point out, however, that there is not complete unanimity as to the lack of an effect of area-level deprivation on young people's occupational aspirations: against the weight of evidence, Furlong and Biggart, in their study of the effects of local labour markets on young people's occupational aspirations, suggest that deprivation is a significant shaper of aspirations (Furlong, Biggart and Cartmel 1996: 561). It is also important to highlight that while the majority of the studies here define their explicans as 'area-level deprivation', some focus on 'disadvantage' – although arguably these two concepts capture broadly the same explanatory territory.

Despite the near consenus in the existing literature that area-level deprivation appears to have little impact on young people's occupational aspirations, the government's line remains that aspirations remain low in more deprived areas. In a 2013 speech on social mobility, the Prime Minister identified disadvantaged areas as being sites of low aspiration (Wintour 2013), while a 2011 report on the Inspiring Communities programme states that "educational achievement still remains lower in more deprived areas, where limited expectations, low self-confidence and low ambitions can sometimes stop young people from doing as well as they could" (Department for Communities and Local Government 2011: 5). The report goes on to argue that "communities matter – young people in certain types of neighbourhood are less likely to develop ambitious, achievable goals" (2011). This policy position can be traced back to a Cabinet Office discussion paper of 2008, and while this discussion paper focuses on educational aspirations it has arguably been the spur for an area-focused agenda for raising aspirations more broadly. The discussion

paper uses data from the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC) to examine the extent to which community level factors, including area deprivation, affect young people's educational aspirations (specifically, their intention to stay on in full time education post 16). Initial analysis found that the proportion of children aspiring to stay on in education was significantly lower in the most deprived areas compared to the least deprived, but once parent- and child-level factors (such as young person's sense of self efficacy, mother's aspiration for the child, gender and social class) are factored into the model, deprivation was no longer found to have a significant impact on aspirations (Cabinet Office 2008: 48). Analysis of data from the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE) reaches similar conclusions: there is a clear association between area-level deprivation and young people's educational aspirations, but the variation in aspirations between more and less deprived areas is reduced to an insignificant level once individual-, parent- and family-level characteristics are accounted for. Nonetheless, the Cabinet Office paper argues that area is an important site for the constitution of these individual-, parent- and family-level characteristics: although deprivation has no direct effect on aspirations, "the effect of community level factors may be indirect, occurring via their association with children's pre-school environment, parents' and children's values and beliefs, as well as the characteristics of children's schools" (2008: 11). As a result, the paper reaches the verdict that area-level deprivation is associated with, and is (indirectly) involved in producing depressed aspirations. As demonstrated above, this conclusion runs against the conclusions of the majority of the existing literature.

7.3 Geodemography

The Cabinet Office paper's analysis of the role of space in shaping aspirations goes further, prompted by the insight, also present in the work of Kintrea et al. (2011), that "not all deprived areas are the same" (2008: 16). Using Experian's MOSAIC neighbourhood classification system[1], the analysis finds a wide degree of variation in the aspirations of young people from the 12 most deprived MOSAIC area types. Here, 'aspirations' are defined as young people's aspirations to stay in full time education post-16, measured using data from the LSYPE, according to which a national average of 87% of young people aspire to continue in full time education post-16. Of the 10 most deprived MOSAIC neighbourhood types, seven contain young people with aspirations below the national average. The three neighbourhood types with the lowest aspirations are 'Low Horizons', 'Families on Benefits' and 'Ex-industrial Legacy' with post-16 education aspiration rates of 74%, 76% and 76% respectively. Three of the 10 most deprived MOSAIC neighbourhood types have aspirations above the national average: 'Counter Cultural Mix', 'South Asian Industry' and 'Metro Multiculture', with rates of 90%, 91% and 95% respectively (Cabinet Office 2008: 16). What the analysis indicates is that areas of deprivation do not uniformly harbour low educational aspirations: some types of deprived area foster relatively low aspirations, while others foster relatively high aspirations. This is not the first time that geodemographic analysis has been used

[1] MOSAIC is an area classification developed by information services group Experian. MOSAIC classifies local areas into 66 ideal types, nested within 15 groups, based on a range of commercial and socioeconomic data. MOSAIC combines Census statistics with a range of administrative and commercial data, allowing the classification to be updated between Censuses (Farr and Webber 2001).

to unpack the claim that area-level deprivation impacts uniformly on young people's outcomes. In an analysis of how young people's GCSE scores are affected by the areas they live in, Webber and Butler find that educational attainment varies widely among young people from similarly-deprived areas, with particular *types* of deprived area producing results that are worse than would be predicted by their deprivation score alone (Webber and Butler 2007). The area types identified by Webber and Butler as being associated with particularly low GCSE results are the same area types identified in the Cabinet Office report as being associated with particularly low aspirations. Specifically, the sorts of deprived area where GCSE results and educational aspirations are found to be particularly low are large, isolated areas of social housing on the outskirts of large provincial cities (Webber and Butler 2007: 1239; Cabinet Office 2008: 41). As will be discussed in greater detail later in the thesis, this area-level finding provides the basis for selecting Wythenshawe as a case study for the intensive phase of the research, and also for the adoption of the ONS Output Area Classification (OAC) as an explanatory variable for the extensive phase of the research.

The OAC uses data from the 2001 Census to group the 223,060 Output Areas in the UK into groups of similarity based on their Census attributes. The OAC has a nested structure and consists of 7 super-groups, each of which contains a number of groups (21 in total), which in turn contain a number of sub-groups (52 in total). The 7 super-groups and 21 groups are named in order to make the classification more user friendly, as detailed in Table 1.

Table 1 – The Output Area Classification

OAC super-group	OAC group
1 – Blue Collar Communities	1a – Terraced Blue Collar 1b – Younger Blue Collar 1c – Older Blue Collar
2 – City Living	2a – Transient Communities 2b – Settled in the City
3 – Countryside	3a – Village Life 3b – Agricultural 3c – Accessible Countryside
4 – Prospering Suburbs	4a – Prospering Younger Families 4b – Prospering Older Families 4c – Prospering Semis 4d – Thriving Suburbs
5 – Constrained by Circumstances	5a – Senior Communities 5b – Older Workers 5c – Public Housing
6 – Typical Traits	6a – Settled Households 6b – Least Divergent 6c – Young Families in Terraced Homes 6d – Aspiring Households
7 – Multicultural	7a – Asian Communities 7b – Afro-Carribean Communities

The seven OAC super-groups can be summarised by the 2001 Census variables whose values are furthest from the national average in those areas captured by the super-group (Williams and

Botterill 2006). These characteristics, along with some examples of areas with a high concentration of OAs belonging to each respective OAC super-group, are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2 – Characteristics of the OAC super-groups

OAC super-group	Variables with proportions far above the national average	Variables with proportions far below the national average	Example areas
1 – Blue Collar Communities	- Terraced housing - Public renting	- Higher education qualifications - Flats	- Thames Estuary - Hull - Teesside
2 – City Living	- Single person households (not pensioner) - Private rents - Flats - Higher education qualifications - People born outside the UK	- Detached housing - Households with non-dependent children age 5 to 14	- Central London - Central Bristol - Hove
3 – Countryside	- Detached housing - Homeworkers - People working in agriculture - Two or more car households	- Public transport to work - Population density - Flats	- National Parks - Home Counties villages
4 – Prospering Suburbs	- Detached housing - Two or more car households	- Public renting - Private renting - Terraced housing - Flats - No central heating	- London commuter belt - The Wirral - Solihull
5 – Constrained by Circumstances	- Public renting - Flats	- Detached housing - Two or more car households - Higher education qualifications	- Wythenshawe - Salford - Basildon
6 – Typical Traits	- Terraced housing	- Public renting	- Blackpool - West Riding towns
7 – Multicultural	- Minority ethnic population - People born abroad - Flats - Public and private renting - Use of public transport to work	- Detached housing	- Bradford - Birmingham - South Manchester - East London

In summary, spatial effects on occupational aspirations are ambiguous. The limited research into the impact of local labour markets on aspirations suggests that there is no such impact, while the majority of research into the effect of area-level deprivation on aspirations finds no evidence of a relationship between the two. A third avenue of enquiry suggests that geodemographic approaches may have identified divergent patterns of aspiration in different types of areas, but this analysis is focused explicitly on educational rather than occupational aspirations. Current government policy on aspirations nonetheless remains predicated on the existence of a substantial area-level effect on young people's aspirations, and although the analysis which underpins current aspirations policy is focused on educational aspirations, the case for an area-based approach has been extended to broader forms of aspiration. Given the apparent lack of conclusive evidence for an area-based approach to addressing young people's occupational aspirations, this thesis sets out to explore the relationship between occupational aspirations and both area level deprivation and area type, based on data from the Understanding Society dataset. This extensive phase of the research occupies chapters 7, 8 and 9.

7.4 Composition and context

Within spatial accounts of areas, a distinction can be drawn between 'compositional' or 'derived' accounts that appeal to the characteristics of the people who live in an area, and 'contextual' or 'integral' accounts that appeal to characteristics of the area itself which cannot be reduced to facts about the individuals who live there (Macintyre, Ellaway and Cummins 2002; Diez-Roux 1998). For instance, compositional accounts of an area may make use of Census data, unemployment figures, levels of benefit uptake and car ownership – all of which are ultimately derived from data about individuals living in that area. Contextual accounts of an area, on the other hand, might make use of data about the types and number of jobs available in the local labour market, features of the planned environment and information about the types of services and amenities that exist – in other words, data that are not derived from the individual people who live in an area. Contextual and compositional accounts of areas are not mutually exclusive alternatives. Firstly, both types of account shed important light on the characteristics of an area and the features of life within it: there is an important role for both composition and context when describing areas. Area-level descriptions that only make recourse to compositional factors, for instance by describing areas using Census statistics, are restricted to a methodologically individualist view of social scientific explanation in which the world can be described exhaustively by recourse to facts about individual people. Secondly, composition and context are interrelated. For instance, the proportion of people unemployed in an area (a compositional factor) may be shaped by the number and type of jobs available in the local labour market (a contextual factor). Meanwhile, the presence of a high proportion of unemployed people in an area (a compositional factor) may give rise to certain forms of local identity and institutional provision (contextual factors).

Context and composition are often interrelated, then, and play an equally important role in giving a comprehensive account of an area. However, they remain conceptually distinct, and it is important, when describing areas, to be clear whether the labels or typologies we are using refer to compositional or contextual characteristics. The OAC, which is based on data from the Census which refers exclusively to individuals, is paradigmatic of a compositional approach. The historical account of Wythenshawe's development offered in Chapter 5, on the other hand, appeals mainly to contextual factors. Area-level descriptors may also combine compositional and contextual accounts, such as the Index of Multiple Deprivation which is based on scores calculated from a range of compositional data, such as the proportion of people unemployed and the proportion of people in poor health, as well as a range of contextual data such as the level of air pollution and the physical condition of the housing stock.

An awareness of whether the area-level indicators we use refer to composition, context or a combination of both is particularly important when we come to talk about area effects: how the characteristics of areas shape the lives of the people who live within them. If we lose sight of the fact that area typologies and many other area-level descriptors are based largely or entirely on compositional variables rather than contextual variables then we risk producing empty or circular

theories about how individual-level outcomes relating to health, income and educational attainment are shaped by area-level characteristics. There may be no actual 'area effect' producing a particular characteristic in a resident population, beyond the fact that we have pre-defined this as an area type with a high proportion of people exhibiting that characteristic. For instance, there may be a strong association between living in an area described by the OAC as Constrained by Circumstances and having low levels of adult qualifications. However, given that the OAC classification itself is based in part on the proportion of people in an area with formal qualifications, it should come as no surprise to find a high proportion of people in places which are defined as Constrained by Circumstances, such as Wythenshawe, who have no formal qualifications.

Such simple circularity is avoided when the outcomes to be explained are not included as factors in the compositional definition of the area being studied. For instance, research into young people's outcomes which uses area typologies based on adult population Census data, such as the OAC, can be confident that its compositional account of area is not derived from the features it sets out to explain. Even when an individual-level outcome is explained by a contextual area-level factor, or a compositional area-level factor that is not derived from the particular individual-level characteristic to be explained, there is still a requirement to provide a convincing account of how area effects work – which mechanisms are in operation to bring about particular individual-level outcomes as a result of particular area-level characteristics. This thesis attempts to address this requirement in two ways. Firstly, as outlined in Chapter 7, it uses constructs drawn from the literature to capture the types of causal explanation represented by the area-level variables deployed in the analysis. Secondly, the thesis directly explores the mechanisms through which area shapes aspirations, at least in one particular locality, by assessing the ways in which young people themselves link the features of their area to the way they understand and formulate their aspirations.

As laid out in section 6, the area-based focus of this thesis rests on a distinction between space and place. Having considered the existing evidence base regarding the effect of space on occupational aspirations, and the way in which space-derived area effects can be derived from both contextual and compositional factors, the discussion now turns to consider the evidence in relation to the effect of place on occupational aspirations.

8 How place shapes aspirations

There is significant and yet hitherto relatively untapped potential for ideas of place to enter into our understanding of how young people's outcomes within the education system and the labour market are produced within particular spatial contexts. While geodemographic research is beginning to identify the precise spatial characteristics of areas where young people's outcomes are most problematic, we still lack insight into the ways in which young people's interactions with, and understandings of, these spatial contexts produce particular outcomes (Raffo 2011: 3). The notion of place allows us to transcend the examination of how particular, local configurations of

spatially-defined characteristics are associated with particular types of outcome, and move on to new explanatory territory which foregrounds young people's understandings and evaluations of their position within these spatial realities – their sense of place – and how these are implicated in producing outcomes. From a critical realist perspective, turning our attention to place allows us to consider the mechanisms which lie behind particular spatial configurations of outcomes, rather than focusing exhaustively on the spatial distributions themselves.

Recent studies of young people, largely in deprived urban contexts, have begun to pay attention to their involvement with place, shedding light on how young people perceive and understand their context, and how they use these perceptions and understandings to construct both attitudinal and behavioural responses to their environment. Reflecting on data gathered from interviews with school children in London deemed to be at risk of 'social exclusion', Hollingworth and Archer uncover the powerful feelings young people have towards their area – feelings that often consist of "quite visceral emotions such as disgust, fear, hope and fantasy" (Hollingworth and Archer 2010: 587). In addition, the authors find that young people's sense of place is clearly shaped by the way in which their area is seen by outsiders. Young people are "well aware of external judgments made about their school by 'others'… these judgments are internalised and can contribute to negative self-perceptions" but, mirroring the complex ways in which young people respond to deprivation, "they are also resisted and contested by the young people" (2010: 594).

Based on research with young people in two inner-city primary schools with heterogeneous working- and middle class intakes, Reay and Lucey conclude that young people's responses to living in areas of deprivation are complex:

> *"They shared a sense of belonging, but one which was undercut by both a recognition of the stigma associated with living on large estates like theirs and an abhorrence mingled with fascination in relation to the activities of the minority, comprised mainly of adolescents, perceived to be engaging in a range of deviant behaviours."*
>
> (Reay and Lucey 2000: 424)

The authors conclude with an emphatic declaration of the need for space to be made within academia for working class young people's understandings of place and locality, in order to counter the tendency to talk simply in terms of 'deficit' and 'deprivation' when describing their lives from a largely middle class academic perspective (2000: 425).

Despite increasing interest in place, and its construction through young people's understandings of their lived context, only a small handful of studies have considered the relationship between place and young people's aspirations. Green and White consider the role of place in shaping aspirations using data gathered from a survey, focus groups and interviews with young people in

three different deprived contexts: Hull, Walsall and Wolverhampton (Green and White 2007, 2008). The authors focus primarily on the role of social networks and place attachment in shaping aspirations, drawing the majority of their conclusions from observations about the way in which young people's clear but often limited sense of the 'known', alongside entrenched but localised social networks, can produce quite narrow subjective opportunity structures that foreclose opportunities further afield (2007: 47-8). Nonetheless, the authors note that although some young people expressed an attachment to their local area that rejected the possibility of moving away to find work, "around half of the young people surveyed indicated that they would be happy – at least in theory – to leave their home city to pursue their career, recognising that opportunities might take them elsewhere" (2007: 55). Green and White stress the importance of "understanding young people in their social and local context, because where they are frames what they see and how they interpret and act on it" (2007: 58). In this vein, in his study of young people's occupational aspirations in a former colliery village in Derbyshire, Bright finds a particular, deeply localised form of aspiration or, to be precise, a 'resistant counter-aspiration' framed explicitly in relation to the history of work in the area and the norms that surrounded it. For instance, a particular form of radical conservatism that can be seen to have underpinned the specific forms of labour played out in the coal mines – a conservatism which foregrounded the dignity of work and the importance of family – is reflected in young people's aspirations in the area today, which refer frequently to jobs that are secure and able to support a house and a family (Bright 2011: 73–74). Young people's sense of place, which in this location is strongly shaped by local historical patterns of work, clearly shapes their occupational aspirations. In conclusion, Bright argues that aspirations can only begin to be understood if they are seen as situated – as being located in, and shaped by, the complexity of young people's understandings of and responses to their position within a particular, localised history and culture (2011: 75). This thesis is propelled by the same sentiment, and in response, as well as exploring the impact of space on aspirations using data from Understanding Society, it explores the impact of place on aspirations using data gathered from fieldwork with fifteen young people in Wythenshawe. This intensive phase of the research occupies chapters 3 to 6.

As explained in the next chapter, the extensive phase of the research, which explores how young people's aspirations are shaped by space, and the intensive phase of the research, which explores how young people's occupational aspirations are shaped by place, are designed to be complementary parts of a unified research strategy. Firstly, both phases of the research address the same top-level research question: how are young people's aspirations shaped by the areas they live in? Secondly, while the extensive phase of the research is designed to identify aggregate trends in the way that aspirations differ between different types of area, the intensive phase of the research is designed to uncover some of the mechanisms that produce these patterns. Thirdly, the intensive phase of the research is based in precisely the type of area – a deprived, outer urban area of social housing on the edge of a provincial city – which is identified in current geodemographic analysis as being the site of particularly low aspirations. In these three ways, the intensive and extensive phases of the research are designed to provide a complementary and comprehensive analysis of the ways in which young people's occupational aspirations are shaped

by the areas they live in.

9 Summary

This chapter began by considering the policy context within which aspirations are situated. During the course of the past decade successive governments, including the coalition government presently in power, have placed the task of 'raising aspirations' at the heart of their education policy, underpinned by an area-based approach which identifies young people from particular types of neighbourhood as having the lowest aspirations. The chapter then considered how the importance of aspirations as an object of policy intervention and academic study has been based on their association with educational and labour market outcomes. However, while the literature identifies educational aspirations as being firmly linked to educational outcomes, there is less persuasive evidence of a link between occupational aspirations and occupational outcomes. I argue, however, that occupational aspirations are still an important object of study, firstly because they may have utility as markers of the wider occupational territory for which a young person is aiming, and secondly because they function as a useful way of discussing young people's broader identities and attitudes. With occupational aspirations reaffirmed as a valid object of study, the discussion then proceeded to explore their nature and definition in more detail. I argue that the current definition of expectations as realistic aspirations is unsatisfactory, and propose that aspirations and expectations should be kept conceptually distinct: the former as an instance of desire; the latter as an instance of belief.

Having clarified the conceptual language used to describe aspirations, the chapter then went on to consider their determinants as they are discussed in the existing literature. These determinants group broadly into five types of factor which shape occupational aspirations: material hardship; human capital; socialisation; opportunity structures, and social capital. This thesis is specifically concerned with the way in which occupational aspirations are shaped by area, aligning with the present focus of government policy in this field. This defines the top-level research question underpinning the thesis:

Top-level research question

How are young people's occupational aspirations shaped by the area they live in?

The discussion consequently reviewed the existing area effects literature, before turning to consider the definition of 'area', drawing a conceptual distinction between area as 'space' and area as 'place' that lays the foundation for the division of labour between the extensive and intensive phases of the research. The existing literature regarding the ways in which occupational aspirations are shaped by space, and by place, was then considered in turn. In relation to space, the existing literature suggests that neighbourhood type may be a more significant determinant of occupational aspirations than area-level deprivation, despite the latter receiving considerably more attention in studies to date. This sets up the research question for the extensive phase of

the thesis, which focuses on the association between area-as-space and the content of young people's occupational aspirations:

Extensive phase research question

Is the content of young people's occupational aspirations associated with the characteristics of the area they live in?

There is far less literature considering the role of place in shaping young people's occupational aspirations, creating a lacuna in our knowledge of the mechanisms through which young people's perceptions and understandings of their local area shape their aspirations. This sets up the research question for the intensive phase of the research, which focuses on the role of area-as-place in shaping young people's conceptions of their occupational aspirations:

Intensive phase research question

How do young people's conceptions of their area shape their conceptions of their aspirations?

2 Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology on which the thesis is based, which has critical realist foundations and takes additional insights from phronetic social science and embedded research. The methodology has four pillars which define, in turn: the materials social science works with (the ontological basis of the research); the types of knowledge claim it can make (the epistemological basis of the research); the methods it should adopt (the methodic basis of the research), and the goals it should pursue (the normative basis of the research). Together, these pillars of the methodology underpin the research strategy adopted in the remainder of the thesis.

This research is situated within a critical realist perspective, which informs the ontology, epistemology and methods of the research. These three components of the methodology are now considered in turn.

1 The ontological basis of the research

From the perspective of critical realism, reality consists of three domains – the empirical, the actual and the real – which give rise, respectively, to the observational data we are presented with, the events that lie behind these data, and the mechanisms that give rise to these events (Bhaskar 1978: 56). Each domain stands respectively in greater remove from the influence of the human mind. As Danermark et al. summarise:

> *"The empirical domain consists of what we experience, directly or indirectly. It is separated from the actual domain where events happen whether we experience them or not. What happens in the world is not the same as that which is observed. But this domain is in its turn separated from the real domain. In this domain there is also that which can produce events in the world, that which metaphorically can be called mechanisms."*
>
> (Danermark et al. 2002: 20)

Bhaskar's critical realist ontology results from an examination of how we do science. In effect, it is the answer to the question: "what must reality be like in order to make the existence of science possible?" (Danermark et al. 2002: 18). In this way, it is a novel approach to the question of how ontology and epistemology are related to (social) scientific methodology. Rather than define ontology first, and then go on to produce claims about the nature of our knowledge of reality, and how we can produce such knowledge, Bhaskar starts from the point of practice. Given what we do, everyday, not just as scientists but as human beings who function on the basis of being able to make inferences about the relations of objects and the outcomes we expect from particular

circumstances, what can we say about the kind of reality that must exist in order to support such scientific practice? Given this question, the critical realist's answer is fourfold: first comes a confirmation of the existence of a mind-independent reality, after which come three claims about the specific domains of this reality.

Firstly, and as all realists would necessarily argue, despite the fact that any aspiration for science to be in the business of producing 'objective', 'neutral' appeals to 'facts' is undermined by the inherently theory-laden nature of knowledge, science does indeed set out to "discover and map out an already structured and mind-independent world" (Psillos 1999: xvii). There is a mind-independent reality, and, ultimately, science is concerned with formulating knowledge claims about this reality. If there is no such reality, the onus lies with the idealist to explain why we do science, why we research the world and, indeed, why we are so heavily implicated in patterns of language and behaviour that presuppose an external world which we can form more or less accurate knowledge of. Important aspects of our social, as well as scientific, lives become meaningless if we cannot lay claim to knowledge of an external world, no matter how imperfect this knowledge may be. In short, critical realism supports the realist claim that there is a mind-independent reality whilst accepting, counter to 'naive' forms of realism such as positivism, that our knowledge of this reality will always be mediated by our pre-existing conceptual language and understandings. As Danermark et al. argue:

> *"scientific theories can take… different positions on the reality they comment on. They may even adopt the position that no science or knowledge of reality is possible. Or that any knowledge is equally valid – or invalid – as any other. Or, for that matter, that reality only exists in and through our concepts of it. None of this can change the fact that theories deal with something that is independent of the theories themselves. It seems reasonable, in all these cases, to call this something 'reality' or 'the world'."*
>
> (Danermark et al. 2002: 24)

Having argued for the existence of a mind-independent reality, critical realists then go on to argue that this reality is *differentiated* – that is, it consists of separate domains. Again, taking as a starting point the everyday practice of doing science and what this practice tells us about the reality that must exist to support it, critical realists contend that reality consists of three overlapping domains: the empirical, the actual, and the real.

The empirical domain is the domain of experience, consisting of the data with which our senses are presented. The observations we make when we do science are based on the phenomena that we apprehend in this empirical domain. This much is common to other methodological positions such as idealism, which states that our apprehension of these empirical phenomena is all there is, and positivism, which states that the empirical phenomena we are presented with are unambiguous representations of the reality that produced them. However, critical realism diverges

from idealism and positivism in crucial respects. Contrary to idealism, critical realism holds that a mind-independent reality exists and is the source of the phenomena we experience in the empirical domain. Critical realism diverges from positivism in two respects. Firstly, it holds that empirical data are inherently theory-laden, human-shaped artefacts that are not unambiguous because they cannot be distinguished from the conceptual apparatus we use to make sense of them. Secondly, it holds that the fact that we *do* science – that we manipulate events into a particular order, or insert particular controls or stimuli into a given environment to prompt outcomes, demonstrates that "reality and the way it behaves are in important respects not accessible to immediate observation. If 'everything that is' were in the open, if reality were transparent, there would be no need for science" (Danermark et al. 2002: 20). In short, critical realism aligns with other methodological positions in its assertion that observation of the empirical is the starting point for science, but it contends that science is not passive 'data collection', and that to see science as such glosses over the way in which, as scientists, we are implicated in producing findings by intervening in the world, whether this intervention consists of asking people questions or setting out to observe particular phenomena in a particular order. There is an external reality, and our immediate interface with this reality is through the empirical domain. However, the way we do science – the way we engage with the world to produce our findings – suggests that what we experience in the empirical domain is not all there is, and accordingly critical realism asserts that reality is differentiated into two further domains.

The actual domain is the domain in which events occur, whether we experience them or not. If we do experience them, events produce the phenomena we apprehend in the empirical domain. Although events in the actual domain produce phenomena in the empirical domain, what happens in the world is not the same as that which is observed: events occur independently of the experiences in which they are apprehended (Bhaskar 1978: 56). Again, the basis for this ontological distinction is found in the way that we practice science. Phenomena in the empirical domain are always theory-laden, by virtue of their being apprehended and processed by the human mind. But the events that cause these empirical phenomena – events in the real world – cannot be similarly theory-dependent, otherwise there would be no sense in which this world existed in a stable form outside the human mind, which is the core premise of practicing any form of science at all.

Finally, examination of the scientific method reveals that events in the actual domain are not the ultimate object of our activities. Doing science involves systematically manipulating reality, either by intervening in the flow of events or by selectively observing particular events over others. As argued above, science is more than the passive observation of the natural flow of events in the world: there is always some kind of human intervention involved in doing science. We get involved with reality, manipulating the stream of events in a way that makes certain information come to the fore, by setting up experiments or otherwise ordering events, or our observation of those events, in a particular way. Science involves work in order to produce particular patterns of events precisely because reality contains unobservables. Aspects of reality are not immediately

accessible to our senses, and in order to uncover these aspects of reality we have to create a particular sequence of observations. As Danermak et al. argue:

> *"if 'everything that is' were in the open, if reality were transparent, there would be no need for science; indeed no science would exist other than as mere data collection. Consequently, one property of reality is that it is not transparent. It has powers and mechanisms which we cannot observe but which we can experience* indirectly *by their ability to cause – to make things happen in the world."*
>
> (Danermark et al. 2002: 20)

Once again, reflecting on the scientific method, in particular the fact that we have to do work with events to produce scientific knowledge, we can draw conclusions about the underlying ontology that supports these activities: in this case, the existence of a third domain, the real, which consists of mechanisms. The first premise of critical realism, that reality is differentiated into three domains, is neatly summarised by its chief proponent:

> *"Structures and mechanisms then are real and distinct from the patterns of events that they generate; just as events are real and distinct from the experiences in which they are apprehended. Mechanisms, events and experiences thus constitute three overlapping domains of reality, viz. the* real*, the* actual*, and the* empirical*."*
>
> (Bhaskar 1978: 56)

2 The epistemological basis of the research

The second premise of critical realism is that the principle mode of inference through which we gain knowledge of reality is retroductive, whereby "events are explained by postulating (and identifying) mechanisms which are capable of producing them" (Sayer 1992: 107).

Pioneering developments in social science, theoretical developments that further our understanding of the social world, are not pioneering because they discover new empirical situations or regularities, but because "they reconstruct the prerequisites, the structural conditions, of what we recognise from social practice" (Danermark et al. 2002: 103). Some of the most profound advances in our social scientific knowledge have come when an empirical, observable reality that is already familiar is explained by appeal to novel mechanisms. Knowledge of these mechanisms, belonging to the third, or real, domain outlined above, are attained by means of a particular mode of inference – retroduction. Much the same as inductive, statistical social science, retroduction aims to produce general claims. However, as Danermark et al. set

out, there are two types of 'general' claim, and whereas statistical social science works to produce one sort, retroductive social science is in the business of producing the other.

The first type of general claim is about extrapolating knowledge from a small set of empirical observations to a larger set. For instance, by taking representative samples and observing the characteristics of the cases in that sample, we can generalise (with varying degrees of certainty) from our knowledge of these cases to say something about all cases of a particular type. This form of generalisation can be termed 'empirical generalisation', as it never leaves the domain of the empirical in its knowledge statements. The mode of inference used to produce empirical generalisations is inductive, whereby knowledge of a few is extrapolated to produce knowledge of many. The second type of general claim involves producing statements about fundamental properties and structures – the mechanisms that give rise to the events which we observe in the empirical domain. As Bhaskar argues, "scientifically significant generality does not lie on the face of the world, but in the hidden essence of things" (1978: 227). Producing general claims of this sort involves abstraction, whereby events or actions are explained by appealing to the existence of general structures, such as identity and power, which exist universally in the social world but are not themselves observable.

Just as Bhaskar derives his critical realist ontology from the question "what must reality be like in order for social science to be what it is?", retroduction involves asking of a particular, observable phenomenon "what must the underlying conditions or mechanisms be like for things to be this way, and not any other way?" For instance, retroductive inference might produce the general claim that in order for the observable properties of gangs to be as they are, there must be respect, allegiance, identity and other fundamental properties of the social world – structures, or mechanisms, that are capable of producing these empirical attributes. We cannot observe these abstract notions, but they must exist in order to produce the empirical phenomena we observe. Unlike deductive inferences, whose validity can be judged according to the rules of formal logic, there is no standard for judging the validity of a retroductive conclusion. Instead, such conclusions are judged according to the explanatory utility of the mechanisms they postulate.

It is important to note that these underlying mechanisms are not predictive theories such as those found in the natural sciences, which have the status of laws which can be invoked as true premises in deductive arguments to logically entail a conclusion – such as the axiom that opposite charges repel. To the extent that the underlying mechanisms that feature in critical realism are lawlike, or predictive, this is merely to the extent that we might, for instance, say "people who feel an affinity to a crowd will often mirror its actions." Thus, we can talk from a critical realist standpoint of 'underlying laws' or 'abstract mechanisms' whilst accepting that all human behaviour is context-dependent (Flyvbjerg 2001: 42) and that mechanisms used to explain social phenomena can never make infallible predictions because they will seldom have uniform effects in every social situation.

3 The methodic basis of the research

The third and final strand of the critical realist framework upon which this research is based holds that a division between extensive and intensive methods, and research designs that incorporate both, is more fruitful for social science than a qualitative-quantitative distinction and research designs that use either-or (Danermark et al. 2002).

This research avoids the convention, now deeply rooted in the social sciences, of referring to a quantitative-qualitative distinction regarding the data and methods used in research. While this convention has some utility, the distinction at its core is problematic. According to the qualitative-quantitative distinction there are ultimately two forms of data – those in the form of numbers and those in the form of words (Blaikie 2003: 20). The transcript from an interview, for instance, can remain in the form of written words, or can alternatively form the basis of a set of numerical values which describe the data – values which are produced by coding the transcript according to the extent to which it exhibits particular characteristics. If the data remain in a written (qualitative) form, they are amenable to qualitative analysis such as narrative analysis, grounded theory approaches and ethnography. If the words from the transcript are translated into a numerical (quantitative) form, they become amenable to quantitative analysis such as descriptive and inferential statistics.

However, and as Blaikie argues, "the distinction between words and numbers, between qualitative and quantitative data, is not a simple one" (2003: 20). It is widely accepted that the process of qualitizing – the assigning of meaning to numbers, for instance by attaching the labels "high aspiration" and "low aspiration" to particular occupational categories (as I do in the extensive phase of this research) – involves interpretation on the part of the researcher. But the process of quantitizing – the translation of words into numbers, for instance by assigning a voiced intention to do particular sorts of work in the future to particular categories within an occupational schema – also involves interpretation. Even the simple act of counting involves judgements on the part of the researcher as to what makes one phenomenon sufficiently discreet from another along a specified conceptual dimension. As Sandelowski et al. argue:

> *"No clear line can be drawn between quantitizing and qualitizing as they entail each other… conceiving quantitizing as unidirectional – as moving from so-called qualitative to quantitative data – masks the continuous cycling between assigning numbers to meaning and meaning to numbers."*
>
> (Sandelowski, Voils and Knafl 2009: 213)

'Quantitative' and 'qualitative' data are therefore fundamentally common in nature. The one respect in which they are held to differ most – the extent to which they embody interpretative processes – is in fact the one respect in which they are most similar. Quantitative data may sit on

the page in the language of mathematics, but they are as much the result of interpretative interventions by the researcher as the word-based data used by qualitative researchers. And although quantitative and qualitative data may be manipulated with discreet sets of tools, the statistical techniques used to analyse the former involve the same degree of interpretative, theory-laden and concept-driven understandings as the techniques used to analyse qualitative data. Ultimately, social science based on a quantitative-qualitative distinction between different data and methods of analysis is insufficiently alive to "the inherently qualitative nature of all data conversions, as they necessarily entail researchers' judgments about what will constitute data and how to represent them" (Sandelowski, Voils and Knafl 2009: 219).

There are important distinctions between data and techniques commonly termed 'quantitative' and those termed 'qualitative', but these distinctions are based around the scale of the data and the types of inferences made from them, rather than the extent to which one is to do with numbers and one is to do with words. Rather than draw the distinction in terms of quantity/quality, then, it is more useful to refer to data and methods that are 'extensive' in nature and those that are 'intensive' in nature. Extensive data and methods use a large number of cases to support empirically generalizable inferences, while intensive methods use a smaller number of cases to support theoretical abstraction. Intensive and extensive methods, then, are aligned with the two different types of generalisation outlined in section 2 above. They use different scales of data to produce these generalisations, and are suited to producing different sorts of knowledge claims. Whereas extensive methods use inductive inferences to produce empirical generalisations about the empirical domain, intensive methods use retroductive inferences to produce abstract claims about mechanisms in the real domain. This distinction between intensive and extensive methods overlaps with the qualitative/quantitative distinction, but draws the emphasis of the distinction away from a fuzzy distinction between 'data as numbers' and 'data as words' and foregrounds in its place the true basis of the dichotomy – between data of two different scales, supporting different kinds of inferences and generating different sorts of knowledge claims. With the qualitative-quantitative distinction redefined on more useful terms, the discussion now turns to consider the relative merits of extensive and intensive research, and the value of deploying both as part of a complementary research strategy.

While extensive research based on large random samples is particularly useful for gaining knowledge of the extent or distribution of particular phenomena within a group, the degree to which the extent of a phenomenon varies between groups, and the way in which phenomena may be associated with particular circumstances, intensive research based on smaller, purposive samples is particularly useful for gaining knowledge of how phenomena are produced, and how people's beliefs, intentions, decisions and understandings are implicated in their production. Large sample, extensive methods help us to describe the social world around us; small sample, intensive methods help us to understand it. As Flyvbjerg argues:

"The advantage of large samples is breadth, while their problem is one of depth. For the case study, the situation is the reverse. Both approaches are necessary for a sound development of social science."

(2001: 87)

Intensive and extensive data and methods, then, have different strengths and are suited to delivering particular forms of knowledge. Consequently, a prudent approach to conducting social scientific research is to adopt research designs that incorporate both intensive and extensive methods, and thereby deliver the benefits of both.

Accordingly, this research has a mixed methods intensive-extensive research design. It uses extensive methods to assess the degree of association between particular types of area and particular forms of occupational aspiration at an empirically general level. In tandem, it uses intensive methods to gain an in-depth understanding of how young people's perceptions of their local area shape their occupational aspirations, in the particular type of location identified in the extensive phase of the research as being associated with the lowest prevalence of high aspirations. The extensive phase of the research makes general claims of an empirical type which describe the relationship between particular areas and particular forms of aspiration, while the intensive phase of the research uses retroductive inference to uncover the mechanisms through which areas shape aspirations.

In addition to a tripartite critical realist framework which specifies the ontological, epistemological and methodic basis of the research, this research also has a fourth, normative pillar, which is founded in claims about how social science should be conducted which are drawn from the notions of phronetic social science and embedded research. The discussion now turns to consider this normative framework.

4 The normative basis of the research

The normative basis of this research rests on one primary claim: that social science has an imperative to be more public-facing. Danermark et al. argue that "science is primarily a concrete, practical, social activity among others, aiming in one way or another at influencing – transforming, improving, modifying, manipulating – the reality of which it is itself a part" (2002: 24). This argument is closely aligned with Sayer's insistence that social science should steer clear of the 'intellectualist fallacy' which sees science as mere observation or contemplation, and should instead recognise that "arguments about the meaning of masculinity and femininity, about the nature of economic recession or about international politics don't take place outside society as competing external descriptions: they are part of the social process itself" (Sayer 1992: 14). Nonetheless, it is arguable that social science in its present form often fails to live up to this ideal. As Flyvbjerg argues, "despite their importance, the concrete, the practical and the ethical have

been neglected by modern science" (2001: 59), and as a result social science risks becoming an irrelevance to the society it studies. In response, Flyvbjerg calls for a social science that makes a greater effort to connect with public concerns and discourse:

> *"If we want to re-enchant and empower social science... we must take up problems that matter to the local, national, and global communities in which we live... we must effectively communicate the results of our research to fellow citizens."*
>
> (Flyvbjerg 2001: 166)

The imperative for social science to be more public-facing has three practical implications for research design, and I endeavour to respond to each of these in my own research.

First, social scientists must communicate their research to a public as well as an academic audience, and this is particularly true where research involves participation from members of the public. Given that their activities are largely publicly funded and their participants are coproducers of the knowledge they lay claim to, it is unjust to circulate the products of social research to an exclusively academic audience. This duty to communicate our research should not be interpreted narrowly as involving the dissemination of findings in a plain English format. Rather, the communication of our research to the public should be holistic, whereby participants and stakeholders are informed about our proposed activities, procedures, purposes and findings in a way that is meaningful and inclusive. For instance researchers working with young people should take time, and perhaps use a novel format, to explain the research to their participants until there is a firm sense that it has been comprehended, rather than relying on a short verbal explanation followed by the completion of a consent form. Rather than merely informing participants of the methods to be used, researchers should consult with them, offering a range of modes of engagement with the research, and, if possible, the opportunity to experiment with the method beforehand. In response to this imperative, in undertaking the intensive phase of this research I suggested the possibility of using film to my prospective participants, before allowing the young people to shoot their own footage and presenting them with a short film about a summer school they attended to demonstrate the output generated by the method. Over a period of several months, I discussed the details of what participation would involve with my prospective participants, in recognition of the fact that universities, PhD theses and formal interviews would likely be alien to them.

Second, public-facing data collection activities should be seen as fundamentally interpersonal interactions, not merely extractive encounters. Ultimately, this means acting phronetically (Flyvbjerg 2001); invoking an understanding of our participants based as much on our everyday social capabilities as on our academic ones, and working to ensure that the interactions participants have with our research are comfortable and socially meaningful. Ultimately, this duty should shape the questions we wish to ask, the way in which we ask these questions and the

setting in which we pose them. Doing social science phronetically, rather than mechanically, not only generates more meaningful interactions for our participants and minimises the risk of causing harm, but also has positive and far-reaching implications for social science as a discipline, the data it is able to gather and the research findings it can produce. Social science which elevates rather than suppresses the role of the everyday, context-dependent, practical knowledge held by the researcher and the participant ultimately produces findings which come closer to an understanding of the social phenomena under consideration. As outlined in Chapter 3, I spent a year with many of my prospective participants before inviting them to participate in my research, in order to build trust and understanding in the research process. What may seem an inordinately long run-in period by many researchers' standards was deemed necessary here, to reduce the imbalance of power between researcher and participant that stems from inadequate knowledge of what participation will involve. Whilst adhering to the boundaries stipulated by my ethical clearance, I also endeavoured to apply a less mechanistic approach to gaining informed consent from my participants; to approach the granting of consent as more than just 'permission to intrude'. The young people interviewed during the course of my research were pleased, on the whole, to have their opinions listened to, on the record, for others to hear and think about. This was my motivation for designing the consent forms so that different levels of consent could be granted, on top of the minimum required for participation. For instance, participants were given the option to be filmed, audio recorded or neither, and were also given the option to allow these films to be shared with other researchers. The vast majority of participants gave maximum consent. Rather than assuming that participants will be averse to having their interviews recorded or filmed, or having their views made public, or having the raw data from their interviews shared with other researchers, social researchers should instead recognise that by asking members of the public to participate in our research we are giving them a stake in the process of conducting that research, and the findings it produces. By giving participants opportunities for their views, or raw interview data, to be disseminated, we make an important statement: that the producers of this data – our participants – have contributed something valuable that deserves to be received by the widest audience possible, granted our participants are happy for this to be the case. An overly cautious approach to gaining informed consent can foreclose these opportunities and limit the ability of our research to be truly social.

Third, social scientists should create opportunities to produce tangible, positive impacts on the communities they study. All social science has some kind of social impact, regardless of any explicit attempt to generate 'impact' as specified by the Research Excellence Framework. This impact may be generated by research findings, for instance in their ramifications for policy, but can also be produced as part of the process of doing research itself when this involves fieldwork with members of the public and public institutions. As I argue elsewhere, such tangible public-facing outputs are a core benefit of an 'embedded' approach to research which is conducted in partnership with an organisation outside the university (Baars 2014: 10). For instance, this research made two tangible contributions to the school in which it was conducted. Firstly, during the fieldwork period I made a short film of a summer school, held at the construction hub in order to keep students engaged during the summer holiday, which proved to be instrumental in

evidencing the provision to the local authority and securing further funding for future summer schools. Secondly, the interviews I conducted with Year 10 students were embedded into the school's programme of provision and support in the run up to work experience. The interviews allowed the school to ascertain pupils' views on the work experience programme and the support they had received from various sources as they began to think about the world of work. The interviews also supplemented a series of talks, visits and lessons geared towards encouraging pupils to start thinking about their plans after school. In this way, the gathering of data for the purposes of the research complemented the school's own activities. These byproducts of the research, which benefited the school and its pupils, albeit in a modest way, helped to establish a relationship of trust and reciprocity with my research participants and, crucially, their gatekeepers – both of which ultimately improved the quality of my data (Shenton and Hayter 2004: 225).

5 Summary

This research is based on a critical realist methodology, drawing additional insights from phronetic social science and embedded research. This methodology is based on four broad claims: about the materials social science works with; the types of knowledge claim it can make; the methods it should adopt, and the goals it should pursue. Firstly, at the level of ontology, reality consists of three domains – the empirical, the actual and the real – which give rise, respectively, to the observational data we are presented with, the events that lie behind these data, and the mechanisms that give rise to these events. Secondly, at the level of epistemology, the principle mode of inference through which we gain knowledge of reality is retroductive, whereby events are explained by theoretical abstractions which postulate underlying mechanisms. These underlying mechanisms, although general, do not have the same deductive-predictive status as natural science laws. This is due in part to the context-dependent nature of all instances of human action, and the subsequent necessity to consider the role of context in our explanations of these actions. Thirdly, at the level of method, a division between extensive and intensive methods, and research designs that incorporate both, is more fruitful for social science than a qualitative-quantitative distinction and research designs that use either-or. Whereas the power of extensive data and methods lies in their ability to produce empirically general claims, the power of intensive data and methods lies in their ability to be alive to the nuances of context and to generate knowledge of the abstract mechanisms that cause social phenomena. Finally, at the normative level, in order to avoid alienating itself from the subject matter it sets out to explore, social science must endeavour to be truly social and engage the public with its activities. Wherever possible, this engagement should be holistic and cover the design, execution and reporting of research.

This four-part methodology lays the foundations for the conduct of the remainder of the thesis. The overall research strategy underpinning the thesis, including the alignment between data, methods, analysis and the critical realist methodology outlined in this chapter, is presented in Table 3. This table also signposts the specific sections of the thesis where the methodological basis of the research is translated into concrete decisions concerning data, methods and analysis – a process which begins in the next chapter. The empirical research for this thesis is conducted

in two phases: an intensive phase based on phenomenographic analysis of semi-structured interviews conducted with three groups of young people in Wythenshawe, and an extensive phase based on statistical analysis of data from the Understanding Society Youth Questionnaire. As discussed above, this mixed methods design capitalises on the respective strengths of extensive and intensive research techniques: the extensive phase of the research sets out to generate knowledge about the ways in which young people's occupational aspirations vary between different areas, while the intensive phase of the research sets out to generate knowledge about the mechanisms through which area shapes young people's aspirations. The next chapter sets out the methodic basis of the intensive phase of the research.

Table 3 – Research strategy and integration with methodology

Research phase		Intensive phase	Extensive phase
Research question		Are young people's conceptions of their occupational aspirations shaped by their conceptions of the area they live in?	Is the content of young people's occupational aspirations associated with the characteristics of the area they live in?
Method		Phenomenographic analysis of 15 filmed, semi-structured interviews [chapters 3-4]	Logistic regression analysis of survey data from Understanding Society Wave 1 Youth Questionnaire [chapters 7-9]
Alignment between research question and method		• Research question is focused on conceptions of aspirations (and of area) • Semi-structured interviews suited to gathering data on conceptions; allow space to explore 'ways of understanding' particular phenomena [p.56] • Phenomenographic analysis suited to identifying conceptions in this form and quantity of data (~20 interviews) [p.64]	• Research question is focused on content of aspirations • Youth Questionnaire contains detailed data on the content of young people's aspirations (coded to SOC2010 unit groups) • Range of variables relating to individual and parental attitudes, household circumstances, demographics • Possible to link with area-level data (OAC and IMD) via Special Licence • Large youth sample, full age range and comprehensive range of topics allows individual waves of Understanding Society to be used for cross-sectional study [pp.130-133]
Methodological bases of the research	**Ontological basis** • Three domains of reality	• Addresses the 'real' domain of mechanisms by exploring how conceptions of area shape conceptions of aspirations [pp.64-65]	• Addresses the 'empirical' domain by assessing observable regularities between particular forms of aspiration and neighbourhood-level characteristics [p.134]

	Epistemological basis
	• Retroduction and the search for mechanisms, alongside induction and the search for empirical generalisations
		• Contributes fundamental generalisations
		  ○ Conceptions of area function as mechanisms linking area-level factors and young people's occupational aspirations
		• Logic of abstraction used to identify conceptions [p.64]
			• Primarily contributes empirical generalisations
			  ○ Understanding Society's nationally representative sample allows empirical associations to be generalised to the national population [p.130]
			• Also alludes to fundamental generalisations
			  ○ Variables grouped by underlying constructs as a proxy for types of mechanism [p.134]

	Methodic basis
	• Rather than using either 'quantitative' or 'qualitative' methods, research designs should synthesise intensive and extensive approaches
		• Synthesis with extensive phase
		  ○ Choice of fieldwork site informed by reference OAC category in the statistical analysis [pp.57-58; 80-81]
		  ○ Addresses same top-level research question
		  ▪ Explores role of area-as-place [pp.41-42]
			• Synthesis with intensive phase
			  ○ Binary 'aspiration specificity' outcome variable derived from intensive phase findings [pp.141-142]
			  ○ Addresses same top-level research question
			  ▪ Explores role of area-as-space [pp.41-42]

	Normative basis
	• Phronetic social science
	• Embedded research
		• Research embedded within a school
		  ○ Findings used to improve careers provision and secure funding for a summer school [pp.52-53]
		• Extended initial fieldwork period in order to establish participants' understanding of the research process [pp.59-60]
			• Research addresses publicly important question relating to a central tenet of current policy [p.15]
			• Assesses government policy in its own terms to maximise the power of critique
			  ○ Binary PMT/non-PMT 'aspiration level' outcome variable distinguishes between 'high' and 'low' aspirations [p.142]
			  ○ Focus on area type and deprivation as explanatories [p.142-144]

Critical reflections on delivery of the research strategy [pp.193-5]		• Mechanisms (conceptions of area) cannot be generalised beyond the specific fieldwork context • Synthesis with extensive phase could be strengthened by conducting additional fieldwork in an area classified as OAC City Living, in contrast to Wythenshawe • Longitudinal design would allow a more sensitive treatment of the temporal nature of young people's aspirations	• Empirical generalisation of the effects of different factors may be more robust with a hierarchical modelling approach • Estimation of area effects is limited by the absence of data on individual-level educational attainment • Data on area type is relatively dated, and limits the extent to which the findings from the analysis can be empirically generalised to the contemporary spatial context of the UK

3 Intensive research design

This chapter focuses on the design of the intensive phase of the research, and is separated into two main sections, based on a distinction drawn by Madill and Gough (2008: 255). The first section discusses the methods used to collect the data, while the second section provides an overview of the techniques used to analyse this data[2]. The chapter concludes by considering the ways in which the design of the intensive phase of the research endeavours to achieve standards of qualitative validity.

1 Data collection

1.1 Selecting a data collection technique

The aim of the intensive phase of the research is to explore how young people's occupational aspirations are shaped by place. A data collection technique was therefore selected with two criteria in mind. Firstly, it must allow four specific topics to be explored: the content of young people's occupational aspirations; the way in which they understand and talk about these aspirations; the way in which they understand and talk about the area they live in, and the extent to which they see their aspirations as being shaped by place. Secondly, as well as accommodating this firm thematic structure, the method of data collection must be sufficiently flexible to allow a rich account of young people's understandings – both of their aspirations, and of the area they live in – to emerge. With these criteria in mind I opted to use filmed, semi-structured interviews of approximately half an hour in length as my data collection instrument for the intensive phase of the research. The use of semi-structured interviews in youth research allows sufficient structure to aid the comparison of responses between different participants, whilst avoiding the sort of tightly directed, question-answer dialogue which closes down opportunities for young people to expand on their thoughts in detail and address sub-topics they feel are important (Heath et al. 2009: 80–81). As Fylan notes, semi-structured interviews vary widely, with some being more structured than others (2005: 66). My own implementation of the technique for the purposes of this research was towards the less structured end of the spectrum, as I was keen to gather the richest possible data on young people's sense of place and was aware in advance that these constructions of place may call on any number of unexpected themes. Section 1.3 considers the conduct of the interviews in more detail, along with the interview schedule for all interviews conducted as part of the intensive phase of the research. Firstly, however, the discussion turns to consider the selection of participants.

[2] Although this thesis argues for an intensive/extensive interpretation of data and methods as opposed to one based on a qualitative/quantitative binary, the literature on research methods overwhelmingly deals with qualitative/quantitative terminology, and as a result the discussion presented here often has to fall back on the same terminology. Nonetheless, the intensive/extensive and qualitative/quantitative typologies of data and methods essentially overlap, so all references to 'qualitative' data and methods relate to the intensive phase of the research.

1.2 Selecting participants

I took a nested approach to selecting my interviewees, which involved firstly identifying a neighbourhood, then a school within that neighbourhood and then, finally, three groups of young people within that school who I invited to participate in the research. At each stage of the process I invoked Flyvbjerg's typology of strategies for the selection of samples and cases (2001: 79), which specifies the different possible rationales which can be used to justify the exploration of research questions in particular locations, or with particular groups of participants, rather than others. While the focus of the intensive phase of the research here is not to assess whether young people's aspirations are 'high' or 'low', my case selection process was steered by area-, school- and individual-level characteristics which form the focus of present policy and literature on aspirations, primarily because they are associated with the 'lowest' aspirations. In brief, I chose to situate my research in an area which is precisely the type of area identified in existing research as being associated with the lowest aspirations; I then selected a school in the most deprived part of this neighbourhood, given the prevalence in policy of the suggested association between deprivation and low aspirations, and finally I selected three groups of participants with varying predicted attainment at GCSE, given that this is one of the primary individual-level factors associated with different levels of aspiration (Gutman and Akerman 2008). Referring back to Flyvbjerg's typology, the area and school are 'critical' cases, because if aspirations are lower in particular types of area, we would expect them to be low in this neighbourhood, and this school's catchment area. Meanwhile, the three groups of participants represent 'extreme' cases, because they contain young people with both the highest and lowest educational attainment. The rationale behind the selection of the neighbourhood, school and participants is now considered in further detail.

1.2.1 Identifying a neighbourhood

I decided to conduct the intensive phase of the research in an area that represents a critical case in relation to the existing literature. Current government research and policy identifies large, isolated areas of social housing on the outskirts of provincial cities as being associated with the lowest aspirations (Cabinet Office 2008; Department for Communities and Local Government 2011). As detailed in Chapter 1, these neighbourhoods are not necessarily areas of acute deprivation, but are increasingly associated with particularly poor youth outcomes, such as aspirations and GCSE attainment (Webber and Butler 2007; Wilshaw 2013). Existing studies have used Experian's proprietary Mosaic neighbourhood classification (Lupton et al. 2011: 81) to identify these areas, defining them as 'Low Horizons' neighbourhoods (Cabinet Office 2008). While I use an alternative neighbourhood classification system (the OAC) in the extensive phase of my research, my selection of a neighbourhood for the intensive phase of the research draws on the Mosaic classification, as this allows my case selection to directly address the existing literature, and the research base of present policy. I decided to locate my research in a large, peripheral, isolated area of social housing on the outskirts of south Manchester which is classified

by Mosaic as a 'Low Horizons' neighbourhood: Wythenshawe. Chapter 5 provides a more detailed account of Wythenshawe's history and present characteristics, so as to set out the spatial context within which young people in this neighbourhood form their sense of place.

1.2.2 Identifying a school

The school in Wythenshawe within which I conducted my interviews was also selected as a critical case. Taking the claim at the core of present government policy and widely interrogated in the literature, that area-level deprivation impacts negatively on aspirations, the research was conducted in the secondary school situated in the most deprived Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) within Wythenshawe. According to the 2010 Indices of Multiple Deprivation, the LSOA within which the school is located has a national rank of 312 out of 32,482, placing it within the top 1% most deprived areas in the country. Assuming, via the operation of catchment areas, that schools source most of their intake from their immediate locality, this school is likely to have an intake of young people from very deprived areas – likely the most deprived in Wythenshawe. If aspirations are lowest in Low Horizons areas such as Wythenshawe, and are also depressed by deprivation, then we would expect, on the basis of current policy, that the aspirations of young people within this particular school within Wythenshawe will be low: the school represents a critical case nested within a critical case.

1.2.3 Identifying participants

Within the school, three groups of pupils within their final two years of compulsory education were sampled for interview: a group with high predicted attainment at GCSE, a group with average predicted attainment and a group with low predicted attainment. Aspirations are strongly correlated with attainment (Gutman and Akerman 2008: 13) and although causality is likely to be bidirectional (Cabinet Office 2008: 9) educational attainment is arguably one of the primary individual-level determinants of young people's occupational aspirations. Given the significant extent to which attainment is determined by pupil background (Harris et al. 2006: 410), attainment also functions as a useful proxy for a range of factors such as parental socioeconomic status and household resources. The tripartite sample, drawing from the extremes of the attainment distribution as well as from its middle, was therefore designed to allow me to assess whether the effect of place on aspirations varies in accordance with this important factor.

The selection of participants to represent the two extremes of the attainment distribution was aided by the existence of two ready-formed groups, created by the school to offer specific provision for their highest and lowest achieving pupils. Pupils with the highest predicted attainment attended regular 'Gifted and Talented' sessions, while pupils with the lowest predicted attainment attended a 'Construction Learning Hub' for pupils identified as being most at risk of becoming NEET (not in employment, education or training) when they leave school. Meanwhile, participants representing the middle of the attainment distribution were recruited from the school's work experience programme, which captures almost all Year 10 pupils. The overall

sample was broadly representative of the range of attainment present within the school, but made a particular effort to sample from its extremes.

A total of 15 one-to-one interviews were conducted: five with the low attaining group; six with the middle attaining group, and four with the high attaining group. Participants in the low and high attaining groups were all between 15 and 16 years of age, while those in the middle attaining group were all between 14 and 15 years of age. The sampling frame within the school was restricted to boys for two reasons. Firstly, existing policy and research identifies boys as having the lowest aspirations (Cabinet Office 2008; Strand and Winston 2008), particularly those from a White British background which forms the vast majority of Wythenshawe's population. Secondly, the Construction Hub from which the group of young people with low projected attainment was sourced was attended exclusively by boys, and so to aid comparison between the three different groups of participants in the study only boys were approached when I came to recruit participants from the middle- and high-attaining groups.

1.3 Conducting the interviews

The semi-structured interviews were conducted in two phases. Interviews with the high-attaining and low-attaining groups were conducted first, while interviews with the middle-attaining group were conducted later, and adopted a more condensed approach.

Interviews with the high and low attaining groups consisted of semi-structured, filmed, 30-minute interviews with six boys from the Construction Hub and four boys from the Gifted and Talented programme. Regular contact was made with prospective participants before seeking their consent to take part in the research. Students in the Construction Hub were visited on a weekly basis for a period of one year before commencing interviews, in order to establish trust and understanding in the researcher and the research process. I was advised by the school that the boys in this group did not have an easy relationship with the school system, many lacked confidence and some were engaged with a range of external agencies, including youth offending teams and the police, which would likely make them wary of being interviewed. I was therefore aware of the need to approach this group of participants slowly, over an extended period of time, in order for them to have sufficient time and space to learn about my background and research aims. During this one year lead-in period my time at the Construction Hub was spent participating in the construction learning activities, talking with the boys informally whilst playing pool, and undertaking participant observation. In the latter stages of this pre-research period the boys were introduced to the camera and basic filming techniques, and were encouraged to film and interview their peers so as to become familiar with the notion of the filmed interview. The notes I made during this period did not form part of the data analysed in the intensive phase of the research. My lead-in with the Gifted and Talented group consisted of an introductory session facilitated by a member of school staff, followed by a session to introduce and discuss the research themes and a further separate session consisting of a group role playing exercise in which students filmed and produced a short news interview – again with the aim of familiarising prospective participants with the equipment

and techniques that would be used in their interviews. Interviews with the Gifted and Talented participants were held in a range of empty classrooms and meeting rooms, depending on the spaces available on the day. Interviews with the Construction Hub participants were held in an office within the Construction Hub building, separate from the main school site, so as to ensure the interviews took place in familiar surroundings. In both cases, interviews took several months to complete due to difficulties receiving written consent from parents, particularly from participants in the Construction Hub, many of whom had disrupted home lives which presented numerous barriers to the completion of paperwork. After approaching the Research Ethics Committee it was agreed that I could instead gain verbal consent from parents, via the teacher at the Construction Hub. This method of gaining parental consent proved to be much more effective, and I was able to progress with the interviews. An example Appointment Card and Information and Consent form are presented in Appendix A.

Interviews with the middle attaining group consisted of semi-structured, audio-recorded, 15-minute interviews with six boys. The interviews conducted with this group were arranged at shorter notice, which did not allow any time to be spent with participants before the interview. However, participants from this group were in the midst of receiving a range of guidance, presentations and advice on matters relating to the world of work as part of the build-up to their work experience placements at the end of Year 10, and these activities helped to contextualise the interviews I conducted with them, as well as providing a rationale for their involvement in the research. As with participants from the high and low attaining groups, the middle attaining group also received a full information sheet with their consent form, which was distributed several weeks before conducting the interviews. Interviews with the Year 10 group took place in a meeting room on the main school site, and were scheduled back-to-back in the course of a single afternoon.

The interview schedule for all interviews conducted as part of the intensive phase of the research is presented in Figure 1. As Fylan argues “a successful semi-structured interview is a conversation with the participant” (2005: 69), and as a result the questions in the schedule were not necessarily followed in the same order in each interview. The precise phrasing of the questions also varied, depending on their context in the interview, in order to facilitate a natural dialogue. Despite these forms of variation, each interview covered all of the themes in the schedule, and most interviews followed broadly the same question ordering.

Figure 1 – Interview schedule for the intensive phase of the research

Thematic section	Questions
1) Wythenshawe	a) Do you live in Wythenshawe? If so, how long have you lived here for? b) Can you tell me a bit about Wythenshawe?
2) Local labour market	a) What kinds of jobs are there in Wythenshawe? b) Are there jobs in Wythenshawe that you would want to do?
3) Occupational aspirations	a) What's a good job? b) What job would you like to do when you're older?
4) Aspirations and area	a) Do you know anywhere outside Wythenshawe that's different to round here? b) If you'd grown up somewhere different/like that, do you think your ideas about the future might be different?
5) Structure and agency	Do you feel like you've been able to make your own choices about the future, or do you feel like you've been steered down a particular path?
6) Mobility	In the long run, do you plan to stay in Wythenshawe or would you think about moving somewhere else?

As stated in the previous chapter, I conducted my interviews within a particular normative framework which aimed to make the research process as approachable and meaningful as possible for my participants. In the case of the interviews with the high and low attaining groups, this meaning was created by engaging in an extended initial period of familiarisation alongside film-based activities. In the case of the interviews with the middle attaining group, this meaning was created by timing the interviews to coincide with their work experience period. I also aimed to deliver tangible, albeit modest benefits for my participants and for the school, by producing a short film of the construction summer school and feeding back pupils' views on the quality of careers guidance to the senior management team as part of an 'embedded' approach to research (Baars 2014).

2 Data analysis

A phenomenographic approach was taken to analysing the data from the interviews, as this approach is ideally suited to my research questions, the nature of my interview data and the critical realist methodology underpinning the research. The discussion now turns to consider the phenomenographic approach in detail.

2.1 Phenomenography

The intensive phase of the research sets out to explore the ways in which young people's occupational aspirations are shaped by place – defined as the way in which they experience, interpret and make sense of the area they live in. As a result, I decided to adopt a

phenomenographic approach to analysing my interview data (Marton 1981; Svensson 1997; Säljö 1997) because, as summarised by Hasselgren and Beach, "phenomenography is research which is simply concerned with how things are understood, the experiences of the process of formation of understandings at individual levels, and their distribution in specific collectivities" (1997: 195). As a method of analysis, then, phenomenography is clearly suited to interrogating the research question driving this phase of the research, which is concerned with the ways in which young people think about, make sense of and understand Wythenshawe, and the ways in which these conceptions of 'place' shape their aspirations. The focus of the intensive phase of the research is not on the objective characteristics of Wythenshawe (space), but on young people's own understandings of Wythenshawe (place). Likewise, the focus in this phase is not on the content of young people's aspirations (the jobs they aspire to do) but their conceptions of their aspirations (the way they understand and talk about their imagined futures).

Phenomenography sets out to understand individuals' conceptions of reality, where 'conceptions' are simply "different ways of understanding" a given phenomenon in the world (Marton and Pong 2005: 335). Phenomenography and phenomenology share an orientation towards experience – both containing the term 'phenomenon' which originates from the Greek term 'phainomenon' or 'things appearing to view', but the crucial difference between phenomenography and phenomenology is that phenomenography seeks knowledge of individuals' reflective understandings of a given phenomenon, whereas phenomenology focuses its attention on the pre-reflective level of consciousness – the 'essence' of the phenomenon itself (Marton 1981: 181). As Larsson and Holmström outline:

> *"Phenomenography is the study of how people experience, understand and conceive of a phenomenon in the world around us. The investigation is not directed at the phenomenon as such, but at the variation in people's ways of understanding the phenomenon."*
>
> (Larsson and Holmström 2007: 56)

Marton expresses this as the difference between first- and second-order perspectives, where phenomenology is conducted from the former and phenomenography is conducted from the latter:

> *"From the first-order perspective we aim at describing various aspects of the world and from the second-order perspective… we aim at describing people's experience of various aspects of the world."*
>
> (Marton 1981: 177)

Phenomenographic analysis can be carried out on data gathered using a range of techniques,

including naturally occurring data which has not been collected specifically for research purposes. However, phenomenographic approaches traditionally work with interview data, and, as Larsson and Holmström argue, a dataset consisting of around 20 transcribed open-ended interviews is the normal basis for phenomenographic analysis (2007: 56). The literature does not indicate a clearly discernible 'phenomenographic' mode for conducting these interviews; any interviewing technique that generates data on individuals' ways of understanding a given phenomenon of interest is a suitable basis for a phenomenographic study. As well as being suited to my specific research questions, then, phenomenographic analysis is also appropriate for use with the data generated by my interviews.

2.2 Conceptions

Given a set of interview data, the ultimate aim of phenomenographic analysis is to discern the various 'ways of understanding', or conceptions, present in what a group of individuals say in relation to a given phenomenon, and to whittle these conceptions down to a limited set of 'categories of description' which are "a way of describing a way of experiencing something" (Marton 1995: 175). This process is guided by abstraction (Larsson and Holmström 2007: 56), the mode of thought whereby we separate or isolate one particular aspect of a phenomenon from all the other properties belonging to that phenomenon (Danermark et al. 2002: 42). For instance, in their study of students' conceptions of 'price', Marton and Pong observe, from the various ways in which young people respond to their questions, two main ways of understanding 'price': 'price as reflecting the inherent value of the object' and 'price as reflecting market conditions' (Marton and Pong 2005: 338). These two conceptions are arrived at by reading and re-reading the interview transcripts iteratively until a handful of conceptions or 'categories of meaning' in relation to 'price' are arrived at, each with a particular essence that is amenable to concise description. These categories of meaning are abstracted from the interview data in that their basic properties, such as being 'market-based understandings' or 'inherent value-based understandings', effectively capture the 'general sense' of that particular way of understanding, given all the other utterances in the interviews (Marton and Pong 2005: 338).

Categories of meaning have two essential components: a 'referential aspect' which identifies how participants understand and talk about a particular phenomenon when they adopt a particular conception, and a 'structural aspect' which identifies what participants refer to – the specific features that are focused on by the participants when they adopt a particular conception (Marton and Pong 2005: 336). The referential aspect of a conception is its 'general sense': here, for instance, 'price as reflecting the inherent value of the object' is the referential aspect of the first conception of price. Once conceptions have been identified by their general sense or referential aspects, analysis moves on to discern the specific features or 'structural aspects' of each conception. By way of example, Marton and Pong note that when they spoke to students about their conceptions of 'trade', two main conceptions could be abstracted from the data: the referential aspect of the first conception is that trade is a win-win activity for both trading partners, while the referential aspect of the second conception is that trade is a zero-sum trade-off activity.

Further analysis revealed that students who had the win-win conception of trade tended strongly to focus on the products involved in trade, whereas students with the zero-sum conception of trade tended strongly to focus on the money involved in trade. Products and money therefore constitute the structural aspects of the two different conceptions of trade. The distinction between the referential and structural aspects of conceptions is summarised by Larsson and Holmström:

> *"The structural and referential aspects of the studied phenomenon are essential. That is, we study both the [structural] "what aspect" of the phenomenon, and the [referential] "how aspect" of it. When the informants talk about this phenomenon: what do they talk about and how do they talk about it?"*
>
> (Larsson and Holmström 2007: 57)

Phenomenographic analysis should identify a limited number of conceptions, or categories of meaning – usually between two and six (Larsson and Holmström 2007: 56). These 'findings' – the categories of meaning abstracted from the data, constitute what phenomenographers call the 'outcome space'.

In summary, phenomenography is an approach to qualitative data analysis which sets out to gain knowledge of conceptions, or the ways in which people understand a given phenomenon. Phenomenography works with data from around 20 semi-structured interviews, analysing these interviews iteratively to produce two to six abstracted conceptions or 'categories of description' in the outcome space. Conceptions are defined by their referential aspects – the way in which people talk about a phenomenon – and by their structural aspects – the things that people refer to when talking about the phenomenon to which the conception refers. Throughout the analysis interview data is taken to represent individuals' conceptions (their understandings of a particular phenomenon) and the aim is to study conceptions rather than the discourse within which they are brought to bear in the interview setting. Phenomenography is alive to the fact that interview discourse is always performative to some extent (St Clair and Benjamin 2011; Säljö 1997: 177), but it treats discourse as a meaningful way of accessing people's conceptions of phenomena in the world around them. The decision to adopt a phenomenographic approach to data analysis for the intensive phase of this research has three primary motivations. Firstly, phenomenography is geared towards exploring the research question underpinning this intensive phase of the thesis, which is concerned with young people's understandings of the areas they live in and the ways in which these understandings shape the way they understand and talk about their occupational aspirations. Secondly, phenomenographic analysis is ideally suited to interview data of the type and scale gathered here. Finally, phenomenography aligns with the critical realist methodology underpinning this thesis in two ways. Firstly, abstraction, the thought process which generates categories of meaning from interview data in phenomenographic analysis, is the core mode of inference within critical realist approaches to social science (Danermark et al. 2002: 42). Secondly, phenomenography's focus on conceptions mirrors critical realism's focus on mechanisms, in that

young people's perceptions and understandings of the area they live in are understood as fundamental to the way in which they formulate desires and plans for action – their sense of place is understood as a mechanism which produces their aspirations. The following chapter turns to consider the framework upon which the phenomenographic analysis was conducted. Firstly, however, the discussion turns to briefly consider the ways in which I endeavoured to ensure the validity of the findings from the intensive phase of the research.

3 Qualitative validity

Lincoln and Guba (1985) outline four concepts that can be invoked to measure the trustworthiness of a piece of qualitative research. Their criteria for trustworthiness map onto the criteria for 'validity', which are standardly invoked in quantitative research, in the following ways: 'credibility' is substituted for internal validity, 'transferability' is substituted for external validity, 'dependability' is substituted for reliability and 'confirmability' is substituted for objectivity (Lincoln and Guba 1985: 219; 289). Credibility involves establishing that the results of a qualitative enquiry are credible or believable from the perspective of the participants involved in the research. Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings from a qualitative study can be transferred to other contexts; maximising transferability is primarily a matter of describing the context within which the research was conducted in as much detail as possible. Dependability emphasises the need for the researcher to account for the ways in which the context of the research could change, even if it were carried out in an identical fashion, with the same participants. The notion of dependability embraces the fact that, strictly speaking, the same piece of research can never be conducted twice – the job of the researcher is to explain why this is the case with respect to their particular project. Finally, confirmability refers to the degree to which the results of a study could be confirmed or corroborated by others – the appeal here is not to objectivity in the sense of an appeal to 'truths' or 'facts' that exist independently of human recognition, but rather whether other researchers feel that the individual conducting the study has sufficiently accounted for the ways in which their own particular perspective has shaped the findings (Trochim 2006). I have endeavoured to maximise the trustworthiness of the findings from the intensive phase of the research in the following ways. To promote the credibility of my findings, I spent a prolonged period of time with the majority of my participants before inviting them to be interviewed, during which I ensured that the rationale behind my research and the questions I wanted to ask were sensible and meaningful to them. By spending time building a relationship of trust with my participants I endeavoured to make the process of the research, and its results, credible and believable from their perspective. To promote the transferability of my findings I have provided a detailed description of the characteristics of my participants and, in Chapter 5, an extended description of Wythenshawe, in order to make the specific context of my fieldwork clear to other researchers. To promote the dependability of my findings I have acknowledged that aspirations are to some extent performative in nature (St Clair and Benjamin 2011) and that my participants may well have provided different responses to my questions on a different occasion. I also acknowledge, given the developmental nature of aspirations (Gottfredson 2002), that even if the specification of my study was replicated in detail at a future stage, the aspirations of my

participants may well be different to those voiced here. Finally, I endeavoured to promote the confirmability of my findings by discussing my results with school staff, albeit in an informal manner, in order to seek an external perspective on the conceptions I had identified. If I were to repeat the study, I would seek to conduct the analysis with another researcher, as exemplified in the phenomenographic analysis of youth transitions conducted by Raffo and Reeves (2000), in order to enhance the confirmability of my findings.

4 Summary

This chapter outlined the design of the intensive phase of the research, from the selection of a data collection technique and the recruitment of participants through to the phenomenographic technique used to analyse the data gathered. The chapter concluded by considering the ways in which I endeavoured to maximise the validity of the findings from this phase of the research. The next chapter turns to consider the process of conducting the phenomenographic analysis in detail.

4 Intensive analysis

Having provided an overview of the phenomenographic approach to analysing interview data in the previous chapter, including its suitability for the research questions and data underpinning this phase of the research, this chapter considers in detail the procedure adopted to conduct the analysis, from defining the terms of the analysis and coding clips, to refining the coding scheme, summarising the data and formulating the conceptions of Wythenshawe, and of occupational aspirations, held by the young people I interviewed during the intensive phase of the research.

1 A framework for the analysis

A basic framework for conducting the phenomenographic analysis is outlined in Figure 2, before the discussion turns to each stage of the analysis in detail.

Figure 2 – Outline of framework for conducting the phenomenographic analysis

Stage	Processes	
1) Define terms	• Define phenomena for which conceptions are sought - 'Wythenshawe' and 'occupational aspirations'. Specify criteria for identifying utterances in the interview data which relate to the phenomena being studied	
2) Prepare data	• Import interview media into Transana • Transcribe interview media and timecode transcripts to produce an episode for each interview, consisting of one video file linked to a written transcript • Produce 'clips' by extracting sections of episodes containing utterances relating to Wythenshawe, and utterances relating to occupational aspirations, guided by the definitions and criteria specified above • Place all clips relating to Wythenshawe into a collection, and all clips relating to occupational aspirations into a separate collection. These collections contain the raw data from which conceptions of Wythenshawe and conceptions of aspirations will be compiled in the analysis	
3) Code clips	• Code clips by applying 'keywords' which identify their referential and structural aspects, in order to produce an initial coding scheme	*These stages of the phenomenographic analysis were conducted for conceptions of Wythenshawe only*
4) Refine coding scheme	• Produce a keyword summary report to summarise the structure of the coding scheme and the relative frequencies of its constituent codes • Refine and reduce the coding scheme by renaming keywords, merging keywords and deleting redundant keywords based on their relative frequency in the data and their theoretical overlap	
5) Finalise clip coding and coding scheme	• Run a check on the coding of each clip in accordance with the refined coding scheme, making coding modifications where necessary • Make further modifications to the coding scheme if possible refinements are identified at this stage • Run further checks on the coding of individual clips until no more than 5% require coding modifications	

6) Summarise the data	• Produce tree maps to determine the frequency of different keywords and keyword groups in the data, for the entire dataset and for individual interviews	
7) Formulate conceptions	• Steered by the structure of the overall coding scheme and its principle code groups and codes, abstract the different 'general senses' of Wythenshawe from the data to produce 2-6 conceptions. Use the code maps applied to each interview to assign each interview to a conception of Wythenshawe. Where a set of conceptions does not arise from the data, such as with conceptions of aspirations, instead use the primary code groups in the data to identify the main themes that recur in each of the interviews, and use these to define individualised conceptions of aspirations for each interview	

1.1 Define terms

Two phenomena are focused upon in the analysis here: Wythenshawe, and occupational aspirations. The outcome of the analysis will consist of a set of young people's conceptions of Wythenshawe and a set of conceptions of their occupational aspirations. Markers of 'conceptions of Wythenshawe' and 'conceptions of occupational aspirations' are now defined in detail, providing a clear set of criteria by which to identify utterances about these phenomena in the interviews. Conceptions of Wythenshawe are prompted by questions in sections 1, 2, 4 and 6 in the interview schedule outlined in the previous chapter. The questions in each of these respective sections approach the notion of 'Wythenshawe' from a different angle, encouraging participants to explore the full range of ways in which they might think of Wythenshawe as a place. Questions in section 1 are designed to prompt an open, exploratory set of ideas about what Wythenshawe means to the participant. Questions in section 2 explore the idea of Wythenshawe as a labour market with particular forms of work and job opportunities. Section 4 is designed to encourage participants to see Wythenshawe in comparative perspective and to examine the notion that aspects of their self and identity, such as their aspirations, might differ if they'd grown up somewhere else. Section 6 is designed to encourage participants to provide an overall evaluation of their affective disposition towards Wythenshawe given the various ways in which their idea of 'place' has been explored in the preceding sections of the interview. Utterances relating to conceptions of Wythenshawe may contain the word 'Wythenshawe' or references to 'round here', 'neighbourhood', 'nearby' as well as local colloquialisms such as 'Wythy' and so forth. Participants might talk about a range of attributes when referring to Wythenshawe: its material environment, the people who live there, its history, their daily routines and experiences within its boundaries, its reputation and so on. The attributes that participants refer to when they speak about Wythenshawe will be important markers of their 'ways of thinking' about, or conceptions of, Wythenshawe.

Conceptions of occupational aspirations will be identified in the data as any utterance relating to a form of desire for a specific job, a type of role or a form of work. Utterances referring to occupational aspirations are prompted primarily by the question in section 3 "what job would you like to do when you're older?" but, as with conceptions of Wythenshawe, the interview provides a number of other opportunities to explore the content of young people's aspirations, using a range

of prompts. These are the question in section 3 “what’s a good job?”, in section 2 “are there jobs in Wythenshawe that you would want to do?”, and in section 4 “if you’d grown up somewhere different, do you think your ideas for the future might be different?”. Aspirations might be voiced in a range of ways: “I’d like to be…”, “Ideally, I see myself as…”, “Where I want to be is…” and so on, although the analysis will focus in particular on the ways in which young people talk about their aspirations: referential features such as whether they talk about their occupational aspirations in specific terms or general terms, and structural features such as whether they refer to the remuneration of a job or its roles, for instance.

With criteria specified for identifying utterances in the interviews that relate to conceptions of Wythenshawe and conceptions of occupational aspirations, the discussion turns to how the interview data were prepared for coding in Transana.

1.2 Prepare data

Transana is a piece of software that allows researchers to transcribe, timecode, organise and code audio-visual data. It is classified as part of the CAQDAS (computer assisted qualitative data analysis software) family, although strictly speaking Transana is a tool for manipulating audio-visual data into a more readily analysable form rather than a tool for conducting analysis itself. Transcripts can be timecoded in Transana so that when video/audio data are split, rearranged and regrouped they are accompanied by the relevant portions of transcript. Transcripts are searchable, allowing the researcher to look for key utterances such as those identified above as markers of conceptions of aspirations and conceptions of Wythenshawe, and sections of media and transcript can be coded in order to specify their attributes for analysis. Transana is unique in allowing multiple simultaneous transcripts and media files, allowing for the analysis of extremely complex video/audio data (Wisconsin Center for Education Research 2012), but it is fundamentally a simple piece of software for manipulating audio-visual data into a form that is easier to analyse.

Audio and video files of the interviews conducted were imported into Transana, transcribed and timecoded. An audio or video file and its accompanying timecoded transcript is called an ‘episode’ in Transana. Episodes were reviewed in real time, and any utterances relating to Wythenshawe – identified in accordance with the criteria specified in Stage 1 – were extracted to produce ‘clips’. In Transana, a ‘clip’ is a segment of audio-visual data extracted from an episode, along with its accompanying segment of transcript. All clips relating to Wythenshawe were placed into a ‘collection’ (a folder in Transana which contains clips which are related in some way, and which can have analytic reports run on it which describe the features of its constituent clips on aggregate). A total of 193 clips relating to interviewees’ conceptions of Wythenshawe were extracted from the data. The same process was conducted in order to produce a collection of clips relating to interviewees’ conceptions of their occupational aspirations**:** a total of 116 clips relating to interviewees’ conceptions of their occupational aspirations were extracted from the data. Data preparation therefore culminated in the formation of two complete collections: one

consisting of clips representing all utterances across all interviews relating to conceptions of Wythenshawe; the other consisting of clips representing all utterances across all interviews relating to participants' conceptions of their occupational aspirations.

The phenomenographic analysis can now proceed with both collections. A different approach was taken to analysing conceptions of Wythenshawe and conceptions of aspirations. In its exploration of the young people's conceptions of Wythenshawe, the analysis sought to reduce the data by means of extensive coding in order to aid comparability across all interviewees and facilitate the construction of a typology of 2-6 conceptions of Wythenshawe, to which individual young people could be assigned. In its exploration of the young people's conceptions of their aspirations, on the other hand, the analysis identified the main overarching themes that defined young people's conceptions of their aspirations and then, without reducing the data further through extensive coding, turned to consider how each of these themes played out in each individual interview. As discussed in detail in the results in Chapter 6, this approach effectively produces an individualised conception of aspirations for each young person, rather than mapping them onto a typology of conceptions. This approach minimises data reduction in relation to the primary phenomenon of interest to this thesis – young people's occupational aspirations. It also responds to the data, which did not yield a compact typology of conceptions of aspirations, in the same way that proved possible with conceptions of Wythenshawe. Rather than force the data to fit a typology, I decided it was more fruitful to leave the coding of aspirations at a high level, once the three overarching themes which were present in all of the young people's conceptions of their aspirations had been identified, and then to explore how each young person's individual conception of their aspirations could be defined, or 'plotted', in relation to these themes. Sections 3 through 6, which relate to the development of a detailed overarching coding scheme, therefore relate specifically to the analysis of conceptions of Wythenshawe.

1.3 Code clips

Random numbers were assigned to each episode (interview) in order to generate a random schedule for passing through the episodes for coding. A second, third and fourth distinct set of random numbers and schedules was then assigned to the episodes, to allow for as many passes of the data as required, as per Stage 5. The first pass of the data involves two simultaneous tasks: constructing the coding scheme and applying these codes to clips. The coding scheme develops organically during the first pass, such that each time a clip is coded its code can either be drawn from the stock of codes in the coding scheme or, if a suitable code is unavailable, a new code can be added to the scheme. The early stages of the first pass of the data are dense with code creation, while towards the latter end of the first pass the coding scheme is largely established – each new clip can generally be coded from the stock of existing codes in the scheme. At this stage, the process of coding individual clips and the process of developing the coding scheme are not only running in parallel but are in fact interdependent. Decisions about which codes to assign to particular clips (coding clips), and which codes are needed to capture different aspects of the data effectively (the content of the coding scheme) are being made alongside each other;

the development of an initial coding scheme and the application of an initial set of codes to each clip in the collection is based on a continuous dialogue between the clips and the coding scheme. By the end of Stage 3, all of the 193 clips in the Wythenshawe collection were coded in line with an initial coding scheme. The content and structure of the coding scheme, and the coding of each clip, both now need refining. This is the focus of Stages 4 and 5.

1.4 Refine coding scheme

Stage 4 begins by summarising the coding scheme and assessing the utility of its codes, by producing a Keyword Summary Report and a Collection Report in Transana. Examples of both are provided in Figures A and B in Appendix B. The Keyword Summary Report maps out the structure of the coding scheme with its keywords nested inside keyword groups, while the Collection Report lists each of the clips in a collection along with a summary of how each clip has been coded and, finally, the frequency with which each of the keywords in the coding scheme has been deployed. At a glance it is possible to see that while some keywords may have been deployed multiple times in the data, others may only have been deployed once. The main aim of Stage 4 is to reduce the coding scheme, primarily by merging little-used codes with others that are more frequently deployed in the data, or simply ejecting codes from the scheme. A coding scheme with too many codes cannot group together theoretically related data to an extent that produces easily recognisable patterns. However, a coding scheme that has been overly reduced will fail to capture important nuances in the data – the difference, for instance, between someone having negative feelings towards Wythenshawe's material environment and having negative feelings towards the people who live there. Refining the coding scheme therefore involves being critical about *why* a code has a low frequency in the data. If a code's low frequency is an artefact of the data itself – if the code is picking something out in the data that is 'real' but happens not to occur very often – then the code should be retained. However, if a code's low frequency is an artefact of the organic coding process outlined above; if for instance it is a code created early on in Stage 3 and then made redundant because its meaning was captured by a new code, the code should be merged with that new code. Examples of refinements to the coding scheme made during Stage 4 of the analysis are presented in Figure C in Appendix B.

1.5 Finalise clip coding and coding scheme

With the coding scheme refined and reduced, Stage 5 involves validating the coding of each of the clips in the collection in light of the changes made to the coding scheme. This involves at least two passes of the data. The first pass should involve a number of recodes, partly because the coding scheme has been adjusted but primarily because the data is now more familiar and nuances in the coding scheme, and their power to distinguish between subtly different 'ways of understanding' in the data, are better appreciated. Here, around a third of the clips required some modification to their coding on the first pass. On the second pass, this dropped to less than 5% of the clips in the collection, indicating that I had reached a consensus in my mind as to how the clips should best be coded.

1.6 Summarise the data

The data in the collection are now ready to be summarised at different levels. Firstly, the frequency of different keywords and keyword groups can be summarised for the entire collection, giving a sense of the relative frequency of different themes across all the interviews. These treemaps are presented in Figures D and E in Appendix B. Each individual interview can be summarised in the same way**.** Secondly, a matrix summarising the interviews according to each keyword group can also be produced, allowing interviews to be compared side by side (see Figure F in Appendix B). Finally, a further-reduced summary can be used to compare interviews according to their most frequently occurring keyword(s) (see Figure G in Appendix B). These various summaries of the data in the collection are useful aids during the final stage in the analysis – formulating conceptions in the outcome space.

1.7 Formulate conceptions

The goal of the final stage of the analysis is to differentiate the interviews into 2 to 6 categories, or conceptions of Wythenshawe. Conceptions should ultimately be differentiated according to their general sense, or how participants talk about Wythenshawe, and elaborated by their structural aspects – the specific features of Wythenshawe that are appealed to. In short, conceptions are identified according to their referential aspects and described according to their structural aspects**.** As the analysis is exploratory in nature, the analytical dimensions along which conceptions will differ in their referential aspect are not stipulated in advance. For instance, conceptions may be distinguished by their overall positivity or negativity towards Wythenshawe, their tendency to talk in comparative or absolute terms about Wythenshawe, an understanding of Wythenshawe as a collectivity of people or as a built environment, and so forth. In accordance with the critical realist framework underpinning the thesis, the logic of abstraction drives this process of differentiating between the different conceptions latent in the data. In the case of conceptions of aspirations, individualised conceptions were defined for each young person by abstracting the three main themes in the data which recurred across all interviews, using the primary keyword groups established in the analysis, and plotting each interview within a three-dimensional space defined by the dichotomies of each of these themes.

2 Summary

This chapter outlined in detail the process by which I conducted the phenomenographic analysis of the interview data generated by my fieldwork in Wythenshawe, from defining the terms of the analysis and coding clips, to refining the coding scheme, summarising the data and formulating the conceptions of Wythenshawe, and of occupational aspirations, held by the young people I spoke to. Phenomenography is an established mode of analysis which is ideally suited to both the data and research questions underpinning the intensive phase of my research. It provides a highly structured method for analysing young people's conceptions of their aspirations, and of the area they live in, which necessitates some degree of data reduction. However, as demonstrated in

Chapter 6, this reductive approach allows the associations between conceptions of area and conceptions of aspirations to be identified more easily by means of summary matrices, whilst allowing for the raw data from young people's interviews to be called upon in order to substantiate the mechanisms producing these associations. The phenomenographic approach is also adaptive: in the absence of an emergent typology of conceptions of aspirations, I was able to use the primary keywords from the initial coding scheme to define a unified set of axes which specified each young person's individualised conception of their aspirations. Before proceeding to the results of the phenomenographic analysis in Chapter 6, the next chapter presents an overview of Wythenshawe in order to establish the spatial context for young people's conceptions of the area.

5 Wythenshawe

The aim of the intensive phase of the research is to explore how young people's sense of place shapes their occupational aspirations. As outlined in Chapter 3, the fieldwork for the intensive phase of the research takes places in Wythenshawe as it is representative of the types of area that are problematised by current policy on aspirations. This chapter presents an overview of Wythenshawe, from its history to its present characteristics, in order to demonstrate why it is an apt fieldwork site for the intensive phase of the research, and also to establish the spatial context within which young people's conceptions of the area – explored in the following chapter – are formed.

1 A brief history of Wythenshawe

Wythenshawe is a large area of social housing to the south of Manchester, bounded to the north by the M60 motorway and the suburbs of south Manchester, and to the south by Manchester Airport and the countryside of north Cheshire. Lying just inside the southern boundary of Manchester City Council, Wythenshawe occupies a site of 5500 acres and houses a population of just under 75,000 according to 2009 mid-year estimates (Manchester City Council 2011). Built between the 1930s and the 1960s by the then Corporation of Manchester to rehouse workers from inner-city slum clearance areas such as Hulme, Wythenshawe materialised at a time when cities up and down the country were beginning the process of sweeping away old housing stock and building modern estates in their place, amidst huge post-war demand for homes. In many ways Wythenshawe is typical of other areas of social housing built during the interwar and early postwar years. Slum clearance accompanied by large scale new housebuilding was taking place across the UK at the time Wythenshawe was being developed, and before the popularity of high-rise developments took hold in the 1960s, edge-of-city, low-rise estates in locations similar to Wythenshawe's were common. The desire to build bigger, more modern homes on the edges of cities to elevate workers from cramped, damp and smoggy rows of inner city Victorian terraces lay behind many social housing schemes of the early 20th century. However, Wythenshawe is relatively unique – one of only a small handful of estates to be built under a pioneering new set of planning principles that briefly rose to prominence in the early 1900s. The principles on which Wythenshawe was planned distinguished it from the majority of housing being built at the time, and the details of Wythenshawe's genesis are therefore central to a proper understanding of its present state.

Wythenshawe was conceived as part of the garden cities movement, a revolutionary set of ideas within planning that took hold in the UK at the beginning of the 20th century. The garden cities movement was built on grand ideals about how the working people of industrial cities should be rehoused, alongside detailed prescriptions as to how these ideals could be achieved through

careful planning of the built environment. The ideals of the garden city were summarised in Ebeneezer Howard's *Three Magnets* diagram which illustrated how the benefits of 'town' – labour, amenities, community – and the benefits of 'country' – clean air and open spaces – could be combined in the 'town-country' of the garden city (Howard 1898). Garden cities would be self-contained, self-sufficient entities, separated from the city by greenbelt and surrounded by countryside, with their own amenities and jobs. Houses would be large, set back from the road by trees and grass verges, with their own private gardens. The garden cities would have strict boundaries and firmly set maximum populations, prohibited from encroaching on their surrounding greenbelt and countryside. Wythenshawe, then, was no overspill housing estate or sprawling extension of the suburbs. As Hopkins and Hebbert summarise, "other cities were building suburban estates, some very large, but here the intention was different – a self-contained model community with its own employment base and services" (Hopkins and Hebbert 2014: 6).

Reflecting these principles, the Corporation of Manchester chose the sparsely populated countryside south of the city as its site for Wythenshawe, with a half-mile wide strip of greenbelt separating the new garden city from the suburbs of Chorlton and Didsbury. Many of the pre-existing cottages and farmhouses, and even mature trees, were retained and built around (Hopkins and Hebbert 2014: 8). Industrial areas were established at Roundthorn and Sharston, and the large Forum centre provided a range of cultural and commercial amenities. Following a wave of construction in the 1930s, and another in the two decades following the Second World War, Wythenshawe's population had reached 100,000 by 1964, becoming the third, and by far the largest, of Britain's garden cities (Hall 2002: 103).

Despite being conceived as a garden city, however, Wythenshawe diverged from the ideal type spatially, economically and, ultimately, socially. The rapid expansion of Manchester Airport in the 1970s gradually cut Wythenshawe off from the countryside to its south, and the arrival of the M56 motorway cut the garden city in two, replacing large areas of parkland, previously inviting to pedestrians, with six busy lanes of traffic (Deakin 1989: 152). Meanwhile Wythenshawe's proximity to Manchester – the two being separated by only half a mile of greenbelt – meant that a designation as a 'garden suburb' or 'semi-garden city' would soon prove more apt (Hall 2002: 110). The reality of this spatial relationship was that Wythenshawe would come to have a satellite dependency on its neighbouring city that did not reflect the situation of the 'true' garden cities such as Letchworth and Welwyn. Many neighbourhood units lacked their own amenities, and the Forum centre did not materialise until the 1970s. As Deakin argues, "while the air was fine, plentiful and free, public facilities and services were still poor and meagre. Nearly forty years after its inception the new Wythenshawe had no civic centre" (Deakin 1989: 148). Meanwhile, the industrial areas set up at Sharston and Roundthorn could not supply enough jobs for all of Wythenshawe's working inhabitants (Hall 2002: 114). As a result, for many years the residents of Wythenshawe would depend on Manchester for services and employment, even though these often lay an hour away by bus. This reliance on Manchester, coupled with a deliberate spatial separation from the city, created daily difficulties for Wythenshawe's residents. As Hopkins and Hebbert summarise:

"Many of [Wythenshawe's] difficulties were locational. Eight miles from Manchester city centre but just separated from the conurbation by the River Mersey and its floodplain, Wythenshawe had neither the imperative of distance to become self-sustaining nor sufficient connection to give its residents full access to the city's employment and amenities."

(Hopkins and Hebbert 2014: 19)

Before Wythenshawe's industrial base had the chance to achieve sufficient scale, wider changes to the economy and labour market were undermining the very logic of the garden city's planned economic base. As a historically working class community – indeed one that was built from scratch to house working people from the inner city – until the 1960s the majority of workers from Wythenshawe were based in manufacturing, trading their labour either in Manchester city centre or the cluster of light industries based locally. This manufacturing base was being replaced from the 1970s onwards by a labour market revolving around services, driven by large local employers such as Manchester Airport and Wythenshawe Hospital. At the time of the 1971 Census, just under 40% of the working population in Woodhouse Park – a central Wythenshawe ward containing the school within which the fieldwork for the intensive phase of the research was conducted – were employed in manufacturing. By the time of the 2001 Census this figure had fallen to just over 10%. The increasing dominance of the airport over Wythenshawe's labour market signalled a shift away from a garden city labour market originally intended to be based around agriculture and industry, to one dominated by the new service economy, in which around two thirds of Wythenshawe's jobs are now located. One could argue that a local labour market dominated by an international airport is the antithesis of the self-sufficient, garden city economy originally envisaged for Wythenshawe. Broadly in parallel with this economic upheaval, social conditions in Wythenshawe were becoming more strained. Relations between the original inhabitants of the estate, who had been carefully vetted, and more recent arrivals who had been moved to Wythenshawe en masse as the process of slum clearance in Manchester accelerated, were becoming frayed (Hopkins and Hebbert 2014: 12). Petty crime and vandalism became more prevalent during the 1970s (Deakin 1989: 151) and Wythenshawe's population began to decline precipitously, falling by a third between 1970 and 2000 (Manchester City Council 2004). Sixty years after its founding, Wythenshawe was moving away from the ideal type of the garden city on a variety of fronts: the local base of employment and amenities remained inadequate to serve a rapidly growing population; the garden city remained spatially isolated from Manchester, and yet relied on it for jobs and services; the labour market in Wythenshawe was moving dramatically away from its historic roots in manufacturing and industry; the physical environment of the garden city was being threatened by an expanding airport and new motorways that simultaneously cut Wythenshawe off from its neighbouring city and countryside and connected it directly with the national and global economy, and the social conditions of life in Wythenshawe were becoming more strained, signalled by a dramatic reduction in the estate's population.

By the early 2000s the decline in the material, social and economic conditions of life in Wythenshawe had reached a critical point, leading to large scale intervention from Manchester City Council coordinated around the 2004 Wythenshawe Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF). The SRF identified Wythenshawe's five main challenges as: population decline; lone adult and lone parent households; low rates of economic activity; poor school performance, and high levels of deprivation (Manchester City Council 2004: 3). At the 2001 Census the employment rate was 61% in Wythenshawe compared with a national rate of 75%, and even this rate reflected a marked increase since the mid-1990s (Manchester City Council 2004). Qualification levels amongst the Wythenshawe workforce compared unfavourably to Manchester and regional averages, with only 6.8% of residents possessing higher education or equivalent level qualifications, against 11.4% for Manchester as a whole. In 2001 40% of Wythenshawe's residents possessed no formal qualifications, compared to 34% for Manchester and 29% for England. School performance at the start of the millennium was also critically low: in 2000, 5% of pupils at the school in which I conducted my interviews gained 5 or more A*-C grades, against a national average of 49%, with 28% of pupils achieving no passes at all, against a national average of 6% (Department for Education 2000).

The low skill base of Wythenshawe's residents and the critically poor performance of its schools at the turn of the millennium were, however, set against rapid growth in local employment – a 19% expansion of the local jobs base between 1996 and 2002 – driven in large part by the growth of the airport. This growing shortfall of adequately skilled local labour was substantial enough to contribute to a significant shift in Wythenshawe's ethnic makeup, with recruitment drives by Manchester Airport and Wythenshawe Hospital resulting in the rapid establishment of a professional Keralite community in the area. The 2001 Census showed that Wythenshawe was home to a predominantly White British population, with less than 5% black and minority ethnic households. This proportion has now doubled (Real Lives Wythenshawe 2012).

Since 2000, three thousand new homes have been built and £250 million has been spent by the two housing trusts in the area to renovate existing properties. All four of Wythenshawe's secondary schools have been rebuilt, with two becoming Academies. The Forum centre has been extensively refurbished and a large new community and youth centre has been built. The Metrolink is in the process of being extended, via Wythenshawe, to Manchester Airport, and in March 2011 the airport was confirmed as the location of an Enterprise Zone, with plans to build an 'Airport City' which will be a centre for business, logistics, research and development. Overall, Wythenshawe has received over £600 million of investment since 1998 (Real Lives Wythenshawe 2012). Meanwhile a 'Real Lives' campaign is tackling negative stereotypes of the area in an attempt to attract new residents, at the core of which is a strong 'garden city' brand which is based on the quality of the housing, the abundance of green space and the closeness of the community to be found at Wythenshawe. The future of the area is therefore based on a place-making strategy rooted in its past.

2 Wythenshawe today

Today, Wythenshawe's population is growing again – from a low of 66,000 in 2001 to just under 75,000 in 2012 (Manchester City Council 2014), although this still represents a net decline of 25,000 against mid-1960s levels. Educational attainment is improving but remains below city and national averages: at the school in which I conducted the fieldwork for this research, 48% of pupils achieved 5 or more A* to C grades at GCSE (including Maths and English) in 2013, compared to a citywide average of 53% and a national average of 59% (Department for Education 2014). The proportion of the population in Wythenshawe without any formal qualifications remains relatively high, at 11.8% compared to regional and national rates of 11.1% and 9.7% respectively (ONS 2014). Rates of serious acquisitive crime across Wythenshawe are below the city average but youth offending rates are relatively high, and although incidents of antisocial behaviour are around the city average, perceptions of antisocial behaviour, drunk/rowdy behaviour, drug use and teenagers hanging around the streets are some of the highest in the city (Manchester City Council 2011).

The most recent labour market statistics for Wythenshawe are only available at parliamentary constituency level. The constituency of Wythenshawe and Sale East takes in the whole of Wythenshawe as well as an affluent part of the Metropolitan Borough of Trafford with some of the lowest levels of deprivation in Greater Manchester, so the utility of this labour market data for drawing conclusions about the nature of work and employment in Wythenshawe is tempered somewhat by its inclusion of data on a neighbouring area with very different socioeconomic characteristics. Nonetheless, the data indicate that unemployment in Wythenshawe stood at 8% in September 2013, in line with the citywide rate in Manchester and slightly higher than the national rate of 7.7%. Meanwhile the rate of economic inactivity – the proportion of people not working and not actively looking for work – stood at 25.6%, higher than regional and national rates of 24.6% and 22.6% and, as of February 2014, 19.7% of Wythenshawe's working age population were claiming key out-of-work benefits - higher than regional and national rates of 16.6% and 13.6%. On key labour market indicators, then, Wythenshawe compares unfavourably in citywide, regional and national comparisons. As the Manchester Independent Economic Review notes, low levels of economic activity persist in Wythenshawe despite a growing local labour market (MIER 2008: 93).

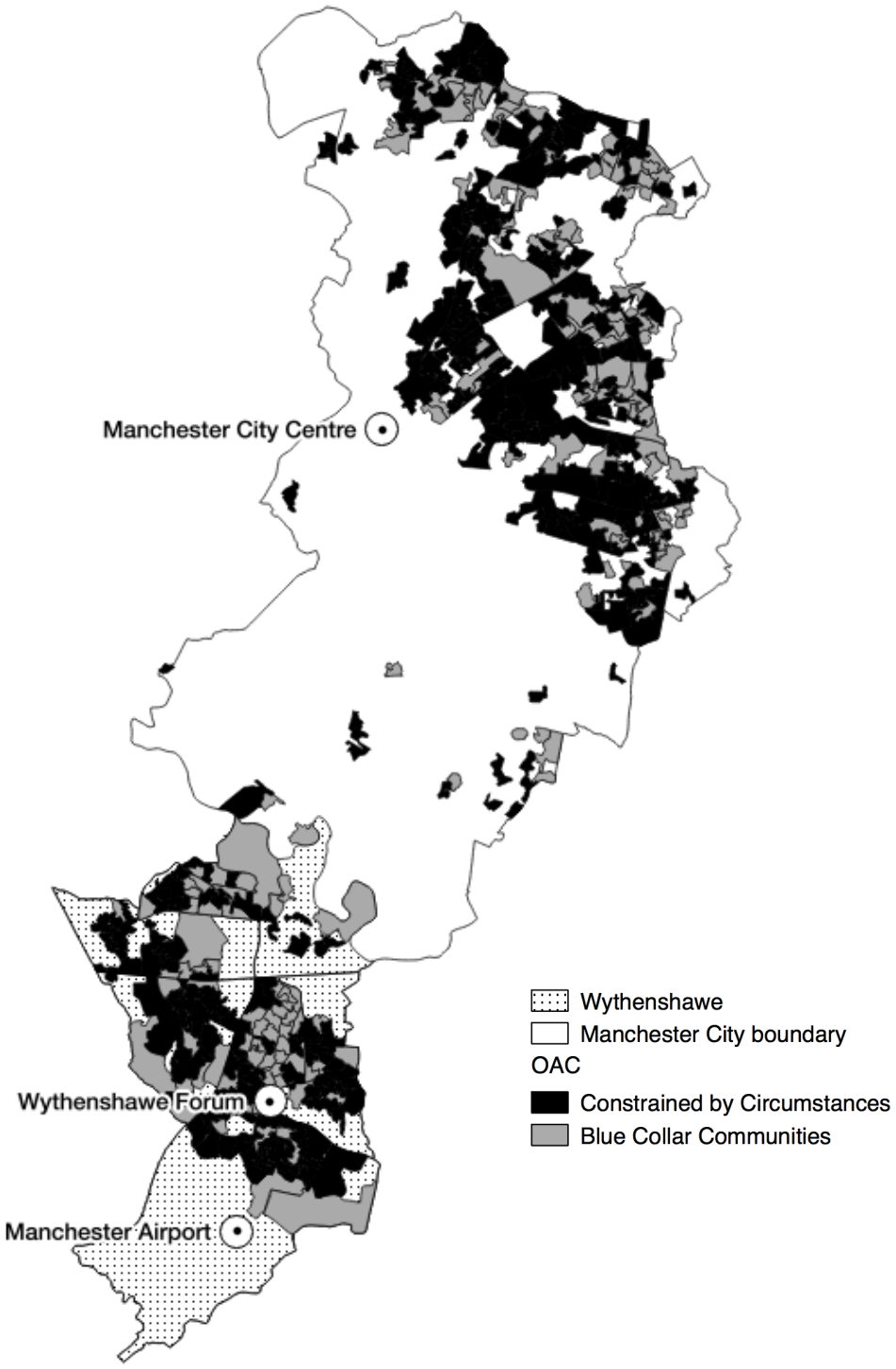
Recent studies identify Wythenshawe as an 'isolate' area of concentrated deprivation which houses people who have moved from, and are likely to move to, equally or more deprived areas (Lymperopoulou, Rae and Robson 2007). Such areas are characterised by concentrations of social housing, the entrapment of poorer households and low levels of spatial mobility, and are identified in policy circles as being most in need of area-based intervention (MIER 2008: 14). A number of the LSOAs in Wythenshawe are within the top 1% most deprived in the country, as measured by the 2010 Indices of Multiple Deprivation (Manchester City Council 2011: 32), and Wythenshawe's deprivation stands in stark contrast to the affluence of its south Manchester/north Cheshire context.

Geodemographic area typologies offer an additional way of summarising Wythenshawe's contemporary spatial characteristics. Acorn, a proprietary area typology developed by CACI Limited, places the majority of wards in Wythenshawe within the 'hard-pressed' area type, which contains people living in the most difficult social and economic conditions in the whole country (Manchester City Council 2011: 9). Mosaic, a proprietary typology developed by Experian, places Wythenshawe within the 'Low Horizons' area type which contains people who are on low incomes, are particularly dependent on the local authority for housing and transport, and who tend to work in semi skilled, routine jobs which demand few qualifications and offer modest wages. 'Low Horizons' areas such as Wythenshawe are identified in academic and government research as being associated with particularly poor GCSE results (Webber and Butler 2007) and low aspirations (Cabinet Office 2008).

The OAC is a publicly available area typology developed by the Office for National Statistics using data distilled from the 2001 Census. OAC area type is included as a variable in the regression models underpinning the extensive phase of the research, and the derivation of the OAC is therefore discussed in detail in Chapter 7. According to the OAC, most of the Output Areas (OAs) in Wythenshawe fall into the 'Constrained by Circumstances' area type, while the majority of the remainder are described as 'Blue Collar Communities' (see Figure 3). The 'Constrained by Circumstances' area type contains less well off areas with high rates of public sector renting and low qualifications, while the 'Blue Collar Communities' area type contains areas with high rates of public sector renting, a high proportion of children, relatively low levels of qualification and a predominance of manufacturing, construction or retail employment (Williams and Botterill 2006). As with area-level deprivation, an account of Wythenshawe based on area type identifies Manchester's garden city as a bounded and isolated entity, surrounded to the south by countryside, to the west and east by 'prospering suburbs' typified by high levels of home and car ownership, and to the north by 'typical traits' areas which are characterised by low rates of public sector renting and a high degree of ethnic diversity.

Despite significant investment and improvement on a range of area-level indicators since the turn of the millennium, Wythenshawe remains an area of concentrated deprivation with a population that is relatively homogeneous in its socioeconomic makeup and has limited spatial and social mobility. Qualifications and educational attainment are improving but remain relatively poor, and despite a relatively buoyant local labour market economic activity is relatively low, with a comparatively large proportion of residents receiving a range of key state benefits. Wythenshawe's situation is thrown into stark relief by its neighbours on all sides, which are generally more affluent.

Figure 3 – Map of Manchester showing Wythenshawe, key locations and OAC



3 Wythenshawe as a research site

As outlined in Chapter 3, two features of Wythenshawe make it a critical location for a study of young people's occupational aspirations: its level of deprivation and its peripheral, isolated location. Both of these area-level features are problematised by contemporary aspirations policy, which associates areas exhibiting these features with particularly low aspirations (Cabinet Office 2008; Department for Communities and Local Government 2011). As a result, areas like

Wythenshawe are critical targets for research. Wythenshawe's extra-urban, peripheral location is also significant because it contrasts with the inner city context of much existing youth research in this area. Studies of young people's place attachment (Reay and Lucey 2000), identity and engagement with education (Hollingworth and Archer 2009) and aspirations (Strand and Winston 2008) have a tendency to focus on the inner city due to the historical prevalence of poverty, deprivation and poor school performance in these inner urban areas. However, research is already picking up on the fact that the inner city is not necessarily the best place to set up shop if we want to find the worst youth outcomes, with peripheral estates on the edge of provincial cities often exhibiting these outcomes more readily (Raffo 2011: 2–3; Webber and Butler 2007). In addition, as Small and Feldman argue, intensive, case-based research can contribute more to our social scientific understanding of the world if it is occasionally targeted at unusual settings rather than always being conducted in the same inner-urban environments (Small and Feldman 2010). If we want to understand the area-based mechanisms that operate to produce particular forms of aspiration, we need to study a range of contexts – not just the inner city.

4 Summary

This chapter presented an overview of Wythenshawe – the fieldwork site for the intensive phase of the research. As one of only a handful of garden cities ever built in Britain, Wythenshawe's history is unique and important, and is heavily implicated in producing the area's unusual contemporary set of characteristics. In many ways Wythenshawe is typical of large, isolated areas of social housing on the outskirts of provincial cities: high concentrations of deprivation, low levels of qualification, poor health and educational outcomes, low rates of economic activity and relatively high levels of benefit dependency are firmly in evidence. However, these facets of life in Wythenshawe sit alongside features less common to large, deprived social housing estates: a carefully-planned material environment, large, well-built houses, parks and green spaces, a buoyant local economy and a rapidly expanding jobs base. Nonetheless, geodemographic area typologies all classify Wythenshawe as the type of area where mobility – both spatial and social – is limited, and where economic outcomes tend to be poor. On this basis, Wythenshawe is precisely the type of area which is problematised by current aspirations policy, and is therefore a critical site for research in this area. The spatial account of Wythenshawe presented in this chapter will be used as a frame of reference for analysing young people's conceptions of the area, which form the focus of the next chapter alongside an analysis of how these subjective orientations towards Wythenshawe shape young people's aspirations.

6 Intensive findings

The previous three chapters described the way in which the intensive phase of the research was designed and conducted, outlined how the data from this phase of the research was analysed, and provided a spatial overview of Wythenshawe – the fieldwork site for the interviews which underpin this phase of the research. This chapter presents the findings from the intensive phase of the research, which consist of a set of conceptions of Wythenshawe, a set of conceptions of aspirations, and a discussion of the relationship between the two.

1 Conceptions of Wythenshawe

After conducting the analysis outlined in Chapter 4, four different conceptions of Wythenshawe emerged from the interviews: a dysfunctional conception; a territorial conception; a provisional conception, and a material conception. As elaborated in Chapter 3, conceptions have two essential components: a 'referential aspect' which identifies how participants understand and talk about a particular phenomenon when they adopt a particular conception, and a 'structural aspect' which identifies what participants refer to – the specific features that are focused on by the participants when they adopt a particular conception (Marton and Pong 2005: 336). The four conceptions of Wythenshawe identified in the interviews are now outlined according to their referential and structural aspects, and explored in detail with recourse to the raw interview data they originate from. To aid interpretation of the findings, interviewees are identified as belonging to the high attainment, middle attainment and low attainment groups using the [HA], [MA] and [LA] suffixes, respectively.

1.1 The dysfunctional conception of Wythenshawe

The dysfunctional conception of Wythenshawe emerges most prominently from the interviews conducted with David [LA], Ross [LA] and Michael [LA]. This conception of Wythenshawe is defined referentially by critical affective orientations, and structurally by local facilities, policing, crime and unemployment.

1.1.1 Referential aspects of the dysfunctional conception of Wythenshawe

David, Ross and Michael all had mainly critical affective orientations towards Wythenshawe, and in the case of Michael and David critical affective orientations were the most frequently recurring code in their interviews. Critical affective orientations are evident when, for instance, David states "it's a horrible place to grow up. I've had some good times, obviously, but it's horrible" and "it's just a dump", while Michael, adopting the same terminology, says "it's horrible. It's a horrible

place to live." Ross, meanwhile, states that "it's a dead depressing place… it's just not a place you want to be, really."

1.1.2 Structural aspects of the dysfunctional conception of Wythenshawe

These negative affective orientations are produced by, and directed towards, specific perceived features of Wythenshawe – local facilities, policing, crime and unemployment. These structural aspects of the dysfunctional conception are evident to differing degrees in each interview.

Local facilities

Of the three interviews aligning with the dysfunctional conception of Wythenshawe, David's is most clearly motivated by a perceived lack of facilities or 'things to do' in the area. He states "there's nowhere to go, nowt to do for kids. When I used to go out with my mates on our bikes, we used to have to go out of the area, to Styal and Bruntwood Park and that. Nowt to do round here, nothing at all" and illustrates his point by remarking that "all I do is walk to school. I don't go out no more. I just go home and watch a film with my girlfriend, go to the shops. It's boring – nowt to do. Not a thing to do." Ross also makes a fleeting reference to the lack of facilities in Wythenshawe, as part of his explanation for the prevalence of crime in the area: "round here there's nothing to do. You need money to do something."

Policing

David's critical affective orientations are also influenced by his experience of policing in Wythenshawe, and the apparently daily occurrence of being stopped for wearing particular clothes that identify him, from the police's point of view, as being part of a problematic group of young people:

> *"Police. Can't go down the road without police stopping you, because you've got your hood up. You can't even go around with your hood up when it's raining, or if you're having a cig. It's every day."*

Ross also refers to negative experiences of policing, in similar terms to David: "the police, they pull you over for no reason. Stop and search you just because you've got your hood up while it's raining."

Crime

Michael details a number of occasions on which he has had things stolen, or seen things being stolen, concluding "you can't have anything round here cos it gets robbed." Referring to the riots

that took place in August 2011, he observes:

"After them riots all the idiots got arrested and then it was alright until they all got let out again. You could actually leave stuff outside and nothing would get robbed. But now they're all let out you have to take everything back inside now."

In the same section of the interview in which David expresses his critical affective orientation towards Wythenshawe with the statements "it's horrible" and "it's just a dump", he refers to the prevalence of crime and drugs in the area: "kids my age, they're all out selling drugs. It's bad for drugs Woodhouse Park." When asked about the history of Wythenshawe, he replies "there used to be loads of stabbings and shootings. It's horrible. You can't even look at someone without them starting."

Ross makes frequent reference to crime in his interview. He describes Wythenshawe as an area almost defined by crime, where crime forms part of the logic of everyday life and participation in crime almost guarantees you a safer existence: "if you're trying to be good and legal then stay in your house. If you want to be a criminal then it's probably the best place to be." However, calling on his own experiences of being involved in crime and his efforts to disentangle himself from this criminal past, Ross clearly sees the prevalence of crime in Wythenshawe in negative terms.

"There's a kid I know in Newall Green, he's seen his older brother got shot when he was about 5. They came into his house and shot him in front of his 5 year-old little brother. That's life round here. That's what I don't want for my kids. Don't want them to grow up round here, cos they've got to have the best trainers on their feet, got to have all this good reputation. You don't need that in life, you just need to get on with your life and do it properly instead of being arrested and being a little criminal. Cos that's what it boils down to being round here."

Appearing prevalently in what David, Ross and Michael say, references to crime are a significant structural aspect of the dysfunctional conception of Wythenshawe.

Unemployment

When asked about the kinds of jobs that people do in Wythenshawe, David describes how unemployment is widespread: "no one's dads have got jobs – it's Jobcentre. They all sign on, that's what everyone does. They say it's easy money; free money, cos they don't have to work to get it" adding, dismissively, "that's what everyone is, dole heads." In his interview, Michael describes how it is increasingly difficult to get a job in Wythenshawe, and puts the local people who work in the minority:

“There’s occasional people round here, largely work at what they want and actually get it in the long run. But other people, they just give up half way and just end up going on the dole cos it’s too hard.”

Ross also describes widespread unemployment, as part of a wider argument about entrenched material hardship in the area:

“Near enough every single person I know that lives round here, their mum's on benefits and they don't work. And if they do work they've not got money to give out to their sons and that, because they're too busy paying the rent on the house. You don't get nowhere, you're just about surviving. My mum struggles to even survive. And I don't want that life for my kids.”

Ross’ final comment here makes it clear that he sees the state of unemployment in Wythenshawe as problematic and undesirable.

In summary, the dysfunctional conception of Wythenshawe is defined by a critical affective orientation towards the area which is, in turn, based on a range of structural aspects. Some of these structural aspects, such as unemployment and crime, are common to all the interviews, while others, such as facilities and policing, are specific to particular participants. The conception is labelled ‘dysfunctional’ because dysfunction best describes the particular form of criticism that David, Michael and Ross direct at Wythenshawe as they describe the various features of the area. Their critical affective orientations, whether directed at local facilities, policing, crime or the state of local employment, are consistently underpinned by a sense that Wythenshawe, in one way or another, is not how it should be. The dysfunctional conception captures an understanding of Wythenshawe as somewhere where things are not working correctly: facilities are inadequate, the police are unfair, and people turn to crime because the labour market cannot support them. In this way, the dysfunctional conception is defined by a critical way of understanding/talking about Wythenshawe, but this does not mean the young people who hold this conception are universally negative about their area. All three interviews aligning with this conception display some sense of attachment to Wythenshawe. Ross, for instance, notes “it is a happy life, though, if you bypass all that. Cos obviously I’ve lived here for 16 years now, and you do sort of just look past that.” David, meanwhile, admits “sometimes it is nice, like in the summer when you go and have a game of football in the park. It’s good.” Michael’s criticism of Wythenshawe is not that the area is inherently ‘bad’, but rather that “it was good, until you can’t get a job anymore” – in other words, a specific role of the area, its ability to provide work for its inhabitants, has ceased to be fulfilled. For young people who have had no choice in the area they have grown up in, and who may have become familiar with, in some cases attached to, their surroundings after 16 years, a dysfunctional conception of place can be frustrating to navigate. As David points out, “it’s not a very good place to grow up, but obviously you’ve got to if you live here.”

1.2 The territorial conception of Wythenshawe

This conception of Wythenshawe emerges prominently from the interviews conducted with Andrew [LA], Billy [HA], Tim [LA] and Charlie [HA]. The territorial conception is defined referentially by a defensive and familiar attitude towards Wythenshawe, and structurally by talk about people.

1.2.1 Referential aspects of the territorial conception of Wythenshawe

Defensiveness

Apart from Tim, the young people with a territorial conception of Wythenshawe were all resolutely defensive of Wythenshawe: defensiveness constitutes the first of the two referential aspects that define the territorial conception. In each case, this defensive attitude emerged in response to considerations of Wythenshawe's reputation, despite the fact that questions about Wythenshawe's reputation did not feature in the interview schedule. When asked to describe Wythenshawe as a place, Charlie explains:

"There's like one side: bad people; gangs; crews; think they're well hard people. And then there's the other side, which is just normal everyday people. But we get judged on the worst people, and the good things don't come out of here."

Andrew makes a similar point:

"People slag off Wythenshawe too much. It's not as bad as everyone goes on. All the posher areas slag us off because we're chavvish, but it's just that a couple of people around the area lower everyone's expectations of everyone else."

Finally, Billy describes how Wythenshawe's inaccurate reputation is sustained by the way in which outsiders respond to news of an incident in the area:

"It's not really that bad compared to its reputation. Everyone says people get shot and stabbed here, and there are some gangs and stuff out there, but it's not that bad a place when you actually live here… once people hear about a shooting in Wythenshawe, cos it's got that bad a reputation already, they just think that that's what happens here and it's just a horrible place to be. But it's not really that bad, there are some nice people here."

Attachment

All of the young people with the territorial conception of Wythenshawe voiced a sense of attachment to the area: attachment constitutes the second of the two referential aspects of the territorial conception. Charlie, Andrew, Billy and Tim expressed their attachment to Wythenshawe in different ways, but they shared a sense of either not wanting to leave Wythenshawe, or wanting to return in the future – the two meanings captured by the code 'attached' in the coding scheme.

When asked if he would consider moving away from Wythenshawe in the long run, Charlie explains "I do like it, but it's just not for me, I don't think. If I had the choice, I would do… I wouldn't stay here." However, having described his well-formulated plans to become a property agent and then a property developer – both occupations he would pursue in areas with "nice houses" rather than in Wythenshawe – Charlie expresses a desire to return to Wythenshawe, clearly driven by a sense of attachment to the area:

"I want to move on but if I come into property developer then maybe I'd come back and try and give the houses a boost round here to make the actual area good, cos I'm obviously from the area so I want to do whatever I can to put something better into the area. So maybe I'd come back and, if I'm successful enough, go and build an estate which would be proper nice and make the place look actually nice."

Andrew states clearly that he wants to get away from Wythenshawe, "yeh, I would move away, definitely… probably America or somewhere hot. Just away – proper away. Go and see the world." However, much the same as Charlie, Andrew expresses a desire to return to Wythenshawe in the future. In his case, it is the presence of family in Wythenshawe that is the focus of his attachment: "I think I'll come back, if my family's still around here anyway."

When asked about Wythenshawe, Billy explains:

"Every time I think of Wythenshawe I think of home… it's like, when I'm here, it's silly, but it's like the world. Wythenshawe around me, that's where I am. And that's home, cos I've never been anywhere else."

Later in the interview, whilst discussing whether Billy would consider moving away from Wythenshawe if doing so would allow him to secure a more interesting job with better pay than local alternatives, he states clearly that "money's just money. If you're not happy in an area or in a job then there's no point doing it. I'm happy to stay in Wythenshawe for less pay and a worse job." This statement gives a firm indication of the strength of Billy's attachment to the area.

Finally, Tim states "I'd like to stay round here… it's like, you don't know what you're going to get if

you move. Like, I know what's round here and stuff." This sense of 'knowing what's round here', or familiarity, is closely linked here to both Tim's and Billy's attachment to the area. However, familiarity does not always lead to feelings of attachment: for instance, the provisional conception of Wythenshawe discussed in section 1.3 below captures young people like Lewis and Josh whose familiarity with Wythenshawe translates, instead, into a desire to move away and experience new places.

1.2.2 Structural aspects of the territorial conception of Wythenshawe

The territorial conception of Wythenshawe has a single common structural component in Charlie's, Billy's, Andrew's and Tim's interviews – a reference to people, whether this forms the basis of defensiveness or attachment. In the case of Charlie, talk of people helps to elaborate the defensive referential aspect of the territorial conception. In the case of Billy and Tim, talk of people helps to elaborate their sense of attachment – the second referential aspect of this conception. In Andrew's case, references to people elaborate both the defensive and attached referential aspects of the territorial conception.

People

Charlie's defensive attitude towards Wythenshawe's reputation is most consistently articulated in the assertion that Wythenshawe contains 'good' people as well as 'bad' people:

> *"You'd get one group who'd be like, think they was proper invincible. The police: they don't care about the police or anything. School: they don't care about school. Just don't really care about anyone – they think they're just it. And then you get the other people who just knuckle down, do their GCSEs, get good jobs and be successful in life, basically… I'd probably say it's half and half to be truthful. You get the idiots, but then you get the good, nice people as well I think."*

The contribution that this reference to 'good' as well as 'bad' people makes to Charlie's defensive attitude towards Wythenshawe is particularly apparent later in the interview, when he argues that despite their reputation, young people from Wythenshawe hold their own against their peers from other parts of Manchester:

> *"This school, you get the odd people who are a bit of idiots; naughty. But then again you get the people what are coming out with As, A*s, what actually match people in other areas of Manchester, and actually getting, like going higher, because they've done better, even though they're from Wythenshawe they've still done better. So, you get, like I said you get the fools but then you get the actual intelligent people who actually make something of their life."*

Andrew also invokes talk of people to construct the defensive referential aspect of the territorial

conception, in two ways. Firstly, in a similar vein to Charlie, Andrew argues that Wythenshawe's negative reputation is the fault of a minority of young people in the area:

"All the posher areas slag us off because we're chavvish. But it's just that a couple of people around the area lower everyone's expectations of everyone else."

As Charlie argues, Wythenshawe's reputation is due to outsiders' inability or unwillingness to take notice of the 'good' people in Wythenshawe, even if they are in the majority. Secondly, Andrew later broadens his criticism of young people in the area:

"People round here got a mouth on them and that. Everyone just slags each other off round here. I would definitely get away. It's mostly young people. Older people just seem intimidated by the younger people cos they've all got mouths on them. I think that's disrespectful. They've been here longer than us so show a bit of respect."

Although he broadens his criticism of young people in Wythenshawe here, no longer referring to 'a couple of people' but to 'everyone' when he lays blame for the area's reputation, Andrew refers to the older generation in Wythenshawe, who from his perspective deserve more respect, to return to the theme of 'good as well as bad'. Young people may be problematic in Wythenshawe, but not everyone in Wythenshawe is a young person. In this way, it is with reference to people that Andrew constructs his defence of Wythenshawe.

References to people also play a role in constructing the referential aspect of attachment. In both Billy's and Andrew's cases, attachment to Wythenshawe is founded on family. In Andrew's case, as discussed above, family is his primary reason for considering returning to Wythenshawe in the future. In Billy's case, family provides an even stronger sense of attachment:

"If my family moved on, I'd feel less attached to Wythenshawe and I'd give more consideration to moving away. But if I got a good job here, and my family were here, then I wouldn't even think about moving anywhere else. I'd just stay here."

Finally, Tim expresses his attachment to Wythenshawe with reference to a different set of people – his friends:

"I like it because you know a lot of people in there, like all your mates are from out there and you think, like, 'If I weren't in Wythenshawe then I wouldn't have met the people that I have'".

In each of Billy's, Andrew's and Tim's interviews it is through reference to people in

Wythenshawe, rather than, for instance, opportunities, facilities or resources, that attachment to the area is constructed.

In summary, the territorial conception is defined by two referential aspects, defensiveness and attachment, both of which are expressed in the interviews primarily with recourse to people. The territorial conception does not necessarily imply a desire to stay in Wythenshawe: Andrew, for instance, definitely wants to get away. But his attachment to the area, via family, provides a reason to return in the future. Furthermore, Andrew's desire to leave Wythenshawe does not undermine his strongly defensive, territorial conception of the area, which he underlines in the final moments of his interview:

> *"I've never seen anyone with a camera round here to say something good's happened. Can't remember anything like that. Just bad stuff."*

1.3 The provisional conception of Wythenshawe

The provisional conception of Wythenshawe emerges from the interviews conducted with Lewis [HA], Josh [MA], Rob [MA] and Joel [MA] and is defined referentially by a comparative perspective which looks favourably upon other areas, and a desire to move away from Wythenshawe. The structural aspects of this conception are limited local facilities and jobs.

1.3.1 Referential aspects of the provisional conception of Wythenshawe

The interviews aligned with the provisional conception of Wythenshawe clearly articulated a sense that other places are better than Wythenshawe (this was the most frequently recurring theme in both Rob's and Joel's interviews) and a desire to move away (all four interviews aligned with this conception voiced in clear terms either a plan or desire to move away from Wythenshawe). These two referential aspects – unfavourable comparisons and moving away – are closely related and so are explored now in tandem.

Unfavourable comparisons and moving away

The coding scheme used for the phenomenographic analysis allowed for the nuances of descriptive and comparative accounts of Wythenshawe to be distinguished. This distinction proved fruitful in defining the provisional conception of Wythenshawe, which is characterised not by a straightforwardly negative or critical verdict on the area itself, but rather by a sense that Wythenshawe is less favourable than other areas. Whereas the dysfunctional conception captures a critical perspective on Wythenshawe that focuses on Wythenshawe alone, the provisional conception captures a comparative understanding of Wythenshawe as somewhere that is less favourable than other places, but not necessarily a 'bad' or 'horrible' place to live in itself.

Lewis describes how “the most exciting thing here is either the Civic or the Airport, so nothing much goes on.” This is not necessarily indicative of a negative or critical understanding of Wythenshawe, as Lewis soon goes on to explain how he appreciates aspects of Wythenshawe’s peripheral location such as quiet surroundings, clean air and access to the countryside. However, it is clear that Lewis has no intention of staying in Wythenshawe as he finds it fairly boring, and he is aware from what he has learnt in school and what he has seen on TV that there are things further afield that he wants to experience. When asked if he might consider staying in Wythenshawe in the long term, his answer is unequivocal:

“Not at all. I don't want to stay in one country too long, but that's a bit too ambitious. So I do want to move round the country and see different things. I want to experience things in my life.”

Lewis explicitly links this desire to move away to the occasional boredom of life in Wythenshawe when he says “I was used to seeing the same thing every day. Being in a boring place like Wythenshawe does make someone want to go out there and see a lot of things.” From a comparative perspective, then, Lewis feels that other places hold greater opportunities that he is keen to experience. Wythenshawe compares unfavourably with other areas not because it is itself ‘bad’ or ‘horrible’, as those with the dysfunctional conception describe it, but because the wider world has more to offer.

In a similar vein to Lewis, Josh explains that “certain parts of Wythenshawe are busy - Civic, the Forum. But in general Wythenshawe isn't very busy. It's a bit dead; a bit boring.” The comparative perspective becomes apparent when Josh begins talking about his frequent trips into Manchester city centre. He describes Manchester from an explicitly comparative perspective, as “more upbeat, busier, different things going on. Mostly shops, pubs, restaurants. It's like a buzz; you're doing something different. Wythenshawe's a bit dead.” Later in the interview, when Josh expresses his desire to move away from Wythenshawe, the comparative perspective is clearly present once again:

“I don't think I'll stay in Wythenshawe because there's not many opportunities, but other places do offer different opportunities. I don't think I'll stay here all my life because there's nothing much to do and I don't really want to stay here. I want to go travelling: Australia; America. See what opportunities are there.”

Rob talks about Wythenshawe from an almost exclusively comparative perspective, having moved to the area from Sheffield only five years ago. Many of his observations about Wythenshawe are understood and communicated in terms of their relationship to his experience of life on the other side of the Peaks. His overall preference for life in Sheffield is evident from the outset when he explains that although he has lived in Wythenshawe for several years now and made a new group of friends, he still prefers Sheffield as a place:

"I prefer round here for my mates and stuff, but back in Sheffield for how it is. How the houses were, and how the streets weren't all like gangs and stuff on it."

Rob has plans to move to Australia or America, depending on whether he can get a good job and make a good living there. In line with the provisional conception, his critique of Wythenshawe is grounded in a comparison with other areas, and manifests itself in a desire to move away from the area.

Joel's critique of Wythenshawe is based on comparisons with both Manchester city centre and Kent, where his uncle lives. Joel describes how, compared to Wythenshawe, Manchester city centre is "more interesting. Got more people and more shops and that." He then outlines how he would like to move away to Kent in the future:

"I'll probably move up to where my uncle lives, in Kent… it's bigger to me. It's more interesting, and there's more stuff to do."

In each case, then, the provisional conception is defined referentially by a comparative perspective which looks upon other areas favourably, and a desire to move away.

1.3.2 Structural aspects of the provisional conception of Wythenshawe

The provisional conception of Wythenshawe has two structural aspects: limited local facilities, and jobs. These are the concrete aspects of Wythenshawe that Lewis, Josh, Rob and Joel tend to refer to when they draw their unfavourable comparisons between Wythenshawe and other areas, and when they express their desire to move away.

Limited local job opportunities

Lewis appeals to limited career biographies within his family to illustrate the constraints of the local labour market in Wythenshawe:

"A lot of my cousins work in shops because that's the only thing you can get in Wythenshawe. Till jobs. Or go to the airport and do retail there. On work experience, or if I was volunteering, I'd just be working in a shop, because that's the only thing available here."

These limited career biographies in turn structure Lewis's narrative about moving away from Wythenshawe:

"My mum doesn't want to get out of Wythenshawe. She thinks it's too late for her. But she does say to me quite often 'you'll want to get out of Wythenshawe when you're older, so work hard for your grades.' Because most of my mother's side haven't had a lot of opportunities – they've all stayed in Wythenshawe. So I think that's been passed down. But my family does try to encourage me to break it, try to get a good job, try to lead a good life."

As well as limited local facilities and amenities, cited above, Josh also refers to limited job opportunities in constructing his rationale for wanting to move away from the area, such as when he states "I myself wouldn't try and get a job in Wythenshawe because I don't think there's that many opportunities."

Limited local facilities

As well as negative observations about the prevalence of gangs in Wythenshawe, Rob's critique of the area is based on specific, material shortcomings which relate to Wythenshawe's lack of provision for his primary hobby and potential future career – scootering. Rob outlines how he is a semi-professional scooter rider and has made use of facilities for riders and skaters in other cities, before explaining how Wythenshawe's provision for these sports is poor:

"They've got all this open space, in Wythenshawe Park and stuff, and they just don't do anything with it. They could at least build something, like a skate park or something. They've got an open park, and there's nothing in it really. Just a tiny little bit where you walk around, and fields, for nothing… just gets used for football."

In summary, the provisional conception of Wythenshawe is defined, referentially, by a comparative perspective which sees Wythenshawe as unfavourable to other areas, along with a desire to move away from the area. The structural aspects of the conception – the concrete aspects of Wythenshawe that Lewis, Josh, Rob and Joel refer to – are limited local jobs, and facilities. The conception is labelled 'provisional' in order to capture the sense in which, for the four participants who embody this conception, Wythenshawe is an interim; a place that will do for now. The provisional conception is underpinned by a critique of Wythenshawe which is relative rather than absolute: Wythenshawe's inferiority is apparent in specific domains – its labour market and facilities – and when compared with other areas, rather than being total and inherent. Unlike the dysfunctional conception, which sees Wythenshawe as 'bad' or 'horrible', the provisional conception is more outward looking – motivated more by a 'pull' towards other places rather than a 'push' from within. As Lewis explains:

"Yeh, I don't want to get away from it, I just think there's a lack of opportunities here. There's different opportunities in different places."

1.4 The material conception of Wythenshawe

The material conception of Wythenshawe emerges from the interviews conducted with Cameron [MA], Karl [MA] and Caleb [MA]. This conception is defined referentially by positive affective orientations towards Wythenshawe, and its structural aspects are green spaces and facilities.

1.4.1 Referential aspects of the material conception of Wythenshawe

Positive affective orientations

All three interviews assigned to the material conception had overall positive affective orientations towards Wythenshawe. Caleb states towards the beginning of his interview that "it's a good place overall… it's a good place to live" and Karl, likewise, that "it's all good." However, positive affective orientations – the referential aspect of this conception – are mainly expressed by concrete references to green spaces and facilities – the structural aspects of this conception.

1.4.2 Structural aspects of the material conception of Wythenshawe

Green spaces

'Green spaces' was the most frequently recurring code in each of the three interviews assigned to this conception. Drawing on a comparison with other areas, Cameron explains how Wythenshawe is well endowed with green open spaces:

> *"It's really grassy; trees everywhere… Many other places are all bunched together - it's all just streets. But in Wythenshawe there's quite a lot of open fields. Like avenues everywhere with big grassy open areas for playing football."*

Karl refers to a pastime he would be unable to (safely) enjoy in an area with less green space:

> *"We've got fields and stuff. There's a field, jump over my bushes there's a farm, so… it's fun, I just get golf balls and smack them into the farm as far as I can."*

Caleb, meanwhile, describes how the parks in Wythenshawe provide a space for him to spend time with his family:

> *"I sometimes go with my brother to play football in the park. You've got swimming at the Forum. I take my sister to the park. My nieces come round; I take them to the park. So I go out quite a lot, so it's alright to live."*

Facilities

Unlike most of the other interviews, those aligned with the material conception have a positive view of Wythenshawe's facilities, whether these relate to leisure or labour. Cameron outlines the latter:

> *"There's a lot of shops near here. Cleaners and workers in factories. Cos there's a couple of factories round here. A lot of supermarkets. Quite a lot of schools too, so lots of teaching jobs."*

Caleb has a similar perspective, arguing that Wythenshawe has a buoyant labour market which supports a good range of jobs:

> *"There's loads of shops. Building. Teaching. Jobs in The Manchester College. There's nurseries around, primary schools. Cleaners, window cleaners, bin men. There's quite a lot of jobs to do."*

Karl, meanwhile, grounds his positive affective orientations towards Wythenshawe by referring to the area's leisure facilities:

> *"We got the CA which is a place they do loads of activities, like football pitches and stuff. Got loads of parks; skateparks."*

This conception is labelled 'material', then, because the material environment – whether Wythenshawe's endowment of green spaces, or the provision of facilities and amenities – is the basis for the positive affective orientations which define the conception.

1.5 Individualised conceptions of Wythenshawe

Some of the young people interviewed did not map neatly onto any one of the conceptions outlined above in they way that they understood and spoke about Wythenshawe. Instead, these participants exhibited a combination of different conceptions in their interviews – these unique combinations of conceptions can be considered as 'individualised conceptions' lying outside of the four-part schema above. The discussion now turns to consider these individualised conceptions of Wythenshawe.

1.5.1 Tyler's individualised conception of Wythenshawe

Tyler [HA] is territorial in his defence of Wythenshawe, and this territorial conception of the area is motivated to a large degree by his awareness of the stigma attached to Wythenshawe:

"It's not that different from most places. People say it's known for criminal activity, but it's not something you notice… not just Wythenshawe, Manchester as a whole has a reputation. There used to be a lot of football violence, gang violence in the early 80s and 90s. But I don't think it's as bad as it used to be, even though people think it's getting worse. I've never been mugged or attacked. People blow it out of proportion."

However, despite this defensive, territorial conception of Wythenshawe Tyler also has a provisional conception of the area: he does think about moving away, and has an idea of Manchester as a 'higher end' place that people tend to move away to as they progress in life:

"The higher end colleges and universities are right in Manchester, so a lot of people move away into Manchester. And after a few years they've trained there, they've got a job, they've got enough money, and then they don't want to move back to Wythenshawe."

Tyler also comments that "there's a lot of development going on in Manchester, so it feels like a nicer place." This conception of Manchester feeds into a provisional conception of Wythenshawe as somewhere he will one day consider moving on from:

"I do think about moving. Not anywhere in particular. Not because I hate Wythenshawe. Just, I'd rather live in a higher end place. In the centre of Manchester – it'd be nice to live there… There's quite a lot of places in Manchester: museums, restaurants, cinemas. Not like that in Wythenshawe."

Tyler's provisional conception of Wythenshawe is, however, more tempered than that held by some of the other participants. He doesn't see himself as tied to Wythenshawe, and he expresses a preference for living in Manchester, but at the same time he has no plan to leave Wythenshawe; he doesn't see a move away from Wythenshawe as inevitable: "it's not that I plan on leaving or I plan on staying. I'm open to the idea of doing either." This tempered provisional conception of Wythenshawe is rooted in a strong sense of agency, which Tyler expresses in two ways in the interview. Firstly, he states openly that "I don't feel tied down to the area. I don't feel trapped in something I don't want to do" and he links this freedom to his attainment at school, which gives him opportunities that are not open to many of his peers. Secondly, he states that ultimately his decision as to whether to stay in Wythenshawe or to move away will be steered by the opportunities he comes across and his response to the experiences he has, rather than being dictated by a preordained strategy or being buffeted by forces beyond his control. For instance Tyler states that if a family member became ill, or if Wythenshawe received extensive investment, he might decide to stay, whereas if he discovered a job he wanted to do that necessitated moving away, he would do so.

1.5.2 John's individualised conception of Wythenshawe

John [MA] is territorial in his defence of Wythenshawe. He argues "yeh, there is some parts that are a bit bad, but then you've got the good parts of it." He seems to be aware that Wythenshawe has a reputation as a problematic part of Manchester, along with places like Moss Side. He draws a comparison between Wythenshawe and Moss Side which suggests that, in his view, reputations are ultimately subjective and can mask a more positive reality:

"People say that Moss Side is worse than Wythenshawe. But then people say that Wythenshawe is worse than Moss Side. So they're similar. But I think it's getting better for both."

John also expresses an interest in improving the area, which aligns him with a territorial conception of Wythenshawe:

"All the gangs and stuff – it's about crime. So I think about that and think about stopping it. So it does sort of inspire me to help the community."

However, John's conception of Wythenshawe is also provisional. He expresses a desire to move away, but this is driven by an aspiration to become a forensic scientist, or to move to Scotland, where his family are from, rather than an aversion to Wythenshawe itself:

"It's alright. But like people say, the longer you live in Wythenshawe the more you'll want to stay. But I don't really, I think that it's the person's choice. I'm not wanting to live in Wythenshawe the rest of my life 'cos I want to move up to Scotland or go to America or somewhere."

2 Conceptions of aspirations

As discussed in Chapter 4 section 2, a different approach was taken to examining the conceptions of aspirations present in the data. Rather than constructing a typology of conceptions, as with conceptions of Wythenshawe, each individual interview was treated as exhibiting an individualised conception of aspirations. This approach sees each interview as representing an independent and unique case rather than being categorised as belonging to a type, and is motivated here by two factors: a desire to minimise data reduction, and the absence of any emergent clustering of conceptions of aspirations. The analysis is not open-ended, however, and is still structured around coding. As described in Chapter 4, initial coding was left at a high level, in order to identify the overarching themes, or keyword groups, that were present across all the young people's conceptions of their aspirations. Three primary keyword groups emerged during the coding of utterances relating to aspirations: materiality; specificity and agency, and these three themes captured the vast majority of the content in the interviews relating

to conceptions of aspirations. These three keywords were then used to define three axes in relation to which each individualised conception of aspirations could be defined. In terms of materiality, then, interviews either exhibited a material conception of aspirations or an immaterial conception of aspirations, or an intermediate position. In terms of specificity, interviews either exhibited a general conception of aspirations or a specific conception of aspirations, or an intermediate position. Finally, in terms of agency, interviews either exhibited a structured conception of aspirations or an individualised conception of aspirations, or an intermediate position.

Each of these three themes are now briefly defined, although they will be fully explored in due course through their application to each young person's individualised conception of their aspirations.

2.1 Materiality, specificity and agency

Materiality refers to the extent to which a young person's aspirations are steered by 'material' considerations of financial remuneration, as opposed to 'immaterial' considerations such as their enjoyment of a particular form of work, or the extent to which a job makes use of their skills and interests. Specificity refers to the extent to which a young person talks about their occupational aspirations in 'specific' terms, such as by referring to particular positions within the labour market, or particular forms of work that use certain skills, rather than having a 'general' conception which does not display a clear preference for any particular form of work, or aspect of that work. Finally, agency refers to the extent to which a young person talks in 'individualised' or agent-focused terms about their occupational aspirations as opposed to 'structured' terms. The terms 'structure' and 'agency' identify two poles of a conceptual terrain which describes the relative significance of individual-level factors and broader, external factors in producing a particular phenomenon or outcome. In the context of youth transitions, Rudd and Evans characterise 'agency' as "those aspects of the decision-making process in school-to-work transitions which [are] predominantly individual, creative, pro-active and involve resisting external pressures" (1998: 51) and 'structure' as "inputs from organisations at a national and local level, the effects of labour markets, and influences of broad social characteristics such as gender, social class and ethnicity" (1998: 39). The contemporary field of youth studies has transcended this binary notion of 'structure versus agency', introducing a middle ground defined as 'structured individualism' or 'bounded agency' (Evans 2002; Simpson and Cieslik 2007), where bounded agency is "socially situated agency, influenced but not determined by environments and emphasizing internalized frames of reference as well as external actions" (Evans 2007: 93). In the analysis here, I identify young people's conceptions of their aspirations as being either 'structured' (focused on the external forces which have constrained or shaped them), 'individualised' (focused on the personal decisions and choices which have steered them), or 'bounded' (focused on the role of agency in shaping aspirations, but also on the influence of external forces). As well as defining each individual's conception of their aspirations in relation to the tripartite framework of materiality-specificity-agency, the analysis also considers the content of their aspirations – the occupations they state

they would like to do in the future.

2.2 Andrew's conception of his aspirations [LA]

Andrew's conception of his aspirations is immaterial, specific and bounded. When I ask Andrew what a good job is, he replies "less hours and more money", indicating a material conception of work: a good job is something that delivers the maximal financial reward for the labour invested. However, when he moves on to consider the more specific, personal question of the job he would like to do in the future Andrew talks in a less material way. He wants to get a job in construction because he finds practical work more satisfying:

> *"I'd rather do something practical. I don't like to be in an office… when you've made something and you look at it and it's alright, feel like you've done something."*

Andrew's own aspirations are, then, steered by his interests and a desire to gain satisfaction from his work. His conception of his aspirations is based on a consideration of the content and quality of the work he will be doing, rather than the pay he will receive for doing it. His conception of a 'good job' is primarily material – something that pays well and doesn't require much work – but when he talks about the job he would like to do in the future, he refers to the importance of the content of the work and its alignment with his interests. I therefore classify Andrew's conception of his aspirations as 'immaterial'.

Andrew wants to get a job in construction, and this indicates a specific conception of his aspirations. When asked if there is a particular aspect of construction he would like to work on, Andrew indicates a broad range of trades – "everything pretty much; plastering, tiling" – but his aspirations remain firmly linked to this specific industry. Apart from Michael, all of the young people interviewed in the Construction Hub expressed a specific interest to work in construction. While it is not possible to confidently infer the direction of causality between their occupational aspirations and the form of educational provision they are receiving, it is worth noting that the young people based in the Hub were placed there due to difficulties accommodating them in the main school and the mainstream curriculum, rather than a particular interest they may have had in studying construction. It therefore seems plausible that the specifically construction-related aspirations of Andrew and his peers in the Hub are due to the particular, arguably narrow form of educational provision they are receiving.

The idea that Andrew's specifically construction-related aspirations may be shaped by the narrow form of educational provision he is receiving is salient in relation to the third theme steering the analysis – that of agency. As proposed above, Andrew's aspirations appear to be structured by the scope of the educational provision he is currently receiving – the focus on construction in his timetable may have closed down other future possibilities in his mind. However, it is also clear that Andrew is attached to the idea of a future job in construction and that this stems from an

alignment with his interests, and this would indicate that his aspiration to work in construction is not simply external or 'structured' – it also comes from 'within'. Both agency and structure seem to feature here. Andrew's aspirations are also shaped by his own perception of his abilities. He refers to self-perceived deficits in his ability which rule out alternative possible forms of work:

"I've always wanted to do something practical with my hands. I'm not really good at Maths and English, so I just use what I've got."

The way in which Andrew's occupational aspirations are shaped by his own assessment of his abilities also seems to reflect elements of both structure and agency. Andrew's aspirations are clearly tempered by a deficit mentality in relation to his skills and aptitudes – there is a clear sense in which he feels held back by his own abilities. Although this form of structure may seem internal, in that it exists as a belief, its provenance is arguably external – a poor experience of schooling; a lack of support from teachers, low peer group expectations and so forth. It seems, therefore, that both structure (the narrow form of educational provision Andrew is receiving; the external sources of his low self-perceived ability) and agency (an affinity with satisfying practical work; a belief in the alignment between manual work and his self-perceived abilities) are implicated in producing Andrew's conception of his aspirations. When he talks about his aspirations, Andrew refers to both structural and agent-focused factors which are, in some cases, interrelated. The notion of bounded agency therefore seems fruitful in describing this aspect of Andrew's conception of his aspirations.

2.3 Billy's conception of his aspirations [HA]

Billy's conception of his aspirations is immaterial, general and individualised. When I ask Billy what a good job is, he mentions both material and immaterial elements of work, but with a clear focus on the latter:

"Something that you're not going to go to work and think 'I can't be bothered doing this.' *Good pay, obviously – I always think about the pay of the job; if you're going to put effort into getting into it. And just, in general, you've got to enjoy it really, and you've got to be interested in whatever subject it's around… Money's just money really. If you're not happy in an area or in a job then there's no point doing it."*

Labeling Billy's conception of his aspirations 'immaterial' merely identifies the focus of his conception in relation to the theme of materiality – it does not ignore the fact that monetary concerns are also present. Billy clearly considers the monetary reward for work to be important, but ultimately he sees a good job as something that aligns with his interests; it is important for work to be fulfilling and meaningful. Earlier in the interview Billy explains that there are particular subjects at school that he enjoys – namely maths and science – and that his intention is to focus

his efforts on these subjects in order to get the best qualification possible in that area and then find a related job. His occupational aspirations, and indeed his strategy for realising them, are clearly linked to his present interests.

The role of Billy's interests in shaping his aspirations extends to the second theme of the analysis – specificity. When I ask Billy what kind of job he would like to do in the future, he responds with a deliberate but open-ended plan to pursue his interests and see what occupational outcome follows:

"I'm not particularly sure what job I want to do in the future, but I've worked out that I'm going to go college to do A levels and then on to university to do something to do with science. And wherever that leads me, I'll get a job in whatever I'm interested in in the future."

Billy does not name a specific occupation or industry here. Instead, he has clear plans to pursue science, his main interest at school, on to further and higher education, and not merely as a route to a particular job. His educational aspirations come prior to, and are not merely instrumental to fulfilling, his occupational aspirations.

Billy's occupational aspirations, in the loose form that they exist, are clearly shaped by his interests, suggesting an agent-focused conception. However, he does refer to family-based forms of leverage which could be interpreted as significant structural influences on his thinking. Billy outlines how his mum has been contributing ideas about his future:

"My mum's been nagging me to think about it lately. She's suggesting all kinds of things cos a friend at work, she has kids who went to university to do science at Leeds. One of them's a biological scientist at a hospital, and one of them's a pharmacist. My mum – she's trying to get me to be one of them now, really."

From the interview data gathered, it is not possible to tell whether Billy's ambitions for science have been steered in any way by his mum's desire for him to pursue a career in this area – it could merely be a coincidence. However, it is clear that Billy's mum is involved to some extent in the process of formulating his aspirations and thereby exerting a structural influence on his thinking. Likewise, Billy is aware of the fact that if he were to go to university he would be the first person in his family to do so, and this would be a source of great pride for his nana:

"My nana wants me to go to university. None of her grandkids have gone yet, so she wants me to go."

In Billy's case, then, there are clear sources of family-based influence on his aspirations which are external and, therefore, structural. However, his aspirations seem to be primarily shaped by his interests, and the open-ended way in which he talks about his desired future job indicates a sense of freedom. As a result, in terms of the third theme of agency I label Ben's conception of his aspirations as individualised.

2.4 Cameron's conception of his aspirations [MA]

Cameron's conception of his aspirations is immaterial, specific and individualised. When I ask Cameron what a good job is, he initially focuses on pay but then makes clear that enjoyment is more central to his conception:

> *"A job that pays much. One that you can enjoy, not a boring one where you sit on a factory belt putting pieces together. You've got to enjoy the people around you, as well, and the area of the work… you've got to enjoy it."*

His conception of his aspirations is therefore immaterial, and the examples he gives of jobs he would like to do seem to be based around his primary interest at school – design – rather than by pay:

> *"We do do it at school, like designing lamps. And we get to work with some machinery as we make them. There's a factory round here called Siemens and they design lots of different components and electric boxes for cars and stuff. It'd be a good place to work in there, designing."*

As well as product design, Cameron also voices an aspiration to work in games design, this being a hobby he pursues avidly at home in his free time. During the interview it is clear that Cameron sources a great deal of satisfaction from the puzzle-solving element of games design, and from the wide audience his games attract when he puts them online – again, these are immaterial considerations. As well as design, Cameron also mentions a specific aspiration in an altogether different sector of the labour market:

> *"I've always wanted to work at a supermarket or something, like a manager, sorting out stock and prices, how much revenue you earn from them."*

Again, however, it is not the pay or status of the job but the nature of its content which draws Cameron to this particular form of work. The way in which Cameron talks about his occupational aspirations in these excerpts demonstrates that the content of work is more important in his mind than the pay received in return – hence the classification of his conception as immaterial. Also

clear here, however, is the specificity of his conception. Although he refers to three concrete occupational aspirations: product design; games design, and being a supermarket manager, these are all very specific roles in the labour market. When Cameron talks about his aspirations, he talks in specific terms rather than general terms, and I therefore classify his conception as specific.

The roles of both structure and agency are clear within Cameron's conception, although ultimately his conception of his aspirations is individualised. Cameron states that he has been 'making his own decisions', but addresses in some detail how the school has encouraged him to consider particular future careers:

"I've been making my own decisions. My mum and dad have been alright with that. But the school, I think the school have been steering me towards the airport because they're sponsored by them. All the trips and work experience - most of those suggestions are for the airport. So I think they're trying to get us towards working for the airport."

Later in the interview, he reiterates this sense of his own free will prevailing over attempts by the school to steer him down a particular occupational pathway:

"It's a bit free will, but sometimes they do try and steer us off into different things but it has been pretty easy, thinking about work."

Despite Cameron's awareness of the structural factors influencing his thinking about his aspirations, then, his aspirations themselves do not seem to be shaped by these external forces. Cameron describes vividly how the school has encouraged him to consider the airport as a place to work – even considering the motivations behind this steering; the school's ties with the airport as a sponsor – but he aspires to work in design, or as a supermarket manager. He also refers explicitly to a sense of free will, and of relative ease in choosing his own path. The presence of structure is clear in Cameron's conception of his aspirations, but its efficacy seems minimal. As a result, I classify this conception as individualised.

2.5 Caleb's conception of his aspirations [MA]

Caleb's conception of his aspirations is immaterial, specific and bounded. When I ask Caleb what a good job is, his response mirrors that of Cameron in its structure and content: he begins by mentioning material reward, before turning to focus on the job's alignment with his interests:

"Good pay. A job that I'm interested in, that I like. Something that's going to be useful to me skills-wise."

Here, Caleb also talks about the quality of a job in terms of the skills it develops, which is a novel consideration of the content and quality of work that is not picked up on in the other interviews conducted. A good job, then, is defined primarily in terms of its immaterial aspects. When I discuss Caleb's occupational aspirations with him, it become clear that these cluster around cartoon design, animation and video game design:

"The job that I want to do is art and design, going into cartoon design and that stuff… whatever uses my art and design, cartoon design, something like that. Animation - I enjoy doing that."

Mirroring the link between Cameron's hobbies and aspirations, Caleb's desire to do an art- or design-based job stems from his main leisure pursuit, which is drawing cartoons. He describes in the interview how he has been drawing for a number of years, gradually honing his skills and building up a portfolio, and his occupational aspirations are clearly based on a desire to transpose this hobby into the world of work. Caleb's conception of his aspirations is immaterial. It is also specific, based on a number of closely-configured and quite highly specified occupations based around design and animation.

Structural factors play a role in shaping Caleb's conception of his aspirations. Firstly, Caleb mentions the role of the school in suggesting or encouraging particular future options:

"We've done things in the past to see what jobs are like at the airport; shadowing people. I've done that a few times. I've been to art galleries to see all the art, see how people are inspired by stuff round here."

As in Cameron's case, the school's attempts to encourage an airport-related route appear not to have fed through into Caleb's aspirations. However, the school may have played a more supportive structural role in fostering Caleb's interest in art. In particular, he explains how the school trip to an art gallery demonstrated to him how artists are inspired by the local area. The notion of a local influence reemerges when Caleb talks about his own sources of inspiration when he draws and, perhaps more fundamentally, when he talks about the inspiration for having become interested in art and an art-related career in the first place:

"Round here there's lots of things that can inspire you for art, so I think that's probably what's made me choose art… If you're living up in Manchester, I wouldn't say that my art skills would be something that I'd have gone to, because there's not really that much to draw, like natural forms wise. Whereas here there's trees, parks, plenty loads of things that you can draw to inspire you."

As a structural force, then, the environment of Wythenshawe appears to have shaped Caleb's conception of his aspirations: the way he thinks and talks about his desire to work in an art-

related job is clearly and explicitly linked to the influence of the locality. Given that art is his primary hobby, however, this occupational aspiration is also therefore undeniably grounded in agency. This epitomises Evans' notion of bounded agency, as "socially situated agency, influenced but not determined by environments" (2007: 93). I therefore define Caleb's conception of his aspirations as bounded.

2.6 Tyler's conception of his aspirations [HA]

Tyler's conception of his aspirations is immaterial, specific and bounded. When I ask Tyler what a good job is, he makes clear reference to the content of the work, job satisfaction and social value. He makes a specific point of acknowledging that public sector work, of the sort he aspires to do, is no less appealing for not necessarily being the best paid:

> *"Mostly it's something you enjoy. I'm not sure yet, but I either want to be a doctor or a police officer. Or something like that. A public sector job. Because when you see that you think* 'that's a nice job.' *It might not have the most money but people seem to enjoy it. You're helping people and that makes you feel good. Whereas some jobs are so mundane it just doesn't feel worth it to even try and do it."*

Tyler's conception of his aspirations is therefore clearly immaterial. As indicated by the excerpt above, Tyler's aspirations are quite broad ranging, covering a number of different possible jobs within a broad public sector domain. As he summarises, he is open to a range of possibilities:

> *"I'm open to anything, but I've set my grades towards being something like a doctor. But I'm open to doing anything, as long as I find it interesting and fun."*

His immaterial focus reappears here with the requirement that his future job be 'interesting and fun'. Although he is 'open to anything', it is clear that Tyler has a particular sort of job in mind, and although in the course of the interview he outlines four different possibilities – doctor, police officer, engineer and chemist – these are all quite specifically defined, with the latter two merely alternatives "if my other options didn't pan out." Although Tyler voices a number of occupational aspirations, these are specifically defined, with a common public sector basis driven by a desire to do a job that is meaningful and satisfying. I therefore classify his conception as immaterial and specific.

The forces of structure and agency emerge in multiple, often overlapping forms during the course of Tyler's interview. As with many of the other conceptions of aspirations described in this section of the thesis, the concept of 'bounded agency' effectively captures the particular combination of structural and individual factors shaping the way in which Tyler understands and talks about his occupational aspirations. As demonstrated above by the range of specific occupations he aspires

to, Tyler is in his own words ‘open to anything’. Later in the interview, it becomes clear that this open-ended conception of his occupational future is something he has ownership of, rather than it being open-ended in a form that is out of his control. When I ask Tyler if he has been steered down a particular route, or whether he has been able to choose his own track, he expresses a clear sense of agency:

“I've been able to choose my own. I guess that's because of my intelligence. I've always had the grades to choose what I want. People in lower sets don't have that. I don't feel tied down to the area. I don't feel like I'm trapped in something I don't want to do. I don't feel like I've not got the skills to do what I want to do.”

What is clear here, then, is that the range of specific occupations Tyler aspires to are in his view very much the product of his own design; his own agency. However, he sees good grades as central to this enabling setup, and when I ask him about the factors shaping his aspirations, he clearly cites education as a significant and almost deterministic structural force:

“If you do well, you think about a high level job. If you do less well academically, you think about lower end jobs.”

Tyler also mentions the importance of family as both a restricting and enabling external factor: on the one hand your family’s occupational history will shape your own occupational future; on the other, a supportive family can enable you to consider new horizons:

“If your family's all lawyers, you'll be shaped to do something like that. My family have always pushed me to do what I want. So it's always been up to me. I've never felt like I've had to choose something that I don't want.”

Finally, and as part of the same discussion of the external factors influencing his aspirations, Tyler refers to the importance of contingent and circumstantial life experiences in shaping his ideas about the future. He explains, for instance, how a stay in hospital during which he witnessed the work of medical staff gave him the idea of becoming a doctor, and how witnessing the role of the police in Wythenshawe gave him the idea of joining the force. In Tyler’s conception, an area itself is not a significant influence on aspirations but the events, experiences and opportunities in that area certainly are. This comes across when I ask Tyler if his occupational aspirations would be different if he’d grown up somewhere else:

“I don't think it would. Unless I'd seen something in a different place that was even better than what I'd already wanted to choose. It's more circumstantial - like the hospital. It's not the actual place that matters, it's the things you experience, the things that happen, in that place.”

The role of various forms of structure – schooling; family background; the opportunities and experiences available in a particular locality – are clearly acknowledged in Tyler's conception of his aspirations, but these elements of structure are more often enabling than restricting. Tyler's conception of his aspirations exhibits bounded agency.

2.7 Charlie's conception of his aspirations [HA]

Charlie's conception of his aspirations is immaterial, specific and bounded. When I ask Charlie what a good job is, his initial response does not refer to the themes of material reward or job satisfaction that characterise the majority of the interviews here. Instead, he states that a good job is one that reflects success, and gives a clear indication of what exactly is entailed by 'success':

"To be successful. And when I say successful I mean, like, if I start a business, I want to work. I will be probably lower down when I start, but by the time I finish I want to be at the top. That'll mean I've been successful."

For Charlie then, a good job is one that facilities upward movement towards the top of a business, or to build a successful business from scratch. There is no indication here that Charlie has money in mind when he talks about success – indeed, when he expands on his idea of the 'good job' and the notion of 'success' as upward movement towards the top of a business, it becomes clear that his conception of his aspirations is immaterial. For Charlie, success only comes if you work hard, and you only work hard at something if you enjoy it:

"Money's not really that important, as long as I like it and enjoy it. If you enjoy it then I'm going to be successful at it anyway, cos you work your way up. So I think a good job to me is probably working at the bottom to get yourself at the top. And that'll be a good job, at the top."

Charlie has a very specific conception of his aspirations. He wants to become a property agent in order to gain knowledge of consumer preferences in the housing market, with a long-term view to becoming a property developer. His conception of his aspirations not only comprises short- and long-term components but also an underlying strategy for bringing the two together:

"I want to be like a property agent so then, I go and see what people like, and then at that same time, save up money and then go and buy my own house, and I'll already have intelligence of what people like in a house, and then do it up to their liking, and then sell it on. And then keep on doing that all the way through."

The specificity of Charlie's occupational aspirations is underpinned by equally specific plans for their realisation:

"I'm going to do a business course, then I'm also going to do a HIC – it's a housing course. That's a BTEC. And then after that, my brother's a plumber at the minute, so I'll get an apprenticeship with him, or school, sponsored by Willow Park, and they said they can get me into that. And after I do that, go into it and then go from there."

Charlie's conception of his aspirations exhibits elements of agency and structural influence. He explains how his aspiration to become a property developer is "just a dream; just a goal that I'm going to succeed at, hopefully." He does however discuss how the local environment of Wythenshawe – namely the quality of its housing stock – has influenced his thinking about the job he would like to do in the future. When I ask Charlie if he thinks his occupational aspirations might be different if he had grown up somewhere else, he explains:

"Yeh, they probably would cos like, I look at the houses round here and think 'gosh, could do a lot better.' *So maybe if I'd grew up where nice houses were everywhere then I'd think* 'oh, people's already got all nice houses, they won't want to go and sell them.' *Cos they won't want to go and buy a new house if they've already got a nice house. So yeh, I think if I was brought up somewhere different, it would probably be different."*

The link between Charlie's perception of the quality of the housing in Wythenshawe and his desire to become a property developer extends further into the future, to the point where Charlie hopes to return to the area when he has become a successful businessman in order to apply his role as a developer directly to the built environment in Wythenshawe:

"If I come into property developer then maybe I'd come back and try and give the houses a boost round here to make the actual area good, cos I'm obviously from the area so I want to do whatever I can to put something better into the area. So maybe I'd come back and, if I'm successful enough, go and build an estate which would be proper nice and make the place look actually nice."

In terms of structure and agency, then, Charlie's conception of his aspirations is, ultimately, characterised more by the latter than the former. The structural context of Wythenshawe, and in particular its housing stock, does feature clearly in Charlie's aspiration to become a property developer. However, ultimately his aspiration is a 'dream', driven by a desire to set up his own business and be successful. Charlie's conception of his aspirations is influenced, but not determined, by structural factors – his conception is bounded.

2.8 David's conception of his aspirations [LA]

David's conception of his aspirations is specific and bounded, and contains both material and immaterial elements. When I ask David what a good job is, he names specific trades within the construction industry and appeals to the ability to make 'easy money' from these when applied in the right setting:

"A joiner or a plumber. That's a good job. Willow Park, or my own little business when I grow up. Cos you see that's good money that: one phone call in the middle of the night, just to go out and have a look - £80. Just to have a look, that's a 5 minute job... That's easy money isn't it? So that's what I'd want to do, something like that."

David's conception of his aspirations is specific, referring to two particular trades within a particular industry, and a desire to either work for the local housing trust or set up his own business. He would also like to work with young people in a teaching capacity, and is exploring this possibility with staff at the school. Here again, his sectoral focus is clear: he would teach construction. When I prompt David to consider if there are any other aspects of working in construction that appeal to him, other than the pay, he does then go on to elaborate that money is not the only factor motivating him to pursue a future job in this area – enjoyment and job satisfaction are also important. David considers these immaterial aspects of the 'good job' as a series of rhetorical questions, implying that it is an obvious, universal truth that these aspects of a job are important:

"Yeh, I like, I enjoy doing stuff like that. That's what I mean: I enjoy it. Obviously that's what I want to do: I enjoy doing stuff. It's not just about the money is it? You want to do something you enjoy. Don't want to go to a job that you don't enjoy, do you? Cos if you're stuck with a job you don't enjoy for the rest of your life you're going to be miserable aren't you?"

This immaterial component of his conception of his aspirations is therefore by no means secondary to the material component. Although David begins by focusing on the material reasons for aspiring to work in construction, it seems as though he considers immaterial factors to be obviously, perhaps even trivially true, and this may explain why he did not voice these immaterial factors until prompted. David's conception of his aspirations is therefore specific, and both material and immaterial.

As noted in Andrew's conception, the content of David's occupational aspirations are aligned with the narrow form of educational provision he is receiving at school – as indeed are the aspirations of all of the young people interviewed in the Construction Hub. However, David's conception of his aspirations does not appeal significantly to any structural influences. As is clear from the previous excerpt from David's interview, he enjoys construction and sees it as a fulfilling future

form of work, both personally and financially. In his interview, David refers to experiences he has had, or people he knows, which have demonstrated either the appeal or viability of construction as a job:

"Matt who lives on my road, he's got his own business... When my kitchen was getting fitted, and my bathroom and toilet and all that, at Willow Park, I'd be sat there watching. I used to sit there watching - I used to enjoy watching them."

As discussed in the case of Tyler, these experiences are in an obvious sense 'structural' in that their provenance is external to the agent. However, in the way that they are discussed when David talks about the source of his occupational aspirations, these structural forces are arguably informing and enabling rather than restricting. If David aspires to a job in construction because he enjoys it, then this affinity with construction can, at least in part, be traced to his enjoyment of watching other people doing that job when he was younger. Ultimately, David's conception of his aspirations is bounded: his understanding of his aspirations is rooted in a sense of environmental context – Matt on his road with his own successful construction business; the kitchen fitters coming to his house – but also in his own personal enjoyment of construction.

2.9 Josh's conception of his aspirations [MA]

Josh's conception of his aspirations is immaterial, specific and individualised. When I interview Josh it is clear from the outset that he has a clear, considered and fairly unequivocal desire to work at the airport:

"I'd definitely like to look into the airport. I like the airport, and I like to be able to go out and enjoy what I'm doing. After I leave school I'll go to college and then move on to the airport… I like the buzz about it, me. There's lots of things going on, different things. It's nice to watch different people doing different things, like people on the airfield, people in the terminal, car parking, different things like that. You've got a wide variety of jobs."

Despite this specific focus on the airport Josh does not specify which sort of role he would most like to fulfil there – indeed, it is the breadth of different occupational possibilities at the airport which seems to appeal to him. An international airport does indeed support a large and varied workforce in myriad different roles, and so in one sense Josh's conception of his aspirations is not particularly specific. The dimension of 'specificity' picked out by this tripartite thematic analysis of the interviews is not, however, narrowly defined – a conception can be 'specific' in the way that it understands and talks about aspirations in any number of ways – in terms of geographical location, sector, industry, skills, content, status and so forth. Furthermore, and to restate the important analytical distinction between the *content* of an individual's aspirations and the *way in which they talk about* those aspirations (Marton 1981), a conception of aspirations can be

'specific' even if it does not refer to a specific job. In Josh's case, then, and by way of exemplifying this distinction, he does not aspire to a particular job at the airport but he talks about a specific employer in a specific geographical location, to specific aspects of the work there and specific reasons for feeling an affinity with it. The 'general sense' (Marton and Pong 2005: 338, 340) that Josh has of his occupational aspirations is one of specificity.

Josh's conception of his aspirations is one of the more straightforwardly immaterial of all those considered here. His desire to work at the airport stems from his interest in the place; his positive orientations towards the 'buzz' and variety there. He makes no reference to the importance of remuneration, although this may be due to the fact that he does not name a specific job at the airport and so is unable to discuss its pay. I forgot to ask Josh what he thought a good job was, which is a somewhat different consideration to the job he would like to do, and is a question which, in the other interviews, tended to elicit some comments about pay, even in conceptions which were ultimately immaterial. The straightforwardly immaterial conception on display here may therefore be partly an artifact of the interview.

When I ask Josh if he has considered other jobs it becomes clear that although he has reflectively examined other possibilities he has always wanted to work at the airport:

"Not really, I've always had my eyes set on the airport. But there are probably different places in Wythenshawe that I don't know of that would be good. Like Willow Park - that might be good. But I don't really like doing office work - I like to be out and about doing things. I think the airport applies most to that. And because the school's connected with the airport, that gives us even more opportunity."

As in the first excerpt from Josh's interview, it is clear that above all else personal interest is steering his desire to work at the airport. There are signs of the influence of structure, such as the enabling role of the school's partnership with the airport. When I ask Josh if he feels he has had freedom to choose what he wants to do when he leaves school, he also briefly acknowledges the structural influence of family – in particular his dad, who has worked at the airport for a number of years. However, he then goes on to make clear that his occupational aspirations are ultimately the result of his own interests and agency, and expresses this sense of personal agency in no uncertain terms:

"Yeh, my dad encourages me towards the airport because there's loads of jobs there that are suited to me. But no, most of it's just me. From an early age I've always wanted to do that. I can't see myself doing anything else. It's out of my own interests. It's of my own accord."

2.10 John's conception of his aspirations [MA]

John's conception of his aspirations is immaterial, specific and bounded. When I ask John what a good job is he mentions both material and immaterial elements, but whereas the material element is qualified – a good job does not necessarily have to be well paid, it is just something which "can be" well paid – the immaterial elements of a good job appear to be crucial:

"Something I find entertaining. Something that can be well paid. Something that you love. Cos it's no good doing something that you don't like doing, is it?"

John talks in specific terms about his occupational aspirations, particularly his primary aspiration to be a forensic scientist:

"The main jobs I'd want to do would be forensic science or my second thought is do something at the airport, cos that's a good place to get a job. They do lots of things."

While the secondary aspiration to do 'something' at the airport is fairly loosely defined in relation to the primary aspiration to become a forensic scientist, as discussed above in Josh's case there is still notable specificity here in relation to geography and employer. As an aside, this is another instance of the airport – by far Wythenshawe's largest employer and a sponsor of the school – featuring in the young people's thoughts about their occupational futures.

John's aspiration to become a forensic scientist appears to have emerged from popular TV shows *NCIS* and *CSI*, which are based on the role of forensics in solving crimes. Apparently driven by a desire to help solve crimes himself, John acknowledges the role of Wythenshawe in shaping his aspirations:

"All the gangs and stuff - it's about crime. So I think about that and think about stopping it. So it does sort of inspire me to help the community."

Finally, John's parents appear to have played a formative role in shaping his aspirations, either by sharing an interest in forensic science or simply by supporting him as he develops his ideas about possible future jobs:

"I've got my parents who really support me and that's the main thing that's made me want to do it – to aim towards the forensics… Cos I like watching shows like NCIS and CSI. It inspires me. And my mum supports me quite a bit… I think things have steered me. My parents love CSI and it's making me think more and more towards forensics. That's what first inspired me towards it. But I've also thought about it myself quite a bit."

This excerpt indicates the firm presence of structure in John's conception of his aspirations – whether in terms of cultural forms, his parents or the environment in Wythenshawe. However, John's final comments above also assert a strong sense of agency over the process of forming his aspirations. Ultimately his conception is best described as bounded: structure has influenced, but not determined, his occupational aspirations.

2.11 Karl's conception of his aspirations [MA]

Karl's conception of his aspirations is material, general and structured. He wants to move into paid employment as swiftly as possible after school, foregoing any further education in order to start earning money:

"I'd rather just skip college and stuff and try and get a job; try and get my own money sorted. Live off my own income and stuff."

His focus on working in order to earn money is driven in part by the experience of his brother, who is twenty and living at home having just finished his third college course. Karl's mum has given his brother a week to get a job so that he can support himself, and Karl tells me "I don't want to be in that position." When he talks about his occupational aspirations, Karl's focus is starting work so that he can begin earning money to support himself financially; the question of what that work might be is secondary. When I ask Karl what kind of job he'd like to do in the future, he talks in quite broad terms:

"Anything really. I could do a desk job; I don't mind computers. I could do stuff out in the open because that's what I was used to on the market, and talking to people. That's something I'd be alright with, like in a shop."

When I ask Karl if there is anything specific he has ever wanted to be, he indicates that there was a point in the past when he aspired to be a marine biologist, but that this began to seem unrealistic when he reflected on how he was doing at school:

"I wanted to be a marine biologist ages ago but I just thought that's shooting a bit too far. I don't think I'd be able to do that… Like, I'm on report. That's not really a good thing. Like behaviour and stuff. But if I tried I probably could, maybe."

When Karl explains that his previous aspiration to become a marine biologist was based on a desire to "travel the world, see fish and coral", it becomes apparent that his conception of his aspirations is now both more general and more material than it was previously: he now wants to work in order to earn money, and he'll do anything, whereas in the past he had more specific

ideas based on his interests. The excerpt above indicates that this move away from a specific, immaterial conception of his aspirations is due to both individual and structural factors: his assessment of his own ability and the effort he is putting into his schoolwork; his problematic behaviour at school; being placed on report. When Karl discusses the role of the school more broadly, however, the influence of structure on his conception of his aspirations becomes increasingly obvious:

"When I was picking my options I wanted to do things like mechanics and stuff, but they pushed me to say... Because I'm capable of getting higher grades, they don't want me to do that kind of stuff; want me to get GCSEs and stuff. But I didn't really want to do that. But that's what I ended up doing."

Karl goes on to explain that had he had more freedom over his options he would have chosen to do construction at school, and given the aspirations of the young people interviewed in the construction hub this may well have led to an entirely different conception of his aspirations. On at least two separate occasions, it seems, Karl's aspirations have been significantly shaped by structural forces, and he clearly acknowledges the role of structure when he talks about his aspirations. Whereas in many of the other conceptions considered here structure plays an enabling or shaping role, producing a 'bounded' form of agency, the role of structure in Karl's conception of his occupational aspirations is clearly more limiting. As a result, I label Karl's conception material, general and structured.

2.12 Lewis' conception of his aspirations [HA]

Lewis' conception of his occupational aspirations is immaterial, general and individualised. When I ask Lewis what he would want from a job, he begins by focusing on the immaterial consideration of job satisfaction – how happy he would be doing that job. He then moves on to note that the job would need to pay enough for him to live on, and implies that his desire to have 'a lot of things' would probably necessitate a relatively good level of pay:

"It would have to be a job that I can go to every day, and I can be happy that I go to the job. If the job makes me happy and the pay's enough for me to live on, because I do want a lot of things because I'm quite a materialistic person."

The way in which Lewis discusses his ideal job places a relatively clear priority on immaterial over material considerations. Although pay is important, and although he anticipates needing a relatively good level of pay in order to sustain his consumption patterns, he nonetheless describes this level of pay as 'enough to live on' – it merely needs to be sufficient, even if this notion of sufficiency is subjectively defined. In Lewis' view, the enjoyment he gets from a job appears to be more important than the pay, and so I define his conception as immaterial.

During the course of the interview it becomes clear that Lewis has a strong interest in biology, and when I ask him about the sorts of jobs he thinks about doing in the future he replies with a range of ideas in this area:

"I think I'd like to go to an animal centre to be honest. I think I'd like to study animal behaviour. And then other times I want to study genes and how they affect us. And other times I want to study DNA itself and perhaps make a new discovery. There's just so many aspects to biology and there's so many jobs that can come out of it that I think it's not too important to think about right now."

Although Lewis names some specific occupations here, his concluding comments suggest that he is open to doing a broad range of jobs and, further, is not preoccupied with honing down his aspirations to a specific job or set of jobs at this stage. He knows that he wants to go to university to study biology, but at this point in time he is uncertain about what might follow. When I talk to Lewis further, it becomes clear that this uncertainty, and the generalised conception of his aspirations it underpins, is in fact born out of a conscious and deliberate effort to resist a range of external pressures that are urging him to be more decisive and more specific:

"The job I want to do: I decided not to even start to think about it right now. I think I'm under too much pressure as it is with my exams, colleges, trying to find a part time job. I don't think I should have to worry about that right now. I'm going to wait until I'm half way through college until I start to think about that, and what I want to be… There's a lot of pressure from outside about what you want to do."

Lewis describes how the pressure to do well at school and plan out his future career is beginning to take its toll, and that he will soon be receiving counseling for the anxiety it is causing him. At this stage in the interview I became acutely aware of the ethical implications of asking Lewis about his occupational aspirations, given that he is clearly under stress from already having similar questions directed at him from numerous other sources. I endeavoured to bring the interview to a close, and in the meantime Lewis elaborated on his preference for not making decisions about his occupational aspirations at this stage by describing how two of his friends have very different conceptions of their own aspirations, one of which he feels more affinity with than the other:

"One of my friends has a great idea of what she wants to be when she's older; she wants to do aquatic biology and she's looking into all these colleges, all these universities, all these experiences. And I hope that she really does well. But another one of my friends, he really doesn't care right now. He's more interested in having fun, which, hypocritically, I also think is quite good. He can ignore the pressure and just do what he wants, and I think that's quite admirable. He

doesn't care about school, and I know that isn't very good, but he is enjoying his life and I think that's what's more important after all."

For Lewis, then, it appears that reaching a specific conception of his aspirations is part of a package of future-directed thinking which he wants to defer to a later stage in his progression from youth to adulthood, in the face of considerable pressure to bring such thinking forward to the present. The role of structure here could not be clearer: Lewis refers to a sense of external pressure which has reached such proportions as to have a tangible impact on his health. Nonetheless, his conception of his aspirations is ultimately individualised because, as he indicates above, he has decided not to think too much about his occupational future at this stage; he refuses to form a more specific conception of his aspirations. Both structure and agency are evident in Lewis' conception, then, but this is not an instance of bounded agency because Lewis has realised his agency in spite of, rather than in the context of, structure. His conception of his aspirations is individualised, despite the significant presence of structural forces.

Lewis concludes his interview by defining his occupational aspirations in terms of what he does not want to do, specifically identifying jobs where his success or failure would impact on other people. It seems, therefore, that his conception of his aspirations is also individualised in a second sense: he aspires to an occupation where the outcome of his work only has a bearing on himself:

"I don't want to be self employed; I can't handle that responsibility. I don't want to be a boss for a major firm. I don't want to be in charge of a company. I don't want to be in government. I want something that, if something good can come out of it then that's great, but if I fail then it only affects me and not anyone else."

2.13 Michael's conception of his aspirations [LA]

Michael's conception of his aspirations is material, specific and structured. When I ask Michael what job he would like to do when he finishes school, he replies with a specific occupational aspiration and initially appeals to the satisfaction he extracts from that type of work:

"Security. I just love doing security. That patrolling job over at college - I love doing that. I just love security."

When I ask Michael if there are any other aspects of security work that appeal to him, he moves on to consider the more material aspects of the occupation:

"It's well paid. You're well paid. London Olympics - £8.25 an hour or £9.25 an hour. You're coming out with £100 odd a week. Better than most jobs isn't it?"

His conception of his aspirations would initially appear to be both material and immaterial – based on the level of pay and an affinity with the content of the work. However, as Michael talks in more detail about his aspiration to work in security it becomes clearer that his conception of his aspirations is primarily material. As well as pay and enjoyment, he refers positively to the ready supply of security work and the consequent ease with which it can be found. This is a material consideration, focusing on the ability to secure work rather than its content. On balance, given the way in which Michael talks about his desire to work in security, I define his conception of his aspirations as material and specific.

The limiting role of structure is evident in the way Michael understands and talks about his aspirations. When I ask him if he thinks he has been able to forge his own path, his response initially emphasizes the role of external forces, of being 'knocked down', and he relates this sense of structure directly to the experience of living in Wythenshawe:

"No, you can't do that cos then you just get knocked down really, round here anyway. If you want something, you either get the occasional people what actually get it, or people that just wish they get it and just don't get anywhere in life."

However, when I ask Michael to elaborate his focus shifts from structure to agency. He seems to suggest that the experience of aspiring in Wythenshawe is one governed by individual perseverance: people in Wythenshawe fail to forge their own path not because they are 'knocked down' by external forces, but rather that they 'give up' rather than working to achieve what they want:

"Some people, there's occasional people round here, largely work at what they want, and actually get it in the long run. But other people, they just give up half way and just end up going on the dole cos it's too hard."

This somewhat ambiguous picture of the role of structure and agency in shaping outcomes for people in Wythenshawe is mirrored in the way Michael talks about the role of structure and agency in shaping his own aspirations. Just as the excerpts above convey an ambivalence in Michael's view about the role of structural and individual factors in preventing people from Wythenshawe from achieving their aspirations, Michael seems similarly equivocal about the role of structure and agency in narrowing down his own individual future prospects – specifically, the possibility of pursuing a career in construction. He describes how his aspiration to work in construction has now faded because, after five years of training at school, he has failed to qualify and gain an apprenticeship. He refers to structural factors, such as the withdrawal of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), as well as individual-level factors such as his level of motivation, in producing this aspirational outcome:

"Even I'm giving up on this now. My fifth year in construction. There's kids what have only just left high school, not even done a year and got apprenticeships. I should be qualified by now - five years. I used to actually do good for the first three years, until I got nothing out of it. Now I just don't care and don't try. Cos there's no point, is there? And for £20 a week."

What seems to come across in the way Michael talks about the role of structure and agency here is that his aspirations have been shaped by a certain degree of 'giving up', 'not caring' and 'not trying' – what may appear at face value to be individual-level factors. However, the limiting role of agency in Michael's conception seems, on closer inspection, to be based on structural factors – the perceived success of his peers; the withdrawal of financial support; the length of time it has taken him to try, and fail, to qualify, and, ultimately, the sense that Wythenshawe isn't the kind of place where it is worth aspiring because "you just get knocked down." Michael's conception of his aspirations seems to be founded upon an idea of agency stifled by structure – in particular, of individual motivation eroded by an environment of non-achievement. For this reason I classify his conception as structured.

2.14 Rob's conception of his aspirations [MA]

Rob's conception of his aspirations is immaterial, specific and individualised. When I ask Rob what job he would like to do in the future he explains that he would like to be an electrical engineer, and that he reached this specific aspiration by considering the various jobs available within the field of engineering.

"I just wanted to be an engineer from the start really: electrician, electrical engineer just seems fun to me. I don't want to be designing buildings and stuff, I'd rather design circuits. Cos once you've designed something and you can see it work, it's pretty exciting really. To know that you've made it, it's new, no one's ever done it before, and then see it work's pretty good."

It is clear that Rob's specific aspiration to be an electrical engineer is governed by his interests – he wants to do a job that will be satisfying, and he specifically identifies the work of an electrical engineer as being able to provide this job satisfaction. Rob's conception of his aspirations is therefore immaterial and specific.

During the course of his interview Rob communicates a strong sense of control over both his aspirations and their realisation. He explains that he wants to be the first person in his family to go to university, and that he has no concerns about applying himself at school in order to get good grades and get a good job. He discusses other occupational possibilities he has considered, such as becoming an architect, and in each case these alternatives have been dismissed of his own volition, on the basis that electrical engineering would be more interesting. When I ask Rob what

the main influence has been behind his desire to go into electrical engineering, his sense of agency is unequivocal: “myself, really… it’s just interesting.”

2.15 Ross’ conception of his aspirations [LA]

Ross’ conception of his aspirations is material, specific and individualised. When I ask Ross what a good job is, he refers initially to the importance of enjoying the job – an immaterial consideration – but then discusses in detail how a job must support more than a subsistence lifestyle:

> *“A good job is being happy while you're working in it, and making enough money not just so you can get your food, your rent, your gas, your electric, not just to pay for that stuff, but also so you've got money that you can go* ‘right, well I'm going to treat myself this week, I'm going to go out and buy a new TV.’*… That to me, that's a good job. Because you've got everything you need to survive, and your luxuries.”*

As will be discussed in greater detail in section 3, the importance of having a job that supports a good standard of living is framed by the prevalence of material hardship in Wythenshawe and, closer to home, within his own family, which Ross raises on a number of occasions during the interview. When Ross turns to consider his own occupational aspirations, it becomes clear that he has a specific job sector in mind – construction. Initially Ross cites material considerations – a desire to find a job with a stable firm that won’t go bust – but then makes clear that his desire to work in construction is also driven by immaterial considerations:

> *“My long term career is to, I want to get a job with a decent enough firm that's not going to go bankrupt as soon as I get onboard with a job. Actual job type: I want to do anything within construction, absolutely anything, cos I do love the thing.”*

Despite this, Ross’ conception of his aspirations does appear to be predominantly material. He details how he plans to supplement his construction job with property development and lettings, and has clearly given an appreciable degree of thought to the income this could generate and the ways in which expertise in construction would be advantageous. In short, Ross’ desire to work in construction is clearly driven in part by an affinity with this form of work, but his primary consideration appears to be material: the security and pay of construction work, and its ability to contribute to additional sources of income.

Structure could be seen to play a significant role in Ross’ conception of his aspirations: the material hardship present in his home and the wider Wythenshawe context, which he discusses at length in his interview, appears to be informing a materially-focussed conception of aspirations which is primarily concerned with securing a job that will pay enough money to support a comfortable lifestyle. However, there is a pervasive impression of ownership in the way Ross talks

about and understands his aspirations to get a job in construction and supplement his income by buying, improving and letting houses. Rather than being resigned to this occupational future, Ross talks with interest and conviction about his aspirations, and they form part of a holistically designed plan. On balance, his conception seems individualised.

2.16 Tim's conception of his aspirations [LA]

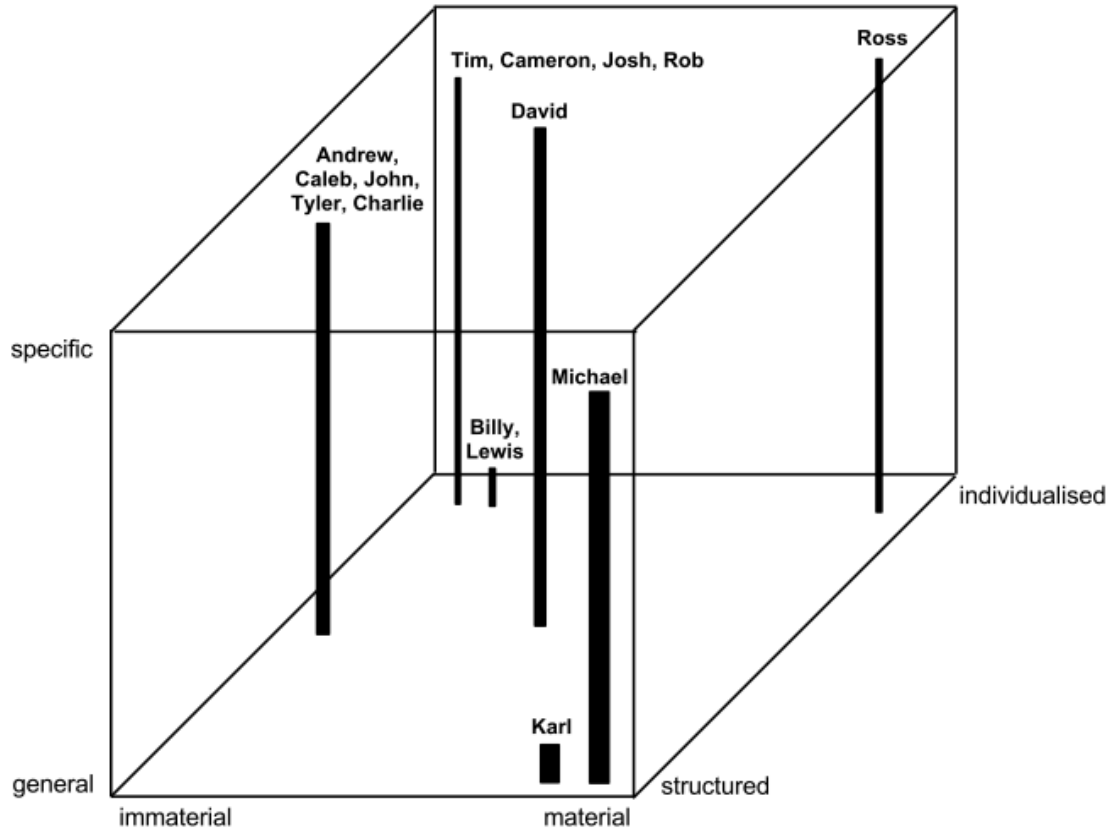
Tim's conception of his aspirations is immaterial, specific and individualised. He wants to work in construction – specifically, as a joiner – and talks about this occupational aspiration in unambiguously immaterial terms, stating of joinery "I just like actually doing it; I like the physical side of it", mirroring the way in which Andrew talks about his affinity with construction. His conception is therefore immaterial and specific. When I ask Tim if he thinks his aspirations might be different if he had grown up somewhere else, his response mirrors Tyler's. Firstly, Tim explains that the form his aspirations have taken depends more on the people he was brought up with than the area he was brought up in; secondly, he indicates that circumstances and experiences in a place, rather than the place itself, are the primary influences on aspirations – he explains how "you get told something and you're like *'oh I want to do that'*", implying that external sources of inspiration can sometimes be taken on board without hesitation. Tom gives no indication, however, that these influences have played a particular or significant role in shaping his own occupational aspirations – indeed, he states at the end of his interview that "I've always known what I've wanted to do, no one forced me to do anything." Ultimately, then, Tim acknowledges that aspirations can be shaped by structure – he has an understanding of how agency can be bounded – but his conception of his own aspirations is individualised.

Unfortunately there was insufficient data from Joel's interview to outline a conception of his aspirations.

2.17 Summary

The individual conceptions of aspirations outlined in section 2 are summarised in Figure 4, which represents each of the conceptions in a three-dimensional space according to their alignment with each of the three themes of materiality, specificity and agency which formed the basis of the analysis. This graphical summary of the analysis highlights a number of points. Firstly, there are seven distinct conceptions of aspirations in the data. Some of these are individually held: Karl's material-general-structured conception; Michael's material-specific-structured conception, Ross' material-specific-individualised conception, and David's specific-bounded conception. One conception is common to two of the young people interviewed: the immaterial-general-individualised conception held by Billy and Lewis. Meanwhile, the remaining two conceptions are common to a number of the young people interviewed: the immaterial-specific-bounded conception held by Andrew, Caleb, John, Tyler and Charlie, and the immaterial-specific-individualised conception held by Tim, Cameron, Josh and Rob, which together account for the majority of the young people interviewed.

Figure 4 – Conceptions of aspirations in the outcome space



Across all of the conceptions there is a tendency towards specificity: five of the seven conceptions are specific, accounting for twelve out of fifteen interviewees. There is also a tendency towards immateriality, with eleven of the fifteen young people (across three conceptions) holding an immaterial conception of their aspirations. Finally there is a tendency towards agency, with seven young people holding an individualised conception and only two holding a structured conception. The remaining participants held bounded conceptions in which agency was clear, alongside an acknowledgment of the role of structural forces in shaping that agency.

Having outlined both the conceptions of Wythenshawe and the conceptions of aspirations that emerge from the interviews, the analysis now turns to consider the relationship between these two sets of conceptions, as well as the mechanisms through which young people's conceptions of Wythenshawe shape their conceptions of their aspirations.

3 Place and aspirations

Two approaches can be taken to assessing the relationship between conceptions of Wythenshawe and conceptions of aspirations. The first approach is based on aggregated data and identifies the broad associations between different conceptions of Wythenshawe and different conceptions of aspirations. The second approach is based on a case-by-case analysis of each

interview and makes inferences about the mechanisms through which conceptions of Wythenshawe shape conceptions of aspirations at the individual level.

3.1 Aggregate-level associations between place and aspirations

The aggregate approach works with the interview data in its most reduced form, whereby each young person's conception of Wythenshawe and conception of their aspirations is summarised in a matrix, as illustrated in Table 4. With the data in this form, it is easier to identify any associations between conceptions of Wythenshawe and conceptions of aspirations.

Table 4 – Matrix summarising the output from the intensive phase of the research

		Conception of aspirations			Conception of
		Materiality	Specificity	Agency	Wythenshawe
Low attainment	Andrew	immaterial	specific	bounded	territorial
	Ross	material	specific	individualised	dysfunctional
	David	material/immaterial	specific	bounded	dysfunctional
	Michael	material	specific	structured	dysfunctional
	Tim	immaterial	specific	individualised	territorial
Middle attainment	Cameron	immaterial	specific	individualised	material
	Caleb	immaterial	specific	bounded	material
	Josh	immaterial	specific	individualised	provisional
	John	immaterial	specific	bounded	territorial/provisional
	Karl	material	general	structured	material
	Rob	immaterial	specific	individualised	provisional
High attainment	Billy	immaterial	general	individualised	territorial
	Lewis	immaterial	general	individualised	provisional
	Tyler	immaterial	specific	bounded	territorial/provisional
	Charlie	immaterial	specific	bounded	territorial

The matrix indicates one such association, between the dysfunctional conception of Wythenshawe and the material conception of aspirations. Referring back to the referential and structural aspects of the dysfunctional conception of Wythenshawe outlined in section 1.1, it is possible to put forward a substantive basis for this association – in critical realist terms, to produce a hypothesis about the mechanism behind the empirical regularity visible in the matrix. One of the structural aspects of the dysfunctional conception of Wythenshawe is unemployment and material hardship: Ross and Michael all refer to unemployment, a lack of jobs and widespread reliance on state benefits amongst the local population. It is plausible to suppose that an understanding of their local area based on these themes could lead David, Ross and Michael to understand and talk about their own occupational aspirations in primarily material terms. They all express a strong desire to avoid unemployment, low pay and welfare dependency when they talk about Wythenshawe and, when they come to talk about their occupational aspirations, job security, good pay and material wellbeing are prominent themes. The association between the dysfunctional conception of Wythenshawe and the material conception of aspirations, visible in the matrix above, would therefore appear to have a plausible substantive basis, and one that can be located in existing literature which finds that a scarcity of material resources at home leads young people to adopt more material aspirations (Threadgold and Nilan 2009: 55). In short, the

material conception of aspirations is a rational response on the part of those young people whose sense of place is most strongly shaped by the material hardships of life in a deprived area – those with a dysfunctional conception of Wythenshawe. The young people confirm the operation of this mechanism in the case-by-case discussion below.

Table 4 suggests another aggregate-level association, although this association is between attainment and conceptions of aspirations, rather than between conceptions of aspirations and conceptions of Wythenshawe. Overall, the matrix indicates that as we move from individuals with low predicted attainment to those with high predicted attainment, conceptions of aspirations move from being material, specific and structured to being immaterial, general and individualised. This trend is most marked in relation to specificity and materiality, but it does seem that young people with higher predicted attainment have looser ideas about the jobs they want to do in future which are less money-focused and steered less by external forces.

3.2 Individual-level associations between place and aspirations

The second approach to assessing the relationship between conceptions of Wythenshawe and conceptions of aspirations is to consider this relationship on a case-by-case basis, examining each interview in turn. The value of this approach is that it can detect when young people draw explicit links between their sense of place and their aspirations, rather than relying only on empirically general claims of association. Where young people's discussion is sufficiently detailed, specific mechanisms linking conceptions of Wythenshawe and conceptions of aspirations can be identified. In some cases there is no clear relationship between the conception of Wythenshawe that emerges in an interview and the conception of aspirations that emerges from that interview; it is, of course, entirely predictable that for some young people their conception of their aspirations will not be shaped significantly by their conception of the area they live in. In five of the interviews – those conducted with Andrew, Billy, Cameron, Rob and Tim – there was no discernible relationship between the young person's conception of Wythenshawe and their aspirations. In the remaining ten interviews there was either a first- or second-order relationship between conceptions of Wythenshawe and aspirations (Marton 1981), where a first-order relationship is a relationship between a young person's conception of Wythenshawe and the content of their occupational aspirations (the job they say they would like to do), and a second-order relationship is a relationship between a young person's conception of Wythenshawe and their conception of their aspirations (the way in which they understand and talk about their aspirations).

3.2.1 First-order associations between place and aspirations

First-order relationships between place and aspirations were evident in the interviews conducted with Caleb, Tyler, Charlie, Josh and John.

Caleb

A significant structural aspect of Caleb's material conception of Wythenshawe is green space; the area's endowment of parks, trees and nearby countryside. Caleb draws an explicit link between Wythenshawe's material environment and his aspiration to pursue an art-related career: he states in clear terms that he may not have been inspired to pursue a career in art if he'd lived somewhere else.

Tyler

Tyler provides lengthy and insightful reflection on the relationship between his conception of Wythenshawe and his aspirations during the course of his interview, and ultimately concludes in plain terms that his aspirations have not been shaped by living in Wythenshawe: he emphasises the importance of education and upbringing instead. However, a recurring theme in his interview is the role of circumstance; of contingent experience. For instance, he states that some time spent in hospital inspired him to become a doctor, and that experiences he will have in the future may take his aspirations down an entirely different track. Tyler relates one of these experiences, and its impact on his aspirations, directly to Wythenshawe when he states that the significant police activity in the area gave him the idea to join the force – currently one of his main occupational aspirations.

Charlie

Charlie relates his aspiration to become a property developer directly to his conception of Wythenshawe as a somewhat run-down area with relatively poor quality housing compared to its more affluent neighbours. He reflects that if he had grown up somewhere with 'nicer' houses that did not need developing, he may not have conceived of the need for property developers and as a result would not have arrived at the aspiration to become one. He even states in the closing stages of his interview that he would consider returning to Wythenshawe when he has built a successful property development business to improve the housing in the area.

Josh

Josh states in no uncertain terms that he does eventually want to move away from Wythenshawe. However, he has a strong and specific desire to work at the airport – by far Wythenshawe's largest employer and a defining feature of the local labour market. The airport appeals to Josh because it is busy – it has 'a buzz' – and offers a range of different jobs, and this is in stark contrast to the rest of Wythenshawe which Josh sees as quiet, boring and somewhat dull. It seems, then, that Josh's aspiration to work at the airport is in part framed by his conception of Wythenshawe: a job at the airport, even though this would keep him local to the area, is appealing precisely because it is a relief from the rest of Wythenshawe as described in his conception of the area.

John

Although primarily influenced by his own interests and his parents' encouragement, John also relates his aspiration to become a forensic scientist to gangs and crime in Wythenshawe. He explains that ultimately gang activity relates back to crime, that he finds himself thinking about stopping crime, and that the aspiration to become a forensic scientist has followed as a result. In this way, the content of his occupational aspirations can be linked to his conception of Wythenshawe.

3.2.2 Second-order associations between place and aspirations

Second-order relationships between place and aspirations were evident in the interviews conducted with David, Karl, Lewis, Michael and Ross.

David

David has a dysfunctional conception of Wythenshawe and a conception of his aspirations that is heavily influenced by material elements. As described in section 3.1 above, Table 4 suggests an association between the dysfunctional conception of Wythenshawe and the material conception of aspirations, and this association has a reasonable theoretical basis which is grounded in the existing literature. David's conception of Wythenshawe depicts unemployment, low-paid work and welfare dependency, while his conception of his aspirations focuses on good pay, with reference to being able to afford a house and a car when he is older. Unlike Ross, David does not however make an explicit link between his dysfunctional conception of Wythenshawe and his material conception of his aspirations, and as a result the substantive basis of the association can only be assumed in his case.

Karl

Karl has a material conception of his aspirations – he wants to leave education as early as possible and start earning money to support himself. Although he talks in detail about material hardship within his family, his conception of Wythenshawe is material and primarily positive. However, despite his positive – in places defensive – conception of Wythenshawe, Karl does indicate that there are nearby areas that are 'higher end' that he would move to if he attained sufficient material resources. In this way, he suggests that Wythenshawe is somewhere he would like to move away from in the future if he found a job that paid well enough. There is, then, a plausible relationship between his conception of Wythenshawe, which revolves around a desire to assemble the necessary material resources to move away from the area, and his conception of his aspirations, which is materially focused. However, as with David's case this relationship can only be inferred – Karl does not draw it explicitly.

Lewis

Lewis' conception of his aspirations is characterised by generality. Not only does he not have a specific idea of what he wants do when he finishes school, but he is actively refusing to make any decisions about his occupational future at this stage – he is choosing not to specify his aspirations, in the face of significant pressure to do so. Lewis' general conception is, then, consciously and actively produced, in response to structural forces at the school level. However, it is also shaped by his conception of Wythenshawe. Early in his interview Lewis draws an explicit link between his conception of Wythenshawe and this general conception of his aspirations, when he argues that if Wythenshawe had a wider variety of jobs he would have a clearer idea of what he wants to do next. As he argues, "I'd be more closed minded – set on one job. If I had a variety of jobs I would know exactly what I want to be." In this way, he sees a clear relationship between his view of Wythenshawe as occupationally homogeneous and uneventful and his unspecified aspirations – in his view, the former is an insufficient source of inspiration to define the latter.

Michael

Michael has a dysfunctional conception of Wythenshawe and a material conception of his aspirations and, as already outlined, there is both an empirical and real association between the two[3] which is suggested in Table 4 and corroborated in the literature and in Ross' case study, below. In Michael's case, there is an additional level to the association between his conception of Wythenshawe his conception of his aspirations. As well as shaping the material element of his conception of his aspirations, Michael's dysfunctional conception of Wythenshawe also appears to shape the structured element. In his interview he argues that he has not chosen his own path because, in Wythenshawe, it is not worth doing so: "you just get knocked down really, round here anyway." In Michael's view, then, it seems that Wythenshawe is not the kind of place where it is worth aspiring; it is not the kind of place where it is worth trying to produce aspirations of your own making. Michael does not feel that he has exercised agency in producing his aspirations – his conception of his aspirations is structured – and he relates this explicitly to his conception of Wythenshawe.

Ross

As in the case of David and Michael, Ross has a dysfunctional conception of Wythenshawe and a material conception of his aspirations which are related in empirical and theoretical terms. In Ross' case, however, the mechanism linking his conceptions is stated explicitly and does not need to be postulated. Moreover, the link he draws between his conception of Wythenshawe and his conception of his aspirations validates the mechanism postulated in David's and Michael's cases. Ross talks in detail about the material hardship present in his family, and sees this as

[3] Adopting the language of critical realism, as outlined in Chapter 2, the 'empirical' is the domain of our observations and the 'real' is the domain of the mechanisms producing the events that generate those observations.

indicative of the situation of most of Wythenshawe's residents. He refers to 'just about surviving', having barely enough money to pay rent and bills, and to widespread welfare dependency. When Ross talks about his occupational aspirations, the materiality of his conception features strongly and is clearly linked to his dysfunctional conception of Wythenshawe – he wants a job that will allow him to afford the 'luxuries' that his family's present economic situation precludes and that will eliminate the need to rely on state benefits. Ultimately, referring to the economic situation in Wythenshawe, he states "I don't want that life for my kids", explicitly setting his aspirations against the status quo he observes around him. Ross' dysfunctional conception of Wythenshawe is also closely entwined with the biographical account he gives of his own past getting involved in crime and being known to the police. He roots his own biography in the broader prevalence of criminal involvement among young people in Wythenshawe, which forms a key component of his dysfunctional conception of the area. Ross makes it clear during the course of his interview that he is keen to move on from this dysfunctional past, and it is evident in what he says that a secure, well-paid job is the route he intends to take to that end. In this way, he frames his occupational aspirations in opposition to his dysfunctional conception of Wythenshawe.

4 Summary

This chapter has outlined the conceptions of Wythenshawe and the conceptions of aspirations held by the young people I interviewed, and assessed the relationship between these two sets of conceptions with the ultimate aim of exploring how young people's occupational aspirations are shaped by their sense of place. Four conceptions of Wythenshawe were identified: a dysfunctional conception; a territorial conception; a provisional conception, and a material conception. A total of seven conceptions of aspirations were identified, each defined by their alignment with a tripartite thematic framework of materiality, specificity and agency. An aggregate-level analysis revealed an association between the dysfunctional conception of Wythenshawe and the material conception of aspirations, and a mechanism behind this association was postulated, based on the existing literature. The aggregate analysis also suggests that as predicted attainment rises occupational aspirations become less material, more general and more individualised. An individual-level analysis revealed a number of first- and second-order relationships between conceptions of Wythenshawe and both the content of young people's aspirations and their conceptions of those aspirations. There is evidence here that place can shape aspirations in a range of ways, from young people's overall affective orientations towards the area, to their assessment of its job opportunities and their affinity with its material environment. The case-by-case analysis also confirmed the existence of a mechanism linking the dysfunctional conception of Wythenshawe with the material conception of aspirations, whereby young people's focus on the security and remuneration of a job is steered by their experience of material hardship at a family and neighbourhood level. Taken together, these findings indicate a number of ways in which place shapes young people's occupational aspirations.

The intensive phase of the research did not focus on the level of young people's aspirations – the specific jobs they refer to and their relative position within the occupational hierarchy – which is

the predominant focus of the existing literature in this area. However, the findings produced in this phase of the research are able to contribute to this debate. Specifically, there appears to be little evidence that aspirations in this highly deprived area are uniformly low, corroborating a growing body of literature which questions the link between area-level deprivation and low aspiration (Turok et al. 2009; Sinclair, McKendrick and Scott 2010; St Clair and Benjamin 2011; Lupton and Kintrea 2011; St. Clair, Kintrea and Houston 2013). To the extent that some of the young people interviewed here did have aspirations that were lower within the Standard Occupational Classification, it appears to be the intersection of area-level deprivation and individual- and household-level characteristics such as educational attainment and parental occupation that functions to produce these aspirations, not merely area-level deprivation alone. Young people's responses to life in a deprived area seem to be a key mediator: the young people interviewed here who wanted to go straight into paid employment rather than pursuing higher skilled occupations tended to be those whose family life was marked by material hardship, occupational insecurity and receipt of state benefits, and whose view of their local area was heavily shaped by these features of life. On the contrary, those with higher predicted attainment and who had family networks whose occupational biographies transcended the boundaries of the local area tended to have aspirations for more highly skilled occupations. In short, individual- and household-level characteristics mediate the extent to which area-level deprivation constrains aspirations, as Roberts (2009) argues.

Furthermore, in some instances young people's experiences of deprivation at the area and household level seemed to function directly as a motivator to secure stable, well-paid work as soon as possible after finishing compulsory education, in what would appear to be an entirely rational response to the desire to avoid the same patterns of material hardship experienced by their parents. This suggests there is an important debate to be had relating to the utility of a dichotomous narrative of 'low' and 'high' aspirations. The young people interviewed here with the lowest predicted attainment at GCSE certainly seemed less likely to aspire to professional and managerial occupations. However, although their aspirations were lower in terms of their position within the standard occupational classification, their conceptions of their aspirations revealed that many of them aspired to well paid jobs with authority and responsibility, and which required at least some degree of further training. Where these aspirations were shaped by an explicit desire to escape their parents' precarious occupational and material situation and, in Ross' words, to secure "a better life for my kids", it would seem perverse to classify these aspirations as 'low'. On the contrary, a material conception of aspirations would appear to be a highly 'aspirational' response to a dysfunctional sense of place.

Although the intensive phase of the research did not focus on the content and level of young people's aspirations, then, its findings nonetheless speak to the claim, currently prevalent in policy circles, that area level deprivation depresses aspirations. There is no evidence that young people in Wythenshawe have uniformly low aspirations, and even among those who aspire to less skilled, less highly paid work, their motivations for and conceptions of their aspirations would seem to be entirely 'aspirational' in that they are geared towards escaping the effects of area-level deprivation

on individual and household life. The intensive phase of the research has produced clear evidence that place shapes young people's occupational aspirations, and that particular conceptions of area are related to particular conceptions of aspirations. However, the findings also demonstrate that the effect of place on aspirations is far from uniform: young people interpret and make sense of a deprived spatial context in a range of ways, which in turn translate into a variety of forms of aspiration. This chapter concludes the intensive phase of the research. The thesis now turns to the extensive phase of the research, contained within Chapters 7 to 9, before synthesising the findings from both phases in Chapter 10.

7 Data and variables

This chapter introduces the data on which the extensive phase of the research is based. The chapter begins by providing an overview of the Understanding Society dataset and its deployment of weights, before appealing to the existing literature on aspirations to explain the choice of variables used in the analysis. These variables are mapped onto the explanatory constructs present in the literature: material hardship; human capital; socialisation, opportunity structures, and social capital. Finally, the chapter considers the specification of each of the variables in detail, including the details of any recoding undertaken and the extent of missing data.

1 Data

The extensive phase of the research has one primary aim: to assess the effect of space on young people's occupational aspirations. Specifically, the research sets out to assess the validity of the claim underlying current aspirations policy that high aspirations are less prevalent in more deprived areas. The research also extends on existing deprivation-focused explorations of the effect of space on aspirations, by assessing whether the proportion of young people with high aspirations varies between different types of area. In order to address these questions, the extensive phase of the research makes use of data from Wave 1 of the UK Household Longitudinal Study, otherwise known as Understanding Society.

Understanding Society is a longitudinal survey of the members of approximately 40,000 households in the United Kingdom. The overall purpose of the survey is to provide high quality longitudinal data about a range of subjects including health, work, education, income, family and social life in order to help researchers understand the long term effects of social and economic change (McFall 2012: 3). Due to Understanding Society's large sample size, full age range and comprehensive range of topics, individual waves of the survey function as powerful standalone cross-sectional studies for research questions that do not have a longitudinal dimension – such as the questions underpinning this phase of the research. Understanding Society is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, the scientific leadership team is from the Institute for Social and Economic Research at the University of Essex, the University of Warwick and the Institute of Education at the University of London, and fieldwork is conducted by the National Centre for Social Research.

Understanding Society is a panel survey of households with yearly interviews. Each round of yearly interviews constitutes a 'wave', and data collection for a single wave is scheduled across 24 months. Data collection for Wave 1 – the wave used for this research – took place between January 2009 and January 2011. Each wave of the survey is based on interviews conducted with all present adult household members aged 16 or over. In addition, household members aged 10-

15 years are asked to complete a short self-completion Youth Questionnaire, and this Youth Questionnaire is the source of the data used here on young people's aspirations. This research is based on Wave 1 for two primary reasons: firstly, questions regarding young people's occupational aspirations were not included in the Wave 2 Youth Questionnaire, and secondly, the fieldwork for Wave 1 broadly overlaps with the period during which I conducted the fieldwork for the intensive phase of the research.

The Understanding Society Wave 1 sample consists of three components: the General Population Sample (GPS); the Ethnic Minority Boost Sample (EMBS), and the General Population Comparison Sample (GPCS). The GPS is the largest sample component, delivering around 25,500 responding households, and is drawn in two distinct ways – one methodology for England, Scotland and Wales, and another methodology for Northern Ireland. The analytic sample used for this research contains only respondents from England, so the discussion here relates to the GPS sampling methodology for England, Scotland and Wales. The GPS is a proportionately stratified (equal probability), clustered sample of addresses selected from the Postcode Address File. The EMBS is designed to ensure that interviews are conducted with at least 1000 adults from five selected target communities: Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Black Caribbeans and Black Africans (Boreham, Boldysevaite and Killpack 2012). EMBS households are sourced from a separate sample of addresses, drawn from a set of postal sectors estimated to contain relatively high proportions of relevant ethnic minority groups based on 2001 Census data. Additional survey questions are asked to members of EMBS households, concerning matters of specific relevance to ethnic minority communities, such as ethnic identity and remittances. The GPCS consists of one sample address in each of 40% of the primary sampling units (selected postal sectors) in the main General Population Sample – in effect, a random subsample of the GPS. Additional survey questions asked of EMBS respondents are also asked of GPCS respondents, regardless of ethnicity, in order to allow comparative analysis (Lynn 2009).

A range of different survey instruments is deployed in respondent households. Firstly, a household interview is conducted to ascertain the relationships between respondents in the household, followed by a household questionnaire lasting around 10 minutes. Secondly, all adults identified by the household interview aged 16 and above are asked to complete a Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) interview, lasting an average of 32.5 minutes (37.5 minutes for members of the ethnic minority boost sample) (Boreham, Boldysevaite and Killpack 2012). The main adult interview covers a wide range of topics, from family and health to employment, beliefs and identity. Thirdly, all adult respondents are then asked to fill in a paper self-completion questionnaire containing questions on feelings and behaviour, sleeping habits, the environment, neighbourhood, friendships and relationships. Lastly, any young people aged between 10 and 15 are asked to fill in a paper self-completion Youth Questionnaire, once verbal consent has been sought from a parent or responsible adult in the household.

Question 53 on the Understanding Society Wave 1 Youth Questionnaire, which asks *"what job would you like to do once you leave school or finish full-time education?"* forms the basis of the

two outcome variables in this analysis – the first representing aspiration specificity, the second representing aspiration level. The explanatory variables in the analysis are sourced from a range of Wave 1 data files, in turn sourced from a range of survey instruments including the household interview, adult interview, adult self-completion questionnaire and the youth questionnaire. The comprehensive range of topics covered by these survey instruments allows a range of variables to be sourced, capturing a range of indicators: from young people's age, gender and ethnicity to their attitudes to school and educational aspirations; from parents' jobs and qualifications to the amount they help their children with homework, household income and family structure. Finally, area-level data available under Special Licence allow a spatial dimension to be introduced to the analysis. Understanding Society is available from the UK Data Service (Study Number 6614) under the standard End User Licence Agreement. Additional low-level geographical identifiers are available under Special Licence. For the purposes of this research, two sets of geographical identifiers were obtained: Census 2001 Output Area Classification (Study Number 6674), and Census 2001 Lower Layer Super Output Areas (Study Number 6670). The former allows the identification of the area type in which young people live, while the latter allows linkage to the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

The data available in Understanding Society has some shortcomings. Firstly, unlike previous waves of the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS), the predecessor to the UKHLS, Understanding Society does not query young people's occupational aspirations beyond asking them to state the job they would like to do when they leave school. Some waves of the BHPS, on the other hand, contained survey items which captured elements of young people's conceptions of their aspirations – the reasons why they wanted to do a particular job; which elements of a job they saw as most important, and so forth. Secondly, merging administrative data from the National Pupil Database (NPD) is not currently possible, as data linkage between Understanding Society Wave 1 and the NPD has not yet been completed and released. Therefore, it is not possible to source data on educational attainment for the young people in this analysis. While this excludes an important explanatory factor, other variables have been included in the analysis here, such as young people's attitudes towards their schoolwork, parental help with homework and area-level educational attainment, which attempt to cover some of the explanatory domain of individual educational attainment.

Ultimately, in making the decision as to the data upon which to base the extensive phase of this research, the limitations of Understanding Society were outweighed by its strengths. Firstly, Understanding Society is the most up-to-date survey of its kind, containing data on young people's aspirations as well as the range of explanatory variables required for my model. Secondly, Understanding Society has a large youth sample – around twice the size, for instance, of the BHPS that came before it. Thirdly, Understanding Society allows linkage not only with LSOA-level geographical identifiers, which are required to link with data from the Index of Multiple Deprivation, but also OAC types, which are required in order to draw conclusions about the role of area type in shaping aspirations. The existing literature contains no studies of young people's occupational aspirations using this large scale, contemporary data, nor any studies including area

type as an explanatory factor when examining the determinants of aspirations. The Understanding Society dataset, when directed towards my research questions, therefore presents the possibility for important contributions to knowledge.

2 Weights and complex sample

The use of weights in survey analysis aims to reduce bias caused by under-coverage, sampling or non-response resulting from the way in which the sample is constructed (Lynn and Kaminska 2010: 6). Even though the Understanding Society sample is representative of all households in the UK, features such as the sample's stratified design and ethnic minority boost sample mean that weights must be used to adjust for unequal selection probabilities, differential non-response and potential sampling error if the data are to support generalized claims about the UK population as a whole. My analysis uses data from a range of Understanding Society survey instruments: the youth self-completion questionnaire; adult self-completion questionnaire and CAPI interview, and household interview. When using data from different questionnaire sources in this way, the analysis weight should be chosen which corresponds to the lowest level in the four-level hierarchy from household-level instruments (level 4) to individual self-completion instruments (level 1) (McFall 2012: 24). As my analysis uses data sourced from level 1 instruments, only uses data from Wave 1, for cross-sectional purposes, and is based on respondents from the youth questionnaire, the appropriate analysis weight for my data is *a_ythscus_xw*. This weighting variable adjusts for unequal selection probabilities due to: the boost in Northern Ireland; the ethnic minority boost; the fact that only three households were selected from addresses with more than three dwellings, or households in a dwelling with more than three households; individuals residing within non-respondent households, and individual-level non-response within respondent households. Predictors for nonresponse come from a range of sources including sample month and geographical region, ethnic density of postcode sector and a range of Census indicators. The weighting variable also adjusts for the stratified design of the sample, matching the sample characteristics to those in the UK as a whole with regard to age, sex and geographical region (McFall 2012: 33).

As discussed by Winship and Radbill (1994) the use of such weighting is unproblematic in deriving unbiased estimates of univariate population characteristics, but can introduce bias in multivariate regression analyses where the weights are a function of the dependent and independent variables in the analysis. In these circumstances, Winship and Radbill recommend the estimation of regression models with Huber/White 'robust' standard errors. The weights used in the analysis here are not a function of the dependent variables (aspiration specificity, and aspiration level), but are a function of some of the independent variables, such as ethnicity, age and sex. Therefore, robust standard errors are used in accordance with Winship and Radbill's recommendation. This is achieved in SPSS by creating a plan file based on the sampling weight variable and using the complex samples CS_LOGISTIC command to run the logistic regression. As well as weights, the CS_LOGISTIC command also allows the specification of stratification and clustering variables

which define the complexity of the sample (IBM 2013: 9). For the analysis here, the stratification variable *w_strata* and clustering variable *w_psu* were used (McFall 2012: 22–23).

3 Constructs

The primary goal of the extensive phase of this research is to assess the extent to which different areas are associated with different proportions of young people with particular types of aspiration. To this end, the statistical analysis here includes three area-level explanatory variables: deprivation, due to its prominence in existing policy and research, and the contestation of its significance in the current literature; area type, due to its significance in relation to educational outcomes and suggested significance in relation to aspirations, but as-yet limited examination in the literature, and finally educational deprivation, due to its salience, as a form of area-level deprivation, to the target population of this research. The statistical models compiled here are designed to assess the effect size and significance of these area-level variables on the outcome of young people's occupational aspirations. In order to do this robustly, household-level explanatory variables (such as household income and parental occupation) and individual-level explanatory variables (such as perceived self-efficacy and educational aspirations) are also included in the analysis, based on the factors identified in the existing literature as shaping occupational aspirations.

As identified in Chapter 1, the literature identifies a range of factors shaping young people's aspirations. These factors can be grouped thematically to reflect different underlying 'explanatory constructs', which are simply 'types of explanation' for variations in young people's aspirations. From a critical realist perspective, constructs are not as specific as mechanisms, as they do not specify exactly how a given aspirational outcome is produced by a given empirical factor, or variable. Rather, constructs are simply a way of grouping factors, or variables, in order to capture the types of mechanisms, or causal stories, they represent. There are two motivations for grouping factors by constructs. Firstly, constructs provide a guide to interpreting the outputs from the statistical modeling, by linking particular variables to types of mechanisms. In this way, constructs allow the outputs from statistical models to contribute to an assessment of the validity of different causal stories as to how aspirations are shaped, rather than merely stating the significance of empirical factors, represented by variables. In short, constructs allow conclusions to be drawn about the types of mechanisms that are significant in producing particular aspirational outcomes, rather than just the empirical factors that are significantly associated with particular outcomes. Secondly, constructs capture factors or variables which offer qualitatively similar explanations for the outcome in question, regardless of the level of measurement of those variables. For instance, the construct of material hardship is captured by both area-level and household-level variables in the models here. As a result, constructs serve as a link between area-level variables in the analysis and household- and individual-level variables which occupy similar explanatory terrain, allowing the relative explanatory contribution of area-level factors to be assessed alongside household- and individual-level factors that are 'competing' for the same

explanatory space. In this way, constructs aid in the process of disentangling true 'area effects' from similar types of mechanism operating at a household or individual level.

The factors identified in the literature as shaping young people's occupational aspirations can be mapped onto five underlying constructs: material hardship; human capital; socialisation; opportunity structures, and social capital. Each of these constructs is now mapped onto the variables which operationalise them in the extensive analysis.

3.1 Material hardship

The construct of material hardship captures the ways in which young people's aspirations are shaped by the extent of the material resources in their lives. This includes the direct impact of material scarcity at home, shaped most significantly by the extent to which parents are engaged with the labour market and the flows of financial remuneration that engagement brings, through to the effect of broader experiences of affluence or poverty, including local levels of unemployment and material deprivation. The construct of material hardship is located in the aspirations literature by factors such as socioeconomic status, class and parental occupation (Andres et al. 1999; Schoon, Martin and Ross 2007; Rojewski and Yang 1997; Threadgold and Nilan 2009; Croll 2008), parental education (Schoon 2001), economic hardship (Schoon, Martin and Ross 2007) and area-level deprivation (Furlong, Biggart and Cartmel 1996). The intensive phase of this research also found that experiences of material hardship were important in shaping young people's occupational aspirations: young people with a dysfunctional conception of Wythenshawe, which reflected critically on the prevalence of unstable employment, low incomes and benefit dependency, had more material aspirations which also tended to be lower within the Standard Occupational Classification. The variables used to reflect the construct of material hardship in the data are household income, parental occupation, parental qualification, household composition, deprivation and area type.

The variable 'household income' captures the construct of material hardship in a relatively straightforward way, measuring as it does the aggregate level of financial resources available to the household on a monthly basis. The variable 'parental occupation' captures the construct of material hardship via the occupational status of the parent(s) in the household, and the resources they are able to distribute to dependent household members as a result of the remuneration received from this occupation – assuming that, as a general rule, occupations at the top of the Standard Occupational Classification are paid more than those at the bottom. Although the variable 'parental qualification' is essentially a measure of human capital, it is a measure of the human capital of the parents in the analysis, not the young people. As a result, its relevance to the outcome variable is through the construct of material hardship, via the remuneration parents are able to attract, and distribute to their dependent children, as a result of their qualifications. The variable 'household composition' captures whether a young person lives in a household with one or two adults. The existing literature identifies that single-adult households can, in some cases, be

presented with particular financial difficulties arising from the reliance on a single rather than dual income. In this way, household structure is taken to represent the construct of material hardship.

The variable 'area-level deprivation' captures an area's overall level of deprivation, as measured by the 2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation. As discussed in further detail in section 4.2.1 below, overall IMD scores are derived from the scores assigned to seven deprivation domains, which measure specific aspects of deprivation in a given area. The seven domains of the IMD are weighted in the process of calculating overall IMD scores, with the 'income' and 'employment' domains receiving prominence, each with a domain weight of 22.5% (Department for Communities and Local Government 2011). Arguably, then, the primary construct captured by IMD score is material hardship: the extent to which people in an area are engaged with the labour market and the flows of financial remuneration that engagement brings. The 'education, skills and training' domain can also be seen to be part of this material hardship construct, measuring as it does the extent to which people in an area are qualified to occupy better-remunerated positions within the labor market: as argued above, adult-level qualifications and employment are more salient as indicators of material hardship than of human capital, for the purposes of this analysis. Finally, the three least-weighted domains – 'housing and services', 'crime', and 'living environment' – could be interpreted as broad indicators of the quality of the material environment, and are therefore also meaningfully captured by the construct of material hardship.

The final variable capturing the construct of material hardship is 'area type', or OAC super-group. As discussed in section 4.2.3 below, this variable is derived from a range of area-level Census characteristics which, on closer inspection, cluster primarily around the construct of material hardship. As shown in Table 2, of the 38 Census variables used to construct the OAC, the majority, 22, relate to housing type or tenure. A further 3 relate to the number of cars in households, 2 relate to occupations of residents, and a further 3 relate to the qualifications of residents. Together, housing type and tenure, cars in households, occupations and qualifications specify 79% of the OAC, and these Census variables are all interpreted here as representing the construct of material hardship. The remaining 8 Census variables used to construct the OAC refer to a range of area-level factors: ethnicity/nationality of resident population; household composition; use of public transport to get to work, and population density. These characteristics have no apparent common construct, and so area type is understood in this analysis to represent the construct of material hardship.

3.2 Human capital

The construct of human capital broadly captures the way in which young people's occupational aspirations are related to their skills, their perceptions of these skills and those of their peers. The construct of human capital is identified in the literature by factors such as self-efficacy and parental self-efficacy (Bandura et al. 2001), school motivation (Schoon, Martin and Ross 2007), educational aspirations (Gutman and Akerman 2008), and educational attainment (Bond and Saunders 1999; Croll 2008). The intensive phase of this research also identified human capital, in

the form of predicted attainment, as being associated with different forms of occupational aspiration. My interviews indicated that young people with higher predicted attainment tended to have less material and less specific aspirations, which tended to be higher within the Standard Occupational Classification. The variables used to reflect the construct of human capital in the analysis here are area-level educational deprivation, individual self-efficacy, educational aspirations and parental self-efficacy.

As discussed in further detail in section 4.2.2, the variable 'area-level educational deprivation' is a measure of the aggregate-level of educational attainment of young people in a given area, derived from an area's score on the IMD children and young people sub-domain. In this way, area-level educational deprivation can be understood to represent the aggregate level of human capital held by young people in a given area. It is important to note why, in the analysis here, parental qualifications address the construct of material hardship, while young people's qualifications address the construct of human capital. Parental qualifications are primarily relevant here as a determinant of the level of material resources in the household, because the primary relevance of qualifications as an adult is their conversion into a labour market position and remuneration. Meanwhile, to the extent that most young people remain outside the labour market, their qualifications are not primarily relevant in this way – they represent human capital in its unconverted form. For this reason, area-level educational deprivation represents the construct of human capital.

The variable 'individual self-efficacy' measures how young people feel about their schoolwork. This is understood as a proxy for how they are engaging with their studies, and therefore the extent to which they are developing their human capital. As well as indirectly representing young people's human capital, this variable also captures their awareness and appraisal of this capital. The variable 'educational aspirations' measures whether or not young people plan to continue their education, and therefore to develop their human capital, beyond school. Finally, the variable 'parental self-efficacy' measures the extent to which parents help with homework and, it is assumed, thereby aim to increase their child's human capital.

3.3 Socialisation

The construct of socialisation captures the way in which young people's occupational aspirations are shaped by the observation, interpretation and acquisition of occupational norms. These norms are based on young people's observations of the types of occupations held by significant others around them, their appraisal of the desirability and attainability of these occupations and their internalisation of these same judgments on the part of significant others. The construct of socialisation is located in the literature by factors such as age (Gottfredson 1981b, 2002; Calder and Cope 2005), gender (Schoon 2001; Schoon, Martin and Ross 2007; Turok et al. 2009), ethnicity (Gutman and Akerman 2008), and class (Andres et al. 1999), alongside young people's perceptions of local historical patterns of employment, often grounded in particular gendered and classed norms (McDowell 2000; Bright 2011; Burke 2006). While the latter set of factors is too

nuanced to be captured and coded by large-scale survey data such as that included in Understanding Society, factors such as age, gender, ethnicity and class (or at least its approximation via parents' position within SOC2010) can all be captured by their respective variables in the dataset used here.

The variable 'age' maps onto the construct of socialisation because it represents the temporal shifts that take place in young people's appraisals of the desirability and attainability of the occupations around them – shifts brought about by changing identities and increased experience of the world. The variable 'gender' also maps onto the construct of socialisation. The literature identifies that young people's occupational aspirations are gendered in much the same way as the distribution of occupations among working men and women. The fact that girls and boys aspire to different types of occupations is primarily due to the inheritance from society of particular gendered norms surrounding the suitability and attainability of particular jobs for each sex. The variable 'ethnicity' captures the construct of socialisation in much the same way as gender, in that ethnicity, as a factor, shapes young people's occupational aspirations primarily via the perception and internalization of norms relating to the suitability and attainability of particular occupations for people from different ethnic backgrounds. The final variable representing the construct of socialisation is parental occupation. As well as capturing the construct of material hardship via the remuneration attached to their job and distributed to the household, parents' occupation also captures the construct of socialisation, as parents are significant others in (most) young people's lives and the occupations they do will therefore likely shape the occupational norms perceived by their children.

3.4 Opportunity structures

The construct of opportunity structures captures the way in which young people's occupational aspirations are shaped by the types of jobs available and the ease with which these jobs can be accessed – the quality and quantity of both local labour demand and facilitative infrastructure. The construct of opportunity structures is addressed in the literature by factors such as the composition of the local labour market (Furlong, Biggart and Cartmel 1996; Furlong and Biggart 1999; Roberts 2009) and connecting infrastructure such as transport networks (Green and White 2008). There is no data available in Understanding Society which captures these factors specifically, although area-level deprivation is partly defined by local rates of unemployment, skills, forms of employment and access to services. As such, area-level deprivation functions here as a proxy for this construct.

3.5 Social capital

The final construct present in the literature is that of social capital. This construct captures the way in which young people's occupational aspirations are shaped by their membership within particular social structures and the resources made available through those structures. The construct of social capital is captured in the literature through the role of both family and broader

peer-based social networks (Turok et al. 2009; Raffo 2006; Green and White 2008). However, as the literature makes clear, it is the content of the advice, information and guidance delivered by these networks, not the existence of the networks themselves, which has explanatory importance in relation to young people's aspirations. This nuanced data is not captured by Understanding Society, and so the construct of social capital cannot be addressed in the analysis here.

3.6 Summary of constructs

Table 5 summarises the four constructs derived from the existing literature for which relevant data in Understanding Society are available, and the way in which the variables used in the analysis map onto these constructs.

Table 5 – Constructs

Construct	Area-level variables	Household-level variables	Individual-level variables
Material hardship	IMD score OAC type	Household income Parental occupation Parental qualification Household composition	
Human capital	IMD CYP score	Parental self-efficacy	Individual self-efficacy Educational aspirations
Opportunity structures	IMD score		
Socialisation		Parental occupation	Age Gender Ethnicity

As Table 5 indicates, only two of the constructs – material hardship and human capital – are represented by both area-level variables and variables at other levels. The output from the statistical models will indicate whether material hardship at an area-level remains significant once material hardship at a household-level has been accounted for, and whether human capital at an area level remains significant once human capital at both household- and individual-level has been considered.

4 Variables

The discussion now turns to consider the specification of each of the 15 variables included in the analysis, including their location in the data, the survey instruments from which they are sourced and their coding, including any recoding undertaken as part of this research. As discussed above, the explanatory variables are grouped into a tertiary hierarchy: area-level variables; household-level variables, and individual-level variables. The specification of the outcome variables is discussed first, followed by the area-level, household-level and individual-level variables in turn. The fifteen variables included in the analysis are summarised in Table 6.

Table 6 – Overview of outcome and explanatory variables

Variable level	Variable	Source
Outcome	Aspiration specificity	USoc Wave 1 Youth Questionnaire
	Aspiration level	USoc Wave 1 Youth Questionnaire
Area-level explanatory	Deprivation	2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation
	Educational deprivation	2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation
	Area type	2001 Output Area Classification
Household-level explanatory	Parental qualifications	USoc Wave 1 adult individual interview
	Parental occupation	USoc Wave 1 adult individual interview
	Parental self-efficacy	USoc Wave 1 adult individual interview
	Household income	USoc Wave 1 household level file
	Household composition	USoc Wave 1 household level file
Individual-level explanatory	Gender	USoc Wave 1 Youth Questionnaire
	Ethnicity	USoc Wave 1 Youth Questionnaire
	Perceived self-efficacy	USoc Wave 1 Youth Questionnaire
	Educational aspirations	USoc Wave 1 Youth Questionnaire
	Age	USoc Wave 1 Youth Questionnaire

4.1 Outcome variables

Within the Understanding Society Wave 1 dataset, information on young people's occupational aspirations is captured by three variables. These three variables are sourced from three different codings of the same response to Question 53 on the self-completion Wave 1 Youth Questionnaire which asks all young people aged between 10 and 15 in Understanding Society respondent households *"what job would you like to do once you leave school or finish full-time education?"* These three variables are *a_ypsoc, a_ypsoc00* and *a_ypsoc10* within the *a_youth* file, and code young people's responses to Question 53 according to the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) 1990, SOC2000 and SOC2010 respectively. My analysis uses *a_ypsoc10* as the basis of its two outcome variables, aspiration specificity and aspiration level, as SOC2010 offers the most up-to-date classification of young people's occupational aspirations, taking into account the most recent changes to the structural composition of the labour market. From the Understanding Society documentation, the full description of *a_ypsoc10*, is "Standard Occupational Classification 2010 (SOC2010) of job young person would like to do when left school/after full-time education. Derived post-field from SOC2000 to SOC2010 look-up file."

SOC classifies jobs according to their skill level and skill specialisation. Skill level broadly equates to the amount of time, education and training required to be fully competent at a particular job, while skill specialisation equates to the field of knowledge and the type of work performed in a particular job (Office for National Statistics 2010: 2). For instance, within SOC2010 health professionals and engineering professionals are classified as having the same skill level, but different skill specialisation. SOC2010 is composed of major groups, sub-major groups, minor groups and unit groups as follows:

9 major groups	e.g. 1: Managers, directors and senior officials
25 sub-major groups	e.g. 11: Corporate managers and directors
90 minor groups	e.g. 111: Chief executives and senior officials
369 unit groups	e.g. 1116: Elected officers and representatives

To use the example given above, health professionals and engineering professionals would be located in the same major group (2 – Professional Occupations) but different sub-major groups (22 – Health Professionals, and 21 – Science, Research, Engineering and Technology Professionals, respectively). Whereas occupations towards the top of the SOC require high-level qualifications along with substantial periods of training and/or study, occupations lower down the SOC require only a general education alongside a shorter period of study or training. This essentially hierarchical construction allows SOC to function as a delineator of 'higher' and 'lower' aspirations, as existing research into occupational aspirations using SOC demonstrates (Kintrea, St Clair and Houston 2011). Other existing research also appeals to the hierarchical nature of occupational classifications to distinguish between 'high' and 'low' aspirations, although this research uses alternative occupational classification such as the Registrar General's Social Class (Croll 2008). As existing aspirations research readily identifies, the process of identifying a young person's occupational aspirations is a complex and fraught process whose results – a single 'revealed' aspiration (Hart 2013) – may merely represent one among many occupational aspirations held by that young person and are highly contingent on the data collection context (St Clair and Benjamin 2011). Given these caveats, however, young people's responses to *a_ypsoc10* are nonetheless taken here to represent the content of their aspirations. Specifically, and in relation to the two outcome variables used in this analysis, responses to *a_ypsoc10* are taken to indicate the specificity of young people's aspirations (whether or not they voice a specific occupational aspiration) and the level of their aspirations (whether they aspire to occupations towards the top or bottom of the SOC). The discussion now turns to consider these two outcome variables in more detail.

4.1.1 Aspiration specificity

Within Understanding Society, *a_ypsoc10* is coded at the level of four-digit unit groups, and so can take 369 possible unique values. Across the whole Wave 1 sample, young people's responses covered 116 unique SOC unit groups. Rather than stating a specific occupation, young people also had the option to respond "don't know" to question 53 on the Youth Questionnaire. In total, then, responses to *a_ypsoc10* take a total of 117 different values. The first outcome variable is defined in terms of whether young people respond with a specific occupational aspiration, or with "don't know". This outcome variable captures the specificity of young people's aspirations – whether a given young person does, or does not, have a specific idea of an occupation they would like to do. The notion of aspirational specificity emerged as a prominent theme in the intensive phase of my research, and formed one of the three elements of young people's conceptions of their aspirations, alongside materiality and agency. The notion of specificity is

simplified here in the extensive phase of the research, simply capturing whether a young person states a specific occupational aspiration or responds "don't know". Aspirational specificity is coded as a binary variable *asp_specificity*, taking a value of 0 for young people who respond "don't know" and a value of 1 for those who respond with a specific occupation that can be coded to the SOC.

4.1.2 Aspiration level

The second outcome variable *asp_level2* captures the level of young people's aspirations, for those who respond with a specific occupation within the SOC. The variable distinguishes between young people who respond with an occupation in SOC2010 major groups 1 to 3, as higher, and those who respond with an occupation in SOC2010 major groups 4 to 9, as lower. This distinction between 'higher' aspirations for Professional, Managerial or Technical (PMT) occupations, and 'lower' aspirations for non-PMT occupations is already made in the literature (Croll 2008). It is also a distinction made in policy circles in order to identify 'knowledge workers' (Centre for Cities 2010: 20). However, the PMT/non-PMT distinction is adopted here in the knowledge that defining 'high' and 'low' aspirations objectively in this way is not unproblematic, as argued by Gutman and Akerman (2008: 3) and also in the conclusion to the previous chapter. The rationale for adopting this 'high' and 'low' terminology here is that the extensive phase of the research sets out to engage directly with a central claim of current aspirations policy – that aspirations are 'lower' in particular types of area – and it is therefore appropriate to adopt a measure of aspirations that draws similar hierarchical distinctions, particularly given that such distinctions are also made in the existing literature. In short, in order to assess the knowledge claims underlying present policy, the extensive phase of the research must adopt a comparable discourse. The binary variable *asp-level2* codes young people's responses to Question 53 on the Understanding Society Wave 1 Youth Questionnaire accordingly: aspirations for PMT occupations are coded 1; aspirations for non-PMT occupations are coded 0, and "don't know" is coded as missing.

4.2 Area-level explanatory variables

4.2.1 Area-level deprivation

Area-level deprivation features as a prominent factor in current policymaking targeted at raising occupational aspirations (Cabinet Office 2008), although in the literature there is mixed evidence for the role of deprivation in shaping aspirations (Lupton and Kintrea 2011). Some studies do find a role for area-level deprivation in depressing occupational aspirations (Furlong, Biggart and Cartmel 1996), but the majority of existing evidence finds little or no difference between the aspirations of young people from more and less deprived areas (Turok et al. 2009; St Clair and Benjamin 2011; McKendrick, Scott and Sinclair 2007; Calder and Cope 2005; Furlong and Biggart 1999; St. Clair, Kintrea and Houston 2013). One of the primary aims of this research is to examine the relationship between area-level deprivation and aspirations using data that has not previously been used for this purpose.

Two variables are included to measure area-based deprivation, both based on the latest release of the English Index of Multiple Deprivation, IMD2010. IMD2010 is a continuous measure of relative deprivation, measured at the level of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs). LSOAs are small geographical areas that cover the whole of England, each containing a population of between 1000 and 3000 people. LSOAs are created according to the population patterns of the last Census, and the analysis here is based on the 32,482 LSOAs constructed from the 2001 Census, given that these correspond with the geographical units used to construct the 2010 IMD. Each LSOA in the country has an overall deprivation score, which describes the overall level of deprivation in that area, relative to all other LSOAs in England. This overall deprivation score is a weighted sum of the scores assigned to an LSOA in relation to seven separate domains of deprivation: Income Deprivation; Employment Deprivation; Health Deprivation and Disability; Education Skills and Training Deprivation; Barriers to Housing and Services; Living Environment Deprivation, and Crime. These seven domains cover a total of 38 indicators of deprivation.

A given LSOA therefore has an overall deprivation score, as well as seven separate scores for each of the individual deprivation domains. Some of the deprivation domains are composed of sub-domains, which also have their own scores. Of particular relevance to this analysis is the Children and Young People (CYP) sub-domain within the Education, Skills and Training Deprivation domain. The two deprivation-based indicators used in this analysis are based on overall deprivation scores and CYP deprivation scores respectively.

Individual respondents in the Understanding Society Youth Questionnaire can be matched with the Index of Multiple Deprivation scores for the LSOA they live in, using geographical identifiers available under Special Licence (UKDA SN 6670) and IMD2010 scores which are freely available from the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Fieldwork for Wave 1 of Understanding Society was conducted between January 2009 and January 2011, allowing me to use the latest, 2010 release of the IMD. IMD scores are continuous interval data, coded to two decimal places and with a theoretical range of values between 0 and 100. Higher scores denote areas of greater deprivation. Of the 4899 individuals in the Youth Questionnaire dataset 754 live in households in LSOAs in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. Although deprivation scores are available for areas in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, deprivation indices between the four UK administrations are not comparable, and so respondents outside England must be excluded from the analysis.

As outlined above, the first deprivation variable is based on the overall deprivation score of the LSOA in which a young person lives. The interval-level IMD scores from the ONS were ranked and placed into quartiles using a methodology developed by Public Health England (2013), in order to produce a 4-category ordinal variable *imd2010_quartile* in which LSOAs in the most deprived quartile are coded 1 and LSOAs in the least deprived quartile are coded 4.

4.2.2 Area-level educational deprivation

The second deprivation variable is based on the CYP sub-domain deprivation score of the LSOA in which a young person lives. An area's CYP sub-domain score is calculated from the following indicators: Key Stage 2 attainment; Key Stage 3 attainment; Key Stage 4 attainment; secondary school absences; rates of continuation to post-16 education, and rates of entry to higher education. CYP scores are therefore effective at capturing an area's educational deprivation. Again, interval-level CYP scores from the ONS were ranked and placed into quartiles using the same methodology as for overall IMD scores, in order to produce a 4-category ordinal variable *cyp_quartile* with the most educationally deprived areas coded 1 and the least educationally deprived areas coded 4.

4.2.3 Area type

As well as area-level deprivation, the extensive phase of this research sets out to explore the relationship between occupational aspirations and area type. The now-discontinued *Inspiring Communities* programme, which aimed to raise aspirations on a community-level basis, was based on government research which found that area type may be a more effective indicator than area-level deprivation for identifying areas of 'low aspiration' (Cabinet Office 2008). However, this analysis was limited to educational aspirations and made use of a proprietary area typology – Experian's Mosaic – whose methodology is not open to scrutiny. Meanwhile, existing academic research indicates that young people's aspirations do seem to vary markedly between different areas, but that this area effect is not captured effectively by deprivation or local labour market conditions (Kintrea, St Clair and Houston 2011; Turok et al. 2009). For these reasons, there is a strong case for including a non-proprietary area type variable as an explanatory factor in the analysis here. This research assesses the association between different types of area and different patterns of aspiration by using the ONS' openly available OAC. The OAC is freely available from the ONS and OAC codes for households in Understanding Society are available under Special Licence (UKDA SN 6674). Understanding Society codes OAC types to the 52 sub-groups. For the analysis here, these sub-groups were coded to their seven respective super-groups to produce a categorical variable *oac_7cat* with the following codes: 1 'Blue Collar Communities'; 2 'City Living'; 3 'Countryside'; 4 'Prospering Suburbs'; 5 'Constrained by Circumstances'; 6 'Typical Traits', and 7 'Multicultural'.

4.3 Household-level explanatory variables

Attaining parent-level data for young respondents in the *a_youth* file involves merging data from other parts of the Understanding Society Wave 1 dataset, as adult respondents (aged 16 and over) are given a different questionnaire and their data is stored in different files. Merging parental data with the data held on young people in *a_youth* is facilitated by the provision of cross-wave person identifiers (pids) which can be located in the main adult datasets, allowing data on these parents to be merged into the youth dataset. For each young person in *a_youth*, pids are provided

for natural mother and natural father, as well as natural/adoptive/step mother and natural/adoptive/step father. For this analysis, pids were taken for natural/adoptive/step parents in order to locate the maximum amount of parent-level data – variables *a_fnspid* and *a_mnspid* in *a_youth* provide the pids for fathers and mothers, respectively.

4.3.1 Parental qualifications

Existing research identifies that job aspirations expressed in adolescence are related to parental education, albeit in relation to the specific realm of aspirations to be scientists, health professionals and engineers (Schoon 2001). Data on parents' level of qualification is available from the file *a_indresp*, variable *a_qfhigh*, which codes adults' responses to the question "*Can you tell me the highest educational or school qualification you have obtained?" a_qfhigh* codes responses to 15 categories, and these categories were collapsed into four with the following codes: 1 'No qualifications', 2 'GCSE or below', 3 'A level or equivalent' and 4 'Higher education', in line with the top-level distinctions drawn by the National Qualifications Framework (Ofqual 2013). With both parents' highest qualification coded to this 4-category schema, a single variable *parentshighestqual* was created to signify the highest qualification held between both parents (for those young people with two parents). The dominance approach was adopted, whereby the qualification level of the parent with the highest value for *a_qfhigh* was taken as the parents' highest level of qualification.

4.3.2 Parental occupation

The existing literature identifies that young people from more occupationally advantaged households tend to have more ambitious occupational aspirations (Croll 2008), and that in more general terms parents seem to have a significant influence on young people's occupational aspirations, either via the jobs they do or the jobs they suggest (Turok et al. 2009), particularly when young people are around the age of 12/13. To the extent that occupational background forms a central component of social class, the literature also finds that aspirations are related to class (Andres et al. 1999), social origin (Schoon, Martin and Ross 2007) and socioeconomic status (Rojewski and Yang 1997). Data on parents' current and last occupations is available from file *a_indresp* variables *a_jbsoc00_cc* and *a_jlsoc00_cc*. These variables are coded post-file from parents' description of their current or last job in the Main Adult Questionnaire. It is important to note that while young people's occupational aspirations are coded to SOC2010, their parents' current and last occupations are coded to SOC2000. However, these two incarnations of the SOC overlap extensively and have the same number, and designation, of major groups (Office for National Statistics 2010). This allows parents' occupations to be coded to the same binary PMT/non-PMT schema as the outcome variable, as outlined above in section 4.1.2. Firstly, three-digit SOC codes were taken for each parent's current job, or their last job if no data was available on their current job. A single value for parents' occupation was then created using the dominance approach, whereby the occupation of the parent highest in the SOC (where major group 1 is the highest) takes precedence. Parents' occupation was then coded to the same binary PMT/non-

PMT classification as the outcome variable, with non-PMT occupations coded 1 and PMT occupations coded 2. Finally, a third value 0 'never worked' was assigned to cases where both parents responded 'never worked' to variable *a_jbhad* in *a_indresp*, sourced from the Main Adult Questionnaire question "*Have you ever had a paid job at all, apart from any casual or holiday work?"*, or where one parent responded 'never worked' and no occupational or employment data was available for the other parent.

4.3.3 Parental self-efficacy

Bandura et al. (2001) argue that parents' self-efficacy beliefs, their children's self-efficacy beliefs and, ultimately, career choices, are closely linked, and as Gutman and Akerman (2008) summarise, young people's career choices are closely linked to parents' level of support for their education. Help with homework is an important way in which parents can exercise self-efficacy beliefs – beliefs that they can shape their children's attainment – and also stands as a useful proxy for parents' wider support for their children's education. Data on the extent to which parents help their children with homework is available from the file *a_indresp*, variable *a_hlphmwk*, and is sourced from parents' responses to the main adult questionnaire. It is important to note, therefore, that this variable represents the extent to which parents help their children with homework as reported by parents, not their children. A combined parent-level variable, *hwk_help*, was created using the dominance approach, whereby the value of the parent who helps most often was assigned. This is a meaningful way of combining the data, given that help with homework may well be subject to a parental division of labour, with one parent perhaps taking on the role of primary helper. The phenomenon of interest here is the extent to which parents provide support with homework to their child – the aggregate level of support provided. Whether that support is provided primarily by one or both parents is not of interest. The variable *hwk_help* is coded ordinally and takes one of five values: 1 'almost every day'; 2 'at least once a week'; 3 'at least once a month'; 4 'less often than once a month' and 5 'never or hardly ever'.

4.3.4 Household income

Schoon et al. (2007) find that young people's occupational aspirations are associated with household-level material hardship, arguing that the effect seems to be via parents' reduced educational aspirations for their children in poorer households. Understanding Society contains a range of data on household material circumstances, but this data is often patchy in coverage. One variable – *a_fihhmngrs_dv* in the file *a_hhresp* – records gross household monthly income and has no missing data, and therefore functions as an efficient indicator of household-level material hardship. *a_fihhmngrs_dv* sums the values of total income in the month before interview for all individuals in the household and is coded as an interval-level variable. This variable was recoded as a binary categorical variable *hhincome*, using a cutoff based on the average gross household income in the year when fieldwork for Understanding Society Wave 1 was conducted. The rationale for recoding household income from an interval to binary categorical variable was to assess the qualitative difference between high and low income backgrounds on young people's

occupational aspirations, rather than the marginal effect of a given unit of additional household income. According to the 2010 Living Costs and Food Survey average gross monthly household income in the UK was £2800 in 2010. *hhincome* takes a value of 0 for 'below average income' households whose gross monthly income is below £2800, and a value of 1 for 'above average income households' whose gross monthly income is above £2800.

4.3.5 Household composition

There is some evidence to suggest an association between the level of young people's aspirations and their household compositions, due to the multiple material disadvantages that can bestow themselves upon single parents (Gutman and Akerman 2008: 8). The *a_hhresp* file within Understanding Society contains a number of variables describing family structure, but *a_hhtype_dv* is the most useful for distinguishing between households with one adult present and families with a couple present. *a_hhtype_dv* is a derived variable which closely follows the household composition classification in the Labour Force Survey (LFS). In contrast to the LFS, however, *a_hhtype_dv* treats as couples all those who are married, cohabiting or in a same sex relationship. The typology is based on simple counts of dependent children and adults currently living in the household and does not consider who is responsible for the children. *a_hhtype_dv* takes a total of nine values in the data, and was recoded to a ternary variable *hhcomposition* in order to distinguish between households with one adult and households with a couple present, as outlined in Table 7. The new variable *hhcomposition* takes a value of 1 'one adult', 2 'couple' or 3 'other'.

Table 7 – Recoding of household composition variable

a_hhtype_dv code	Label	*hhcomposition* recode	Recode label
4	1 adult, 1 child	1	1 adult
5	1 adult, 2 or more children	1	1 adult
10	Couple with 1 child	2	Couple
11	Couple with 2 children	2	Couple
12	Couple with 3 or more children	2	Couple
18	2 adults, not a couple, 1 or more children	3	Other
20	3 or more adults, 1-2 children, incl. at least one couple	3	Other
21	3 or more adults, >2 children, incl. at least one couple	3	Other
23	3 or more adults, 1 or more children, excl. any couples	3	Other

4.4 Individual-level explanatory variables

4.4.1 Gender

Existing research indicates a clear gender divide in young people's occupational aspirations, with girls tending more readily towards high-status occupations than boys (Schoon, Martin and Ross 2007), and with some research identifying clear evidence of young people having gendered views

of different occupations and occupational transitions (Burke 2006; McDowell 2000). On the other hand, some studies do not find any significant differences between the aspirations of males and females (St Clair and Benjamin 2011). Nonetheless, gender is an important factor to include in the analysis. Data on young people's gender is held within the variable *a_ypsex* in the *a_youth* file. The coding of this variable remains unchanged for the analysis here, taking a value of 1 for males and 2 for females.

4.4.2 Ethnicity

The existing literature suggests that aspirations are patterned by ethnicity, although to date this has primarily been explored in relation to educational aspirations (Strand and Winston 2008; Gutman and Akerman 2008: 12). Given the plausibility of strong, bidirectional links of causality between educational and occupational aspirations, and given further that ethnicity has not received consideration explicitly in relation to occupational aspirations in the literature to date, ethnicity is included as a factor in this analysis. Data on young people's ethnicity is held in two places within the Understanding Society dataset. For the majority of young people in the data, their ethnicity can be determined by the variable *a_yprace* within the *a_youth* file which has its source in the question *"Which of the following groups do you think you belong to? Please choose one section and tick the box that applies to you"* within the Youth Questionnaire. For around 500 young people, however, data on ethnicity was unavailable in *a_youth* and had to be sourced from variables *a_ethnic1* through *a_ethnich96* in the file *a_indall*, recoding to match the coding scheme of *a_yprace*. The original variable *a_yprace* was then recoded in order to reduce the number of ethnic groups from 22 to 2 – the new, binary coding assigning a value of 1 for White British and 0 for Non White British to produce the variable *a_yprace_2cat*. 1 'White British' encompasses codes 1 'British', 2 'English', 3 'Scottish', 4 'Welsh' and 5 'Northern Irish', while all other ethnic groups were assigned to 0 Non White British. Although this binary coding scheme significantly reduces the detail of the data on minority ethnic groups, the White British group is of particular interest to this research. Firstly, this group is singled out in the existing literature as having particularly low educational aspirations (Strand and Winston 2008); secondly, white working class boys form the focus of much of the existing research into young people's occupational aspirations broadly, and 'low aspirations' more specifically (McDowell 2000; Nayak 2003; Burke 2006), and thirdly, Wythenshawe has a predominantly White British population, strengthening the possibility for the intensive phase of the research to contribute mechanistic explanations for any statistical associations observed in the extensive phase.

4.4.3 Perceived self-efficacy

Bandura et al. find that young people's perceived academic self-efficacy, rather than their actual academic attainment, is the key determinant of their occupational aspirations (Bandura et al. 2001). Meanwhile, Schoon et al. find that greater school motivation is associated with higher occupational aspirations (2007). The Understanding Society Youth Questionnaire contains a number of items relating to young people's feelings about different aspects of their life, including

their schoolwork. The variable *a_yphsw* in the file *a_youth* codes young people's responses to a rating-scale question which takes the following format: "*The next few questions are about how you feel about different aspects of your life. The faces express various types of feelings. Below each face is a number where '1' is completely happy and '7' is not at all happy. Please tick the box which comes closest to expressing how you feel about each of the following things.... Your school work?*" Responses are coded from 1 'completely happy' to 7 'not at all happy', and in this way can be seen to capture young people's perceived academic self-efficacy – that is, whether they feel they are doing well with their school work or not – as well as their school motivation. The coding is unaltered for this analysis.

4.4.4 Educational aspirations

Existing research suggests that educational aspirations, educational attainment and occupational aspirations are all closely related with ties of multidirectional causality (Gutman and Akerman 2008). Aspirations for highly skilled jobs may drive young people to want to achieve solid educational outcomes and to aspire to continue their education post-16. Likewise, solid performance at school can encourage young people to entertain aspirations for well-paid, highly skilled jobs and, subsequently, to aspire to continue their education and training post-16 in order to increase the odds of realising these aspirations. Question 28 on the Youth Questionnaire asks young people about their plans at 16 in relation to the combination of employment and study they would like to do: "*At the moment, young people can leave school at 16. What would you most like to do when you are 16?*". Responses are coded to the variable *a_yplvsc2do* in the file *a_youth* and can take five different values: 1 'get a full time job'; 2 'study full time'; 3 'get a job and study'; 4 'do something else' and 5 'don't know'. In this way, the coding scheme accommodates aspirations to continue in full time education, to go straight into paid employment, or to pursue a mixture of the two. Codes 4 and 5 were combined to create a new code 4 'don't know/do something else' and, as the variable had more than 10% missing data this missing data was coded as a new code 9 'no response' in order to avoid significantly reducing the size of the analytic sample.

4.4.5 Age

The final explanatory variable included in the analysis is age. The literature on aspirations and career development is widely accepting of the significant role that age plays in shaping young people's aspirations. Broadly speaking, as young people grow older their aspirations are shaped by their increasing knowledge of the opportunity structures around them, the development of their perceptions of their own skills and aptitudes, their perceptions of what others expect of and aspire for them, and their recognition and internalisation of social norms, gender roles and other structures that function, in the first instance, to trim away particular occupations as undesirable, and, in the second instance, to close off particular desired occupations as unobtainable (Gottfredson 1981b, 2002). The existing literature often explores the aspirations of young people over time, or of different cohorts, in order to examine the outcomes of these age effects (Kintrea,

St Clair and Houston 2011), with the general finding being that aspirations become lower, or more 'realistic' as young people get older (Calder and Cope 2005). The ages of the young people in the sample were obtained from the variable *a_dvage* in the file *a_indall*, which is a derived variable for the age of the respondent at last birthday – calculated from the exact date of birth and the date of the interview. Where the date of birth information is missing, the estimated age is used. *a_dvage* can take integer values between 0 and 101, but all young people in *a_youth* have ages between 10 and 15. The original coding remains unchanged for this analysis.

The distribution of the sample by the area-level and main demographic explanatory variables is summarised in Table 8, while the missing data on each of the explanatory and outcome variables is summarised in Table 9.

Table 8 – Sample description

Variable	Values	N=	% of sample
Gender	Male	2090	51.4%
	Female	1979	48.6%
Ethnicity	White British	3013	74.0%
	Non-White British	1056	26.0%
Age	10	669	16.4%
	11	672	16.5%
	12	675	16.6%
	13	699	17.2%
	14	648	15.9%
	15	706	17.4%
Area-level deprivation	Most deprived	1091	26.8%
		955	23.5%
		1003	24.6%
	Least deprived	1020	25.1%
Educational deprivation	Most deprived	1101	27.1%
		1021	25.1%
		988	24.3%
	Least deprived	959	23.6%
Area type	Constrained by Circumstances	374	9.2%
	Blue Collar Communities	736	18.1%
	City Living	110	2.7%
	Countryside	482	11.8%
	Prospering Suburbs	998	24.5%
	Typical Traits	812	20.0%
	Multicultural	557	13.7%

Weighted sample, N=4069

Table 9 – Summary of missing data

Variable level	Variable	Missing data	N
Outcome	Aspiration specificity	0	4069
	Aspiration level	634*	3435
Area-level explanatory	Deprivation	0	4069
	Educational deprivation	0	4069
	Area type	0	4069
Household-level explanatory	Parental qualifications	94	3975
	Parental occupation	134	3935
	Parental self-efficacy	147	3922
	Household income	0	4069
	Household composition	0	4069
Individual-level explanatory	Gender	0	4069
	Ethnicity	0	4069
	Perceived self-efficacy	21	4048
	Educational aspirations	0 (420)**	4069
	Age	0	4069
			4069

Weighted data, respondents resident in England only
*These missing cases correspond to the 'Don't know' response
**Missing data recoded as 'no response' (see Chapter 7 Section 4.4.4)

6 Summary

This chapter introduced the Understanding Society dataset on which the extensive phase of the research is based, including the way in which weights are deployed in the data to take account of its complex sample design, and the features of the dataset that lend themselves to the research being undertaken here – in particular a large youth sample and a comprehensive set of variables. The variables included in the analysis were then derived from the literature and mapped onto four broad explanatory constructs: material hardship; human capital; opportunity structures and socialisation. Finally, the two outcome variables and thirteen explanatory variables were defined in detail, with the explanatory variables arranged into a tripartite hierarchy of area-level, household-level and individual-level variables. The next chapter considers the distribution of these variables in the data, alongside a bivariate analysis of each explanatory variable with the outcome variables.

8 Descriptive statistics, univariate and bivariate analysis

This chapter provides a descriptive analysis of the data underpinning the extensive phase of the research, introduced in the previous chapter. The chapter explores the univariate distributions of the outcome variables, followed by the univariate distributions of the explanatory variables and the bivariate distributions of each explanatory variable with the two outcome variables.

1 Outcome variables

1.1 Aspiration specificity

The vast majority (over 84%) of young people in the data voiced a specific occupation when asked what job they would like to do when they finish full-time education. However, as Table 10 shows, over 15% responded "don't know".

Table 10 – Univariate distribution of aspiration specificity

	Frequency	Percent
Don't know	634	15.6
Do know	3435	84.4
N=	4069	

The rationale for retaining this "don't know" response category is therefore twofold. Firstly, it allows the extensive phase of the research to distinguish between specific and general aspirations and therefore link with an important conceptual distinction that emerged from the intensive phase of the research. Secondly, young people who responded "don't know" to this item on the Youth Questionnaire represent a sizeable share of the sample. As can be seen in Table 12, when aspirations are categorised by SOC2010 major group "don't know" is the third largest response category, behind aspirations for professional and associate professional occupations.

1.2 Aspiration level

Of those young people who do have a specific occupational aspiration, almost 80% aspire to professional, managerial or technical (PMT) occupations, as shown in Table 11. In line with the findings of recent aspirations research (Croll 2008; Kintrea, St Clair and Houston 2011; St Clair and Benjamin 2011; St. Clair, Kintrea and Houston 2013), it seems that the young people in this sample have predominantly 'high' aspirations.

Table 11 – Univariate distribution of aspiration level

	Frequency	Percent
Non-PMT	722	21.0
PMT	2712	79.0
N=	3435	

Classifying young people's aspirations by SOC2010 major groups (see Table 12) shows that aspirations for professional and technical occupations make up the majority of PMT aspirations, while aspirations for trades and service occupations make up the majority of non-PMT aspirations. Overall, aspirations for professional, associate professional and technical occupations are the most prevalent, accounting for just under two thirds of the entire sample.

Table 12 – Univariate distribution of aspirations by SOC2010 major group and PMT/Non-PMT

		Frequency	Percent
	Don't know	634	15.6
PMT	1 - Managers, Directors and Senior Officials	123	3.0
	2 - Professional Occupations	1271	31.2
	3 - Associate Professional and Technical Occupations	1319	32.4
Non-PMT	4 - Administrative and Secretarial Occupations	14	.4
	5 - Skilled Trades Occupations	289	7.1
	6 - Caring, Leisure and Other Service Occupations	343	8.4
	7 - Sales and Customer Service Occupations	51	1.2
	8 - Process, Plant and Machine Operatives	15	.4
	9 - Elementary Occupations	10	.2
	N=	4069	100.0

2 Area-level explanatory variables

2.1 Deprivation

The weighted sample used here provides broadly equal proportions of young people from each deprivation quartile, with around 1000 young people in each quartile, although young people from the most deprived quartile are slightly oversampled compared to the national population. The data in Table 13 indicate that young people's aspirations tend to be slightly more specific in more deprived areas, although a Bonferroni-adjusted pairwise significance test indicates this difference is not statistically significant. There are significant differences between deprivation quartiles in the level of young people's aspirations, however, with the data indicating that a greater proportion of young people have high aspirations in less deprived areas. Nonetheless, it remains the case that even in the most deprived areas almost two thirds of young people aspire to professional, managerial and technical occupations.

Table 13 – Distribution of aspirations by deprivation quartile (column %)

	IMD2010 quartile				Total
Occupational aspirations	Most deprived			Least deprived	
Don't know	14.0%	16.0%	16.4%	16.1%	15.6%
PMT	63.6%	62.6%	**71.2%**	**69.4%**	66.7%
Non-PMT	22.4%	21.4%	**12.5%**	**14.5%**	17.7%
N	1091	955	1003	1020	4069

Weighted data. Cramer's V=.08, p<.001
Bold cells are significantly different from 'Most deprived' at .05 level

2.2 Educational deprivation

As with overall IMD scores, young people from more deprived areas within the Children and Young People (CYP) deprivation sub-domain are slightly oversampled in the data here compared to the national population, although the weighted sample used here largely adjusts for this, achieving a broadly equal share between quartiles. As with overall deprivation, a greater proportion of young people have specific occupational aspirations in the most deprived CYP quartile, but this difference is not statistically significant. Table 14 does, however, identify significant differences between the level of young people's aspirations in different educational deprivation quartiles. As with overall deprivation, the proportion of young people with high aspirations is greater in less educationally deprived areas, and this difference is slightly more pronounced in magnitude here, in the case of educational deprivation, than it is in the case of overall deprivation.

Table 14 – Distribution of aspirations by educational deprivation quartile (column %)

	IMD Children & Young People sub-domain quartile				Total
Occupational aspirations	Most deprived			Least deprived	
Don't know	14.4%	13.8%	17.1%	17.4%	15.6%
PMT	61.5%	**67.0%**	67.0%	**71.8%**	66.7%
Non-PMT	24.2%	**19.2%**	**15.9%**	**10.7%**	17.7%
N	1101	1021	988	959	4069

Weighted data, Cramer's V=.093, p<.001
Bold cells are significantly different from 'Most deprived' at .05 level

2.3 Area type

As described in the previous chapter, the OAC is collapsed to its seven super-groups for the analysis here. The proportion of the weighted sample within these super-groups differs widely, from the largest groups – 'Prospering Suburbs' with 25% and 'Typical Traits' with 20% to the smallest – 'Constrained by Circumstances' with 9% and 'City Living' with just 3% of the sample.

As is evident in Table 15, aspirations also vary widely between groups. Specific aspirations are most prevalent in areas defined as 'Constrained by Circumstances' and 'Blue Collar

Communities', where around 14% of young people responded "don't know" when asked what job they would like to do when they leave full-time education, compared to 17% in 'Multicultural' and 'Typical Traits' area types. However, Bonferroni-adjusted z-tests indicate these differences in the prevalence of aspiration specificity by area type are not statistically significant. Significant differences can, however, be observed in the level of young people's aspirations. The highest proportion of high aspirations is found in 'City Living' and 'Multicultural' area types, with 80% and 71% of young people aspiring to PMT occupations respectively. Meanwhile, high aspirations are least prevalent in 'Blue Collar Communities' and 'Constrained by Circumstances' area types, where 60% and 63% of young people aspire to PMT occupations respectively. Taking the 'Constrained by Circumstances' area type as a reference category, only 'City Living' has a statistically significant difference in the proportion of young people aspiring to PMT occupations. Turning to the proportion of young people aspiring to 'lower' non-PMT aspirations, 'City Living', 'Prospering Suburbs' and 'Multicultural' area types are all significantly different from 'Constrained by Circumstances'. It is noteworthy, then, that area types where young people tend to be more certain about the job they would like to do also appear to be those areas where high aspirations are least common.

Table 15 – Distribution of aspirations by OAC area type (column %)

	OAC super-group							Total
Occupational aspirations	Constrained by Circumstances	Blue Collar Communities	City Living	Countryside	Prospering Suburbs	Typical Traits	Multicultural	
Don't know	14.5%	14.3%	15.5%	15.1%	15.8%	16.4%	16.7%	15.6%
PMT	62.7%	59.5%	**80.0%**	68.0%	68.6%	66.9%	71.3%	66.7%
Non-PMT	22.8%	26.2%	**4.5%**	16.8%	**15.5%**	16.7%	**12.0%**	17.8%
N	374	736	110	482	998	812	557	4069

Weighted data, Cramer's V=.095, p<.001
Bold cells are significantly different from 'Constrained by Circumstances' at .05 level

Some of the specific area-based patterns in the data are relatively unsurprising. For instance non-PMT aspirations, a large proportion of which are skilled trades, are most prevalent in areas defined as 'Blue Collar Communities'. Meanwhile, the high proportion of PMT aspirations in 'City Living' area types may well be due, at least in part, to the concentration of professional occupations in inner-urban areas.

3 Household-level explanatory variables

3.1 Parental qualifications

A large proportion of the parents in this sample are highly qualified: over 40% of young people have at least one parent with a higher education qualification, and parents qualified to this level occupy the largest proportion of the sample. However, 11% of young people have parents with no qualifications between them, and almost half have parents with only GCSE-level qualifications or below (including those with no qualifications).

The findings of existing literature, which identify a relationship between young people's occupational aspirations and their parents' level of education in relation to a specific sub-set of professional aspirations (Schoon 2001), appear to be confirmed in the data here at a more general level. Firstly, in relation to aspiration specificity, young people with a more highly qualified parent are more likely to have a specific occupational aspiration than those with low qualified parents. Among young people whose parents have no qualifications, a fifth responded "don't know" when asked what job they would like to do when they leave full-time education. This falls to 13% among those with parents who have A level or equivalent qualifications, and this difference is statistically significant (see Table 16). This association between higher levels of parental qualification and more specific aspirations is perhaps the opposite of the association we would expect to see. We might expect young people whose parents have no qualifications, and so whose occupational status is likely to be lower, to be more likely to have specific aspirations – partly due to material disadvantage (as found in the intensive phase of this research) and partly to the effects of parental socialisation which may lead young people with parents who had shorter transitions from education to the labour market to be planning similarly short, and therefore more specific, transitions themselves. To this extent, the finding in Table 16 that young people with low qualified parents are in fact less likely to have specific aspirations is unexpected. However, it is equally plausible that young people from low-skilled backgrounds, who are themselves more likely to enter low-skilled work, may not see the need to plan a career. The very notion of aspirations structured around career goals may be part of a middle class cultural logic of upbringing (Lareau 2003); a luxury open to those who have the most options upon leaving school.

Table 16 – Distribution of aspirations by parents' highest qualification (column %)

	Parents' highest qualification				Total
Occupational aspirations	No qualifications	GCSE or below	A level or equivalent	Higher education	
Don't know	19.5%	16.7%	**12.6%**	14.5%	15.7%
PMT	54.1%	60.6%	**72.3%**	**74.5%**	66.9%
Non-PMT	26.4%	22.7%	**15.1%**	**11.0%**	17.4%
N	450	1453	404	1668	3975

Weighted data, Cramer's V=.128, p<.001
Bold cells are significantly different from 'No qualifications' at the .05 level

In relation to aspiration level, there is a clear association between parental qualifications and their children's aspirations. Young people with at least one highly qualified parent are significantly more likely to aspire to professional, managerial or technical occupations than their peers with lower qualified parents. While 75% of young people with a parent with higher education qualifications aspire to PMT occupations, this figure falls to 54% among young people whose parents have no qualifications. The association between higher parental qualifications and higher occupational aspirations, identified by Schoon (2001) in relation to a specific sub-set of professional aspirations, therefore seems to be present in the data here at a more general level.

3.2 Parental occupation

The sample is roughly equally split between young people with at least one parent in a PMT occupation and those with parents neither of whom is in a PMT occupation, although the proportion with parents in non-PMT occupations is slightly larger. Meanwhile, a small minority (2.5%) of young people have parents who have never worked (see Table 17).

In relation to aspiration specificity, the most noticeable difference is between the aspirations of young people whose parents are in work, and those whose parents have never worked. While the proportion of young people who responded “don’t know” when asked what job they would like to do when they leave full-time education is broadly similar for those with PMT and non-PMT parents (around 15% for both), this proportion is noticeable greater – 27% – for young people whose parents have never worked. This difference in the proportion of young people with specific aspirations between those whose parents work, and those whose parents have never worked, is statistically significant.

Table 17 – Distribution of aspirations by parental occupation (column %)

	Parental occupation			Total
Occupational aspiration	Non-PMT	PMT	Never worked	
Don't know	15.3%	15.4%	**26.5%**	15.6%
PMT	61.0%	**73.3%**	62.2%	66.9%
Non-PMT	23.7%	**11.3%**	**11.2%**	17.5%
N	1950	1888	97	3935

Weighted data, Cramer's V=.121, p<.001
Bold cells are significantly different from 'Non-PMT' at the .05 level

In relation to aspiration level, young people with parents in PMT occupations are the most likely to aspire to these occupations themselves. 73% of young people with at least one parent in a PMT occupation aspire to PMT occupations, whereas this figure falls to 61% for young people with neither parent in a PMT occupation. This is a statistically significant difference. Meanwhile, non-PMT aspirations are most prevalent among young people with parents in non-PMT occupations – at 24%, over twice the proportion of young people from PMT backgrounds.

3.3 Parental self-efficacy

Overall, the extent to which parents report helping their children with homework demonstrates a high level of perceived efficacy among parents in the sample, with more than three quarters of parents helping with homework at least once a week, and just under 30% helping almost every day. Nonetheless, a sizeable minority (14%) report helping with homework less often than once a month, with over 10% of parents never or hardly ever helping with homework. Bandura et al. argue that “there is a growing body of evidence that parents who believe that they can affect their

children's development are more proactive and successful in cultivating their children's competencies than parents who doubt they can do much to influence their children's developmental course" (2001: 189). In turn, children's own perceived educational efficacy shapes their aspirations, setting up a link between parental perceived efficacy and the level of their children's occupational aspirations. Given this existing literature, we would expect young people whose parents help more frequently with homework to be more likely to have high aspirations. Table 18 demonstrates there is little evidence for this association here. It appears at first glance that young people with parents who help more frequently with homework are slightly more likely to have specific and high aspirations, but pairwise comparisons reveal that there are no statistically significant differences here.

Table 18 – Distribution of aspirations by parental self-efficacy (column %)

	How often parents help with homework					Total
Occupational aspirations	Never or hardly ever	Less often than once a month	At least once a month	At least once a week	Almost every day	
Don't know	19.5%	21.2%	15.8%	14.3%	15.7%	15.6%
PMT	61.3%	59.1%	68.0%	67.7%	68.7%	67.1%
Non-PMT	19.2%	19.7%	16.3%	18.0%	15.6%	17.3%
N	395	138	399	1848	1142	3922

Weighted data, Cramer's V=.046, p<.05
Bold cells are significantly different from 'Never or hardly ever' at the .05 level

3.4 Household income

The majority of young people in the data here (58%) live in households with above average gross monthly income. Based on Schoon et al.'s findings, household-level material hardship should have a depressing effect on young people's aspirations (Schoon, Martin and Ross 2007), and the data in Table 19 provide some evidence for this. There is no statistically significant difference in the specificity of young people's aspirations by household income, but there is a significant difference in aspiration level, with young people from more affluent households more likely to have PMT occupational aspirations. Although statistically significant, however, this difference (69% to 63%) is arguably not very sizeable.

Table 19 – Distribution of aspirations by household income (column %)

	Gross monthly household income		Total
	Below average income	Above average income	
Don't know	15.7%	15.5%	15.6%
PMT	63.0%	**69.4%**	66.7%
Non-PMT	21.4%	**15.1%**	17.7%
N	1722	2347	4069

Weighted data, Cramer's V=.083, p<.001
Bold cells are significantly different from 'Below average income' at the .05 level

3.5 Household composition

The majority of the young people in the data here (60%) live in households with an adult couple, while 21% live in households with a single adult and a further 19% live in households with a range of further compositions of adults. Although there is some evidence in the literature to suggest that living in a single parent family can lower young people's aspirations due to the multiple disadvantages that can cluster around single parenthood (Gutman and Akerman 2008: 8), the data here do not confirm this. As Table 20 shows, there is no significant variation in young people's aspiration specificity or level by household composition.

Table 20 – Distribution of aspirations by household composition (column %)

	Household composition			
Occupational aspirations	1 adult	Couple	Other	Total
Don't know	15.7%	15.3%	16.5%	15.6%
PMT	64.8%	68.1%	64.2%	66.7%
Non-PMT	19.6%	16.6%	19.4%	17.7%
N	837	2442	790	4069

Weighted data, Cramer's V=.03, p<.5
Bold cells are significantly different from '1 adult' at the .05 level

4 Individual-level explanatory variables

4.1 Gender

There are slightly more males than females in the weighted data used here: the proportion of males to females in the sample is 51% to 49%. Elements of the existing literature identify a gender divide in the level of young people's aspirations, with girls tending to have higher aspirations than boys (Schoon, Martin and Ross 2007). The data in Table 21 do not support this finding. Instead, as argued by St Clair and Benjamin (2011), girls and boys appear to have similarly high aspirations, according to the proportion aspiring to PMT occupations. However, girls do appear slightly more likely to have specific aspirations than boys, with only 14% responding "don't know" when asked what job they would like to do when they finish full time education, compared to 17% of boys.

Table 21 – Distribution of aspirations by gender (column %)

	Gender		Total
Occupational aspirations	Male	Female	
Don't know	17.4%	**13.7%**	15.6%
PMT	67.0%	66.3%	66.7%
Non-PMT	15.6%	**20.0%**	17.7%
N	2090	1979	4069

Weighted data, Cramer's V=.07, p<.001
Bold cells are significantly different from 'Male' at the .05 level

It is important to note that while the data in Table 21 indicate there is little difference between girls' and boys' aspirations when these are described in terms of 'higher' PMT occupational aspirations and 'lower' non-PMT occupational aspirations, unpacking this binary distinction to consider aspirations at the level of SOC2010 major groups demonstrates that aspirations are significantly gendered, as illustrated in Table 22. Although similar proportions of boys and girls aspire to PMT occupations, girls are much more likely than boys to aspire to professional jobs (37% of girls; 26% of boys) while boys are twice as likely as girls to aspire to managerial occupations (4% of boys; 2% of girls) and technical occupations (37% of boys; 27% of girls). Likewise, within non-PMT occupations, aspirations are also significantly gendered. While boys are far more likely than girls to aspire to skilled trades occupations (12% of boys; 2% of girls), girls are more likely than boys to aspire to caring, leisure and service occupations (16% of girls; 1% of boys).

Table 22 – Distribution of aspirations (SOC2010 major groups) by gender (column %)

	Gender		Total
Occupational aspirations	Male	Female	
Don't know	17.4%	**13.7%**	15.6%
1 - Managers, Directors and Senior Officials	4.0%	**2.0%**	3.0%
2 - Professional Occupations	25.6%	**37.1%**	31.2%
3 - Associate Professional and Technical	37.4%	**27.1%**	32.4%
4 - Administrative and Secretarial	.3%	.5%	.4%
5 - Skilled Trades Occupations	12.3%	**1.6%**	7.1%
6 - Caring, Leisure and Other Service	1.3%	**16.0%**	8.4%
7 - Sales and Customer Service	.8%	**1.7%**	1.2%
8 - Process, Plant and Machine Operatives	.6%	**.1%**	.4%
9 - Elementary Occupations	.3%	.3%	.3%
N	2090	1979	4069

Weighted data, Cramer's V=.363, p<.001
Bold cells are significantly different from 'Male' at the .05 level

The data here yield two separate and important observations about the association between gender and aspirations. Firstly, at the level of individual occupational groups, aspirations are clearly gendered. Secondly, however, at the level of a binary distinction between 'higher' and 'lower' aspirations, gender differences largely dissolve. What seems apparent is that girls and boys aspire to different types of jobs, but that neither group's aspirations are 'higher', on the whole, than the other's. As argued in the previous chapter, there is a utility to maintaining a binary distinction between 'higher' PMT and 'lower' non-PMT aspirations: such a distinction aligns with present policy discourse in this area, and also has a precedent in the literature (Croll 2008). However, it is also clear that on occasion the collapsing of occupational categories into a dichotomous variable masks the more nuanced aspects of the data. Given that the effect of gender on occupational aspirations is not the focus of the thesis, a loss of nuance is not considered to be problematic in this instance.

4.2 Ethnicity

The majority of the young people in the weighted sample (74%) are White British. Table 23 demonstrates that there is no significant difference in the propensity for young people to have either higher, or more specific, aspirations between White British and non White British groups. At the level of bivariate analysis, then, there appears to be no evidence here to support the findings of the current literature in this area, which concludes that of all ethnic groups White British young people tend to have lower occupational aspirations (McDowell 2000; Nayak 2003; Burke 2006).

Table 23 – Distribution of aspirations by ethnicity (column %)

	Ethnicity		Total
Occupational aspirations	White British	Non White British	
Don't know	15.0%	17.1%	15.6%
PMT	66.5%	67.0%	66.7%
Non-PMT	18.4%	15.9%	17.8%
N	3013	1056	4069

Weighted data, Cramer's V=.035, p<.1
Bold cells are significantly different from 'White British' at the .05 level

4.3 Perceived self-efficacy

On the whole the young people in this sample feel happy about their schoolwork, with almost a fifth feeling 'completely happy', and over 77% falling into the three most positive response categories. Meanwhile only 1.8% feel 'not at all happy' with their school work, with less than 8% of the total sample falling into the three most negative response categories. Bandura et al. find that young people's perceived academic self-efficacy, rather than their actual academic attainment, is the key determinant of their occupational aspirations (Bandura et al. 2001). Meanwhile, Schoon et al. find that greater school motivation is associated with higher occupational aspirations (2007). The data in Table 24, taking young people's feelings about their school work as an indicator of perceived self-efficacy, demonstrate similar trends, although few of these are statistically significant.

Table 24 – Distribution of aspirations by perceived self-efficacy (column %)

	How young person feels about their schoolwork							Total
Occupational aspirations	Not at all happy						Completely happy	
Don't know	11.0%	13.8%	15.3%	18.5%	14.8%	15.3%	14.9%	15.4%
PMT	61.6%	60.3%	64.2%	58.4%	65.5%	70.8%	71.0%	66.9%
Non-PMT	27.4%	25.9%	20.5%	23.1%	19.7%	**13.9%**	14.2%	17.7%
N	73	58	190	589	1150	1261	727	4048

Weighted data, Cramer's V=.08, p<.001
Bold cells are significantly different from 'Not at all happy' at the .05 level

71% of young people with high perceived self-efficacy aspire to professional, managerial and technical occupations, compared with 62% of those with low perceived self-efficacy. However, this difference is not statistically significant. Meanwhile, aspirations for non-PMT occupations are more prevalent among those with low perceived self-efficacy, with 27% of young people with low perceived self-efficacy aspiring to these occupations compared with 14% of young people with high perceived self-efficacy. The proportion of non-PMT aspirations in the second highest self-efficacy category is significantly different from the lowest category. The picture is a little less simple in relation to aspiration specificity. Comparing young people with the highest and lowest perceived self-efficacy, there is little difference in aspiration specificity. In fact, the group of young people who are least likely to have a specific aspiration are those who are ambivalent about their self-efficacy: the neutral category, between 'completely happy' and 'not at all happy', contains young people who are most likely to respond "don't know" when asked what job they would like to do when they finish full time education. However, this difference in aspiration specificity is not statistically significant.

4.4 Educational aspirations

When asked what they would most like to do when they finish school at 16, almost three quarters of the young people in the sample responded that they would like to either study full time, or study alongside a job. The latter combination of study and employment was the single most popular response, accounting for 42% of the young people in the data here. A minority (13%) responded that they would like to get a full time job, while a further 4% didn't know what they wanted to do, or wanted to do something other than study, work and study, or work full time. A sizeable proportion of young people (12% of the sample) had missing data on their educational aspirations, and so these respondents were coded as 'no response' in accordance with the coding scheme outlined in the previous chapter. As will be noted below, this group appears to have quite peculiar characteristics.

Table 25 shows that young people who aspire to study full time post-16 are the most likely to aspire to PMT occupations. In general, young people who intend to undertake some form of study post-16 are significantly more likely to have PMT aspirations than those who plan to go directly into full-time employment. Young people who don't know what form of education they will undertake post-16 (those with the least specific educational aspirations) are also significantly more likely to have PMT aspirations than those who want to get a full time job. However, there are few of these young people in the sample, and they account for only 5% of all of those aspiring to PMT occupations.

Table 25 – Distribution of occupational aspirations by educational aspirations (column %)

	What would you most like to do at 16?					Total
Occupational aspirations	Get a full time job	Get a job and study	Study full time	Don't know/do something else	No response	
Don't know	14.0%	12.6%	14.2%	14.4%	**31.6%**	15.6%
PMT	55.8%	**67.5%**	**75.8%**	**70.2%**	51.1%	66.7%
Non-PMT	30.2%	**19.9%**	**10.0%**	**15.5%**	**17.3%**	17.7%
N	507	1700	1199	182	481	4069

Weighted data, Cramer's V=.165, p<.001
Bold cells are significantly different from 'Get a full time job' at the .05 level

The young people with missing data on their educational aspirations – coded here as 'no response' – are noteworthy for being by far the least likely to have specific occupational aspirations, with almost a third responding "don't know" when asked what job they would like to do when they finish full time education.

Existing research suggests that educational aspirations, educational attainment and occupational aspirations are all closely related with ties of multidirectional causality (Gutman and Akerman 2008). High educational aspirations and high occupational aspirations may be associated for a range of reasons. Having their sights set on a high status occupation, coupled with the knowledge that such an occupation requires many years of further study, may encourage a young person to aspire to go on to further study. Likewise, young people who decide to continue studying beyond school, perhaps because they enjoy study and have high educational attainment, are likely to entertain aspirations for jobs that make use of the high-level qualifications they will go onto attain. The bivariate distribution above suggests that young people's occupational and educational aspirations are indeed well aligned, given that the Standard Occupational Classification defines PMT occupations as those that require extended periods of further study and training, and young people who are most likely to aspire to these occupations are those that want to study full time upon leaving school. However, it remains the case that some young people represented by the data here have occupational and educational aspirations that are not, on the face of it, well aligned. Over 10% of young people who aspire to PMT occupations want to go straight into full time employment – an educational path that is not, perhaps, best placed to produce the occupational trajectory they aspire to.

4.5 Age

The Understanding Society Youth Questionnaire captures young people between the ages of 10 and 15, and the sample is spread very uniformly across this range, with each age constituting an almost identical share of the sample. The most common age in the sample is 15 (17.3% of the sample) and the least common age is 14 (15.9% of the sample).

Perhaps surprisingly, the older individuals in the sample are less likely to have a specific aspiration than their younger peers. As Table 26 shows, the proportion of young people responding "don't know" when asked what job they would like to do when they leave full time education rises from 13.3% among 10 year-olds to 16.7% among 15 year-olds. 14 year-olds are the least likely to voice a specific aspiration, with over 18% not stating an occupational aspiration when prompted in the questionnaire. However, these differences in specificity by age are not statistically significant. In terms of aspiration level, the older individuals in the sample appear to be slightly less likely to have high aspirations than their younger peers, a finding that aligns with the existing literature (Gottfredson 1981a, 2002; Calder and Cope 2005). The proportion of young people aspiring to 'higher' PMT occupations falls from 68% among 10 to 13 year-olds to 64% among 14 and 15 year-olds. However, again, these differences in aspiration level by age are not statistically significant.

Table 26 – Distribution of aspirations by age (column %)

	Age						Total
Occupational aspirations	10	11	12	13	14	15	
Don't know	13.3%	13.7%	15.6%	16.0%	18.1%	16.7%	15.6%
PMT	66.7%	69.2%	67.2%	68.9%	63.4%	64.5%	66.7%
Non-PMT	20.0%	17.1%	17.2%	15.1%	18.5%	18.7%	17.8%
N	669	672	675	699	648	706	4069

Weighted data, Cramer's V=.043, p<.5
Bold cells are significantly different from '10' at the .05 level

Unpacking the binary PMT/non-PMT classification to the nine SOC2010 major groups reveals a more pronounced, and somewhat countervailing trend within aspirations for PMT occupations, as detailed in Table 27. Firstly, age seems to have a more significant impact on aspirations within the PMT category than between PMT and non-PMT. Secondly, within the category of PMT occupations, young people's propensity to have 'high' aspirations in fact appears to increase as they get older. As young people age, they become less likely to aspire to associate professional and technical occupations – 39% of ten year-olds aspire to these occupations, alongside only 28% of fifteen year-olds. Meanwhile they become more likely to aspire to professional and managerial occupations.

Table 27 – Distribution of aspirations (SOC2010 major groups) by age (column %)

Occupational aspirations	Age 10	11	12	13	14	15	Total
Don't know	13.3%	13.7%	15.6%	16.0%	18.1%	16.7%	15.6%
1 - Managers, Directors and Senior Officials	1.2%	2.8%	2.5%	**3.9%**	3.5%	**4.1%**	3.0%
2 - Professional Occupations	27.0%	28.3%	32.7%	31.9%	**34.7%**	33.0%	31.3%
3 - Associate Professional and Technical	38.5%	38.2%	32.1%	33.1%	**25.2%**	27.5%	32.4%
4 - Administrative and Secretarial	.3%	.6%	0.0%	.1%	.3%	.7%	.3%
5 - Skilled Trades Occupations	6.3%	5.2%	7.0%	6.7%	8.8%	8.5%	7.1%
6 - Caring, Leisure and Other Service	11.2%	8.5%	7.6%	7.0%	8.3%	8.1%	8.4%
7 - Sales and Customer Service	1.2%	1.9%	1.5%	1.0%	.8%	1.3%	1.3%
8 - Process, Plant and Machine Operatives	.6%	.6%	.6%	.1%	.2%	0.0%	.3%
9 - Elementary Occupations	.4%	.1%	.4%	0.0%	.2%	.1%	.2%
N	669	672	675	699	648	706	4069

Weighted data, Cramer's V=.071, p<.001
Bold cells are statistically significant from '10' at the .05 level

Given that the SOC places managerial and professional occupations higher than technical occupations, within the category of PMT occupations young people's propensity to hold high aspirations can therefore be seen to increase as they grow older, when measured in this way. However, as discussed above, the aggregate proportion of PMT aspirations gradually falls as young people get older, and on this measure, therefore, young people's propensity to hold high aspirations decreases as they get older.

Unpacking the occupational classification still further, to the level of individual SOC2010 unit groups, reveals that the move away from associate professional and technical occupations is driven primarily by young people jettisoning hopes to become sports players (held by 13% of ten year-olds and only 2% of fifteen year-olds) and actors (held by 6% of eleven year-olds and only 3% of fifteen year-olds). Meanwhile, aspirations for professional occupations such as architects, journalists and social workers become more prevalent as young people approach fifteen.

Age therefore appears to have a number of concurrent effects on occupational aspirations. Firstly, as young people get older they become slightly less likely to aspire to PMT occupations, and in this way their aspirations appear to become lower. This could be described as the 'macro age trend'. Secondly, however, within the category of PMT aspirations there is a significant degree of transfer away from archetypal 'fantasy' jobs such as sports players and actors, which are classified as associate professional or technical, towards professional occupations such as architects and journalists, as young people grow older. These professional occupations are more abundant and therefore, all else being equal, more attainable and therefore more 'realistic' (Gottfredson 1981a, 2002). They are also, however, higher within the Standard Occupational Classification in terms of the skill level they require. Young people's aspirations can therefore be seen to become more realistic, and also higher, as they get older. This could be seen as the 'micro age trend'. Interestingly, this trend highlights that the process of aspirations becoming more realistic does not necessarily involve them becoming 'lower', or less ambitious in relation to their status in the hierarchy of occupations.

At the macro level, then, young people appear to become slightly less likely to hold high aspirations as they grow older. Meanwhile, at the micro level, their aspirations become more

realistic and, in the process, due to the upward substitution of professional and managerial occupations for associate professional occupations, higher. This dual trend highlights the importance of clarity when it comes to the language researchers use to describe aspirations: specifically, 'realistic' aspirations are not necessarily 'lower' aspirations. As argued in section 4.1 above, the preceding discussion demonstrates that there are nuances in the data that may be masked by the dichotomous 'PMT/non-PMT' coding of aspiration level. However, as with gender, the association between age and different forms of aspiration is not a focus of this thesis, and as a result the utility of this binary coding outweighs these costs.

5 Summary

This chapter explored the descriptive statistics relating to the outcome and explanatory variables, as well as a bivariate analysis of each explanatory variable's association with the two outcome variables. The analysis revealed that the majority of young people voice a specific occupational aspiration, and, within that majority who voice an aspiration, four-fifths aspire to 'high' professional, managerial or technical occupations. By some margin, the most common aspirations are for professional and associate professional occupations, supporting claims in the existing literature that, taken on aggregate, young people's aspirations are ambitious (Croll 2008: 246; St. Clair, Kintrea and Houston 2013: 9). At the area level, young people from more deprived areas are slightly less likely to have high aspirations than their peers from less deprived areas, and the same trend is observed in relation to area-level educational deprivation. The lowest proportions of young people with high aspirations are found in areas defined as 'Constrained by Circumstances' and 'Blue Collar Communities', while the highest proportions of high aspirations are found in 'City Living' and 'Multicultural' area types. While these area-level variations in the proportion of young people with high aspirations are both statistically significant and of sociological interest, it is important to note that even in the most deprived areas almost two thirds of young people aspire to professional, managerial and technical occupations. As St. Clair et al. argue, while young people from particular types of area appear to be somewhat less likely to hold high occupational aspirations, there is little evidence to suggest that these areas could accurately be described as areas of 'low aspiration' (St. Clair, Kintrea and Houston 2013: 18). While the analysis revealed significant area-level variation in aspiration level, there was no evidence that aspiration specificity varies significantly between different types of area.

The analysis also revealed a number of significant associations between young people's aspirations and particular household- and individual-level factors. At the household level, young people whose parents are highly qualified are more likely to have high aspirations, but less likely to voice a specific aspiration. Young people whose parents have never worked are far less likely to voice a specific aspiration, while those whose parents have PMT occupations are most likely to have high aspirations. Young people from low income households are less likely to have high aspirations than their peers from above average income households, although while this difference is statistically significant it is not sizeable. At the individual level, girls are slightly more likely to have specific aspirations than boys, although while aspirations are clearly gendered at the

level of individual SOC2010 major groups, there is little evidence that girls are more likely to have high aspirations overall. Young people's educational aspirations are clearly associated with their occupational aspirations: those who intend to undertake some form of study post-16 are more likely to have high occupational aspirations than those who plan to go directly into full-time employment. Finally, as young people get older they become slightly less likely to aspire to PMT occupations. However, within the PMT occupational grouping, young people's aspirations tend to upgrade as they relinquish dreams of becoming actors and footballers, substituting professional and managerial occupations in their place. The association between age and occupational aspirations is therefore nuanced and, at the level explored in this thesis, not significant.

The bivariate analysis conducted here reveals several significant associations between area-level deprivation and area type, and the form of young people's occupational aspirations. In tandem, the analysis reveals a number of significant associations between occupational aspirations and a range of individual- and household-level factors. The next chapter examines whether the association between area and aspirations remains, when the effects of household- and individual-level factors are considered simultaneously as components in a multivariate regression model.

9 Multivariate analysis

This chapter presents the findings of the extensive phase of the research, which are based on four logistic regression models using data from Understanding Society introduced and described in the previous two chapters. The chapter begins by defining the research questions and hypotheses driving the analysis, based on the existing literature and the findings from the intensive phase of the research. The statistical method of logistic regression is then outlined. After specifying the four statistical models which underpin the analysis, the results of these models are presented and discussed.

1 Research questions

The analysis in this chapter responds to the following two research questions:

RQ1
Are young people more or less likely to voice a specific occupational aspiration, depending

RQ2
Are young people more or less likely to hold high occupational aspirations, depending on the

The discussion now moves on to distinguish between those variables included in the analysis as explanatories, and those included as controls, before defining hypotheses for each of the explanatory variables.

2 Controls

Table 5 (page 139) summarised the four constructs underpinning the explanatory variables included in this analysis. The table shows that only the constructs of material hardship and human capital are captured by variables at both area- and either household- or individual-level. Given that the primary aim of the analysis here is to assess the extent to which area-level factors are associated with particular forms of aspiration, once competing explanations at individual- and household-level have been accounted for, only those individual- and household-level variables that capture the same explanatory constructs as the area-level variables are included as explanatory variables. The remaining individual- and household-level variables, capturing the constructs of opportunity structures and socialisation, are included as controls. The controls in the analysis are therefore age, gender and ethnicity. The analysis also controls for region, using the variable *a_gor_dv* from the file *a_youth*, which assigns respondents to one of the 9 English Government Office Regions.

3 Hypotheses

The explanatory variables in the analysis are: area-level deprivation; area-level educational deprivation; area type; household income; parental occupation; parental qualification; household composition; parental self-efficacy; individual self-efficacy, and educational aspirations. Hypotheses are now presented which state the expected relationship between these explanatory variables and the two outcomes in the analysis – aspiration specificity, and aspiration level – based on the existing literature and the findings from the intensive phase of the research.

H1: Area-level deprivation
Young people are predicted to be less likely to have high aspirations in more deprived areas (Furlong, Biggart and Cartmel 1996). They are also predicted to be more likely to voice a specific aspiration in more deprived areas, based on the finding in the intensive phase of the research that young people whose conception of their area focused primarily on the material conditions of deprivation were more likely to voice a specific occupational aspiration.

H2: Area-level educational deprivation
Young people are predicted to be less likely to have high aspirations in areas where educational attainment is low (Bond and Saunders 1999; Croll 2008). They are also predicted to be more likely to voice a specific aspiration in more educationally deprived areas, based on the finding from the intensive phase of the research that young people with the lowest attainment tended to have the most specific aspirations.

H3: Area type
Young people are predicted to be most likely to have high aspirations, and least likely to voice a specific aspiration, in the City Living and Multicultural OAC area types. Meanwhile young people are predicted to be least likely to have high aspirations, and most likely to voice a specific aspiration, in Blue Collar Communities and Constrained By Circumstances OAC area types. The aspiration level component of the hypothesis is sourced from existing research (Cabinet Office 2008; Webber and Butler 2007), while the aspiration specificity component of the hypothesis is sourced from the intensive phase of the research, which identified that young people who vocalised experiences of material hardship tended to have more specific aspirations. Material hardship is the primary construct underpinning the Output Area Classificaiton, and is more prevalent in Blue Collar Communities and Constrained by Circumstances area types.

H4: Household income
Young people from households with above average income are predicted to be more likely to have high aspirations (Schoon, Martin and Ross 2007) and less likely to voice a specific aspiration, based on the finding from the intensive phase of the research that experiences of material hardship in the home were linked with more specific aspirations.

H5: Parental occupation
Young people whose parents have PMT occupations are predicted to be more likely to have high aspirations (Andres et al. 1999; Schoon, Martin and Ross 2007; Rojewski and Yang 1997; Threadgold and Nilan 2009; Croll 2008). They are also predicted to be less likely to voice a specific aspiration, based on the inverse relationship between occupational status and material hardship, alongside the finding from the intensive phase of the research that experiences of material hardship in the home were linked with more specific aspirations.

H6: Parental qualification
Young people whose parents are highly qualified are predicted to be more likely to have high aspirations (Schoon 2001). They are also predicted to be less likely to voice a specific aspiration, based on the inverse relationship between parental qualifications and household-level material hardship, alongside the finding from the intensive phase of the research that experiences of material hardship in the home were linked with more specific aspirations.

H7: Household composition
Young people who live in single-adult households are predicted to be less likely to have high aspirations (Gutman and Akerman 2008) and more likely to voice a specific aspiration, based on the relationship drawn in the literature between single-parent households and material hardship, alongside the finding from the intensive phase of the research that experiences of material hardship in the home were linked with more specific aspirations.

H8: Parental self-efficacy
Young people who receive more frequent help with their homework from parents are predicted to be more likely to have high aspirations and less likely to voice a specific aspiration (Bandura et al. 2001).

H9: Individual self-efficacy
Young people who feel happier about their schoolwork are predicted to be more likely to have high aspirations (Bandura et al. 2001; Schoon, Martin and Ross 2007) and less likely to voice a specific aspiration, based on the finding from the intensive phase of the research that young people with higher attainment tended to have less specific aspirations.

H10: Educational aspirations
Young people with higher educational aspirations (those who plan to stay on in either full- or part-time education upon leaving school at 16) are predicted to be more likely to have high aspirations (Gutman and Akerman 2008) and less likely to voice a specific aspiration, based on the finding from the extensive phase of the research that the young people I interviewed who planned to continue into Further and Higher Education were those with the least specific occupational aspirations.

4 Method

Both outcome variables in the analysis here – aspiration specificity, and aspiration level – are binary. In both cases the outcome: either voicing an aspiration, or not voicing an aspiration; having a high aspiration, or having a low aspiration, is discrete in nature, rather than continuous (Pampel 2000: 1). When the outcome is binary in this way, model estimates for explanatory variables do not reflect the degree to which the value of the outcome is increased or decreased per unit increase in the explanatory, because the outcome only takes two discrete values. Rather, model estimates represent the extent to which the probability of the outcome occurring (or not occurring) increases or decreases per unit increase in the explanatory (Burns and Burns 2009: 570). Given that a binary outcome necessitates a stochastic interpretation of model estimates, linear regression techniques face two problems. Firstly, linear regression techniques can produce model estimates with values between negative and positive infinity, whereas probabilities can only take values between 0 and 1. Secondly, fitting a straight line to a distribution in which the outcome (y-axis) has values of only 0 and 1 results in residuals that are small at each end of the distribution but large in the middle of the distribution. The variance of the errors is not constant, and so the assumption of heteroscedasticity, on which linear regression is based, does not stand

(Pampel 2000: 3–9). Linear regression techniques are therefore not appropriate for modeling the relationship between a set of explanatory variables and a binary outcome. Instead, logistic regression must be used. Logistic regression "determines the impact of multiple independent variables presented simultaneously to predict membership of one or other of the two dependent variable categories" (Burns and Burns 2009: 569).

Logistic regression calculates changes in the log of the odds of the dependent variable for each unit of change in each of the explanatory variables. As with linear regression, logistic regression allows the significance and magnitude of the effect of each explanatory variable on the outcome to be calculated, conditional on the other variables in the model. The variable-level output B is the logistic coefficient (the natural logarithm of the odds ratio of observing the outcome versus not observing the outcome) which, when exponentiated, gives the odds ratio for a given predictor variable. The predictive power of the model as a whole can also be calculated. Prediction success expresses the percent of cases whose outcomes are correctly classified by the model – this figure provides a useful indication of the overall predictive utility of the model. Meanwhile, a pseudo R-square indicates the proportion of variation in the outcome variable which is accounted for by the model. Here, Nagelkerke R square is used. Nagelkerke R square is an adaptation of the coefficient of determination that has a maximum value of 1 for discrete models, such as those produced in logistic regression. This property makes Nagelkerke R square easier to interpret than alternatives such as Cox R square, whose maximum value is less than 1 (Nagelkerke 1991: 692). With a maximum value of 1, Nagelkerke R square can be interpreted intuitively as the proportion of variation explained by the model, just as R square is interpreted in linear regression models. However, as pointed out by Hosmer and Lemeshow, the pseudo R square statistic is almost always much lower in logistic analyses compared to 'true' R squares in linear analyses (Hosmer and Lemeshow 2000: 167).

A single-level, binary logistic modeling approach was adopted, rather than multinomial logistic regression or a form of multilevel modeling. A multinomial approach would have allowed the outcome (young people's occupational aspirations) to be specified as a multi-category variable, rather than a simple binary. However, a binary logistic approach was favoured for two reasons. Firstly, a binary PMT/non-PMT distinction is already in use in the literature (Croll 2008) and is an effective way of capturing the notion of 'high' and 'low' aspirations which lies at the core of the government policy discourse being examined by the thesis. Secondly, as shown in Table 12, page 153, the distribution of aspirations in the data is not spread evenly across the nine SOC2010 major groups, with almost two thirds of aspirations falling within professional groups 2 and 3 and with some major groups accounting for only a handful of aspirations. A binary PMT/non-PMT classification was therefore considered the most meaningful way of reducing the data. A multinomial approach would also allow the two research questions relating to aspiration specificity and aspiration level to be addressed with one regression model using an outcome variable with three response categories: don't know; non-PMT; PMT. However, the decision was taken to address the two research questions separately, with two binary logistic regression models, in order to emphasise the conceptual distinction between aspiration specificity and aspiration level

rather than seeing the two as occupying the same conceptual continuum, with aspiration specificity merely representing a third 'don't know' category.

Meanwhile, a multilevel approach would seem well suited to hierarchical data such as that used here, in which individual young people are nested within households, which in turn are nested within areas. Multilevel regression analysis accounts for the fact that outcomes (occupational aspirations) of young people from the same cluster (household or area) tend to be more similar than those of young people from different clusters. Furthermore, multilevel approaches allow the effect of membership in a group (due to unobserved group characteristics) to be separated out from the effect of observed group-level predictors, and therefore produce a more accurate estimation of standard errors for observed group-level predictors (such as household- or area-level factors) compared to single-level regression techniques. However, as Mitchell argues, in formally distinguishing between the effect of individual-level factors and area-level group membership, multilevel models do not account for the fact that area effects are mediated by individual level factors (2001: 1358). The area-level data used here are based on fixed statistical geographies, which require the assumption that the area-level context within which young people live can be defined separately from their individual characteristics. A multilevel modeling approach would compound this assumption further - separating the calculation of the variance in the model into portions that are accounted for by area-level variables, and portions which are accounted for by individual- and household-level variables. A single-level modeling strategy was therefore adopted.

Details of each variable's level of measurement, coding and dummy reference category are discussed in full in Chapter 7 and summarised here in Table 28.

Table 28 – Specification of the four regression models

Variable level	Variable name	Indicator	Construct	Level of measurement	Coding	Dummy reference category
Outcome(1,2)	asp_specificity	Whether or not yp voices an aspiration		Binary	0 Don't know 1 Do know	Don't know
Outcome(3,4)	asp_level	Whether yp aspiration is PMT or non-PMT		Binary	0 Non-PMT 1 PMT	Non-PMT
Area(2,4)	imd_2010_quartile	Area-level deprivation	Material hardship, opportunity structures	Ordinal, 4 categories	1 Most deprived ... 4 Least deprived	Most deprived quartile
Area(2,4)	cyp_quartile	Area-level educational deprivation	Human capital	Ordinal, 4 categories	1 Most deprived ... 4 Least deprived	Most deprived quartile
Area(2,4)	oac_7cat	Area type	Material hardship	Nominal, 7 categories	0 Constrained by Circumstances 1 Blue Collar Communities 2 City Living 3 Countryside 4 Prospering Suburbs 6 Typical Traits 7 Multicultural	Constrained by Circumstances
Household	a_qfhigh	Parental qualifications	Material hardship	Ordinal, 4 categories	1 No qualifications 2 GCSE or below 3 A level or equivalent 4 Higher Education	No qualifications
Household	parent_job_3cat	Parental occupation	Material hardship, socialisation	Ordinal, 3 categories	0 Never worked 1 non-PMT 2 PMT	Never worked
Household	hhincome	Household income	Material hardship	Binary	0 Below average income 1 Above average income	Below average income
Household	hwk_help	Parental self-efficacy	Human capital	Ordinal, 5 categories	1 Never or hardly ever 2 Less often than once a month 3 At least once a month 4 At least once a week 5 Almost every day	Never or hardly ever
Household	hhcomposition	Household composition	Material hardship	Nominal, 3 categories	1 One adult 2 Couple 3 Other	One adult
Individual	a_yphsw	Individual self-efficacy	Human capital	Ordinal, 7 categories	1 Not at all happy ... 7 Completely happy	Not at all happy
Individual	a_yplvsc2do	Educational aspirations	Human capital	Nominal, 5 categories	0 Get a full time job 1 Get a job and study 2 Study full time 3 Don't know/do something else -9 Missing/don't know	Get a full time job
Individual	a_yprace_2cat	Ethnicity	Socialisation	Binary	0 Non White British 1 White British	White British
Individual	a_ypsex	Gender	Socialisation	Binary	0 Male 1 Female	Male
Individual	a_dvage	Age	Socialisation	Ordinal, 6 categories	10 ... 15	10

(1) Included only in Model 1.1
(2) Included only in Model 1.2
(3) Included only in Model 2.1
(4) Included only in Model 2.2

5 Models

The statistical models address two research questions in turn, relating to the two outcome variables used in this analysis – the first relating to the specificity of young people's aspirations; the second relating to the level of their aspirations. Each of the research questions is, in turn, addressed with two models. In total, then, the analysis consists of four models. The first model includes all explanatory variables apart from the area-level explanatories, and the second model adds these area-level variables. This ordering allows an assessment to be made of how much

additional explanatory power the area-level variables contribute, on top of the household- and individual-level variables. The four models are summarised in Table 29.

Table 29 – Summary of the four regression models

Research question	Model	Outcome variable	Explanatory variables
RQ1: are young people more or less likely to voice a specific occupational aspiration, depending on the area they live in?	1.1	Aspiration specificity	Household-level, individual level
	1.2	Aspiration specificity	Household-level, individual level, area-level
RQ2: are young people more or less likely to hold high occupational aspirations, depending on the area they live in?	2.1	Aspiration level	Household-level, individual level
	2.2	Aspiration level	Household-level, individual level, area-level

The modeling strategy adopted here is confirmatory rather than exploratory. Accordingly, the value, error and significance of model estimates will be reported for all variables in order to support either a confirmation or rejection of their explanatory importance. The models for Research Question 1 are specified as follows, with variables in italics being added in model 1.2:

logit(aspiration specificity) = parental qualifications + parental occupation + household income + help with homework + household composition + perceived self-efficacy + educational aspirations + ethnicity + gender + age + region + *area type* + *area level deprivation* + *educational deprivation*

The models for Research Question 2 are specified in the same way, with variables in italics being added in model 2.2:

logit(aspiration level) = parental qualifications + parental occupation + household income + help with homework + household composition + perceived self-efficacy + educational aspirations + ethnicity + gender + age + region + *area type* + *area level deprivation* + *educational deprivation*

Before running the models, collinearity diagnostics were examined in order to ensure none of the explanatory variables were correlated beyond tolerable limits. As Table B in Appendix C shows, the diagnostics confirm that there are no unsatisfactory levels of correlation between the explanatory variables in the models. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the highest degree of collinearity between the predictors in the model exists between area-level deprivation and area-level educational deprivation; the latter being a component of the former. Although this collinearity is within tolerable levels, it will nonetheless inflate the standard errors on these two variables and may therefore affect their significance. A variety of interaction effects were also included in the

models, firstly to test whether the effect of area-level deprivation is mediated by gender (given that the intensive phase of this research only included boys) and, secondly, to test directly whether the effect of area-level material hardship is mediated by the effect of household-level material hardship, given that this is the primary construct underlying the analysis. However, the interaction effects did not add significantly to the predictive power of the models, nor did the interaction coefficients present any clearly interpretable patterns. Results with interaction effects are presented in Tables E and F in Appendix C, but the models underpinning the analysis here are main effects models which exclude the interaction terms. The modeling procedure dealt with missing data using listwise deletion, and the resulting analytic sample sizes (N=3864 for the models relating to aspiration specificity; N=3266 for the models relating to aspiration level) are reported in Table 30 and Table 31.

6 Results

6.1 Aspiration specificity

The results of Models 1.1 and 1.2 are presented in Table 30. For a full results table including parameter estimates for controls, see Table C in Appendix C.

At the individual level, Models 1.1 and 1.2 indicate that educational aspirations have no significant association with aspiration specificity – neither model produces evidence that young people with higher educational aspirations are less likely to voice a specific occupational aspiration, providing no support for Hypothesis 10. Interestingly, however, young people for whom data on educational aspirations is missing are significantly less likely to voice a specific occupational aspiration than those who want to work full time when they leave school. It appears, then, that this group of young people, who have no recorded data on their educational aspirations, have characteristics which also make them much less likely to voice an occupational aspiration. The change in the effect of educational aspirations between model 1.1 and model 1.2 (which includes area-level variables) is negligible. Models 1.1 and 1.2 both suggest that young people who are happier with their schoolwork are less likely to have a specific occupational aspiration, supporting Hypothesis 9. It is important to note, however, that the 'neutral' response category here is also significantly associated with a lower likelihood of voicing a specific aspiration, and that the 'completely happy' response category loses significance when the area-level variables are introduced in Model 1.2. Overall, however, there is enough evidence to support Hypothesis 9 that young people with greater perceived self-efficacy are less likely to voice a specific occupational aspiration.

At the household level, parental qualifications are significantly associated with different likelihoods of voicing a specific aspiration, although in the opposite direction to that predicted by Hypothesis 6. Young people with higher qualified parents are around 50% more likely, rather than less likely, to voice a specific occupational aspiration than those whose parents have no qualifications. In Model 1.1 GCSE, A-level and Higher Education qualifications are all associated with a higher propensity to voice a specific aspiration. When the area-level variables are added in model 1.2,

parents with GCSEs is no longer a significant factor, but the effect of parents with A-level and Higher Education qualifications becomes stronger and more significant. The models demonstrate that young people with highly qualified parents are more likely to voice a specific aspiration. There is some evidence that parental occupation is associated with different likelihoods of voicing a specific aspiration, although not in the manner predicted by Hypothesis 5. Young people whose parents have PMT occupations are no less likely to voice an aspiration – their aspirations are just as likely to be specific as young people whose parents have non-PMT occupations. However, young people whose parents have never worked are only 60% as likely to voice a specific aspiration as those with parents who do non-PMT jobs. It seems, then, that young people whose parents have the lowest occupational status are least likely to voice a specific aspiration – the opposite finding to that predicted by Hypothesis 5. Models 1.1 and 1.2 also do not support Hypothesis 4, which predicted that young people from households with above average incomes are less likely to voice a specific occupational aspiration: the models report no statistically significant association between household income and aspiration specificity. The same verdict is reached in relation to Hypothesis 7: the models report no significant relationship between aspiration specificity and household composition. Finally, Model 1.2 provides some evidence that young people who receive more help with their homework are more likely to voice a specific aspiration, with those who receive help at least once a week just over 1.3 times as likely to voice an occupational aspirations as those whose parents never or hardly ever help with homework. This finding does not support Hypothesis 8, which predicted that young people who receive more help with homework would be less likely to voice a specific aspiration.

At the area level, deprivation appears not to be significantly associated with young people's propensity to voice a specific occupational aspiration. Model 1.2 therefore rejects Hypothesis 1, which predicts that young people from more deprived areas are more likely to voice a specific aspiration. Area type also has no significant association with young people's propensity to voice a specific occupational aspiration, rejecting Hypothesis 3 which predicted that young people from Constrained by Circumstances and Blue Collar Communities area types would be more likely to voice a specific aspiration. However, area-level educational deprivation is significantly associated with young people's propensity to voice a specific occupational aspiration, confirming Hypothesis 2. Young people from the least educationally deprived quartile of areas are 40% less likely to voice a specific aspiration than their peers from the most educationally deprived quartile. This appears to be the only significant area-level effect on aspiration specificity.

Models 1.1 and 1.2 include four controls: age; gender; ethnicity, and region. The model outputs relating to these variables are presented in Table C in Appendix C, and are now briefly considered. Models 1.1 and 1.2 both suggest that the aspirations of 10 and 11 year-olds are more likely to be specific than those of 15 year-olds, and that girls are more likely to have a specific aspiration than boys: girls are around 30% more likely than boys to voice an aspiration. Both models suggest that there is no significant difference between the propensity of young people from White British backgrounds and those from other ethnic groups to voice an occupational aspiration. Finally, the models detect a significant regional difference in young people's propensity

to voice a specific aspiration: those from the South East are less likely to hold a specific aspiration than those from the South West.

Human capital appears to be the most prevalent construct underpinning the effects shaping aspiration specificity: it appears to be operating at an individual, household and area level. There is no evidence of the effect of material hardship at an area level; this construct only appears to be in operation at a household level. The effect of socialisation is in evidence at both a household level, and in the demographic factors included in the controls. Finally, there is no evidence of the operation of the construct of opportunity structures in relation to aspiration specificity.

Model 1.1 is significant to $p<.001$, has a Wald F of 3.67, a Wald Chi Square of 122.12 and a Nagelkerke R^2 of .06. Model 1.2, which includes the area-level variables, is significant to $p<.001$, has a Wald F of 3.02, a Wald Chi Square of 137.65 and a Nagelkerge R^2 of .07. Overall, then, both models are significant, and the addition of the area-level variables does add to the explanatory power of the model. The R^2 values suggest neither model accounts for more than a small fraction of the variation in young people's propensity to voice a specific aspiration, but as Hosmer and Lemeshow argue "low R^2 values in logistic regression are the norm and this presents a problem when reporting their values to an audience accustomed to seeing linear regression values" (2000: 167). Furthermore, given that R^2 is a measure of overall model fit, logistic regression models with only modest R^2 values can include sizeable differences in predicted probabilities, such as the 40% difference in the likelihood of a young person voicing a specific aspiration between the most and least educationally deprived areas, indicated by model 1.2.

Table 30 – Determinants of aspiration specificity (outcome: young person voices an aspiration)

		Model 1.1			Model 1.2		
		B	S.E.	exp(B)	B	S.E.	exp(B)
Individual	Educational aspirations (ref: get a full time job)						
	Get a job and study	0.13	0.17	1.14	0.15	0.17	1.16
	Study full time	0.05	0.18	1.06	0.07	0.18	1.08
	Don't know/do something else	-0.04	0.29	0.97	-0.03	0.29	0.97
	Missing/don't know	-1.09***	0.18	0.34	-1.08***	0.19	0.34
	How young person feels about schoolwork (ref: not at all happy)						
	2	-0.24	0.62	0.79	-0.19	0.64	0.83
	3	-0.62	0.49	0.54	-0.59	0.5	0.55
	4	0.91^	0.45	2.48	-0.86^	0.46	0.42
	5	-0.64	0.44	0.53	-0.59	0.45	0.55
	6	-0.81^	0.44	0.45	-0.76^	0.45	0.47
	Completely happy	-0.79^	0.45	0.46	-0.75	0.46	0.47
Household	Parents' highest qualification (ref: no qualifications)						
	GCSE or below	0.13*	0.16	1.14	0.17	0.16	1.18
	A level or equivalent	0.42^	0.22	1.52	0.47*	0.22	1.6
	Higher Education	0.36*	0.17	1.43	0.45**	0.18	1.57
	Parental occupation (ref: Non-PMT)						
	Professional, managerial or technical	-0.1	0.12	0.9	-0.057	0.12	0.95
	Never worked	-0.50^	0.26	0.61	-0.54*	0.27	0.58
	Household income above average (ref: below average income)	-0.07	0.12	0.93	-0.04	0.12	0.96
	Household composition (ref: one adult)						
	Couple	-0.03	0.14	0.97	-0.01	0.14	0.99
	Other	0.02	0.17	1.02	0.03	0.17	1.03
	How often parents help with homework (ref: never or hardly ever)						
	Less often than once a month	-0.09	0.27	0.91	-0.11	0.27	0.9
	At least once a month	0.19	0.21	1.21	0.18	0.21	1.2
	At least once a week	0.27	0.17	1.3	0.27^	0.17	1.31
	Almost every day	0.15	0.18	1.17	0.15	0.18	1.16
Area	Area-level deprivation (ref: most deprived quartile)						
	Second most deprived quartile				-0.22	0.17	0.8
	Second least deprived quartile				-0.19	0.23	0.83
	Least deprived quartile				0.06	0.27	1.07
	Area-level educational deprivation (ref: most deprived quartile)						
	Second most deprived quartile				-0.02	0.17	0.98
	Second least deprived quartile				-0.28	0.21	0.75
	Least deprived quartile				-0.49*	0.25	0.61
	OAC area type (ref: Constrained by Circumstances)						
	Blue Collar Communities				0.02	0.21	1.02
	City Living				0.28	0.38	1.32
	Countryside				0.11	0.25	1.11
	Prospering Suburbs				0.03	0.23	1.03
	Typical Traits				0.01	0.22	1.01
	Multicultural				0.01	0.25	1.01
	Constant	2.14***	0.51	8.48	2.24***	0.54	9.41
	N		3864			3864	
	% predicted correct (empty model=84.5%)		84.5%			84.6%	
	Chi-square (Hosmer and Lemeshow)		16.02*			6.08	
	Nagelkerke R squared		0.06			0.07	

^ p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Weighted results. Source: Understanding Society Wave 1 Youth Questionnaire

Controls: age, gender, ethnicity, region

6.2 Aspiration level

The results of Models 2.1 and 2.2 are presented in Table 31. For a full results table including parameter estimates for controls, see Table D in Appendix C.

At the individual level, whereas educational aspirations were not significantly associated with young people's propensity to voice a specific aspiration, they do appear to be significantly associated with the likelihood that a given young person will have high aspirations. Models 2.1 and 2.2 both confirm Hypothesis 10, which predicted that young people with higher educational aspirations (those who want to stay on in either part-time or full-time education on leaving school at 16) are also more likely to have high occupational aspirations. Those who want to study full time when they leave school are 3 times as likely to aspire to a PMT occupation as those who want to get a full time job, and even those who want to combine working with study post-16 are more than twice as likely to have professional, managerial or technical aspirations as those who want to work full time. The addition of the area-level variables in model 2.2 has a negligible impact on the significance and effect size of educational aspirations. The models also suggest that individual self-efficacy is significantly associated with young people's propensity to have high aspirations, with young people who feel happy or completely happy about their schoolwork around twice as likely to have a PMT aspiration as those who feel unhappy. Hypothesis 9 is also therefore confirmed, and the effect of individual self-efficacy becomes slightly more significant in Model 2.2.

At the household level, Hypothesis 6 is confirmed: both models suggest that young people with more highly qualified parents are more likely to have high aspirations than those with less highly qualified parents. GCSE, A level and Higher Education parental qualifications are all significantly associated with a higher likelihood of having PMT occupational aspirations, with the effect size rising progressively with each additional level of qualification. Young people whose parents have Higher Education qualifications are more than twice as likely to have professional, managerial or technical aspirations as those whose parents have no qualifications. The effect and significance of parental qualification is only negligibly reduced when the area-level variables are introduced in Model 2.2. The models also confirm Hypothesis 5, that young people whose parents' occupations are higher in the Standard Occupational Classification are more likely to aspire to PMT occupations themselves. Young people whose parents have professional, managerial or technical occupations are over two thirds more likely to have PMT aspirations than those whose parents have non-PMT occupations. Interestingly, however, young people whose parents have never worked are more than twice as likely to have high aspirations as those whose parents work in non-PMT occupations. The association between the occupations young people's parents do, and their likelihood of having high occupational aspirations, remains largely unaltered when the area-level variables are introduced in Model 2.2. Hypotheses 4, 7 and 8 are not supported, however. Hypothesis 4 predicted that young people from households with above average income would be more likely to have high aspirations, but neither model produces evidence of a statistically significant relationship between aspiration level and household income. It may be that other

variables included in the model, such as parental qualification and occupation, are more reliable indicators of household-level material resources than household income, which is often misreported by respondents in surveys (Willitts 2006: 8). Likewise, Hypothesis 8 predicted that young people who receive more frequent help with homework will be more likely to have high aspirations, but the models indicate that there is no statistically significant relationship between parental self-efficacy and aspiration level. Finally, Hypothesis 7 predicted that young people from single-adult households would be least likely to have high aspirations. In fact, the models suggest that young people from single adult households are the most likely to have PMT aspirations, compared to those from two adult and 'other' household compositions, controlling for all other factors in the model, such as that single parent households may have lower household incomes and tend to be located in more deprived areas.

At the area level, deprivation and area type have a significant impact on young people's propensity to have high aspirations, while educational deprivation is not significant – a reversal of the pattern of significance amongst the area-level variables from the analysis relating to aspiration specificity. Model 2.2 indicates that young people from the second least deprived area quartile are 1.7 times as likely to have a PMT occupational aspiration as their peers in the most deprived quartile. However, comparing the extremes of the deprivation index, those in the least deprived quartile are not significantly more likely to have high aspirations than those in the most deprived quartile. Model 2.2 therefore provides only modest support for Hypothesis 1, that area-level deprivation is associated with a lower likelihood of having high aspirations. Meanwhile, the finding that there is no statistically significant relationship between area-level educational deprivation and the likelihood of having high aspirations rejects Hypothesis 2, which predicted that young people from more educationally deprived areas would be less likely to have high aspirations. Of the area-level variables included in Model 2.2, area type has the most sizeable and easily interpretable impact on young people's propensity to have high occupational aspirations. Hypothesis 3 predicted that young people from City Living and Multicultural OAC area types would be most likely to have high aspirations, while young people from Blue Collar Communities and Constrained By Circumstances area types would be least likely to hold high aspirations. Model 2.2 provides almost complete confirmation of this prediction. Compared to young people from areas defined as Constrained by Circumstances, there is no significant difference in the proportion of young people with high aspirations from Blue Collar Communities. However, this could be a result of the similar extent of high aspiration in these area types, revealed in the previous chapter. Meanwhile, young people from Multicultural areas are almost twice as likely to have PMT aspirations as those from Constrained by Circumstances areas, and young people from City Living areas are almost five times as likely to have high aspirations as those from Constrained by Circumstances areas. Model 2.2 therefore confirms the hypothesis that high aspirations are least prevalent in Constrained by Circumstances areas, and most prevalent in Multicultural and City Living areas.

As with Models 1.1 and 1.2, Models 2.1 and 2.2 include four controls: age, gender, ethnicity and region. There are significant age effects in both models, but these are difficult to interpret. Model 2.1 indicates that 11 and 13 year-olds are more likely to have high aspirations than 15 year-olds,

while in Model 2.2 only 13 year-olds remain significantly different from 15 year-olds in the proportion having high aspirations. There is no clearly identifiable age effect on aspiration level. Models 2.1 and 2.2 both indicate that girls are a third less likely to have PMT aspirations than boys, and that there is no statistically significant difference between the likelihood of having high aspirations between White British and other ethnic groups. It is important to note that the dichotomous ethnicity variable used here does not distinguish between non White British ethnic groups who are known to have divergent educational attainment and aspirations (Strand and Winston 2008) and may therefore mask variation in occupational aspirations between these minority groups. However, the thesis did not set out explicitly to explore the role of ethnicity in shaping occupational aspirations, beyond the predominantly White British context of the intensive phase of the research which is a core characteristic of the types of outer-urban deprived area that form the focus of the thesis, and a more nuanced consideration of ethnic differences is, in any case, precluded by sample size. Finally, Model 2.1 suggests that young people from London are significantly more likely to have high aspirations than the reference category in the analysis (South West), although this effect is no longer significant in Model 2.2 when the area-level variables are introduced.

Material hardship appears to be the most prevalent construct underpinning the effects shaping aspiration level: it operates at both an area and household level. The construct of human capital is in evidence operating at an individual level (although not at the area or household level), and the effect of opportunity structures is only partially discernible at an area level through the contestable effect of area-level deprivation. Finally, the operation of the construct of socialisation is apparent at a household level, and in the demographic factors included as controls.

Model 2.1 is significant to $p<.001$, has a Wald F of 7.40, a Wald Chi Square of 246.64 and a Nagelkerke R^2 of .14. Model 2.2, which includes the area-level variables, is significant to $p<.001$, has a Wald F of 6.05, a Wald Chi Square of 275.83 and a Nagelkerge R^2 of .16. Overall, then, both models are significant, and the models predicting aspiration level have appreciably better explanatory power than those predicting aspiration specificity. As with Models 1.1 and 1.2, the addition of the area-level variables in Model 2.2 does add to the explanatory power of Model 2.1.

Table 31 – Determinants of aspiration level (outcome: young person voices a PMT aspiration)

		Model 2.1			Model 2.2		
		B	S.E.	exp(B)	B	S.E.	exp(B)
Individual	Educational aspirations (ref: get a full time job)						
	Get a job and study	0.35*	0.15	1.41	0.32*	0.15	1.37
	Study full time	1.12***	0.18	3.06	1.09***	0.18	2.97
	Don't know/do something else	0.81**	0.27	2.25	0.82**	0.28	2.27
	Missing/don't know	0.35^	0.2	1.42	0.33	0.2	1.39
	How young person feels about schoolwork (ref: not at all happy)						
	2	-0.05	0.52	0.95	0.01	0.55	1.01
	3	0.34	0.4	1.41	0.42	0.41	1.52
	4	0.06	0.35	1.06	0.1	0.36	1.11
	5	0.27	0.34	1.31	0.32	0.35	1.37
	6	0.56	0.34	1.76	0.62^	0.36	1.86
	Completely happy	0.65^	0.35	1.92	0.71^	0.37	2.03
Household	Parents' highest qualification (ref: no qualifications)						
	GCSE or below	0.34*	0.16	1.4	0.33*	0.16	1.39
	A level or equivalent	0.69**	0.22	1.99	0.66**	0.23	1.93
	Higher Education	0.86***	0.18	2.35	0.78***	0.19	2.18
	Parental occupation (ref: Non-PMT)						
	Professional, managerial or technical	0.56***	0.12	1.74	0.53***	0.13	1.7
	Never worked	0.77*	0.37	2.15	0.78*	0.37	2.19
	Household income above average (ref: below average income)	0.13	0.12	1.14	0.12	0.12	1.13
	Household composition (ref: one adult)						
	Couple	-0.25^	0.14	0.78	-0.24^	0.14	0.79
	Other	-0.32^	0.17	0.72	-0.32^	0.17	0.73
	How often parents help with homework (ref: never or hardly ever)						
	Less often than once a month	-0.2	0.3	0.82	-0.19	0.3	0.83
	At least once a month	0.17	0.23	1.19	0.16	0.23	1.17
	At least once a week	-0.11	0.18	0.9	-0.14	0.18	0.87
	Almost every day	-0.09	0.19	0.92	-0.11	0.19	0.9
Area	Area-level deprivation (ref: most deprived quartile)						
	Second most deprived quartile				0.04	0.16	1.04
	Second least deprived quartile				0.55*	0.23	1.73
	Least deprived quartile				0.2	0.26	1.22
	Area-level educational deprivation (ref: most deprived quartile)						
	Second most deprived quartile				-0.08	0.17	0.92
	Second least deprived quartile				-0.13	0.22	0.88
	Least deprived quartile				0.17	0.26	1.18
	OAC area type (ref: Constrained by Circumstances)						
	Blue Collar Communities				-0.15	0.19	0.86
	City Living				1.57*	0.65	4.79
	Countryside				-0.22	0.25	0.8
	Prospering Suburbs				-0.16	0.24	0.85
	Typical Traits				0.07	0.22	1.07
	Multicultural				0.59*	0.25	1.8
	Constant	-0.20	0.42	0.82	-0.22	0.45	0.8
	N	3266			3266		
	% predicted correct (empty model=79.6%)	79.7%			79.5%		
	Chi-square (Hosmer and Lemeshow)	18.77*			15.44*		
	Nagelkerke R squared	0.14			0.16		

^ p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Weighted results. Source: Understanding Society Wave 1 Youth Questionnaire

Controls: age, gender, ethnicity, region

7 Discussion

The four logistic regression models underpinning the analysis here found a range of factors to be significantly associated with the specificity and level of young people's occupational aspirations. At the individual level, the models suggest that young people who feel happy about their schoolwork are more likely to have high aspirations, and less likely to voice a specific aspiration. The models also indicate that young people who have higher educational aspirations are more likely to hold high occupational aspirations, although there was no clear finding in relation to aspiration specificity here. At the household level, young people whose parents have high qualifications and PMT occupations are more likely to aspire to PMT occupations themselves. However, young people whose parents have no qualifications and have never worked were the most likely to have high aspirations, and the least likely to voice a specific aspiration – opposite to the hypothesised trend. This finding poses a stark counterbalance to present policy rhetoric surrounding intergenerational 'cultures of worklessness' (Shildrick et al. 2012), and corroborates, at an individual level, St. Clair et al.'s area-level finding that young people growing up in low employment areas do not simply "reproduce what they see around them" (St. Clair, Kintrea and Houston 2013: 9). Elsewhere at household level, there is no clear association between household income and either the likelihood of having high aspirations or of voicing a specific aspiration. Household composition is significant in relation to aspiration level, with young people from single adult households most likely to have high aspirations, but not significant in relation to aspiration specificity. Lastly, parental self-efficacy does appear to be associated with a greater likelihood of voicing a specific aspiration, but not of having high aspirations.

Ultimately, the multivariate analysis in this chapter set out to assess the size and significance of the association between young people's occupational aspirations and the areas they live in, once a range of individual- and household-level factors have been accounted for. Models 1.2 and 2.2 indicate that some area-level factors do indeed have a statistically significant association with particular forms of aspiration, and add explanatory power to models that predict these aspirations. Turning to the constructs underpinning the factors included in the analysis, it seems that human capital is the primary construct operating at area level in relation to aspiration specificity, while material hardship is the primary construct operating at area level in relation to aspiration level.

Area-level educational deprivation, rather than overall deprivation or area type, is the primary area-level explanatory factor in relation to aspiration specificity. As hypothesised, young people from more educationally deprived areas are more likely to voice a specific aspiration. The intensive phase of the research found that young people with the lowest predicted educational attainment tended to have the most specific aspirations. It seems, then, that lower educational attainment is related to an increased likelihood of voicing a specific occupational aspiration, at both an individual and an area level. Furthermore, Models 1.1 and 1.2 also indicate that young people who feel less happy about their schoolwork tend to have more specific aspirations, suggesting that as well as objective area- and individual-level effects (young people's attainment

at school), educational attainment also has a second-order individual-level effect (the way young people feel about their attainment at school) on the specificity of young people's aspirations (Marton 1981). The case for considering the significance of perceived self-efficacy as well as absolute levels of attainment as a determinant of young people's occupational aspirations (Bandura et al. 2001) is supported here.

In relation to aspiration level, the primary construct in operation at an area level is material hardship. Area-level educational deprivation loses its significance here. Turning to overall deprivation, Model 2.2 suggests that young people in less deprived areas are more likely to have high occupational aspirations, but this finding does not hold for areas in the least deprived quartile – only the second least deprived quartile, when compared with the most deprived quartile. At the extremes of the deprivation spectrum, then, there is no evidence that the proportion of young people with high aspirations varies significantly. As a result, it is not possible to confirm that young people from more deprived areas are less likely to have high occupational aspirations. As such, the findings here align with the bulk of the existing literature, which finds little evidence that deprivation is associated with a lower propensity for high aspirations (Turok et al. 2009; St Clair and Benjamin 2011; McKendrick, Scott and Sinclair 2007; Calder and Cope 2005; Furlong and Biggart 1999; St. Clair, Kintrea and Houston 2013) rather than those studies that claim there is an association between deprivation and aspiration level (Furlong, Biggart and Cartmel 1996).

Instead, area type stands out as the most significant area-level explanatory factor in relation to aspiration level. Model 2.2 indicates that compared to young people from outer-urban areas of deprivation, young people from inner city 'Multicultural' and 'City Living' area types are the most likely to have professional, managerial or technical aspirations. This finding lends weight to the rationale to conduct the intensive phase of this research in Wythenshawe – a deprived, peripheral urban location, the majority of whose Output Areas are classified by the 2001 OAC as 'Constrained by Circumstances', the reference category in this analysis. When it comes to spatially identifying areas where aspirations are least likely to be high, then, two conclusions can be drawn from the findings here. Firstly, area type appears to be a more effective tool than area-level deprivation, and secondly, of the various area types it seems as though outer-urban areas such as Wythenshawe are the locations, if any, that should command our attention. The Constrained by Circumstances area type, where high aspirations are least prevalent, captures areas that are often among the most deprived. However, this can also be said of the Multicultural and City Living area types, where high aspirations are most prevalent. While high aspirations often are less widespread in deprived areas, then, this is only the case for particular types of deprived area. Returning to section 4.2.3 in chapter 7, which outlines the specific Census variables that define each of the OAC super-groups, it is clear that while the City Living and Constrained by Circumstances area types share features of less affluent areas in common, such as low levels of detached housing and owner-occupation, they diverge on other specific characteristics – most notably the prevalence of higher education qualifications, which is high in City Living Areas and low in Constrained by Circumstances areas. Likewise, while levels of renting are high in both area types, in City Living areas people tend to rent in the private sector, whereas in Constrained by

Circumstances areas people tend to rent from the public sector. These specific area-level characteristics offer a more nuanced account of the types of factor that may be associated with lower rates of high aspiration in particular areas, and arguably have greater utility for policy-targeting than vaguer notions of 'disadvantage' or 'deprivation' which lie at the centre of current policy discourse on aspirations (Wintour 2013).

8 Summary

The analysis in this chapter set out to test the significance of area-level effects on young people's aspirations, conditional on a range of household- and individual-level variables which sought, as comprehensively as was possible with the data available, to account for the underlying explanatory constructs present in the literature. The analysis sought to ascertain whether area is significantly associated with young people's propensity to have high aspirations, and their propensity to have specific aspirations, and whether area-level factors remain significant when competing explanatory factors are considered. The statistical analysis consisted of four logistic regression models, designed to test the effect of area on aspiration specificity and level, conditional on the effect of all the other variables included in the analysis. All four models demonstrate the significance of area, over and above the effects of individual- and household-level factors already identified in the literature. Young people from more educationally deprived areas are more likely to voice a specific aspiration, while young people from particular inner-city area types are most likely to have high aspirations.

The finding that young people from areas of high educational deprivation are more likely to voice a specific aspiration provides an interesting extension to the finding, from the intensive phase of the research, that young people with lower predicted educational attainment tend to have more specific aspirations. It appears that low educational attainment is associated with a higher propensity for voicing a specific aspiration, at both an area level and an individual level. However, the regression models here did not directly consider the effect of individual-level educational attainment due to the unavailability of this data, instead relying on perceived self-efficacy as a proxy. As a result, the models are unable to test the relative effects of area-level and individual-level educational attainment. It may be that the area-level effect of low educational attainment identified here is merely an aggregation of the individual-level effect of low educational attainment identified in the intensive phase of this research.

In relation to aspiration level, the inclusion of area type in this analysis appears to have real explanatory worth. The change in the odds of a young person having high rather than low aspirations attached to their residence in a City Living area type is the largest of all the effects included in the models. Conditional on the effects of all the other variables, a young person from a City Living area type is almost five times as likely to have high occupational aspirations as a young person from a Constrained by Circumstances area type. When examining area-level effects on aspirations, the existing literature has tended to focus on deprivation. However, City Living, Multicultural and Constrained by Circumstances area types are all often co-located with areas of

deprivation, and young people from the former two area types are significantly more likely to have high aspirations than young people from the latter area type. To the extent that the existing literature has considered the association between area and young people's aspirations, then, it seems that it has focused somewhat unduly on the role of deprivation, leaving the arguably greater significance of area type unexamined. To the extent that existing policy to 'raise aspirations' is targeted at areas of deprivation, then, it seems that this focus should be concentrated on outer urban areas of deprivation rather than the inner city. This spatial conclusion chimes with recent research into the effect of area type on educational attainment (Webber and Butler 2007; Raffo 2011: 3), which finds that outer-urban areas of deprivation, rather than the inner city, are often the sites where educational outcomes are poorest.

Despite the unavailability of linked data from the National Pupil Database and an updated OAC based on 2011 Census data, the analysis conducted here has notable strengths. By using data from Understanding Society it addresses the question of how young people's aspirations are determined with a large, recent, nationally representative dataset that has not previously been used for this purpose. The analysis also goes further than the existing literature on aspirations and area, by including area type, as well as standard measures of deprivation, as an explanatory factor. Area type appears to be significantly associated with the form of young people's occupational aspirations, and allows a more nuanced identification of the areas where policy to 'raise aspirations' may best be targeted in future. Finally, the analysis complements and extends the findings from the intensive phase of the research in two main ways. Firstly, it appears that educational attainment is related to aspiration specificity at both an individual- and area-level. Secondly, Wythenshawe is precisely the type of area identified in the regression models as having the lowest prevalence of high aspirations, and material hardship – a core component of the mechanisms linking area and aspirations in the intensive phase of the research – was found to be the primary construct operating in the analysis here at an area level. The mechanisms linking area and aspirations identified in the intensive phase of the research are therefore apt candidates for explaining the empirical trends identified here in the extensive phase. These synergies between the intensive and extensive phases of the research are explored in more detail in the next and final chapter.

10 Conclusion

This chapter restates the research questions underpinning the thesis, before considering the findings generated by both the intensive and extensive phases of the research in response to these questions. The discussion then turns to consider the points of complementarity and contrast between the findings from the intensive and extensive phases of the research, and how their respective strengths allow the influence of area on young people's occupational aspirations to be assessed on different levels. The chapter then turns to discuss the limitations and strengths of the research, before offering a number of considerations and recommendations for future policy and research.

1 Research questions

This thesis is driven by one top-level research question: how are young people's occupational aspirations shaped by the area they live in? The intensive and extensive phases of the research address this question in two different ways. The extensive phase of the research considers the 'first order' of this question: whether the content of young people's aspirations – their level and specificity – is significantly associated with the objective features of the area they live in, such as their level of deprivation and the characteristics of their residents. Meanwhile, the intensive phase of the research considers the 'second order' of the research question: how do young people's perceptions and understandings of their local area shape the way they understand and talk about their aspirations, or, to adopt phenomenographic terminology: how do young people's conceptions of their area shape their conceptions of their aspirations? In short, while the extensive phase of the research considers how the content of young people's aspirations is shaped by area-as-space, the intensive phase of the research considers how young people's conceptions of their aspirations are shaped by area-as-place. These iterations of the top-level research question are summarised below.

Top-level research question

How are young people's occupational aspirations shaped by the area they live in?

Intensive phase research question

How do young people's conceptions of their area shape their conceptions of their aspirations?

Extensive phase research question

Is the content (level and specificity) of young people's occupational aspirations associated with the characteristics of the area they live in?

2 Findings from the intensive phase of the research

The intensive phase of the research was based on fifteen semi-structured interviews with 14 and 15 year-old boys attending the same secondary school in Wythenshawe. The justification for choosing Wythenshawe as the fieldwork site for this phase of the research was twofold. Firstly, Wythenshawe is an area of concentrated deprivation, and area-level deprivation is the primary spatial characteristic around which area-based studies of aspirations, and area-based government policy on aspirations, are currently directed (Kintrea, St Clair and Houston 2011; Turok et al. 2009; St Clair and Benjamin 2011; Calder and Cope 2005; Furlong, Biggart and Cartmel 1996; St. Clair, Kintrea and Houston 2013). Secondly, Wythenshawe is a particular type of deprived area – in an isolated, outer-urban location at the edge of a provincial city – which is identified by geodemographic analysis as being of potentially sizeable significance in relation to poor educational outcomes and 'low aspirations' (Webber and Butler 2007; Cabinet Office 2008; Raffo 2011), as opposed to the traditional focus on inner-urban areas of deprivation.

The boys I interviewed fell into three roughly equal-sized groups, based on their school's assessment of their likely performance at GCSE: four of the boys had high predicted attainment, six had average predicted attainment and five had low predicted attainment. In line with the research question driving this phase of the research, the interviews were designed to elicit two main strands of data, relating to young people's conceptions of Wythenshawe, and their conceptions of their aspirations. The interviews were analysed using phenomenographic analysis, which focuses on the ways in which people experience, understand and conceive of a phenomenon in the world (in this case 'Wythenshawe' and 'occupational aspirations'), rather than focusing attention on the phenomena themselves (Marton 1981; Larsson and Holmström 2007). Conceptions, as the primary unit of analysis in phenomenography, are simply a "way of understanding" a given phenomenon (Marton and Pong 2005: 335).

2.1 Conceptions of Wythenshawe

The phenomenographic analysis of the way in which young people spoke about Wythenshawe revealed four conceptions of the area: a dysfunctional conception; a territorial conception; a provisional conception, and a material conception. As elaborated during the discussion of phenomenographic analysis in Chapter 3, conceptions have two essential components: a 'referential aspect' which identifies how participants understand and talk about a particular phenomenon when they adopt a particular conception, and a 'structural aspect' which identifies what participants refer to – the specific features that are focused on by the participants when they adopt a particular conception (Marton and Pong 2005: 336). The dysfunctional conception of Wythenshawe was defined referentially by critical affective orientations, and structurally by local facilities, policing, crime and unemployment. The territorial conception of Wythenshawe was defined referentially by a defensive and familiar attitude towards Wythenshawe, and structurally by talk about people. The provisional conception of Wythenshawe was defined referentially by a comparative perspective which looks favourably upon other areas, and a desire to move away

from Wythenshawe, and structurally by talk about limited local facilities and jobs. Finally, the material conception of Wythenshawe was defined referentially by positive affective orientations towards the area, and structurally by talk about green spaces and facilities. Two of the boys interviewed did not map neatly onto any one of these conceptions in they way that they understood and spoke about Wythenshawe. Instead, they exhibited a combination of different conceptions of Wythenshawe in their interviews – these were considered as 'individualised conceptions' lying outside the four-part schema.

2.2 Conceptions of aspirations

A different approach was taken to classifying the boys' conceptions of their aspirations. Rather than constructing a typology of conceptions and mapping each participant onto one of these conceptions, each individual interview was treated as exhibiting an individualised conception of aspirations, defined in relation to a tripartite thematic framework which emerged from the main keyword groups in the coding scheme. The three elements of the thematic framework were materiality, specificity, and agency. 'Materiality' refers to the extent to which a young person's aspirations are steered by 'material' considerations of financial remuneration, as opposed to 'immaterial' considerations such as their enjoyment of a particular form of work, or the extent to which a job makes use of their skills and interests. In relation to materiality, a young person's conception of their aspirations is classified here as being either material or immaterial. 'Specificity' refers to the extent to which a young person talks about their occupational aspirations in 'specific' terms, such as by referring to particular positions within the labour market, or particular forms of work that use certain skills, rather than having a 'general' conception which does not display a clear preference for any particular form of work, or aspect of that work. In relation to specificity, a young person's conception of their aspirations is classified as being either specific or general. 'Agency' refers to the extent to which a young person's decisions regarding their aspirations are steered by individual processes which resist external pressures, rather than being shaped by external structural forces. In relation to agency, a young person's conception of their aspirations is classified here as being either individualised, structured, or bounded, where a 'bounded' conception of aspirations acknowledges the influence of structural forces but is not determined by them (Evans 2007: 93). Across all of the individual conceptions of aspirations there was a tendency towards specificity: twelve out of the fifteen young people interviewed had specific conceptions of their aspirations. There was also a tendency towards immateriality, with eleven of the fifteen young people holding an immaterial conception of their aspirations. Finally there was a tendency towards agency, with seven young people holding an individualised conception of their aspirations and only two holding a structured conception. The remaining participants held bounded conceptions of their aspirations.

2.3 Links between conceptions of Wythenshawe and conceptions of aspirations

At the aggregate level, the findings from the intensive phase of the research suggest that there is an association between the dysfunctional conception of Wythenshawe and the material

conception of aspirations, and one of the boys, Ross, suggested a substantive basis for this association in his interview, linking his family- and neighbourhood-level experiences of material hardship – unemployment, low pay, and benefit dependency – with his priority to find a secure job with good pay:

"Near enough every single person I know that lives round here, their mum's on benefits and they don't work. And if they do work they've not got money to give out to their sons and that, because they're too busy paying the rent on the house. You don't get nowhere, you're just about surviving. My mum struggles to even survive. And I don't want that life for my kids."

In this way, a material conception of aspirations seems a rational response to the dysfunctional conception of Wythenshawe, in which the multiple material hardships of life in an area of concentrated deprivation are foregrounded. This mechanism is corroborated by existing literature which finds that a scarcity of material resources at home leads young people to adopt more material aspirations (Threadgold and Nilan 2009: 55).

All the boys with a dysfunctional conception of Wythenshawe also had a specific conception of their aspirations. Moreover, the dysfunctional conception of Wythenshawe was found exclusively among boys with low predicted attainment at GCSE. The aggregate level analysis therefore suggests that as we move from individuals with low predicted attainment to those with high predicted attainment, conceptions of aspirations move from being material, specific and structured to being immaterial, general and individualised. This trend is most marked in relation to specificity and materiality, but it does seem that young people with higher predicted attainment have looser ideas about the jobs they want to do in future which are less money-focused and steered less by external forces.

Examining the data on an interview-by-interview basis reveals that in ten out of the fifteen interviews the boys draw an explicit link between their conception of Wythenshawe and either their conception, or the content, of their aspirations. For instance: Caleb states that Wythenshawe's green spaces have presented him with an opportunity to develop his drawing skills, culminating in his desire to become an artist; Josh's desire to work at an airport is clearly shaped by the presence of Wythenshawe's largest local employer; Charlie's assessment of the quality of Wythenshawe's housing stock has influenced his decision to become a local property developer, and Lewis argues that if Wythenshawe had a better range of jobs he would have a clearer idea of what he wanted to do when he leaves school. Overall, then, the intensive phase of the research produced compelling evidence that young people's occupational aspirations are shaped by place.

3 Findings from the extensive phase of the research

The focus of the extensive phase of the research was to examine the association between the level and specificity of young people's occupational aspirations and the objectively defined features of the areas they live in. This phase of the research used four logistic regression models, based on data from the Understanding Society Wave 1 Youth Questionnaire, to assess the effect of three area-level variables: deprivation, educational deprivation and area type, alongside a range of household and individual level variables. These variables were selected in order to operationalise the main explanatory factors identified in the literature. The models were used to assess the significance of area-level effects in predicting two outcomes: aspiration specificity (whether or not a young person voices an occupational aspiration when asked), and aspiration level (whether a young person voices an aspiration for a professional, managerial or technical occupation, or an occupation lower in the Standard Occupational Classification). Aspiration specificity was included as an outcome in an attempt to capture one of the elements of the tripartite thematic structure which captured young people's conceptions of their aspirations in the intensive phase of the research. Unfortunately, the data was too limited to capture the two other axes of young people's conceptions of their aspirations – materiality and agency.

The extensive phase of the research generated two main findings regarding the spatial distribution of young people's occupational aspirations – one finding in relation to aspiration specificity, and one in relation to aspiration level. In relation to aspiration specificity, the outputs from the regression analysis indicate that young people from areas of educational deprivation are significantly more likely to have a specific occupational aspiration than their peers from less educationally deprived areas. In relation to aspiration level, the extensive phase of the research found that young people from particular inner city area types are almost five times as likely to have 'high' aspirations for professional, managerial or technical occupations as their peers from outer-urban areas of deprivation, who are least likely to have high aspirations. This finding aligns with the growing body of literature situating the poorest youth outcomes in outer- rather than inner-urban areas of deprivation (Webber and Butler 2007; Raffo 2011: 3).

4 Synthesising the intensive and extensive phases of the research

The finding from the extensive phase of the research, that young people from areas of educational deprivation are significantly more likely to have a specific occupational aspiration than their peers from less educationally deprived areas, corroborates, at an area level, the finding from the intensive phase of the research, that young people with lower predicted attainment tend to have more specific aspirations. It would appear, then, that having low individual educational attainment, or living in an area where other young people have low educational attainment, are both associated with an increased likelihood of voicing a specific aspiration. The findings from the intensive phase of the research suggest that the propensity of young people with lower predicted attainment to have more specific aspirations may be due to their having shorter school-to-work transitions in mind, which are focused on securing a job as soon as possible after leaving school

rather than entering an extended period of further education (Jones 2002: 6). There was a clear sense, among the young people I spoke to with lower predicted attainment, that they were thinking in more concrete terms about the specific types of work they would like to do, in many cases via specific workplace-based apprenticeships, and that these specific aspirations were part of a broader desire to secure material returns from their skills and knowledge as soon as possible.

The finding from the extensive phase of the research, that young people from particular inner city area types are almost five times as likely to have 'high' aspirations for professional, managerial or technical occupations as their peers from outer-urban areas of deprivation, lends support to the decision to conduct the fieldwork for the intensive phase of the research in Wythenshawe as it represents a 'critical' case where we would expect to find young people with the lowest propensity for having high occupational aspirations. Nonetheless, while the extensive phase of the research suggests that young people in areas such as Wythenshawe are less likely than their inner-city peers to voice high occupational aspirations, the intensive phase of the research did not find compelling evidence of 'low aspiration' at the individual level in Wythenshawe. Among the boys whose neighbourhood and family life seemed most affected by the material conditions of area-level deprivation, there was indeed a tendency to aspire to occupations that did not require extensive further training and, therefore, tended not to be professional, managerial or technical. According to the PMT/non-PMT occupational binary, these boys would all therefore be classified as having 'lower' aspirations. However, analysis of their conceptions of their aspirations suggested that their desire for local, secure, if relatively low-skilled work, is driven by a desire to escape the material conditions of their upbringing – as Ross argues, to secure a better life for themselves and their children. It would seem odd to classify these imagined futures as 'unaspirational'. The intensive phase of the research does therefore suggest a mechanism through which experiences of area-level deprivation can lead young people to formulate aspirations which are positioned lower in the Standard Occupational Classification. However, this same mechanism – a focus on securing a more stable material future – questions the value of a distinction between 'high' and 'low' aspirations based solely on their position within the SOC. Moreover, this mechanism linking experiences of area-level deprivation and aspirations lower in the SOC does not shed any light on why deprivation is only associated with lower aspirations in particular outer-urban contexts, and not in the inner city. It may be that inner-urban areas of deprivation are more likely to abut less deprived areas, and are more likely to have access to a diverse labour market including professional, managerial and technical occupations, whereas outer-urban areas of deprivation such as Wythenshawe are more isolated from these opportunity structures. The existing literature finds little association between local labour market factors and the content of young people's occupational aspirations (Furlong, Biggart and Cartmel 1996; Furlong and Biggart 1999), but it is interesting to note that the young people I spoke to whose aspirations were most markedly shaped by experiences of deprivation, and were most heavily steered by a focus on the material resources a job provides, aspired to local construction work rather than high-paying professional careers. As Kintrea et al. observe in relation to the different levels of aspiration in two of their fieldwork sites – Newham and Nottingham – this may be due to the contrasts between

deprived areas marked by an isolated, homogenous population and labour market, and those with greater levels of population and employment diversity (Kintrea, St Clair and Houston 2011: 44).

Both phases of the research present compelling evidence that young people's occupational aspirations are shaped by space and place. In many instances the findings of one phase are corroborated by findings in the other, and the intensive phase of the research is able to offer some insights into the mechanisms by which the spatial associations, identified in the extensive phase of the research, are produced. This mutually reinforcing relationship between the intensive and extensive phases of the research is most evident in relation to the findings pertaining to the level of young people's aspirations. Neither phase of the research supports the claim made by current policy that aspirations are lower in more deprived areas, but particular outer-urban areas of deprivation are associated with a lower propensity for young people to voice high aspirations. Indeed, the effect of area type was the largest of all the variables included in the regression models. The intensive phase of the research suggests that young people whose conceptions of their area focus on negative material experiences of deprivation are more likely to have materially-focused aspirations, which also tend to require lower skills and are therefore lower in the Standard Occupational Classification. This suggests a mechanism through which area-level deprivation may function to depress young people's aspirations, at least in terms of their content. However, it remains the case that the young people I spoke to in Wythenshawe were arguably all highly aspirational, despite all living in an area of concentrated deprivation. Even those who voiced aspirations that were not for professional, managerial or technical occupations were still motivated by a desire to attain a stable occupational future with sufficient remuneration – their conceptions of their aspirations revealed that they were unquestionably 'aspirational' young people. The intensive phase of the research therefore suggests a mechanism through which experiences of outer-urban deprivation may depress aspirations, but, at the same time, demonstrates in clear terms that young people from low employment areas do not simply reproduce what they see around them when imagining their futures (St. Clair, Kintrea and Houston 2013: 9). The extensive phase of the research corroborates this finding, with the regression models showing that young people whose parents have never worked are the most likely to hold 'high' aspirations for professional, managerial or technical occupations. If this interconnected web of findings supports one overall argument, it is that young people produce a variety of senses of place, and a variety of forms of aspiration, from the same spatial context. Generalised spatial patterns in the form of young people's occupational aspirations do exist, but underneath these trends a high degree of individual-level heterogeneity persists.

5 Study limitations and strengths

This research has limitations. The first limitation applies to both the intensive and extensive phases of the research. As the literature identifies, young people's occupational aspirations are subject to a great deal of shift over time (Gottfredson 1981b, 2002) and are liable to notable 'performative' effects (St Clair and Benjamin 2011). For these reasons, longitudinal studies of young people's aspirations are in many ways preferable to cross sectional studies based on a

single interview, which might place too much weight on the occupational aspiration a young person happens to voice at a particular moment in time, and which may well differ substantially the next week, or day. Both the intensive and extensive phases of the research are based on single data points, and it is therefore important to recognise that they are best understood as capturing an 'aspirational territory', as outlined in Chapter 1 (Gottfredson 2002: 92). The prudence of interpreting voiced aspirations in cross-sectional studies broadly rather than narrowly lends weight to the rationale for conducting the extensive phase of the analysis with a broad PMT/non-PMT definition of the outcome variable, rather than coding to all 9 SOC2010 major groups.

The intensive phase of the research has two additional limitations. Firstly, the conceptions of area identified during the fieldwork, which function as explanatory mechanisms linking young people's neighbourhood context and the formation of their aspirations, cannot be generalised beyond the specific spatial context of Wythenshawe, although it is reasonable to offer a typology of conceptions of area, and of aspirations, based on the data gathered here. Secondly, the synthesis between the intensive and extensive phases of the research could have been strengthened by conducting additional fieldwork in an area classified by OAC as City Living. This would have allowed the intensive phase of the research to address both the reference category of the regression analysis (as was the case by conducting fieldwork in Wythenshawe) and the area context identified as being associated with the greatest likelihood of high aspirations. This additional fieldwork would also have allowed an assessment of the generalisability of the explanatory mechanisms (conceptions of area) that were identified in Wythenshawe.

The extensive phase of the research has three additional shortcomings. Firstly, it does not include data on young people's individual educational attainment, which is identified in the literature as a significant factor shaping their aspirations. Secondly, the area type variable is based on data from the 2001 Census, which is now over a decade old and does not take account of the substantial change in area-level characteristics which may have taken place in the interim. However, it was not possible to use data on individual-level educational attainment as data linkage between Understanding Society and the National Pupil Database was not complete at the time of the research, and it was not possible to make use of the 2011 OAC, based on data from the latest Census, because the finalised version of this classification has also not yet been released. The use of Index of Multiple Deprivation Children & Young People sub-domain scores was an attempt to include some measure of educational attainment in the analysis, although this is a strictly area-level measure. Meanwhile, initial documentation on the development of the 2011 OAC suggests that in cities such as London, which have undergone substantial population growth and compositional change during the last decade, the updated OAC may have significant differences from the 2001 OAC (Gale and Longley 2011a), but preliminary maps of the 2011 classification suggest the outer-urban clustering of 'constrained' or 'hard-pressed' communities which proved to be the main axis of area-level variation in aspirations in the analysis here, remains in many cities (Gale and Longley 2011b). Thirdly, different modelling strategies may offer some improvements on the binary logistic approach used here. A multinomial modelling strategy would allow occupational aspirations to be considered in a more nuanced manner, beyond a simple PMT/non-PMT binary,

although the extent to which the data used here could accommodate a multi-category outcome coding are questioned in Section 4 of Chapter 9. Meanwhile, multilevel regression would allow a more accurate estimation of the effect of area-level factors on young people's aspirations, given the hierarchical nature of the factors considered here.

Alongside these shortcomings, this research has significant strengths. Firstly, it goes beyond a first-order examination of the jobs young people aspire to do, to consider the way in which young people think about and understand their aspirations. This second-order examination is not limited to the intensive phase of the research: the extensive phase of the research makes use of the "don't know" response category to operationalise the notion of aspiration specificity, which is identified as one of three conceptual axes which define conceptions of aspirations in the intensive phase of the research. Indeed, the research makes a concerted effort not to simply ignore young people who "don't know" what job they would like to do when they are older, instead making the case that this response category is of both interest and importance to studies of young people's aspirations. This research is the first to explore the effect of space and place on young people's occupational aspirations using data from Understanding Society, and as a result benefits from being based on recent data and a large sample. Finally, Understanding Society also allows area type to be considered as an explanatory variable, as well as the focus on area-level deprivation which is more common in the existing literature. As demonstrated above, the inclusion of area type as an explanatory factor generates significant and illuminating findings regarding the spatial distribution of young people's occupational aspirations which are not generated by area-level deprivation. The selection of the fieldwork site for the intensive phase of the research on the basis of area type, rather than deprivation alone, reinforces the value of this fieldwork as a case study of precisely the type of area where we would expect to find young people with the lowest likelihood of having high aspirations.

6 Future research and policy

The thesis raises six recommendations for future research in this area: two recommendations relate to data; two relate to the focus of research, and two relate to the conduct of research.

In relation to data, future studies of young people's aspirations based on Understanding Society should aim to exploit the release of the new OAC, based on the 2011 Census, when this is made available, as well as data from the National Pupil Database, when data linkage is completed. Secondly, despite its vastly increased youth sample, it is unfortunate that Understanding Society lacks the range of data on young people's occupational aspirations present in the British Household Panel Survey it superseded. Variables which allow a second-order analysis of young people's aspirations, such as those which capture the factors that make particular jobs more appealing than others, were present in many waves of the BHPS and, if reintroduced in Understanding Society, would significantly widen the possibilities of this dataset for studying the ways in which young people think about and understand their aspirations, as well as just the content of these aspirations.

This second recommendation relating to data leads to the first of two recommendations for the focus of future research in this field. Firstly, more studies are required which explore young people's conceptions of their aspirations, rather than focusing exclusively on their content, and whether they are 'high' or 'low'. This is demonstrated by the important role that the construct of specificity plays in the findings here, including young people who don't know what job they would like to do in the future. Secondly, future research into area effects on aspirations should pay greater consideration to the role of place, rather than simply space, in shaping young people's imagined futures. Attending to the role of area-as-place has two primary benefits for research: firstly, it allows the mechanisms linking area and aspirations to be considered, rather than simply the associations between the two; secondly, it sheds light on how aspirations formed within the same spatial context may be shaped by different understandings and interpretations of that context.

Two final recommendations for future research relate to the manner in which this research should be conducted. Firstly, the thesis demonstrates the utility of foregrounding the voices of young people in youth research – an element which is paradoxically lacking in much of the existing literature on aspirations (Reay and Lucey 2000). Speaking to young people in Wythenshawe about their neighbourhood and their imagined futures revealed a heterogeneous range of aspirational responses to life in a deprived area which transcended any simple notions of 'deficit' or 'low aspiration'. Secondly, the thesis demonstrates the benefits of a more embedded approach to research which addresses publicly important questions, involves the public in the research process and engages the public with its findings (Baars 2014). The fieldwork underpinning the intensive phase of the research generated tangible, if modest, benefits for the school and young people who participated in the research and, by demonstrating the practical value of social science and taking the time to gain the trust and understanding of the young people I spoke to, the research process became more meaningful for those involved and generated rich data as a consequence.

Three specific recommendations for policy also arise from the thesis. Current government policy on 'raising' young people's aspirations is targeted at young people from poorer families and deprived areas, as indicated in a recent speech delivered by the Prime Minister (Wintour 2013). Firstly, the research here finds no evidence that household income has a significant effect on young people's aspirations. Secondly, while it does not suggest that policy is misguided in focusing on areas of deprivation, this research does suggest that area type, rather than area-level deprivation, should be the spatial factor used for targeting policies related to aspirations. The analysis here suggests that young people who are less likely to hold high aspirations do indeed seem to cluster in particular deprived area types – those at the edge of the city – but young people with the highest likelihood of having professional, managerial or technical aspirations are also found in predominantly deprived areas – those in the inner city. To the extent that existing policy to 'raise aspirations' is targeted at areas of deprivation, then, it seems that this focus should be concentrated on outer urban areas of deprivation rather than the inner city. Thirdly, to

the extent that policy sets out to 'raise aspirations', it is important to note that the research here finds no evidence that young people's aspirations are uniformly low in deprived areas – even those at the urban periphery, which formed the focus of the intensive phase of this research. The findings from both the intensive and extensive phases of the research raise significant doubts as to the validity of current policy discourse that young people from areas of high unemployment, or from workless households, are affected by a 'culture of worklessness' (Shildrick et al. 2012) and tend to reproduce what they see around them when drawing up their ideas for the future (St. Clair, Kintrea and Houston 2013).

Above all, the findings of this research demonstrate that the way in which a given location shapes the aspirations of the young people who live there is far from uniform: young people interpret and make sense of a deprived spatial context in a range of ways, which in turn translate into a variety of forms of aspiration. The research suggests that there are significant differences in the form of young people's occupational aspirations between different types of area, but also that different young people produce heterogeneous senses of place, and myriad forms of aspiration, within the same spatial context. As a result, any interventions to address aspirations must engage with individual experiences of place, by foregrounding the voices of young people, rather than relying solely on studying and changing the material aspects of space. Area plays an important role in influencing young people's occupational aspirations, but the nuances and complexities of this role are currently being overlooked in the formation of policy.

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Appendix A

Figure A – Interview appointment card

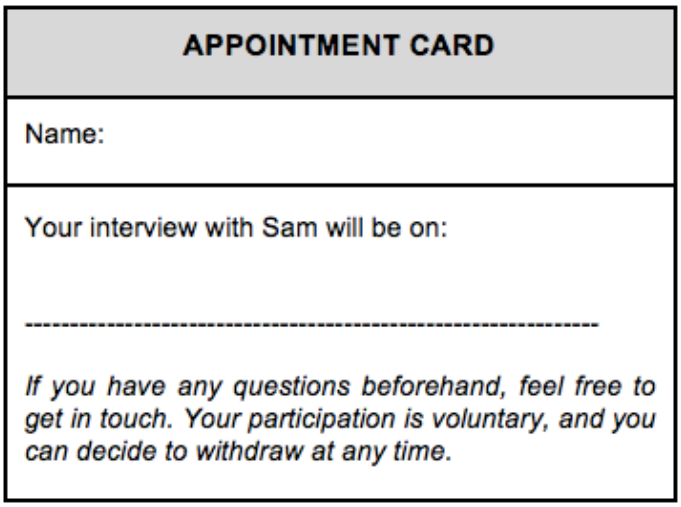

Figure B – Participant Information and Consent form

MANCHESTER 1824

The University of Manchester

Aspirations for the future

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

You are being invited to take part in a research study as part of a PhD project. The research is looking at how young people's plans for the future are shaped by the area they live in.

Before you decide whether or not you would like to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with other people if you want to. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear, or if you would like more information.

Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Who will conduct the research?
Sam Baars

What is the title of the research?
The geography of aspiration: how young people's plans for the future are shaped by the area they live in.

What is the aim of the research?
The aim of the research is to understand what young people in Wythenshawe think of local job opportunities, what they hope to do when they are older, and how they plan to get there.

Why have I been chosen?
You have been chosen to take part in the study because you attend school in Wythenshawe and you are in your final year of compulsory education. 7 other participants will be involved.

What will I be asked to do if I take part?
If you decide to take part in the study you will take part in a short session, lasting around half an hour, during your normal time in the Construction Hub, where you can practice being interviewed in front of a video camera, as well as being behind the camera yourself filming others. You will then do two interviews with the researcher, around a week apart. Firstly, you will be interviewed for around 15 minutes about your thoughts on the world of work and your aspirations for the future. The interview will be filmed, if you give consent for this. You will then take part in a second session, around a week later, in which you will watch the recording of your first interview and discuss what you said with the researcher. This second session will also be filmed, if you give consent, and will also take around 15 minutes.

What happens to the data collected?
The recordings of your two interviews will be examined by the researcher alongside the interviews carried out with the 7 other participants. The researcher will use what you say in the interviews to build a picture of how young people in Wythenshawe think about the world of work.

How will my confidentiality be maintained?
Only the researcher will have access to the video recordings of the interviews and any notes which are taken. All data from the interviews will be stored on an encrypted disk, which only the researcher can access with a password. The disk will be kept in a locked cabinet in the university and will be destroyed after 5 years. If you give consent, the researcher may show sections of your interview to other researchers so that they can also learn from the things you talk about, but you do not have to agree to this to take part in the research. Also, if you give consent, your video will be put on a password-protected website which only you, the researcher and the other participants will have access to, so that you can watch your

interview back and post comments at a later date if you want to. You don't have to agree to this to take part in the research.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?
It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part, and you can still take part even if you don't want your interview to be filmed, if you don't want your interview film to be shared with other researchers, or if you don't want your interview film placed on a secure website. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign the attached consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason, and with no further questions asked.

Will I be paid for participating in the research?
You will not be paid for participating in the research, but you will receive a copy of your interview film and a certificate from the University of Manchester.

What is the duration of the research?
Your participation in the research will take around 1 hour 15 minutes, spread over a maximum of 4 weeks. This includes a short session introducing you to the research, a 30-minute introduction to filming and interviewing, and two 15-minute interviews. If you are still attending MEA next year, the researcher may ask if you would like to take part in the study again in the future, to discuss how your ideas or opinions might have changed over time.

Where will the research be conducted?
The research will be conducted at MEA, in the Construction Hub.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?
The outcomes of the research may be published in an academic journal, where you may be anonymously quoted – your name will never be used. You will receive a copy of the findings, which you can discuss with the researcher at any point if you wish.

Has the researcher had a Criminal Records Check?
The researcher has passed an Enhanced Criminal Records Check

What are the researcher's contact details for further information?
Sam Baars
Institute for Social Change
2.11 Humanities Bridgeford Street
University of Manchester
Oxford Road
Manchester
M13 9PL

Email: sam.baars@manchester.ac.uk
Tel: 07814 609596

What if something goes wrong?
If you need help or advice during or after the research, you should get in touch with a teacher at MEA or speak to the researcher.

If you want to make a formal complaint about the conduct of the research you should contact the Head of the Research Office, Christie Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL.

MANCHESTER 1824

The University of Manchester

Aspirations for the future

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

If you are happy to participate please complete sections **1-6** below and sign section **7**. Then pass this consent form to your parent or guardian, who needs to sign section **8**.

		Please initial box
1	I confirm that **I have read the attached information sheet** on the project. I have had the chance to consider the information and ask questions, and any questions have been answered	
2	I understand that **my participation in the study is voluntary** and that **I am free to withdraw at any time** without giving a reason and without any consequences	
3	I understand that the **interviews will be filmed.** If you don't want your interview to be filmed, you can still take part – your interview will be audio recorded instead. If you'd rather not be filmed leave this box blank.	
4	**I understand that my video will be placed on a password-protected website** to which only I, the researcher and the other participants will have access. If you don't want your video placed on the website, you can still take part – just leave this box blank.	
5	**I agree to the use of anonymous quotes**. If things I say in my interview are published in text, my name will not be used.	
6	**I understand that videos of my interviews may be shared with other researchers** who are doing similar studies. My personal details will never be disclosed but I will be identifiable in the video. If you don't want your video to be seen by other researchers, you can still take part – just leave this box blank.	

I agree to take part in the project:

7 ⇨	----------	----------	----------
	Name of **participant**	Date	Signature

I agree for the above signed to take part in the project:

8 ⇨	----------	----------	----------
	Name of **parent/guardian**	Date	Signature

MANCHESTER 1824

The University of Manchester

Aspirations for the future

PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMATION SHEET

Dear parent/guardian,

Your son is being invited to take part in a research study as part of a PhD project. The research is looking at how young people's plans for the future are shaped by the area they live in.

Participation will involve two short interviews, exploring a number of questions about the world of work such as job aspirations and attitudes towards particular kinds of work. The interviews should hopefully be a beneficial experience as these are important questions for young people to consider during their final year of compulsory education.

Your son must give his consent to take part in the project, and he has been given an information sheet with full details of the project in order to help him to decide.

As parent/guardian, you also need to declare that you are happy for your son to participate in the study by signing section **8** of the consent form.

Before completing the consent form, please read the Participant Information Sheet which has details of who to contact if you have any questions about the project, and what participation will involve.

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Sam Baars
Institute for Social Change
2.11 Humanities Bridgeford Street
University of Manchester
Oxford Road
Manchester
M13 9PL

Appendix B

Figure A. Example of a Collection Report in Transana (truncated)

Transana Collection Report

Collection: Wythenshawe

Clip: It's not that different from most places

Collection: Wythenshawe > Tyler
File: /Volumes/Data/interviews/Tyler.mp4
Time: 0:00:05.5 - 0:00:45.1 (**Length:** 0:00:39.5)
Episode Transcript: Tyler
Clip Transcript:
Not that different from most places. People say it's known for criminal activity, but it's not something you notice. Live right next to school. All the stuff I have to do is a 15 minute walk around.
Clip Keywords:
crime : crime
material environment : facilities
reputation : defensive

Clip: People who get good jobs move away and don't come back

Collection: Wythenshawe
File: /Volumes/Data/interviews/Tyler.mp4
Time: 0:08:05.6 - 0:08:48.1 (**Length:** 0:00:42.5)
Episode Transcript: Tyler
Clip Transcript:
I think it's changing. A lot of people now want to do better jobs. But when they get those jobs they move out of Wythenshawe. It's either not a nice place to be, or you live here so long and the stereotype's so bad you actually start believing it yourself. You think: I've got money, I'll move to a nicer place. So Wythenshawe just stays the same. The only people who do stay are the people who've got work there like construction, because there's not as many high end jobs around
Clip Keywords:
affective orientations : critical
comparisons : other places better than wythenshawe
labour market : limited local job opportunities
labour market : need to move to find work
local jobs : skilled trades
people : homogeneity
people : people stuck
reputation : descriptive

Summary

affective orientations : critical	4	0:03:24.4
aspirations : not shaped by area	3	0:01:41.9
aspirations : shaped by area	1	0:00:15.4
comparisons : other places better than wythenshawe	4	0:02:30.9
crime : crime	5	0:03:03.1
descriptive : material hardship	1	0:00:32.9
labour market : limited local job opportunities	3	0:02:55.7
labour market : need to move to find work	2	0:01:38.3
local jobs : professional	1	0:00:55.8
local jobs : skilled trades	2	0:01:59.9
material environment : facilities	5	0:03:54.3
material environment : underinvestment/decay	2	0:01:19.6
mobility : immobile	2	0:01:09.4
mobility : mobile	1	0:00:36.1
moving away : attached	1	0:00:33.4
moving away : move	3	0:01:36.6
people : family	2	0:01:02.0
people : homogeneity	1	0:00:42.5
reputation : defensive	3	0:02:01.5

Clips: 18 Total Time: 0:12:13.8

Figure B. Example of a Keyword Summary Report in Transana (truncated)

Keyword Summary Report

affective orientations

balanced
A single utterance in which a balanced view of Wythenshawe as having both 'good' and 'bad' elements is expressed

critical
An utterance expressing a critical overall view of Wythenshawe

familiarity
An utterance expressing familiarity with Wythenshawe, for example "I know the people here", "I know the area", "Wythenshawe is home", "Wythenshawe is all there is"

positive
An utterance expressing a positive overall view of Wythenshawe

comparisons

other places better than wythenshawe
Reference to another area that is better than Wythenshawe, in general or specific terms

wythenshawe better than other places
Reference to a general or specific way in which Wythenshawe is better, or 'nicer', than another area

crime

crime
Reference to 'crime' in general terms, or unspecified 'criminal activity' located in Wythenshawe

gangs
Reference to gangs or gang-related behaviour in Wythenshawe

police
Reference to police or police activity in Wythenshawe

Figure C. Examples of coding scheme changes made during Stage 4 of the analysis

- All 7 utterances coded as *'wythenshawe is not unique/different'*, bar one, were found to be expressing a defensive attitude towards Wythenshawe's reputation. A code for *'defensive attitude towards wythenshawe's reputation'* already exists, with 15 occurrences in the data. Merging the two codes produces 21 utterances in the data expressing a defensive attitude towards Wythenshawe's reputation

- Closer analysis of the 13 clips comparing Wythenshawe *'with London'* or *'with Manchester'* revealed that 8 of them see these cities as favourable when compared with Wythenshawe. Although not as explicit as the 13 utterances coded as *'other places better than wythenshawe'*, these 8 clips do express an understanding of Wythenshawe as somehow inferior, less desirable, less exciting or less safe than other places they know. These 8 clips will therefore be recoded as *'other places better than wythenshawe'*, increasing the frequency of this code in the data from 13 to 21

- *'know the area'* and *'know the people round here'* will be combined into a new code *'familiarity'*. 'wythenshawe as home' and *'wythenshawe as to*tality' were also merged with this new 'familiarity' code

- Codes in the keyword group *'local jobs'* will be coded into major SOC2000 groups as follows:
  - *'shops/retail', 'airport'* and *'Civic'* will not be recoded, partly because they're the three most frequently occurring codes in the *'local jobs'* keyword group and partly because there's insufficient information to attach them to a particular SOC2000 group
  - *'bin men', 'cleaners', 'factories'* and *'security'* → 'elementary'
  - *'call centres'* → 'sales/customer service'
  - *'garages'* and *'building/construction'* → *'skilled trades'*
  - *'nurses/doctors'* and *'schools/teaching'* → *'professional'*
  - *'office work'*→*'administrative and secretarial'*
  - *'old people's home'*→*'personal services'*
  - *'police'*→*'associate professional and technical'*
  - *'Hospital'* and *'self employed'* will not be recoded because there is insufficient information to attach them to a particular SOC2000 group

Figure D. Keyword summary treemap for the Wythenshawe collection

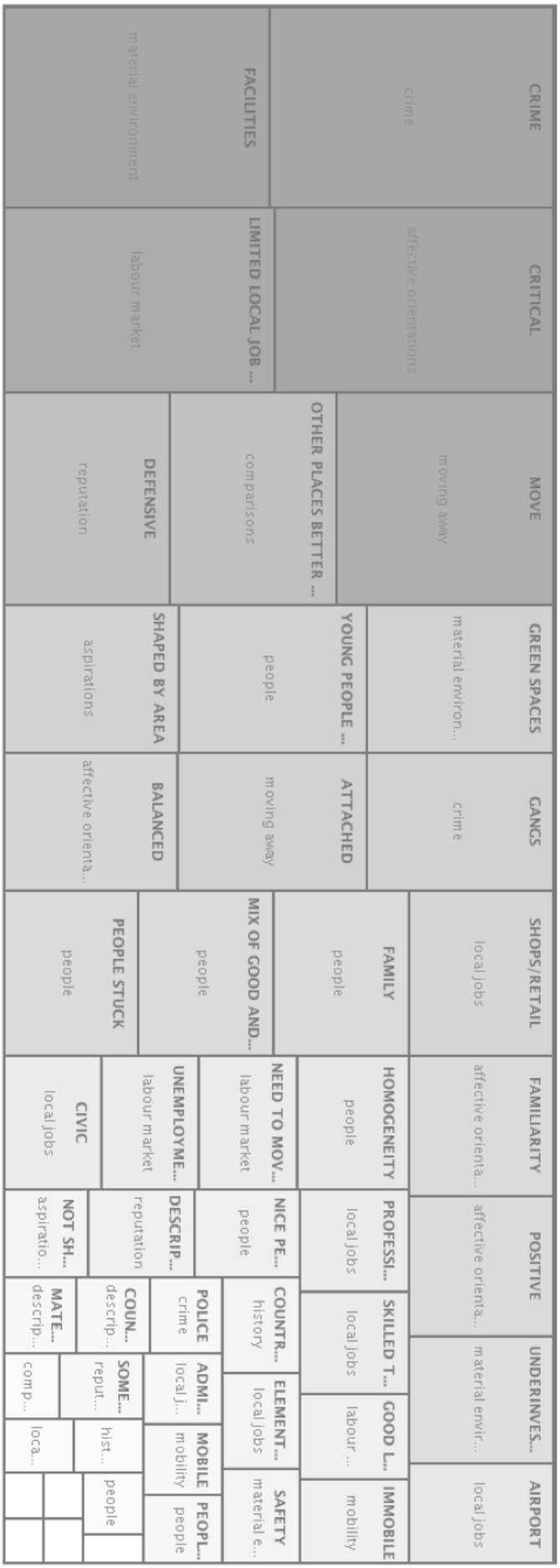

Figure E. Keyword groups summary treemap for the Wythenshawe collection

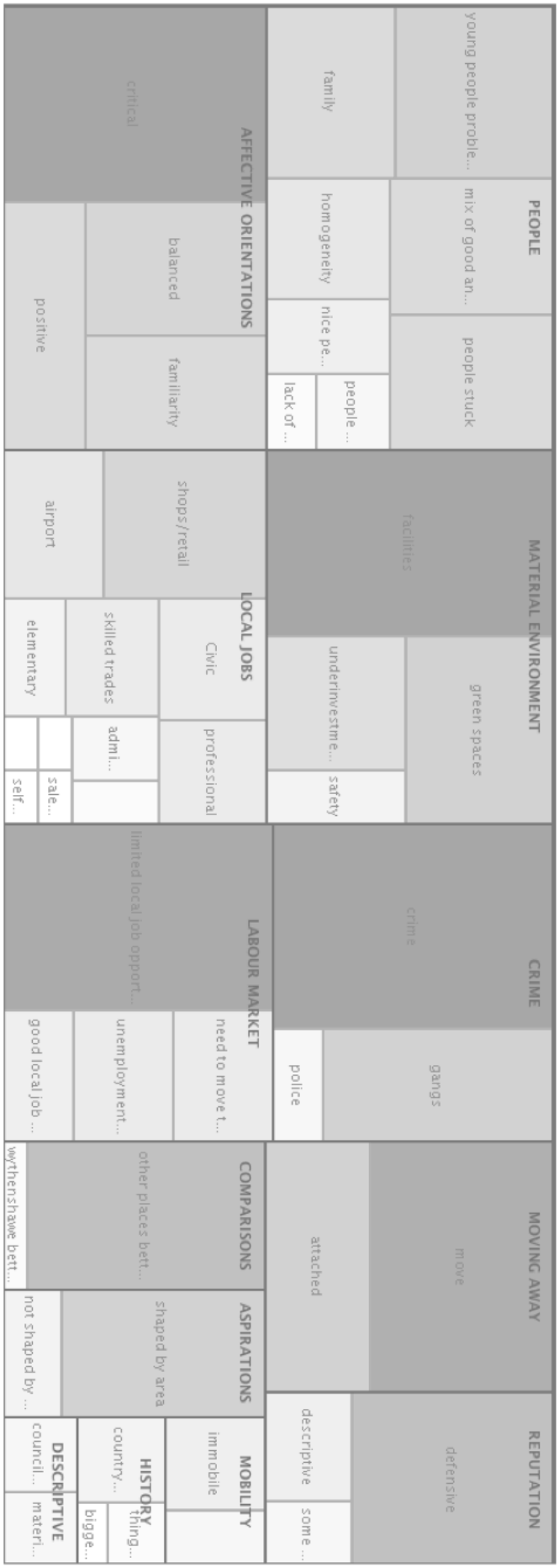

Figure F. Matrix summarising interviews by each keyword group

		Affective orientations	Material environment	Crime	Reputation	Moving away	Comparisons	Labour market	Aspirations	People
Low attainment	Andrew	critical			defensive	balanced		limited		yp problematic
	Ross	critical	safety	crime		move	other places better	limited		people stuck
	Michael	critical		crime		balanced		limited	shaped	mixed
	David	critical	facilities	crime		move	other places better	unemployment/JSA		negative
	Tim	familiarity	facilities		defensive	attached		good local job opps	not shaped	mixed
	Rob	balanced/critical/familiar	green spaces	gangs		move	other places better			
	Cameron	balanced/positive			defensive	balanced				yp problematic
	Caleb	positive	green spaces/facilities				wythenshawe better	good but need to move	shaped	family
Middle attainment	Josh	critical	facilities			move	other places better	limited	shaped	yp problematic
	John	balanced	facilities	gangs	defensive	move	other places better	good	shaped	people stuck
	Joel	balanced/positive	facilities			move	other places better	limited		nice people
	Karl	balanced/positive	green spaces/facilities		defensive	balanced	other places better	limited		family/nice people
High attainment	Lewis	critical	green spaces/facilities		defensive	move		limited	shaped	people stuck
	Billy	familiarity			defensive/some truth	attached	other places better		shaped	family
	Tyler	critical	facilities	crime	defensive	move	other places better	limited	not shaped	family/yp problematic
	Charlie	balanced/familiar	underinvestment/decay	gangs	defensive	move	other places better	limited	shaped	mix of good and bad people

Figure G. Matrix summarising interviews by most frequent keywords and keyword groups

		Primary code group	Primary code
Low attainment	Andrew	reputation	defensive
	Ross	crime	crime
	Michael	affective orientations	critical
	David	affective orientations	critical
	Tim		familiarity/attached/nice people
Middle attainment	Rob	comparisons	other places better than wythenshawe
		crime	gangs
		material environment	green spaces
	Cameron	material environment	green spaces
		mobility	immobile
	Caleb	material environment	green spaces
	Josh	material environment	facilities
	John	affective orientations	balanced
		crime	gangs
	Joel	comparisons	other places better than wythenshawe
	Karl		facilities/green spaces/balanced/positive
High attainment	Lewis	labour market	limited local job opportunities
	Billy	moving away	attached
	Tyler	crime	crime
		material environment	facilities
	Charlie	people	mix of good and bad people

Appendix C

Table B. Collinearity diagnostics for the explanatory variables

	Tolerance	VIF
imd2010_quartile	.354	2.824
cyp_quartile	.357	2.802
oac_7cat	.935	1.070
parentshighestqual	.699	1.431
parent_job_3cat	.678	1.474
hwk_help	.885	1.130
hhincome_2cat	.733	1.365
hhcomposition	.831	1.203
a_ypsex	.991	1.009
a_yprace_2cat	.900	1.111
a_yphsw_cs_3cat	.982	1.019
a_yplvsc2do	.986	1.014
a_dvage	.929	1.076
a_gor_dv	.978	1.023

Table C. Determinants of aspiration specificity (outcome: young person voices an aspiration)

		Model 1.1			Model 1.2		
		B	S.E.	exp(B)	B	S.E.	exp(B)
Individual	Educational aspirations (ref: get a full time job)						
	Get a job and study	0.13	0.17	1.14	0.15	0.17	1.16
	Study full time	0.05	0.18	1.06	0.07	0.18	1.08
	Don't know/do something else	-0.04	0.29	0.97	-0.03	0.29	0.97
	Missing/don't know	-1.09***	0.18	0.34	-1.08***	0.19	0.34
	How young person feels about schoolwork (ref: not at all happy)						
	2	-0.24	0.62	0.79	-0.19	0.64	0.83
	3	-0.62	0.49	0.54	-0.59	0.5	0.55
	4	0.91^	0.45	2.48	-0.86^	0.46	0.42
	5	-0.64	0.44	0.53	-0.59	0.45	0.55
	6	-0.81^	0.44	0.45	-0.76^	0.45	0.47
	Completely happy	-0.79^	0.45	0.46	-0.75	0.46	0.47
Household	Parents' highest qualification (ref: no qualifications)						
	GCSE or below	0.13*	0.16	1.14	0.17	0.16	1.18
	A level or equivalent	0.42^	0.22	1.52	0.47*	0.22	1.6
	Higher Education	0.36*	0.17	1.43	0.45**	0.18	1.57
	Parents' occupation (ref: Non-PMT)						
	Professional, managerial or technical	-0.1	0.12	0.9	-0.057	0.12	0.95
	Never worked	-0.50^	0.26	0.61	-0.54*	0.27	0.58
	Household income above average (ref: below average income)	-0.07	0.12	0.93	-0.04	0.12	0.96
	Household composition (ref: one adult)						
	Couple	-0.03	0.14	0.97	-0.01	0.14	0.99
	Other	0.02	0.17	1.02	0.03	0.17	1.03
	How often parents help with homework (ref: never or hardly ever)						
	Less often than once a month	-0.09	0.27	0.91	-0.11	0.27	0.9
	At least once a month	0.19	0.21	1.21	0.18	0.21	1.2
	At least once a week	0.27	0.17	1.3	0.27^	0.17	1.31
	Almost every day	0.15	0.18	1.17	0.15	0.18	1.16
Area	Deprivation quartile (ref: most deprived quartile)						
	2				-0.22	0.17	0.8
	3				-0.19	0.23	0.83
	Least deprived quartile				0.06	0.27	1.07
	Educational deprivation quartile (ref: most deprived quartile)						
	2				-0.02	0.17	0.98
	3				-0.28	0.21	0.75
	Least deprived quartile				-0.49*	0.25	0.61
	OAC area type (ref: Constrained by Circumstances)						
	Blue Collar Communities				0.02	0.21	1.02
	City Living				0.28	0.38	1.32
	Countryside				0.11	0.25	1.11
	Prospering Suburbs				0.03	0.23	1.03
	Typical Traits				0.01	0.22	1.01
	Multicultural				0.01	0.25	1.01
Controls	Age (ref: 15)						
	14	-0.11	0.17	0.89	-0.12	0.17	0.89
	13	0.08	0.17	1.08	0.09	0.17	1.1
	12	0.12	0.18	1.12	0.12	0.18	1.13
	11	0.38*	0.38	1.47	0.37*	0.18	1.45
	10	0.42*	0.19	1.52	0.42*	0.19	1.52
	Gender female (ref: male)	0.29**	0.1	1.33	0.27**	0.1	1.32
	Ethnicity non White British (ref: White British)	-0.13	0.12	0.88	-0.17	0.13	0.84
	Government Office Region (ref: South West)						
	South East	-0.36^	0.2	0.7	-0.39^	0.21	0.68
	London	-0.22	0.22	0.8	-0.2	0.25	0.82
	East of England	-0.11	0.22	0.9	-0.12	0.22	0.89
	West Midlands	-0.03	0.23	0.97	-0.03	0.23	0.97
	East Midlands	0.09	0.23	1.1	0.07	0.24	1.07
	Yorkshire and the Humber	0.01	0.23	1.01	-0.02	0.23	0.98
	North West	-0.21	0.22	0.81	-0.21	0.22	0.81
	North East	0.08	0.29	1.09	0.05	0.29	1.05
	Constant	2.14***	0.51	8.48	2.24***	0.54	9.41
	N		3864			3864	
	Nagelkerke R squared		0.06			0.07	

^ p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Weighted results. Source: Understanding Society Wave 1 Youth Questionnaire

Table D. Determinants of aspiration level (outcome: young person voices a PMT aspiration)

		Model 2.1			Model 2.2		
		B	S.E.	exp(B)	B	S.E.	exp(B)
Individual	Educational aspirations (ref: get a full time job)						
	Get a job and study	0.35*	0.15	1.41	0.32*	0.15	1.37
	Study full time	1.12***	0.18	3.06	1.09***	0.18	2.97
	Don't know/do something else	0.81**	0.27	2.25	0.82**	0.28	2.27
	Missing/don't know	0.35^	0.2	1.42	0.33	0.2	1.39
	How young person feels about schoolwork (ref: not at all happy)						
	2	-0.05	0.52	0.95	0.01	0.55	1.01
	3	0.34	0.4	1.41	0.42	0.41	1.52
	4	0.06	0.35	1.06	0.1	0.36	1.11
	5	0.27	0.34	1.31	0.32	0.35	1.37
	6	0.56	0.34	1.76	0.62^	0.36	1.86
	Completely happy	0.65^	0.35	1.92	0.71^	0.37	2.03
Household	Parents' highest qualification (ref: no qualifications)						
	GCSE or below	0.34*	0.16	1.4	0.33*	0.16	1.39
	A level or equivalent	0.69**	0.22	1.99	0.66**	0.23	1.93
	Higher Education	0.86***	0.18	2.35	0.78***	0.19	2.18
	Parents' occupation (ref: Non-PMT)						
	Professional, managerial or technical	0.56***	0.12	1.74	0.53***	0.13	1.7
	Never worked	0.77*	0.37	2.15	0.78*	0.37	2.19
	Household income above average (ref: below average income)	0.13	0.12	1.14	0.12	0.12	1.13
	Household composition (ref: one adult)						
	Couple	-0.25^	0.14	0.78	-0.24^	0.14	0.79
	Other	-0.32^	0.17	0.72	-0.32^	0.17	0.73
	How often parents help with homework (ref: never or hardly ever)						
	Less often than once a month	-0.2	0.3	0.82	-0.19	0.3	0.83
	At least once a month	0.17	0.23	1.19	0.16	0.23	1.17
	At least once a week	-0.11	0.18	0.9	-0.14	0.18	0.87
	Almost every day	-0.09	0.19	0.92	-0.11	0.19	0.9
Area	Area-level deprivation (ref: most deprived quartile)						
	Second most deprived quartile				0.04	0.16	1.04
	Second least deprived quartile				0.55*	0.23	1.73
	Least deprived quartile				0.2	0.26	1.22
	Area-level educational deprivation (ref: most deprived quartile)						
	Second most deprived quartile				-0.08	0.17	0.92
	Second least deprived quartile				-0.13	0.22	0.88
	Least deprived quartile				0.17	0.26	1.18
	OAC area type (ref: Constrained by Circumstances)						
	Blue Collar Communities				-0.15	0.19	0.86
	City Living				1.57*	0.65	4.79
	Countryside				-0.22	0.25	0.8
	Prospering Suburbs				-0.16	0.24	0.85
	Typical Traits				0.07	0.22	1.07
	Multicultural				0.59*	0.25	1.8
Controls	Age (ref: 15)						
	14	0.1	0.18	1.1	0.08	0.18	1.08
	13	0.46**	0.18	1.58	0.44*	0.18	1.56
	12	0.26	0.18	1.29	0.25	0.18	1.28
	11	0.31^	0.18	1.36	0.28	0.18	1.32
	10	0.05	0.18	1.05	0.03	0.18	1.03
	Gender female (ref: male)	-0.4***	0.1	0.67	-0.4***	0.1	0.67
	Ethnicity non White British (ref: White British)	0.13	0.13	1.14	0.05	0.13	1.05
	Government Office Region (ref: South West)						
	South East	0.15	0.2	1.16	0.07	0.21	1.07
	London	0.58*	0.24	1.79	0.21	0.28	1.24
	East of England	0.17	0.21	1.19	0.1	0.22	1.1
	West Midlands	-0.1	0.21	0.91	-0.13	0.22	0.88
	East Midlands	0.16	0.21	1.18	0.18	0.22	1.2
	Yorkshire and the Humber	-0.17	0.21	0.85	-0.21	0.22	0.81
	North West	0.15	0.21	1.16	0.14	0.22	1.15
	North East	-0.08	0.25	0.92	0.01	0.26	1.01
	Constant	-0.197	0.42	0.82	-0.22	0.45	0.8
	N		3266			3266	
	Nagelkerke R squared		0.14			0.16	

^ p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Weighted results. Source: Understanding Society Wave 1 Youth Questionnaire

Table E. Aspiration specificity with interaction effects (outcome: young person voices an aspiration)

		Model 1.1			Model 1.2		
		B	S.E.	Exp(B)	B	S.E.	Exp(B)
Individual	How young person feels about schoolwork						
	(ref: Neutral)						
	Happy	0.18	0.14	1.20	0.17	0.14	1.19
	Unhappy	0.48*	0.22	1.62	0.45*	0.23	1.57
	Educational aspirations						
	(ref: Get a full time job)						
	Get a job and study	0.12	0.17	1.12	0.14	0.17	1.14
	Study full time	0.03	0.18	1.03	0.04	0.18	1.04
	Don't know/do something else	-0.02	0.29	0.98	-0.01	0.29	0.99
	Missing/don't know	-1.08***	0.18	0.34	-1.08***	0.19	0.34
Household	Parental qualifications						
	(ref: No qualifications)						
	GCSE or below	0.12	0.16	1.13	0.15	0.16	1.16
	A level or equivalent	0.41^	0.22	1.51	0.44*	0.22	1.56
	Higher Education	0.34*	0.17	1.41	0.43*	0.17	1.54
	Parental occupation						
	(ref: Non-PMT)						
	PMT	-0.11	0.12	0.90	-0.06	0.12	0.94
	Never worked	-0.52*	0.26	0.60	-0.58*	0.26	0.56
	How often parents help with homework						
	(ref: Never or hardly ever)						
	Less often than once a month	-0.10	0.27	0.91	-0.12	0.27	0.89
	At least once a month	0.19	0.21	1.21	0.17	0.21	1.19
	At least once a week	0.26	0.16	1.30	0.28^	0.17	1.32
	Almost every day	0.15	0.18	1.16	0.15	0.18	1.16
	Household income						
	(ref: Below average income)						
	Above average income	-0.07	0.12	0.93	-0.20	0.21	0.82
	Household composition						
	(ref: 1 adult)						
	Couple	-0.04	0.14	0.96	0.00	0.14	1.00
	Other	0.00	0.17	1.00	0.02	0.17	1.02
Area	Area-level deprivation						
	(ref: Most deprived)						
	Second most deprived				-0.65**	0.24	0.52
	Second least deprived				-0.24	0.31	0.78
	Least deprived				0.11	0.35	1.12
	Area-level educational deprivation						
	(ref: Most deprived)						
	Second most deprived				0.00	0.17	1.00
	Second least deprived				-0.27	0.21	0.77
	Least deprived				-0.47^	0.25	0.62
	OAC Area Type						
	(ref: Constrained by Circumstances)						
	Blue Collar Communities				0.00	0.21	1.00
	City Living				0.21	0.38	1.24
	Countryside				0.08	0.25	1.08
	Prospering Suburbs				0.00	0.23	1.00
	Typical Traits				-0.04	0.22	0.96
	Multicultural				0.00	0.24	1.00
Interactions	Area-level deprivation*household income						
	Least deprived*above average income				-0.01	0.30	0.99
	Second least deprived*above average income				-0.04	0.29	1.04
	Second most deprived*above average income				0.58*	0.28	1.78
	Area-level deprivation*gender						
	Least deprived*female				0.02	0.28	1.02
	Second least deprived*female				0.18	0.28	1.20
	Second most deprived*female				0.36	0.28	1.44
Controls	Age						
	(ref: 15)						
	14	-0.12	0.17	0.89	-0.13	0.17	0.88
	13	0.07	0.17	1.07	0.09	0.17	1.09
	12	0.10	0.17	1.11	0.09	0.18	1.10
	11	0.36*	0.18	1.44	0.35^	0.18	1.41
	10	0.41*	0.19	1.51	0.41*	0.19	1.50
	Gender						
	(ref: Male)						
	Female	0.27**	0.10	1.31	0.12	0.20	1.13
	Ethnicity						
	(ref: White British)						
	Non White British	-0.13	0.12	0.87	-0.19	0.13	0.83
	Region						
	(ref: North West)						
	North East	0.27	0.27	1.31	0.23	0.27	1.26
	Yorkshire & The Humber	0.21	0.21	1.23	0.18	0.22	1.20
	East Midlands	0.31	0.22	1.36	0.30	0.22	1.35
	West Midlands	0.17	0.21	1.19	0.19	0.21	1.21
	East of England	0.11	0.20	1.11	0.12	0.21	1.12
	London	-0.01	0.20	0.99	0.02	0.22	1.02
	South East	-0.14	0.18	0.87	-0.16	0.19	0.85
	South West	0.22	0.22	1.25	0.24	0.22	1.27
	(Intercept)	1.06***	0.31	2.88	1.35***	0.37	3.85
	N		3864			3864	
	Nagelkerke R square		0.06			0.07	

^ p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Weighted results. Source: Understanding Society Wave 1 Youth Questionnaire

Table F. Aspiration level with interaction effects (outcome: young person has a PMT aspiration)

		Model 2.1			Model 2.2		
		B	S.E.	Exp(B)	B	S.E.	Exp(B)
Individual	How young person feels about schoolwork (ref: Neutral)						
	Happy	0.4**	0.13	1.49	0.4**	0.14	1.49
	Unhappy	0.13	0.21	1.14	0.14	0.21	1.15
	Educational aspirations (ref: Get a full time job)						
	Get a job and study	0.35*	0.15	1.42	0.33*	0.15	1.39
	Study full time	1.15***	0.17	3.17	1.13***	0.18	3.09
	Don't know/do something else	0.78**	0.27	2.18	0.79**	0.28	2.21
	Missing/don't know	0.33^	0.20	1.40	0.32	0.20	1.38
Household	Parental qualifications (ref: No qualifications)						
	GCSE or below	0.35*	0.16	1.42	0.36*	0.16	1.44
	A level or equivalent	0.72***	0.22	2.05	0.72***	0.23	2.06
	Higher Education	0.88***	0.18	2.41	0.82***	0.18	2.27
	Parental occupation (ref: Non-PMT)						
	PMT	0.55***	0.12	1.74	0.51***	0.13	1.67
	Never worked	0.83*	0.37	2.29	0.84*	0.38	2.31
	How often parents help with homework (ref: Never or hardly ever)						
	Less often than once a month	-0.22	0.29	0.81	-0.22	0.29	0.81
	At least once a month	0.17	0.22	1.19	0.16	0.22	1.17
	At least once a week	-0.11	0.18	0.90	-0.14	0.18	0.87
	Almost every day	-0.08	0.19	0.93	-0.10	0.19	0.91
	Household income (ref: Below average income)						
	Above average income	0.12	0.12	1.13	-0.14	0.19	0.87
	Household composition (ref: 1 adult)						
	Couple	-0.23	0.14	0.80	-0.22	0.14	0.80
	Other	-0.31^	0.17	0.73	-0.31^	0.17	0.74
Area	Area-level deprivation (ref: Most deprived)						
	Second most deprived				0.30	0.25	1.35
	Second least deprived				0.36	0.31	1.43
	Least deprived				0.15	0.33	1.16
	Area-level educational deprivation (ref: Most deprived)						
	Second most deprived				-0.07	0.17	0.93
	Second least deprived				-0.12	0.22	0.89
	Least deprived				0.17	0.26	1.19
	OAC Area Type (ref: Constrained by Circumstances)						
	Blue Collar Communities				-0.13	0.19	0.88
	City Living				1.57*	0.66	4.80
	Countryside				-0.21	0.25	0.81
	Prospering Suburbs				-0.17	0.23	0.85
	Typical Traits				0.08	0.21	1.08
	Multicultural				0.59*	0.25	1.80
Interactions	Area-level deprivation*household income						
	Least deprived*above average income				0.48^	0.29	1.62
	Second least deprived*above average income				0.53^	0.29	1.70
	Second most deprived*above average income				0.17	0.27	1.18
	Area-level deprivation*gender						
	Least deprived*female				-0.35	0.28	0.70
	Second least deprived*female				-0.19	0.29	0.83
	Second most deprived*female				-0.6*	0.27	0.55
Controls	Age (ref: 15)						
	14	0.13	0.17	1.14	0.10	0.18	1.11
	13	0.48**	0.18	1.62	0.45*	0.18	1.57
	12	0.29	0.18	1.34	0.28	0.18	1.32
	11	0.35*	0.18	1.42	0.32^	0.18	1.37
	10	0.09	0.18	1.09	0.04	0.18	1.05
	Gender (ref: Male)						
	Female	-0.37***	0.10	0.69	-0.10	0.18	0.91
	Ethnicity (ref: White British)						
	Non White British	0.14	0.13	1.15	0.07	0.13	1.07
	Region (ref: North West)						
	North East	-0.22	0.25	0.80	-0.12	0.25	0.89
	Yorkshire & The Humber	-0.29	0.20	0.75	-0.32	0.21	0.73
	East Midlands	0.00	0.20	1.00	0.00	0.21	1.00
	West Midlands	-0.24	0.20	0.79	-0.26	0.20	0.77
	East of England	0.01	0.21	1.01	-0.07	0.22	0.93
	London	0.43^	0.23	1.54	0.07	0.27	1.07
	South East	-0.02	0.19	0.98	-0.11	0.21	0.90
	South West	-0.17	0.21	0.84	-0.17	0.22	0.84
	(Intercept)	-0.07	0.30	0.93	-0.11	0.34	0.89
	N	3266			3266		
	Nagelkerke R square	0.14			0.16		

^ p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Weighted results. Source: Understanding Society Wave 1 Youth Questionnaire