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# TRANSITIONING BEYOND UNDERGRADUATE HOSPITALITY EDUCATION; A DIALOGIC ANALYSIS OF FINAL YEAR HOSPITALITY STUDENTS' NARRATIVES OF EMPLOYABILITY

Hine, Catherine

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University of Plymouth

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**RESEARCH  
DEGREES  
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UNIVERSITY**

**TRANSITIONING BEYOND UNDERGRADUATE HOSPITALITY EDUCATION; A  
DIALOGIC ANALYSIS OF FINAL YEAR HOSPITALITY STUDENTS'  
NARRATIVES OF EMPLOYABILITY**

By

**CATHERINE HINE**

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth

in partial fulfilment for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

School of Tourism and Hospitality, Faculty of Business

**May 2017**





## Authors Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Graduate Sub-Committee.

Work submitted for this research degree at Plymouth University has not formed part of any other degree either at Plymouth University or at another establishment.

This study was financed with the aid of a full scholarship as part of a Doctoral Teaching Assistant contract within the School of Tourism and Hospitality, Plymouth University.

A programme of advanced study was undertaken, which included;

- PGCert Academic Practice
- PGCert Research Methodologies
- Endnote for Beginners
- Nvivo & Nvivo Advanced
- SPSS
- Preparing for the Viva
- Research Impact
- Writing and Publishing 3\* Papers in Pedagogic Research
- Writing for Research Publications
- Presenting at Conferences
- Immersive Writing
- The Labour Market and Career Options for PhD finalists: Non Academic and Academic

Relevant seminars and conferences were regularly attended at which work was presented, other relevant research work was also conducted including;

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## Abstract

Employability has become a key consideration for graduates, and society. Increasingly the trajectory of individuals at age 18 involves the completion of an undergraduate level degree qualification. This thesis presents a sociologically grounded study into the dialogic construction of employability in final year hospitality students and recent hospitality graduates. Drawing on a nationwide sample of UK based hospitality graduates, as they transition beyond undergraduate level higher education, a new understanding of the way in which employability is narrated and individuals position themselves within the competitive context surrounding employability, has been uncovered. The study therefore evaluates the way in which employability is constructed and narrated as a result of graduates' social and cultural capital, their experience of higher education, career focus and way in which identity is constructed.

Through the utilisation of a dialogic narrative approach the social dimensions of employability have been considered within this study. As a result this research sits in contrast to the dominant conceptions of employability, whereby agency is elevated in importance, which pertain within society. The duality between structure and agency is taken into consideration by drawing on the work of Bourdieu and Giddens. Assumptions surrounding the somewhat linear trajectories into employment which are anticipated by many, are challenged and structural influences, identified through the multivoiced nature of dialogue are analysed in conjunction with the agency exhibited by individuals. Identity is also used in order to help understand employability and to frame the narrative and reflexive processes that are undertaken within the construction of graduates' narratives of employability.

Drawing on 28 interviews this study reveals how individuals narrate employability in different ways, based on their experience of higher education and intended trajectory, upon completion of their degree. The socio-cultural background of individuals is also highlighted as a mediating and influencing factor within the process of engagement with learning and development within higher education, and subsequent constructions of employability. It is argued that hospitality graduates are not effectively prepared for the transition into employment on completion of their degrees and therefore work needs to be done in order to better prepare them for employment both within and beyond the hospitality industry. The hospitality industry itself is also not doing enough in order to support the development of students and graduates in order to encourage career development within the field. This has led to a number of recommendations being made in order to better help the development of employability in hospitality graduates through undergraduate curriculum and associated work related experience.



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## List of Abbreviations

A Level	General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Level
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BSc	Bachelor of Science
BTEC	The Business and Technology Education Council
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DLHE	Destination of Leavers from Higher Education
EU	European Union
FdSc	Foundation Degree Sciences
FE	Further Education
FHEQ	Framework for Higher Education Qualification
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HE	Higher Education
HEA	Higher Education Academy
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI	Higher Education Institute
HND	Higher National Diploma
HR	Human Resource
ICT	Information Communication Technology
NSS	National Student Survey
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
SU	Students Union
UCAS	The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
UG	Undergraduate
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States of America



# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction to this Thesis

This thesis offers an analysis of the way in which final year hospitality students and recent graduates narrate employability as they transition out of undergraduate (UG) hospitality degree programmes. Employability is a key outcome of student engagement with higher education (HE) and as such is a concern for students, educators and other stakeholders.

Hospitality as a subject area, and as a focus for programmes of study, offers an interesting case study within the *field* of graduate employability due to the vocational nature of degrees, and the multiplicity of trajectories that graduates pursue upon completion of these courses (Giddens, 1991; 1994; Josiam *et al.*, 2010; Kim, McCleary & Kaufman, 2010; O'Leary & Deegan, 2005; Richardson, 2008; 2009; 2010).

This thesis will contribute to knowledge in a number of ways. Primarily a new, socially grounded, understanding of employability relating to recent hospitality graduates will be presented. Based on the dualistic divide between structure and agency, and also drawing on identity this study will contextualise individuals within the socio-cultural world which they inhabit, identifying barriers and constraints on agentic behaviour. This will provide insight into the challenges and concerns facing final year hospitality students and recent hospitality graduates as they attempt to negotiate HE, and the labour market upon completion of their degrees. It will also identify the key components of employability narratives and the significance that final year students and recent graduates place on employment related attributes as they narrate their positions. This will lead to a new understanding of the way in which employability is narrated and the extent to which the HE experience contributes to the development of these stories.

This study will contribute to the development of literature surrounding employability, both generally and within the *field* of hospitality education. By expanding upon the evolving body of

knowledge surrounding the socio-cultural perspective of employability, this study will help maintain the visibility of this standpoint. As such, this will support its trajectory to becoming more widely recognised and accepted within broader understandings of employability. In terms of hospitality graduates' employability this study will provide specific insights into this unique group of individuals. The curriculum that they have studied will be analysed and recommendations for future practice, and programme developments will be made in order to positively impact upon future graduates' employability.

Finally methodological advances to considering employability will also be made as a result of the dialogic, narrative the approach taken within this study. The positioning of employability as a dialogic construct, whereby the social dimensions of language (Bakhtin, 1981; Frank, 2005; Holquist, 1990) and how, as individuals, final year students and recent graduates draw on the voice of Others, and broad societal echoes (Aveling, Gillespie & Cornish, 2015; Bakhtin, 1981; Frank, 2010; Holquist, 1990), in order to reflexively develop employability, is a new concept. Situated within the social domain this approach offers a new means of considering the underlying theories associated with transitions beyond HE. As such new methods in considering employability, more generally can be drawn, contributing to further developments within the *field*. By contributing to knowledge in these ways a new understanding of employability, specifically in hospitality graduates will be developed.

Within this initial chapter a background to the study will be presented. A general oversight into the way in which the thesis will be constructed will also be included alongside aims and objectives. This will provide a foundation for the subsequent chapters.

## **1.2 Background to this Study**

Hospitality management qualifications have been a component of the HE environment since the 1950s (Medlik, 1972). Since this time the discipline has expanded. For the academic year 2017/18 there are currently 77 different providers offering hospitality HE (BA / BSc)



programmes, suggesting that it is a well-established and growing subject area, particularly as Walmsley (2011) only identified 64 different institutions within the 2011/12 academic year). The changing nature and growth of the international hospitality industry and the expansion of HE, as an industry in itself, has resulted in a range of hospitality based programmes available within the current HE environment. However, it is not easy to identify all of the programmes incorporating hospitality they are often classified under both N8 (Hospitality and Tourism) and N2 (Institution Management) programme codes (UCAS, 2017b).

The underlying focus of hospitality in HE has been to provide vocationally relevant programmes of study (Airey & Tribe, 2000; Barrows & Johan, 2008), preparing graduates for a career within the management of hospitality operations. However, the extent to which the curriculum should focus on the vocational as against the academic (and liberal) dimensions of education is often debated (Airey & Tribe, 2000; Airey, Dredge & Gross, 2015; Dredge *et al.*, 2012; Gross & Manoharan, 2016; Lashley, Lynch & Morrison, 2007a; Lashley, 2004; 2015; Morrison & O'Mahony, 2003; Tribe, 2002; Van Hoof, & Wu 2014; Wilson, Small & Harris, 2012). There is also limited continuity in definitions of the hospitality industry (British Hospitality Association, 2017; People 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013a) and the type of business classified as hospitality. From within the *field* the merits of hospitality as a subject area in itself have also been questioned (Brotherton & Wood, 2008; Tews & Van Hoof, 2011). Furthermore evidence suggests that many hospitality graduates do not enter the industry (Richardson, 2008; 2009; 2010) and that hospitality employers do not all specifically look to employ hospitality graduates within their operations (Gibson & Hine, 2013; Hine, 2017); this makes hospitality education an interesting case study in order to help improve our understanding of the complexities underlying links between HE, employability and the content of vocationally orientated programmes of study.

This apparent disconnect between education and industry within the *field* of hospitality, coupled with the changing nature of society, poses a number of questions. At the same time

there has been, what some consider, a gradual marketization of the HE environment within the UK (Brown & Carasso, 2013), and tuition fees have increased to £9000 (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2011) marking a considerable investment for potential students. With increasing numbers of individuals entering HE, and graduating with 'good degrees', often defined as a 2:1 classification or above (Greenbank, 2015; HESA, 2017), competition within the competitive labour market is thus increasing. As such the relative employability of hospitality graduates needs to be considered. This scenario is situated against a backdrop of modernity, whereby individuals no longer follow linear or predictable trajectories into employment (Barron *et al.*, 2007; Giddens, 1990; Giddens, 1994; King, McKercher & Waryszak, 2003; Raybould & Wilkins, 2005; Richardson, 2008; 2009; Richardson & Butler, 2012). It is suggested that individuals are seen to be agentive, and able to reflectively consider their position in society and change it, thus traditional class delineations, and means of categorizing individuals within the socio-cultural context of modern times no longer pertain (Savage *et al.*, 2013). As a result, cohorts of hospitality graduates are increasingly diverse, with different aims and aspirations within the labour market (Barron *et al.*, 2007; King, McKercher & Waryszak, 2003; Raybould & Wilkins, 2005; Richardson, 2008; 2009; Richardson & Butler, 2012).

Employability has been of central concern for hospitality educators for a number of years. As a concept employability is often considered as a set of skills and attributes developed by graduates which will help them to gain employment (Yorke & Knight, 2006). Thus studies have been conducted in order to try and establish the skills and attributes required by industry employers (Arcodia & Barker, 2003; Brownell, 2008; Millar, Mao & Moreo, 2010; Weber *et al.*, 2013) and the disparity between graduates' and employers' expectations (Cheung, Law & He, 2010; Harkison, Poulston & Kim, 2011; Nolan *et al.*, 2010) within hospitality. However, other research has situated employability as much more than just the skills and experience required



by graduates as they enter into the labour market (Pool & Sewell, 2007) and more recently the socio-cultural nature of employability has been highlighted (Burke, 2016; Tholen, 2013; 2015; Tomlinson, 2007; 2010; 2015). Within these studies structure, agency and identity have been used in order to demonstrate how different individuals benefit from HE. The way in which so called hard and soft credentials are packaged into narratives in order to illustrate personal capital is therefore a core component of these studies (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004; Tomlinson, 2008).

The different ways that individuals engage with HE and the activities that they undertake, relating to both scholarship and the broader social encounters associated with the HE experience is therefore important. In addition to the learning and development concomitant with the core hospitality curriculum, the activities engaged with beyond this are also integral to the way in which depictions of personal capital (social and cultural ways of being in the world) (Bourdieu, 1986; Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004) are constructed within narratives. It is these additional activities, such as involvements with societies, volunteer work, or paid employment, that help to differentiate individuals (Tomlinson, 2008) as they progress into the competitive labour market. However, this engagement is often mediated by a number of socio-cultural factors. It is therefore important to take into consideration the antecedents of the HE experience within employability.

This HE environment is positioned alongside an era notable in terms of political and economic turbulence. At the time of undertaking research and writing this thesis (2012-2017) political changes included the replacement of a coalition government with a conservative government, a Scottish independence referendum, and the UK also voted for 'Brexit' (to leave the EU) (BBC News, 2017). Economically GDP has continued to fluctuate post the 2008 economic recession (Office for National Statistics, 2017) resulting in some degree of consumer uncertainty within the UK population. However employment levels have risen and, in particular, the economic

activity of women has continued to increase (Office for National Statistics, 2016). These societal changes are noted so that data can be contextualised within the current time period. Impending changes resultant of the current social and political climate may mean that some of the graduates' trajectories noted within this research are no longer feasible to pursue for future generations of students. They may also appear unrecognisable within any current scenarios surrounding progression from HE.

Previous research projects have not considered the way in which discipline specific narratives of employability are developed. Looking at graduates in general, studying a range of different subject areas provides a somewhat generic oversight into graduate employability. Hospitality graduates', with their specific industry knowledge developed through the vocational components of their degree programmes have never been included within these research samples (Burke, 2016; Tholen, 2013; Tomlinson, 2007; 2008). A socio-cultural analysis of graduates from a single *field* of study has also not been conducted, this thesis therefore aims to contribute to existing knowledge by developing a new understanding of employability in this context.

In addition to these theoretical underpinnings personal motivation also impacted the way in which this study evolved. Prior to embarking on a career in academia the author completed a BA (Hons) and MSc in Hospitality Management, and spent a number of years working in the hospitality industry for companies including Marriott International, Mitchells and Butlers PLC and Compass Group, predominantly in food and beverage. This experience within hospitality related employment was both positive and negative (positive in the sense that it was enjoyable, offered career advancement and flexibility; negative in that the lifestyle associated with hospitality employment became increasingly challenging to balance with family commitments). As a result an interest in the way in which people are managed and encouraged into the hospitality industry developed. Throughout the completion of this thesis

the author was employed as a Doctoral Teaching Assistant, in the School of Tourism and Hospitality, at Plymouth University. Within this position roles such as that of a module leader, placement and personal tutor have been undertaken. Work on curriculum development initiatives surrounding work based learning have also been central to this post. As such there was a vested interest in undertaking a project that could ultimately contribute to the development of hospitality education and supporting individuals into hospitality related employment.

### **1.3 Research Aim**

In essence this thesis aims to develop a new understanding of employability relating to hospitality graduates as they transition beyond UG hospitality education. More specifically the study will;

- Evaluate the way in which final year hospitality students and recent hospitality graduates narrate their employability;
- Contribute to, and develop further knowledge of the way in which hospitality students engage with HE and prepare themselves for progressing beyond their degrees;
- Inform future curriculum developments and the way in which hospitality students are prepared for their transition beyond UG hospitality education and thus influence future developments within the hospitality industry.

In order to achieve this a set of objectives were developed. These guided the research process and ensured that the overriding aims were met. As such the following objectives were used in order to frame the research process;

- Analyse and synthesise the body of knowledge surrounding HE and employability;
- Undertake a data collection exercise which enables analysis of graduate experiences in HE and personal accounts of employability;
- Identify how areas of the hospitality curriculum contribute to the development of employability narratives;

- Assess the variety of different ways in which employability is narrated by graduates' as they transition beyond HE;
- Synthesise findings and make an original contribution to knowledge within the context of hospitality graduate employability.

## **1.4 Structure of this Thesis**

This introduction has provided a brief insight into the overall aim and purpose of this study. It is followed by a comprehensive review of literature relating to hospitality education and employability. Within Chapter Two the hospitality curriculum is discussed, this includes a review of the philosophical underpinnings and market influences that impact upon the hospitality discipline. The way in which students learn, and opportunities for learning as a component of the hospitality curriculum, and more generally as a HE student, are then discussed. This section of the literature includes an analysis of the impacts on student learning and starts to identify how individuals benefit in different ways from HE. Following this graduate employability is discussed. Both mainstream, and the alternative socio-culturally informed approaches are considered. At the end of this chapter a model of employability is proposed and research questions highlighted in order to inform data collection and analysis.

Chapter Three details the methodological underpinning of this study. The use of dialogic narrative analysis is justified and in depth interviews are discussed as a method of data collection. The information presented in this chapter further elaborates on the nature of the research study and why specific actions were taken during the research process. Within the latter section of the chapter information regarding the research participants is also noted, in order to provide an insight into the national scope of this study.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six analyse the data collected. They discuss findings in relation to the literature presented in Chapter Two. Specifically, Chapter Four introduces the hospitality graduate and highlights some of the decisions made prior to starting their degrees. Chapter

Five then goes on to discuss the HE experience and various activities that graduates' engaged with throughout their time in HE. Within Chapter Six the value propositions associated with gaining a hospitality degree are explored. The specifics of employability as a social construct are also elaborated upon. Chapter Seven then provides a synthesis of findings and highlights the implications associated with these for a range of stakeholders, including students, hospitality educators, HEIs, industry bodies and the government.

The final chapter of this thesis offers a conclusion. The way in which this research contributes to new knowledge will be explicitly addressed. Recommendations will also be made for stakeholders, in order to inform future practice and help future generations of hospitality graduates improve their employability. This chapter will also comment on the research process, limitations that have arisen, and make recommendations for future research.

The following chapter will present an overview of the literature associated with hospitality education and employability. A critical analysis of key theories will support the development of research questions, which will subsequently inform data analysis.



## **2 Hospitality in Higher Education; theoretical approaches to the development of graduate employability**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter will address some of the key contextual writings and theory related to learning, development and employability in hospitality higher education. Student learning and development is a precursor to graduate employability in that it is not just the successful completion of a degree which determines progression into the labour market (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004; Greenbank, 2015; Tholen, 2013; Tomlinson, 2008; Wilson, 2012). Initially hospitality management and the hospitality curriculum will be discussed in order to 'set the scene' for the remainder of this thesis. The importance of both vocational and academic initiatives within the curriculum will also be explored. Following this the constructivist nature of learning and development and importance of student engagement will be highlighted. This section will start to identify some of the key factors which contribute to the development of graduate employability. The concept of graduate employability itself will then be discussed. Here both dominant, and more sociological approaches to studying employability will be explored in order to develop a sound theoretical underpinning for this research project. The final sections of Chapter Two will then present a conceptual framework and research questions which will inform the remainder of the study.

### **2.2 Hospitality Management in Higher Education**

The changing nature and growth of the international hospitality industry and the expansion of HE, as an industry in itself, has resulted in a range of hospitality based programmes that have evolved from their original conception. As such, interpretations of hospitality as a HE subject and discipline vary. The term hospitality itself stems from the Latin *hospitālis*, which is constructed from the noun *hospes* (host, guest, visitor, stranger, foreigner) and *ālis* (the



relationship). This implies that the origins of hospitality are rooted in the relationship between hosts and guests. However within an academic context, hospitality has been defined as ‘the provision of food and / or drink and / or accommodation in a service context’ (HEFCE, 1998, p.2), a definition that is still referred to within the QAAs subject benchmark statements (QAA, 2016). This characterisation focuses upon the commercial context of the industry and, as a result, has been criticised for not encapsulating the scope of the hospitality discipline area (Lashley & Morrison, 2000). Consequently, academics within the *field* have attempted to broaden depictions of the discipline so as to ultimately better understand the management of hospitality (Brotherton, 1999; Brotherton, 2002; Brotherton, 2003; Jones, 2004b; Lashley, Lynch & Morrison, 2007a; Lashley & Morrison, 2000; Slattery, 2002; Slattery, 2003). Lashley, Lynch & Morrison (2007b, p.173) suggest that hospitality can be viewed and defined through society, that it ‘can be depicted as a mirror that reflects societal norms, values, beliefs and ideologies’; their interpretation thus transcends the boundaries of management in the commercial domain to include social and cultural situations which are based on hospitable relationships. For the purpose of this study the hospitality industry will be defined as any organisation that specialises in the provision of food, drink, accommodation, leisure or entertainment products which rely upon a host – guest relationship as a component of the product. These businesses should also employ individuals; this employment may be through commercial or charitable organisations. This definition of the hospitality industry does not however encapsulate hospitality within the social domain as, while reciprocity is important within this sphere (Lashley, Lynch & Morrison 2007a) this form of hospitality does not directly incorporate employment opportunities.

Despite the different interpretations of hospitality within the academic community the underlying purpose of hospitality in HE is concerned with students learning. The importance of education in society can be traced back to classical Greece; Plato’s philosophy suggested that



every man had the power to learn, those with talent could be found in any social class and these individuals should be educated so that they may positively impact upon the future of society as wards of the state (Plato, 380BC). This philosophy still underpins current discourses on the purpose of education whereby both personal and future societal gains and advancement support investment and increasing participation in HE (Barnett, 2005). This is achieved through the development of ‘capable and cultivated human beings’ (Mill, 1867, p.4) or, as Pring (2004, p.59) suggested, the ‘development of distinctly human qualities’, through a social process, integral to growth and a necessity of life (Dewey, 1916). Formal education has a longstanding relationship with social mobility (Bourdieu, 1986; Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2011) and health and family life (Schuller, 2004); it is an essential part of society in that it can positively impact upon equality and social justice. Reforms to HE within the UK emphasise these advancements in social mobility through encouraging increased participation from ‘non-traditional students’ (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2011). As these agents are socialised into the HE *field*, they develop relationships and evolve as individuals through their acquisition of cultural and academic capital enabling them to adopt a new *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1984; 1986). Thus, underlying values, dispositions and tastes change in line with the new social groups that a student associates themselves with (Bourdieu, 1984). The overriding focus of HE is however concerned with the ‘achievement of outcomes’, (QAA, 2008a, p.2); attainment of a HE level qualification is thus based on a descriptive set of quantifiable generic outcomes and attributes that individuals should be able to demonstrate on completion of their studies. As such there are specific competencies embedded into degree programmes. This content and the way that it is delivered is therefore core to hospitality in HE.



## 2.2.1 The Hospitality Curriculum in Higher Education

### *Philosophical Underpinning of the Curriculum*

The way in which academics perceive hospitality, its scope and the range of operations which they choose to include within their interpretation, shapes the way in which the curriculum is developed and the extent to which cross disciplinary research informs teaching. The hospitality curriculum evolved from hotel and catering studies which were first introduced at degree level in the 1960s (Brotherton, 1999; Lashley, 2000; Medlik, 1972). The focus of programmes is traditionally vocational in nature (Airey & Tribe, 2000; Barrows & Johan, 2008); therefore they are directly linked to a career in a specific industry and focus on preparing students to operate within the world of work. It is also noteworthy that many hospitality educators have experience within the industry (Ladkin, 2015) and can therefore draw on this in order to inform teaching. However despite this specific focus, the merits of hospitality as a HE subject have been questioned (Tews & Van Hoof, 2011) and a contentious debate regarding the extent to which a vocational focus should dominate the curriculum has evolved (Airey & Tribe, 2000; Airey, Dredge & Gross, 2015; Dredge *et al.*, 2012; Gross & Manoharan, 2016; Lashley, Lynch & Morrison, 2007a; Lashley, 2004; 2015; Morrison & O'Mahony, 2003; Tribe, 2002; Van Hoof, & Wu 2014; Wilson, Small & Harris, 2012).

The delivery of hospitality programmes at degree level generally conforms to a somewhat standardised approach taken by universities. Having searched UCAS there was no evidence of courses taught through flexible or block delivery methods (UCAS, 2017b). As yet there are no standards for a hospitality degree apprenticeship (Skills Funding Agency, 2017) whereby a degree is delivered as a component of an apprenticeship (Skills Funding Agency, 2015). One institution is however delivering a hospitality based programme in conjunction with employers as a component of a management degree apprenticeship (Manchester Metropolitan University, 2017), this is not however being advertised extensively.

Since its conception as a subject, the global expansion of the hospitality industry, and changes in the way that consumers use their leisure time, have resulted in a curriculum that is constantly being updated in order to remain relevant (Barrows & Johan, 2008). There are a number of different schools of thought concerning hospitality and the associated curriculum. However, the extent to which these philosophical underpinnings are regarded by the academic community often depends on their background. Jones (2004a) suggested that traditional interpretations of hospitality education, where food and drink is perceived to be central to curriculum, often adhere to a scientific underpinning, where the use of food laboratories are included in programmes. Other curricula have greater orientation to the current industry, whereby academics have a strong industry related background (Jones, 2004a). Here hospitality is seen as a process distinctly different from other management and service based disciplines, with its own theoretical underpinning. Strong links with industry and an emphasis on the vocational nature of the hospitality degree dominate this school. However, Brotherton and Wood (2008) suggest that this perception of the hospitality industry as being unique, has led to the term hospitality management becoming 'accidental' in its description of the hospitality industry. Within this school of thought they claim that; "hospitality' is what the hospitality industry offers and 'hospitality management' is the management of what is offered, which is hospitality' (Brotherton & Wood, 2008, p.3). This portrayal of the industry still represents a common assumption and highlights that, in many instances; there is no clear delineation as to what hospitality is within the curriculum. As such the upmarket hotel sector is often used as a primary exemplar (Doherty *et al.*, 2001). This practice is particularly prevalent within US curriculum where programmes primarily aim to prepare students for managerial positions within the hotel sector (Formica, 1996) and is achieved through extensive periods of time in WBL (work based learning). This 'Cornell' model of delivery is less common within UK based institutions as many programmes are situated within business schools (Brotherton & Wood, 2008; Gursoy & Swanger, 2005). As a result, the amount of time spent



as a part of hospitality programmes, enhancing student's professional development and practical skills has been widely discussed. Lashley (2004) suggested that by focusing on current practices in operations there may be limited scope for students to develop more academic skills associated with higher education. As such a curriculum with greater liberal underpinnings has been developed in contrast to the industry based perspectives of hospitality education. Here hospitality relationships inform the way in which industry is interpreted and a broad understanding as to what hospitality is underpins the curriculum. This liberal approach to curriculum development has received a great deal of attention in recent years (Airey & Tribe, 2000; Airey, Dredge & Gross, 2015; Dredge et al., 2012; Gross & Manoharan, 2016; Lashley, Lynch & Morrison, 2007a; Lashley, 2004; 2015; Morrison & O'Mahony, 2003; Tribe, 2002; Van Hoof, & Wu 2014; Wilson, Small & Harris, 2012) and challenges traditional interpretations of the way in which hospitality curricula is delivered by focusing on academic development in the quest to develop reflective practitioners (Airey & Tribe, 2000; Tribe, 2002).

However, the dominant school of thought within hospitality education is that of hospitality management (Jones, 2004a). The work of Nailon (1982) produced a theory of hospitality management, broadening the subject out from its traditional hotel and catering background, to include the external environment, human resources, technical infrastructure and management information systems. Within this perspective, hospitality is seen as a special case within the separate management disciplines and as such often draws on research conducted in these different disciplines. This can provide an incoherent understanding of the industry therefore hospitality management could be seen as being diverse and fragmented as it is not underpinned by a clear definition as to what it is (Jones, 2004a).

Perceptions of the scope of the hospitality industry and the inclusion, or exclusion, of certain business types within this will also impact upon the curriculum. In terms of number of operations, the industry is dominated by restaurants, pubs, bars and nightclubs (People 1st,



2013b). If, for example, as Slattery (2002) highlighted, pubs or licenced retail operations are not included into the scope of the hospitality definition then a core component of the potential curriculum and large sector in terms of possible employment opportunities for graduates will in fact be excluded. In order to incorporate some sectors of the industry a number of specialist programmes or pathways have been developed, these give students the opportunity to specialise their knowledge and increase employment prospects in related areas of the industry (QAA, 2008b).

### *The Vocational Focus*

The maintenance of a vocational focus is important in order to ensure that hospitality students acquire the skills and knowledge required in order to progress into the labour market.

However, the way in which this is achieved is an issue of contention. Stemming from Kantian notions of theory and practice (Kant, 1792) the aim of vocational education is to ensure that graduates have the ability to apply theoretical knowledge to practical and 'real life' situations. According to Airey and Tribe (2000) a vocational degree directly prepares students for effective employment within a specific industry. Thus it follows that hospitality management graduates should be equipped with the skills and knowledge to enter into supervisory and / or management level positions within the hospitality industry upon completion of their studies.

According to the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) hospitality management graduates should be able to demonstrate 'vocationally relevant management skills' (QAA, 2008b, p.16) which are acquired through exposure to professional practice; they should also undertake fieldwork and practical activities within the vocational context of their studies (ibid). However, there is no requirement for students to gain first hand practical experience. The inclusion of skills with 'practical applicability' within employment are only included as a necessity in the Framework for Higher Education Qualification (FHEQ) at level 4 (HND / FdA levels) (QAA, 2011). This highlights a contentious issue; while there are a significant number of similarities between



HND level and bachelor degrees in hospitality management (Purcell & Quinn, 1996), the inclusion of practical training at FHEQ level 5 is not necessarily appropriate, thus supporting the argument for a more academic based curriculum. This has been supported by Coleman *et al.* (2002), who questioned both the appropriateness and academic rigour associated with some forms of food and beverage curriculum delivery at UG degree level.

However, a number of authors have suggested that the inclusion of practical skills in undergraduate degrees is extremely important (Alexander, 2007a; Alexander, Lynch & Murray, 2009; Connolly & McGing, 2006). Historically much of the core vocational hospitality curriculum has been delivered through the use of training restaurants and laboratories (HEFCE, 1998). The traditional training restaurant model was based on what Alexander (2007b, p.30) referred to as a 'pseudo-Escofferian menu' which gave students an unrealistic experience of practical work within the industry and taught somewhat outdated silver service skills alongside some extremely specialist based craft skills. This form of food and beverage curriculum was also often seen as synonymous with the low status work associated with hospitality (Brotherton & Wood, 2008). While this model is being phased out (Roberts, 2011) there is limited consistency across different academic institutions as to the approach which take its place.

Often seen as costly (Alexander, 2007a) and an underutilised resource (Farbrother & Dutton, 2005), some institutions have struggled to justify the continuing use of practical training restaurants (Roberts, 2011). Thus, in some institutions, undergraduates gain practical skills through running staff canteens, where the predominant form of product delivery is through counter service (Farbrother & Thomas, 2008). Others have developed a comprehensive range of facilities in the form of research laboratories where consumer food behaviour, social interaction and other such areas can be studied, as well as providing the opportunity for practical skills to be developed by students (Pantelidis & Woodward, 2012). Used not only in



the provision of hospitality programmes the design of a research laboratory such as this is conducive to a wide range of research degrees and culinary based programmes. These multiple uses help to reduce associated overheads cost. In contrast to this approach other universities have opted to use conference facilities that operate commercially as a means of delivering in-house practical training (Roberts, 2011) as these provide a means of, again, reducing the operating cost of facilities. However, within all of these models the centrality of food production remains core, something which Ritzer (2007) considers to be outdated in the modern hospitality industry. Some attempts have been made in order to address this, such as the management shadowing initiative adopted by Plymouth University (Hine, Gibson & Horner, 2015). Here students spend time in a range of different departments, supported by partner businesses within the hospitality industry (ibid). Through initiatives such as this the rigour associated with vocational training has also been addressed, so that it better represents a HE experience (Hine, Gibson & Horner, 2015). It has also been suggested that reflection needs to be a core component of student engagement with practical skills (Alexander, Lynch & Murray, 2009; Dredge *et al.*, 2012; Tribe, 2002) and that management decision making and problem solving can also be included within the plethora of skills developed within these settings (Farbrother & Dutton, 2005; Farbrother & Thomas, 2008). It is concepts such as this reflexive focus, which help to differentiate current models of vocational hospitality education from traditional craft skills focuses.

The QAA (2016, p.10) subject benchmarking statement asserts that hospitality programmes must include 'the opportunity to participate in a period of supervised work experience in industry'. Often completed over the course of a year WBL or placements as they are often referred to as, have been a core component of hospitality curriculum for a number of years (HEFCE 1998). These periods of extended experiential learning often provides students with skills and experience essential for their future careers (Lester & Costley, 2010) and HEFCE



(2001) suggested that many industry commentators value the specific transferable skills and hands on experience which hospitality graduates gain from this form of experience. It could also be argued that only through a prolonged period of time within the industry can a student begin to understand the emotional demands, such as those described by Hochschild (1983), which service work can place on employees. Placement experience can also modify aspirations (Wilson, 2012) and assist in the acquisition of social and cultural capital. Shorter placement experiences appear less common as a component of hospitality degrees, however Thompson (2017) suggests that students can gain valuable experience through these shorter periods of time in industry and they can be particularly useful in helping to decide career direction.

Many students do not however see the value of these periods of time spent in work and often choose not to engage with them (Aggett & Busby, 2011; Bullock *et al.*, 2009; Nixon *et al.*, 2006; Wilson, 2012). It has been cited that the transition from university to a placement is off-putting for many because they do not have the confidence to break away from the comfort and confines of university life (Bullock *et al.*, 2009). It is therefore essential that industry specific transferable and vocational skills are embedded into the hospitality curriculum and associated assessments if the subject is to remain vocational in origin. This is of particular importance with some universities being unable to justify the continued use of training restaurants. It has therefore been suggested that term time work based experiences and work related learning can be incorporated into degrees (Littlejohn & Watson, 2004) or supported through co-curricular initiatives (Hine, Gibson & Horner, 2015) in order to help ensure that students develop relevant skills. Through this form of activity Moreland (2005, p.4) suggests that students learn 'about themselves and the world of work in order to empower them to enter and succeed in the world of work and their wider lives'. The experience of managing oneself in a range of different setting and learning about one's confidence, capabilities and

career orientation are all essential alongside learning and practicing skills in developing the personal attributes that are central to employability. Both Maher and Graves (2007) and Hine, Gibson and Horner (2015) use field trips, case studies and consultancy based assignments along with employer involvement in teaching and assessment to show how work related learning can be incorporated into the core hospitality curriculum. Close relationships between education and industry have long been cited as a method of increasing employability or gradueness of students (Connolly & McGing, 2006; Littlejohn & Watson, 2004; Maher & Graves, 2007), and there are benefits to both parties in terms of the industry's future and the utilisation of skills.

When developing vocational skills the homogenous nature of the industry and the diversity of hospitality provision make alignment of the curriculum with industry requirements difficult (Littlejohn & Watson, 2004; Slattery, 2002). Research into the vocational skills required by graduates or the significance ascribed to the provision of food and beverage is limited in value to the context with which the research is set. For example both Santich (2004) and Johanson *et al.* (2010) suggest that a more in-depth understanding of food is required as they both purport that students do not understand basic preparation methods or know the origins of many meals, highlighting that despite training restaurants, food and beverage curriculum is not producing graduates with the skills and knowledge which some sections of the industry desires. However, for Lashley (2004) there is a 'tyranny of relevance' related to the hospitality curriculum and how the current provision neither meets the needs of the student or the industry to which it seeks to serve. In whatever manner practical skills are delivered it is ultimately the responsibility of hospitality educators to highlight the importance of gaining competencies within a degree as many students believe that successful completion of specific outcomes is less important than the fact that they have 'participated' (and gained a degree) (Barron, 2008).



### *The Academic Focus*

The foundation of a hospitality degree is essentially that of an academic qualification. As with all degrees, hospitality graduates should have developed a range of evaluative, interpretive, and technical skills upon graduation (QAA, 2011). These should be established within the context of the hospitality discipline, management concepts should also be entrenched within the curriculum, along with a key understanding of hospitality as a phenomenon (QAA, 2008b). As mentioned previously, the hospitality management school of thought (Jones, 2004a) dominates hospitality curriculum and as such management education is a core component of students learning. Much of the academic content included within hospitality programmes therefore centres on management practice. Marketing, finance, HR, management and leadership theory are therefore delivered to students, and are often used as the foundation for developing critical thinking, problem solving and research skills integral to HE. However, this management content could still be deemed vocational in its orientation towards a specific career within the hospitality industry. It can also entrench a focus on the day-to-day operational context of hospitality management within the curriculum, resulting in a narrow depiction of hospitality as a discipline area presented to students.

As a result a number of commentators have discussed the 'liberation' of hospitality education (Morrison & O'Mahony, 2003) and a more critical approach to understanding hospitality (Fullagar & Wilson, 2012; Lugosi, Lynch & Morrison, 2009; Lynch *et al*, 2011; Walmsley, 2015; Wilson *et al*, 2012), which can be embedded within the hospitality curriculum. Thus, hospitality degrees are underpinned by an interdisciplinary understanding of hospitality informed by subject areas such as culture, anthropology, philosophy and sociology; (Lashley, Lynch & Morrison, 2007a; Lashley & Morrison, 2000; Lynch *et al*, 2011; Morrison & O'Mahony, 2003; Tribe, 2002) as well as critical management studies (Belhassen & Caton, 2011). The work of Lashley, Lynch & Morrison (2007a) has been particularly influential in this field, they position hospitality as a means of exploring society and suggest new research agendas in line

with the notion of 'hospitality studies'. As a result greater credence has been given to texts such as that by O'Gorman (2010) on the origins of hospitality and the development of the Hospitality and Society journal, which aims to further scholarly development in this field (Lynch *et al*, 2011). This journal, in particular, provides an outlet for hospitality based research which adopts innovative methodological and theoretical approaches, it support a broad understanding of hospitality and hospitableness, and provides a platform for debate amongst the academic community. Articles can therefore be used to inform curriculum and develop content beyond a vocational management focus.

The incorporation of broad interpretations of hospitality, which are informed by multiple disciplines within the academic curriculum, can have positive impacts on graduates. Lashley (2004, p.68) describes this approach to studying hospitality as the '*study of hospitality*', which can result in a greater investment in the future as against replication of prior practice within the industry (Lashley, 2015; Lashley, Lynch & Morrison, 2007b). Thus graduates have the potential to better shape the future of the hospitality industry. Critical approaches to considering hospitality can also help in the development of analytical thinking as well as professional management related skills (Fullagar & Wilson, 2012; Lashley 2015) in graduates.

The notion of developing liberal education in order to influence management practice has its merits, however, the integration of liberal values within the hospitality curriculum also has the potential to better inform practice across a number of stakeholder groups (Lugosi, Lynch & Morrison, 2009). Broad socio-cultural issues can also be addressed through a more critical approach to hospitality with emancipation and social justice become a key focus through this ideological shift in considering the discipline area in a more critical manner (Wilson *et al* 2012). This academic focus within hospitality curriculum sits in line with the underlying purpose of a degree, and the development of graduates that can positively influence society.

The development of these liberal and academic approaches to hospitality curriculum also sit in line with research on graduate skills within the discipline area. Despite the overriding academic focus of hospitality degrees, research conducted into the composition of the hospitality curriculum has cited that more generic skills integral to hospitality, need to be incorporated. For example Marnburg (2005), highlighted an emphasis on how business morality is developed in a social context is required, Santich (2004), reflected on the importance of 'general knowledge' in hospitality graduates and multiple reference has been made to the importance of more general soft skills (People 1<sup>st</sup> 2013b; 2016; Sisson & Adams, 2013; Webber *et al*, 2013). It is therefore evident that graduates need to be educated beyond the vocational management focus which often dominates programmes.

However the merits of a 'hospitality studies' approach to curriculum development has been debated for a number of years (Airey & Tribe, 2000; Airey, Dredge & Gross, 2015; Dredge *et al*, 2012; Gross & Manoharan, 2016; Lashley, Lynch & Morrison, 2007a; Lashley, 2004; 2015; Morrison & O'Mahony, 2003; Tribe, 2002; Van Hoof, & Wu 2014; Wilson, Small & Harris, 2012). Similarly, the more recent drive towards a critical hospitality management research agenda has also been met with practical recommendations on balancing this academic approach to curriculum with vocational learning (Gross & Manoharan 2016). Dredge *et al* (2012) draw on *phronesis*, or the idea that contributions of scientific knowledge (*episteme*) and technical knowledge (*techne*), in isolation, are insufficient in determining good professional action. Thus, while the inclusion of broad, liberal methods of considering hospitality are important, this must be balanced with practice (*techne*), or vocational approaches.

It is therefore clear that attempts to liberalise the hospitality curriculum and broaden the scope of programmes must occur alongside the development of vocational training. Tribe (2002) developed the concept of the 'Philosophic Practitioner' to describe a balance between vocational, liberal, action and reflective elements of the curriculum and create graduates that



can effectively sell themselves within the labour market as they will have developed a range of skills necessary for hospitality employment. Here vocational action or practical, operational skills are only one element of the wider curriculum, with academic skills and liberal thinking taking precedence. Recent literature (Dredge *et al.*, 2012) has maintained support for this approach and suggests HEIs may position themselves differently within the curriculum space, thus core hospitality curriculums can be delivered alongside a focus on knowledge or capabilities. Gross & Manoharan (2016) also suggested that the option to tailor degree programs and choose additional, liberally orientated modules, was of benefit of students. Thus, incorporation of 'option modules' is one means of supporting liberal development within the curriculum.

The academic curriculum and way in which this supports graduate development is integral to the discipline area. Therefore, despite the historically vocational orientation of programmes, and the attention that has been placed on this curriculum approach, it is clear that academic and liberal approaches to learning are as, if not more important than practical skills development in the education of potential future managers. HEIs must therefore take this into consideration when developing programmes and initiatives which support the development of graduate employability.

### **2.2.2 Market Influences on Hospitality Higher Education**

The HE market has changed considerably as a result of historical factors, these changes have influenced hospitality programmes in HE. Disciplines have become specialised and fragmented, globalisation has impacted upon the student population and scope of education, knowledge has become a commodity, and there has been a dramatic increase in the amount of learning at HE level. According to Oxenham (2013, p.3) this is due to 'philosophical and sociological revolutions' associated with the times that we live in. Literature refers to this world as one of 'fluidity' as in Bauman's (2000b) liquid modernity; of 'risk' (Beck, 1992); and of



'fragility' (Stehr, 2001); it is a world, according to Giddens (1990, p.36), which 'is a contrast with tradition'. The changes to societal norms which emerged from industrialism and the spread of capitalism have continued to develop. The decline in static structures has made way for universal comparison (Bauman, 2000b) whereby individuals set their own code and rules by which to conform, this freedom of choice means that individuals have to shoulder the consequences of their actions, (Bauman, 2000b; Beck, 1992), however there is also greater scope for individuals to participate in HE.

According to Dale and Robertson (2009) the paths of modernity and capitalism have followed converging trajectories, essentially this has altered the relationship between the HE market and the moral, socially grounded notion of education for all. HE has been influenced by neoliberal reforms but despite this has continued to maintain demand (UCAS, 2014). In the following section, changes to HE will be discussed in line with two key considerations; the marketization of HE and expansion of the student population. These factors have influenced the nature of student learning and the employability of hospitality graduates and are therefore important in helping to contextualise discussions later in this chapter.

### ***The Marketization of Higher Education***

Multiple, successive government policies that have resulted in the marketization of HEIs, whereby universities are now seen to be operating within a neoliberal 'quasi-market' (Brown & Carasso, 2013). Traditionally universities were seen as autonomous from political and economic powers, with their own rules and structure (Bourdieu, 1988), however reforms have imposed controls over education and enhanced comparability of programmes (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2011; Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005). Resultant competition between institutions is intended to create a more effective, equitable, and efficient HE system (Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005). The key benchmark between universities remains the league tables, which provide a broad indication of a universities standing nationally and globally

(Briggs, 2006). However, an increase in brand building activities (Bunzel, 2007; Chapleo, 2007; Chapleo, Carrillo Durán & Castillo Díaz, 2011) and the development of the 'Unistats' website in order to provide potential students with transparent data to compare programmes has led to wider dissemination of National Student Survey (NSS), Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) and graduate salary information (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2011). Despite the focus on this information, it has been suggested that figures, such as graduate salaries, have no impact on application patterns (UCAS, 2012) and that data on the immediate economic gain derived from HE does not fully represent student progression into the labour market (Nairn & Higgins, 2007). Therefore, despite the prevalence and perceived importance of this data within the marketplace it is of limited value to students and potential students.

Neoliberalism in HE withdraws the value associated with education as a social good; individuals are reframed as self-interested subjects (Olssen & Peters, 2005), shaping aspects of social behaviour along economic lines (Davies & Bansel, 2007); the view that education provides a return has been unequivocally internalised by the current student population (Tomlinson, 2008). The economic productivity usually associated with education could be seen to now come from something which can be bought and sold (Davies & Bansel, 2007) and as such some students have developed a sense of entitlement in terms of their education (Singleton-Jackson, Jackson & Reinhardt, 2010; Williams, 2013). Students are attempting to take control of their educational experience; in many instances they do not consider that academic staff 'know best', this has the potential to further influence the values core to HE provisions (Naidoo, 2003; Singleton-Jackson, Jackson & Reinhardt, 2010).

Notions of entitlement have been reinforced through the recent government white paper 'students at the heart of the system' where students are explicitly referred to as consumers (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2011). However, the notion of students as

consumers does not sit comfortably with the constructivist nature of learning, it thus has the potential to alienate students from the learning process so that they adopt a passive or instrumental approach to their education (Boden & Nedeva, 2010; Naidoo, 2003; Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005; Williams, 2013). This in turn can reduce the value of a qualification as by not engaging with learning, or the social structures associated with HE, graduates will not have the embodied *habitus* required to succeed in the graduate labour market (Bourdieu, 1977). It is apparent through the work of Arum and Roksa (2011) that this is the case in many US institutions as the majority of students are not committed to their academic development while at university.

Controls and accountability associated with HEIs were established to protect the interests of students and ensure that all programmes meet minimum standards (QAA, 2011). However, in some instances, this has created challenges for academics. According to Ball (2003) new modes of teaching based on a culture of performativity; rewards; and sanctions can influence commitment to pedagogies, particularly those that emphasise liberal education. It is also difficult to balance these performance measures against authentic relationships with students as there is a natural tension between the two. This again can impact upon the social dimension of the learning process and has the potential to exclude some individuals from engaging with content.

### ***The Student Population***

The perception that education can enhance national competitiveness, and positively impact upon economies, has resulted in a worldwide expansion of HE provisions (Naidoo, 2003; Schofer & Meyer, 2005). When coupled with changes to the way in which HE is funded in the UK (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2011) a number of discourses have arisen surrounding the impacts of the increasing number of graduates entering the labour market.

Expansion of the number of HEIs able to award degrees (British Government, 1992) and the politically publicised benefits associated with HE (Dearing, 1997; Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2009; 2011; Leitch, 2006) have helped to stimulate demand for programmes. As such, almost half (44%) of young people apply for HE places before they are 19 in England (UCAS, 2013) and 49% of 17-30 year olds in the UK now participate in higher education, the majority of which are aged 18 (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2013) and studying within the UK (King, Findlay & Ahrens, 2010). Figures include increasing numbers of individuals from 'non-traditional backgrounds' entering the HE system as a result of widening participation initiatives (HEFCE, 2013), and have remained relatively consistent over recent years (UCAS 2017a). These students represent those who, for a range of cultural, social and economic reasons, did not traditionally participate in HE, thus they come from minority or marginal groups. These different populations often adhere to different modes of participation (ie part time study) (Schuetze & Slowey, 2002).

The implications of globalisation have also influenced demand for HE. The shared nature of cultural and economic interests has increased (Browne, 2011) and countries once referred to as 'third world' have become increasingly industrialised through the diffusion of technology and knowledge (Giddens, 1990); this has ultimately increased demand for more formal education. The flow of people, knowledge and values across borders (Knight, 2004) has also increased student mobility (King, Findlay & Ahrens, 2010). Students recognise the global investment into knowledge based industries (Altbach & Knight, 2007) and how internationalised experiences can create benefits for future employment in a global business environment (Atherton, 2013; Hargreaves, 2000; Knight, 2004). As a country with a longstanding reputation for providing quality education, the UK has naturally benefited from this expansion; after the USA, England is the second most preferred destination for foreign students (King, Findlay & Ahrens, 2010) attracting a significant number of non-EU students

(approximately two-thirds of all international students) who are primarily of Chinese and Indian origins.

Structural changes in society have also resulted in the expectancy for many that they will attend university; for those whose parents attended university, there is an expectation that they will also go to university; it has been engendered into their upbringing (Ball, Reay & David, 2002) though the doxic conception of 'what people like us do' (Bourdieu, 1990, p.64-65). Combined with the influence of teachers; friends; career advisors; and other contingent factors, this has helped to further reinforce a culture of participation (Winterton & Irwin, 2012). Leaving school and directly entering the labour market is no longer considered the norm. This idea is supported by Christie (2009, p.127) who has suggested that the 'middle class narrative about the inevitability and predictability of higher education' shapes the decisions of non-traditional students as well as those from more traditional backgrounds in their transitions into adulthood. Alongside this there is also an increasing personal demand for the social capital or social status associated with the completion of a degree, Brynin (2002) suggests that this has also helped stimulate demand for HE. However, many of these students are not prepared for university study and have no clear plans for the future (Arum & Roksa, 2011), as such they are not motivated to achieve academically.

Despite the governments widening participation initiatives (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2011) there are a number of class and racial inequalities still prevalent in the HE system (Reay *et al.*, 2001) and worldwide there is a disparity in access to HEIs across different socio-economic groups (Atherton, 2013). Thus while there are a greater number of working-class and minority students choosing to enter HE (HEFCE, 2013), they are typically entering different institutions to their middle-class counterparts (Reay *et al.*, 2001); perceived social classifications and existing cultural and social capital influence their choice (Ball *et al.*, 2002). As such there are institution, subject, gender and socio-economic discrepancies within

the rates of return that students can expect from participation in HE (Adnett & Slack, 2007; Atherton, 2013; Baum, Ma & Payea, 2010; Furlong & Cartmel, 2005; Moreau & Leathwood, 2006; Purcell & Elias, 2004). This has led to the suggestion that ‘young people from relatively rich families’ have disproportionately benefited from the expansion of HE (Adnett & Slack, 2007, p.23) and that those from disadvantaged backgrounds ‘who can least afford to pay ...end up paying more, in absolute and relative terms, for their education’ (Furlong & Cartmel, 2005, p.38). This could be seen to reproduce and reinforce social and cultural structures within society (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) detracting from the benefits associated with increased participation and the acquisition of social and cultural capital, particularly in the instance of non-traditional learners (Atherton, 2013).

### **2.3 The Constructivist Nature of Student Learning for Hospitality**

Constructivism refers to the way in which human beings learn. According to Fry, Ketteridge and Marshall (2009) the constructivist paradigm dominates teaching and learning in higher education; learning new knowledge is seen to extend and supplant existing understandings. The work of Dewey (1916; 1938) is particularly interesting in understanding the importance of education in society and the way in which the continued reconstruction of experience aids the understanding of theory. However, alongside Dewey’s philosophical interpretations, the roots of constructivism can also be attributed to social interactionism (Vygotsky, 1978) and cognitive psychology (Bruner, 1960; Piaget, 1953). The commonality amongst each of these is that an emphasis is placed on the necessity for the student to actively participate in learning (Phillips, 1995); knowledge construction is thus shaped by interaction and dialogue between students and teachers (Light, Cox & Calkins, 2009). The work of Biggs (1999) echoed this by suggesting that teaching methods which encourage student activity can help ensure that those students who are not committed to learning *per se* (but instead committed to completing their degree and ‘passing’) develop high order cognitive processes.



Constructivist approaches to learning also support a focus on the ontological as against epistemological dimension in HE (Barnett, 2005; Dall’Alba & Barnacle, 2007). Ontological development is concerned with a ‘sense on being’; this sits in contrast to the philosophically underpinned epistemological quest for knowledge itself. HE is thus concerned with the holistic development of the student, not just the acquisition or development of knowledge. The prevalence of experiential and social dimensions embedded into teaching support the associated notion of situated learning (Wenger, 1998). Learning and interaction with peers also supports HE’s ability to facilitate social mobility the acquisition of capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). It thus follows that in order to ensure that students benefits from their time in HE, they must be actively engaged with their education so as to move into the higher order realms of learning which included application, analysis and evaluation (Bloom, 1972); students must also engage with the broader social dimension of the HE experience to benefit from peer learning. However, within the literature reviewed there is no one consensus as to what the constructivist notion of student engagement is or how it can be measured, in some instances engagement has been referred to as little more than a buzz word (Leach, 2012).

The notion of student engagement has received a great deal of attention in recent years, it is often viewed as a means of combatting problems arising from declining student motivation and ensuring that students are successful in their pursuits (Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004; Kuh *et al.*, 2007). Initiatives to engage students have been coined as a means of encouraging learning and personal development within HE (Carini, Kuh & Klein, 2006; Hu & Kuh, 2002); increasing student retention (Bryson & Hand, 2007); enhancing the student experience (Little *et al.*, 2009); and rectify inequalities within the educational system (McMahon & Portelli, 2004). As such methods of teaching and learning have been adapted in order to take into consideration technological advancements and the way in which students interact in order to enhance performance (Beard & Dale, 2008; Cobanoglu & Berezina, 2011;

Dale & Lane, 2007; Hannon & D'Netto, 2007; Yu *et al.*, 2010). High impact activities are also encouraged within the curriculum (Biggs, 1999; Miller, Rycek & Fritson, 2011; Ramsden, 2003), a move away from traditional, transmission methods of teaching so as to also support high order skills development.

Evidence suggests that students recognise the need to actively engage and put effort into their studies (Soilemetzidis *et al.*, 2014) however the way in which many spend their time as a student does not always prioritise academic learning (Arum & Roksa, 2011; Holmes, 2013). The notion of student engagement as a means of ensuring learning will now be defined, establishing what it consists of and identifying some of the pursuits that students can 'engage with' as components of hospitality degrees. Different perspectives on studying engagement will also be addressed in order to inform how these may be used to effectively inform research and combat issues in the HE marketplace, as identified previously.

### **2.3.1 Student Engagement**

The responsibility for engagement lies both with institutions and the student; this should be reflected in any definition of the principle. Thus, after an extensive literature search on behalf of the HEA, Trowler (2010, p.2) defined student engagement as being;

*concerned with the interaction between the time, effort and other relevant resources invested by both students and their institutions intended to optimise the student experience and enhance the learning outcomes and development of students and the performance, and reputation of the institution*

This definition highlights the constructivist nature of the concept and makes links between actions and outcomes of engagement, insinuating that, as suggested by Krause and Coates (2008), engagement research has the potential to inform many aspects of HE, including; pedagogy; attrition; retention; student learning; and student affairs. However, while Trowler's work encapsulates differing perspectives of engagement and gives a somewhat holistic characterisation of the phenomenon there are a number of authors who focus on only one

dimension of engagement within their work. For example Hu and Kuh (2002, p.555) define engagement as 'the quality or effort that students themselves devote to educationally purposeful activities,' and HEFCE situate engagement processes with the institution and relevant sector bodies (Little et al., 2009).

As a result of this there is a diverse range of literature characterised under the title of engagement. According to Kahu (2013) much of this does not distinguish between engagement, its antecedents, and consequences. It is also dominated by a number of large scale research projects which have been carried out in America (Arum & Roksa, 2011; Kuh, 2001; Kuh et al., 2007) and Australia (Coates, 2009). As nationwide studies these research projects do not produce discipline specific results and as such are not necessarily representative of the different motivations associated with completion of different programmes. American and Australian research contexts also do not take into consideration differences in HEI fee structures and the choice between public and private institutions which, for hospitality programmes, is more prevalent in some countries (Barrows & Johan, 2008). However, these studies do highlight correlations between students and the time that they dedicate to educational activities whilst completing their UG qualifications. In contrast to the broad depictions of engagement associated with these studies a number of other papers focus on only one dimension of engagement, and the impact that this has on outcomes. Focusing on either specific initiatives or outcomes these research papers are often case studies, employing qualitative and / or quantitative research methods they, collectively, help provide a holistic understanding of engagement and its distinct components.

The idea of student engagement is not a static concept and this makes it difficult to establish whether or not student are, or can be classified, as 'engaged'. Bryson and Hand (2007) suggest a continuum of engagement with 'engaged' and 'disengaged' describing the extremities of the scale. This continuum has a number of different levels linked to the classroom, a task or



assignment, a module, a programme of study or the university itself. A student can thus be engaged to a different degree within each level. Engagement can also increase or decrease depending on the time of year or the number and variety of tasks, modules or other activities that they are expected to participate in. The notion of engagement has also been contrasted with alienation. Mann (2001) uses this term to describe the student experience, suggesting surface and strategic approaches to study represent a student's alienation from the subject and learning process. She argues that the nature of HE, its focus on 'performativity and functionality' (Mann, 2001, p.9) and the dominance of the lecturer (in shaping work undertaken in line with requirements for marks) can, in some instances, make a lack of engagement inevitable. This would suggest that even the best intentions to engage students will not be successful all of the time.

### **2.3.2 Opportunities for Learning**

Student engagement in educationally purposeful activities is not limited to those which are included within the academic curriculum delivered by HEIs. Engagement is essentially linked to the acquisition of personal capital, it therefore focuses on the development of hard and soft competencies and personal development (of self), which are not exclusively developed through study (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004). There is a link between what students do (what they engage with) whilst at university and the distal outcomes of education such as personal growth and the construction of graduates capable of contributing to the knowledge economy. The currency of qualifications is no longer sufficient in order for students to successfully move into the graduate labour market upon completion of their studies; they must therefore capitalise on additional experiences in order to construct individualised narratives of employability so as to differentiate themselves (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004; Tomlinson, 2008). However, the activities which student choose to pursue beyond of their academic pursuits can negatively impact upon the successful completion of their degree and the process of learning (Arum & Roksa, 2011). The following section will therefore discuss



both the academic and extra or co-curricular activities which hospitality students may engage with whilst completing their degrees.

### *Academic Pursuits*

Through the pursuit of a degree, graduates should develop a range of evaluative, interpretive, transferable and technical skills, contextualised within a specific discipline (QAA, 2011). The situated nature of knowledge results in learning occurring most effectively when developed in this context (De La Harpe, Radloff & Wyber, 2000). Thus both hard and soft skills are embedded into academic curriculums (Pool & Sewell, 2007; QAA, 2011; Yorke & Knight, 2006); students should therefore have, on successful completion of a degree, the necessary skills required for employment. Evidence suggests that in some instances academic engagement can also positively impact upon early career earnings (Hu & Wolniak, 2010).

However, the extent to which these are developed is related to a student's active engagement with their academic pursuits and the process of learning (Carini, Kuh & Klein, 2006; Marton & Säljö, 1976). For example, in line with constructivist approaches to education Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest that learning occurs in social situations and thus is collaborative; there is a 'community of practice' within cohorts, which develops throughout their time together. Peer learning is another term commonly used to describe this; it is based on the notion that students learn both with and from each other (Boud, Cohen & Sampson, 2001). For stronger students the process of explaining ideas and teaching others helps to reinforce knowledge (Boud, Cohen & Sampson, 2001; Ramsden, 2003) and develop high-level, deep learning (Biggs, 1999). However, if individuals do not attend sessions, interact, or participate in discussions then they may not in fact be learning. This, and other surface or passive approaches to learning, can result in students doing 'enough' to meet assignment criteria and pass assessments in order to achieve a degree but does not ensure that high level skills and cognitive practices have been developed and knowledge has been internalised for effective

future usage or personal change (Biggs, 1999; Hay, 2007; Kahu, 2013; Marton & Säljö, 1976). Here the proximal consequences of engagement may include achievement of credits, but not learning.

In terms of employability specific currencies, Yorke and Knight (2006) highlighted that at one end of the spectrum these can be developed through a holistic approach across the whole or core curriculum through to specific modules, WBL or WRL (work related learning) which run either as a component of, or parallel to curriculum. In the latter instances, when employability becomes either non-credit bearing or additional to the curriculum, students must choose to pursue this without the incentives associated with assessments or other tangible benefits. This requires increased motivation and active engagement.

### *Extra and Co-Curricular Activities*

Extra and co-curricular activities can enhance students development of both self and employability related skills and attributes (Jackson, 2010; Roulin & Bangerter, 2011; Yorke & Knight, 2006). Academic pursuits are in essence only one element of the development process associated with employability (Holmes, 2013), as such some employers use extracurricular interests as a means of identifying personalities (Rivera, 2012). According to Jackson (2010) the incorporation of 'life' within conceptions of the curriculum encourages recognition of the formal and informal learning activities that contribute to student development. These 'institutional designed and personally constructed experiences' represent a student's life within the wider world (Jackson, 2010, p.4) and provide individuals with the opportunity to differentiate themselves from one another.

Universities often develop structured activities which students can engage with. These include clubs and societies, volunteering or other opportunities to positively impact communities (Jackson, 2010; Stuart *et al.*, 2008; Tchibozo, 2007). In some instances tangible recognition can be gained from these such as employability focused awards which encourage growth across a

range of areas, such as personal and skills development and making contributions to society (Watson, 2011). Motivation to participate in such activities varies, with most students following intrinsic interest however some actively partake in activities purely because they will support narratives of employability (Roulin & Bangerter, 2011).

Beyond university engagement there has been a significant growth in the number of students who are seeking part-time employment alongside their studies (Callender, 2008; Holmes, 2008; Warhurst, 2008). Some suggest that this is the best way in which to develop employability skills (Mason, Williams & Cranmer, 2009) and this additional experience is used as a means of constructing narratives of employability (Tomlinson, 2008). However, research also suggests that part time work is used as a means of meeting basic living costs for many students (Callender, 2008; Holmes, 2013); for some work is essential in order to complete university studies. As such it can negatively impact upon the HE experience by decreasing the amount of time that student have available for academic study and leisure activities which can contribute to personal growth (Callender, 2008; Hall, 2010).

Despite the prevalence of a range of opportunities that students can engage with in order to enhance development while at university those from non-traditional backgrounds often approach university in different ways. They are less likely to engage with extra-curricular activities or use services aimed at helping to increase employability (such as careers services) (Stuart *et al.*, 2008; Thomas & Jones, 2007) and are more likely to work longer hours (Callender, 2008). As such some of their narratives of employability are more likely to rely on the hard currency of having a degree which according to Tomlinson (2008) is no longer adequate in order to secure graduate level employment.

### **2.3.3 Impacts on Student Learning and Development**

Opportunities for learning, and learning itself, are situated in a broad social context. For Hilsdon (2011) the facilitation of learning development encapsulates a range of multi-



disciplinary tasks and functions. Learning in HE is not confined to activities within a classroom. However, there are a number of factors which impact on student ability and desire to engage with HE in its broadest sense. As a result the student experience can vary dramatically as not all students engage in the opportunities available to them.

It is well documented that there are a number of pre-college experiences and characteristics that can affect a student's successful transitions into HE and their engagement and attitude towards academic pursuits once at university, these include; demographics (Hockings, Cooke & Bowl, 2007); motivations (Gibson, 2004); support (Kuh *et al.*, 2007); academic preparation (Arum & Roksa, 2011; Kuh *et al.*, 2007); prior experience (Heath, 2006) and institution / course choice (Ball, Reay & David, 2002; Reay *et al.*, 2001). These factors are all integral in defining who the student is and highlight the importance of considering life events and subjective experiences alongside student learning and preparation for the world of work (Christie *et al.*, 2008; Tomlinson, 2010).

Despite the societal drive towards participation in HE it has been suggested that many students do not have an accurate perception or knowledge of what their programme will entail in terms of both content and workload (Lowe & Cook, 2003). It has also been noted that non-traditional students, in particular, have diverse pedagogic, social and epistemological expectations of HE (Hockings, Cooke & Bowl, 2007; Scanlon, Rowling & Weber, 2007) and have very different experiences of the choice process associated with the decision to attend university in relation to their more traditional student counterparts (Reay *et al.*, 2001). Upon transition into university, Christie (2009) suggests that emotions range from fear and guilt to enthusiasm and pride and that experiences within the first term of university can either reassure or compound these feelings. Combined with differing expectations of HE this can actively contribute to disengagement, perceived levels of confidence in relation to peers and notions of 'self-concept' can decline, particularly in the instance of females (Jackson, 2003), as

students move from familiar situations into the unknown. As a result of this students lose the 'identity' that they have become familiar with; they enter a state of transition as they start to develop new narratives associated with their time in HE (Giddens, 1991) and take on a new habitus (Bourdieu, 1984). Symbolic power (cultural and social domination within *habitus*) and power relations embedded within the HE environment (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Burke, 2016; Robinson, 2012) further influence interactions between students and academics. This can make it difficult, particularly for non-traditional students to 'fit in' and adapt to the new ways of learning associated with participation in HE (Mann, 2001; Schuetze & Slowey, 2002; Thomas, 2002).

Moving away to study is intrinsically linked to the historical and cultural context of higher education (Holdsworth, 2009; Reay *et al.*, 2001) According to Holdsworth (2006) mobility has become a form of embodied cultural capital, facilitating student habitus and the development of dispositions and values common to graduates. In general there has been an increase in the mobility of young professionals (OECD, 2013) conducive with the expansion of education. However, as participation in higher education widens there are more students from non-traditional backgrounds entering into HE, many of these students are from poorer backgrounds and are more debt adverse than traditional students (Callender & Jackson, 2005). Fear of debt affects choice of university for many therefore low living costs and employment opportunities are increasingly seen as important when making decisions about which university to attend (Callender & Jackson, 2008); focus during the decision making process is thus not purely concerned with learning. The recent increase in tuition fees to £9000 (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2011) has also had an increasing impact on the perceived affordability of HE. As such an increasing number of students are now choosing to live at home in order to complete their studies (Christie, 2007; HEFCE, 2013); this further enhances and reproduces inequality within society as students from more middle class

backgrounds have access to greater financial resources and the cultural capital which allows them to remain mobile in their choice of institution (Christie, 2007). Living at home ultimately limits a students' choice of university and programme of study. Holdsworth (2006) also found that students living at home faced additional barriers within their experience of student life; the disparity between student *habitus* and that of their local community can be difficult to negotiate when trying to immerse themselves into 'student life' and develop a student identity. Attitudes and assumptions made by other students can also negatively impact upon the integration into the 'student scene' of those living at home (Holdsworth, 2006).

Many students take an instrumental approach to their learning. Black (2010, p.99) suggests that students are increasingly goal orientated and often 'approach learning as a plug-and-play experience'. According to Biggs (1999) this creates challenges in the maintenance of academic standards as, unless assessments are constructively aligned to learning outcomes, students are assessed not in fixed characteristics, but on single activities. The currency associated with having a good degree is important and this often takes precedence over learning for more intrinsic gratification (Tomlinson, 2008); there is an expectation for explicit and tangible outcomes as a result of study (Tomlinson, 2008).

This instrumental approach to learning is facilitated through students use of ICT (Information Communication Technology) and always connected approach to life (OECD, 2012). Prensky (2001, p.1) suggested that the expansion of ICT has fundamentally changed students, claiming that as a result of this technology driven environment the way 'today's students think and process information is fundamentally differently from their predecessors'. The majority of teenagers have access to the internet and while once associated with Anglophone countries it is now a global medium of communication (OECD, 2013). Despite the amount of time that the current generation of student spends using ICT many are only 'rudimentary users' (Kennedy *et al.*, 2010, p.339). Thompson (2003) suggested that many students are not information literate



in terms of the way in which they engage with ICT and as such they often interact with sources such as Wikipedia and Google in order to inform their research (Head & Eisenberg, 2010). This supports a surface approach to learning and working, where speed and efficiency are a primary concern, thus detracting from the process of learning (Thompson & Gregory, 2012).

The social life associated with HE study is seen to be core to student development, however there is a trend in that many students dedicate more time to this than they do anything else (Arum & Roksa, 2011). A large component of students social life revolves around the consumption of alcohol, this has negative impacts on academic performance and sleep patterns (Porter & Pryor, 2007; Singleton & Wolfson, 2009); despite this, heavy drinking has become normative within HE (Lewis *et al.*, 2011) in the UK. Students also socialise and communicate through social media platforms (Correa, Hinsley & de Zúñiga, 2010; Madge *et al.*, 2009). Social media sites allow individuals to project an image of themselves within the public domain; they have been associated with personality traits such as being an extrovert (Correa, Hinsley & de Zúñiga, 2010), establishing a sense of self-worth (Stefanone, Lackaff & Rosen, 2011) and belonging (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012). They have also been negatively associated with student engagement (Junco, 2012) and the development of narcissistic tendencies (Bergman, Westerman & Daly, 2010) such as self-absorption and overconfidence which could have a negative impact on future careers (Westerman *et al.*, 2011).

Despite the social nature of the current generation of student there is evidence of strong cultural segregation amongst friendships (Rienties, Johan & Jindal-Snape, 2015); the way in which students develop social relationships has a strong impact on satisfaction and the way in which they cope with the demands of HE (Hendrickson, Rosen & Aune, 2011; Rienties, Johan & Jindal-Snape, 2015). These relationships or networks of connections are representative of an agent's social capital (Bourdieu, 1986), thus by not expanding these effectively some of the benefits of HE will not be achieved. Heath, Fuller and Johnston (2010) also found that, in the



instance of first generation students, experiences of HE negatively impact upon an individuals broad social network, thus potentially deterring participation from other members of a network and reinforcing pre-existing disposition towards HE.

Impacts on student learning have also been discussed in relation to psychology and cognitive functions. Here engagement is concerned with internal indicators, their effect on student behaviour (Appleton *et al.*, 2006) and students investment in learning (Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004). Students motivation to learn has received a great deal of attention within this disciplinary perspective (Ames & Ames, 1985; Bruinsma, 2004; Deci *et al.*, 1991; Haggis, 2004; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Schunk, 1991; Walker, Greene & Mansell, 2006) as have self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982; Bandura, 1993) and goal orientation (Phillips & Gully, 1997). There is also evidence that some personality traits may be predictors of academic success (Farsides & Woodfield, 2003) along with psychological concepts such as relationships with teachers and peers, and feelings of belonging (Appleton *et al.*, 2006). Engagement is thus viewed as a psycho-social process where student development is linked to qualitative changes in thinking, feeling, values and behaviour (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Kahu, 2013).

In a similar body of work Mann (2001) highlights how feeling like an 'outsider' can be particularly alienating for some students entering into HE; this is consistent with the work of Ball *et al.* (2002) who suggested that perceived social classifications and the make-up of the current student population can be a key consideration when prospective students are choosing a university. Thomas (2002) therefore suggests that institutional habitus, (the dispositions and values held by a HEI) which fosters retention and promotes access of students from a range of background is essential in order to ensure student retention. Inclusive and socially orientated teaching and learning strategies and assessment methods are all specific characteristics of a HEI with this form of habitus (Thomas, 2002). Wilcox, Winn and Fyvie-Gauld (2005) found that influences on retention are multifaceted and complex; they noted that the



social side of HE was particularly prevalent in students' decision to leave university, with social support and problems arising from accommodation being cited as key. As a result of this, social satisfaction and wellbeing can be both seen as consequences of engagement and precursors to engagement (Kahu, 2013); this highlights the importance of social integration for all students and its impacts on academic life.

As students' progress through their programme of study emotional engagement, or student 'affective reactions in the classroom' (Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004, p.63) remain important; Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) suggest that in general students self-concepts or identity across both academic and social facets, which are linked to emotions, become more positive as they progress through HE. Solomonides and Reid (2009) also situate personal feelings of confidence, happiness, imaginative and self-knowledge or a 'sense of being' along with a sense of transformation (learning, understanding and thinking) as core to student engagement. These ontological features predicate disciplinary engagement and the way in which students develop professionalism and form relationships with industry.

Assimilation of cultural and academic capital (Bourdieu, 1984), development and growth are outcomes of engagement and are expressed through student identity. This identity emerges as a result of the developmental journey associated with learning (Daniels & Brooker, 2014) and the interactions that occur between the student and significant others (Holmes, 2013). For many reaching the end of their degrees this identity reflects the relationship between study and employability; it is constructed from both the positive and negative elements of student life, social relations along with personal growth and development (Lairio, Puukari & Kouvo, 2011). The development and identification of employability attributes is an important element of this identity (Daniels & Brooker, 2014); it is therefore essential for students be able to critically reflect on every element of their time in HE in order to facilitate their progression into the labour market, as such the socio-cultural dimension of learning and development

need to be taken into consideration when exploring employability. Identity is therefore of value in trying to understand the diverse nature of the current student population and the factors which shape student development and progression.

## **2.4 Hospitality Graduate Employability**

A focus has emerged in HE whereby students individual employability is elevated in importance and workplace skills have become central to current curricula (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2009). As a result employability or 'work-readiness' has become to some, the major purpose of HE within today's society (Holmes, 2013; Tomlinson, 2010; Tymon, 2013). Following this employability has become a performative function of HE (Boden & Nedeva, 2010); it is a component of major university league tables and the 'Unistats' website publishes more specific information on graduate destinations and salaries in order to provide prospective students with clear and comparable anticipated benefits associated with different courses (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2011). This again supports its importance to the HE environment.

There are a range of different careers which appeal to hospitality students (Chuang & Dellmann-Jenkins, 2010; Chuang *et al.*, 2007; Jenkins, 2001; Lee, Olds & Lee, 2010); Slattery's (2002) discussion as to the boundaries of the hospitality industry supports this by highlighting the ambiguity surrounding operations which may or may not identify with the core concepts of hospitality. However, in line with the unknown and changing trajectories characterised by life in modern times, it has been found that during their time at university, a significant number of hospitality students become less interested in pursuing a career within the industry or leave the industry within a couple of years of graduating (Barron *et al.*, 2007; King, McKercher & Waryszak, 2003; Raybould & Wilkins, 2005; Richardson, 2008; Richardson, 2009; Richardson & Butler, 2012). Thus the transferable nature of development and employability is particularly important within the discipline.

The lack of congruence between the lived reality of employability and the dominant discussion in line with the nature of HE need to be considered in order to establish how employability is managed by hospitality students. There are also a number of inconsistencies in the way that employability is defined and experienced within HE and the graduate labour market.

According to Rothwell and Arnold (2007) employability has both an internal and an external dimension; thus it can be perceived in the context of individual employment options or in the context of organisational or governmental policy *foci*. Within the following sections different interpretations of employability both related to and independent of the labour market will be discussed. Initially the dominant approach to employability will be addressed; this is directly related to some of the previous discussions as to the changing nature of HE, influenced heavily by governmental policy. After this an alternative, more sociological approach, will be discussed along with the notion of graduate identity as a fundamental component of employability.

#### **2.4.1 The Dominant Approach to Considering Employability**

Much of the mainstream literature surrounding HE participation emphasises the increased earnings that can be demanded as a result of investment and acquisition of the skills 'required' within the labour market (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004; Tholen, 2015). This is supported by the political influences on the HE market. Current governmental policy relating to HE provisions and employability in the UK has been firmly aligned with the national economy; by investing in education and skills acquisition economic growth and productivity will be maximised (Becker, 1964; Dearing, 1997; Leitch, 2006). The New Labour Government (1997-2010) laid out plans to increase participation in HE to 50% of all 18-30 year olds in order to ensure that skills gaps within the labour market are met (Department for Education and Skills, 2003) by developing these quickly and efficiently (Drucker, 1969). These 'skills gaps' have been identified as a result of the move towards an economy built on knowledge; here knowledge and industries based on sharing information and ideas (as against goods and services) are the



foundation of the economy and Gross National Product (Drucker, 1969). Graduates are considered as representative of the knowledge worker, therefore an increased number of these highly skilled knowledge workers will accordingly continue to support economic development.

The notion of human capital theory; the knowledge, skills and attributes embodied by an individual which assist in their ability to create economic value (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961) has also elevated the importance of employability to HEIs (HEFCE, 2011; Tomlinson, 2013). This is supported by literature suggesting that both within the UK and USA it has been found that graduates are likely to earn a significant amount more per year (Baum, Ma & Payea, 2010; PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2007; Purcell & Elias, 2004). For many this anticipated return has become a key consideration in decisions concerning further study (Hilmer & Hilmer, 2012), with many citing that the value of attending university is connected to alignment with specific career paths, and this return on investment (Maringe, 2006). While interest in a subject remains important in students' choice (Malgwi, Howe & Burnaby, 2005), the intrinsic motives of 'love for the subject' no longer features as the top reason for course choice (Maringe, 2006, p.476). Increases in tuition fees charged to UG students also supports this idea of personal investment as, through the recent implementation of these (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2011), the financial burden associated with attending university has now been fully placed on the student.

These conceptions of employability are supported by a body of literature discussing employability and focussing on the skills agenda. Supported by policy-making, this perspective on employability is very much the mainstream idiom (Tholen, 2015). A series of papers published by the HEA, suggest that employability is;

*a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy*



(Yorke & Knight, 2006, p.3)

Practical models of employability have been developed in line with this definition; these incorporate skills, experience and knowledge along with psychological constructs such as self-efficacy, and self-esteem (Pool & Sewell, 2007). This definition of employability is directly associated with human capital theory and governmental initiatives that emphasise the graduate *prima*, or specific characteristics that can be expected from those that have completed a HE qualification. Thus by investing in human capital, through education students can expect to see returns on their investment and enhanced employability. Here the individual is entirely responsible for their position in the labour market an ensuring that their skills and abilities match those which are demanded by employers.

Within the hospitality discipline numerous academic and industry related studies have attempted to define the skills and attributes required by the industry (Brownell, 2008; Cheung, Law & He, 2010; Millar, Mao & Moreo, 2010; 2013a; People 1st, 2016; Raybould & Wilkins, 2006; Sisson & Adams, 2013; Spowart, 2011; Testa & Sipe, 2012), however outcomes often have limited consensus. This is consistent with other disciplines and the HE industry as there is limited agreement, in general, as to the skills and attributes required by graduates (Atkins, 1999; Holmes, 2013). According to Atkins (1999) the definition of 'skills' is highly ambiguous, as there is confusion relating to the use of terms such as enterprise / core / key / common / transferable / generic to describe these. As a result of this, discourses on graduate employability and associated skills gaps can become disjointed, due to differences in stakeholder understanding. Thus it is difficult for graduates to know whether they *possess* skills and if these are the *right* skills (Holmes, 2013). The focus on skills and attributes has also led employers to identify increasing skills shortages within the labour market, particularly in terms of technical, practical or job-specific skills (UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2014), hospitality is not an exception to this trend (Harkison, Poulston & Kim, 2011; Millar,



Mao & Moreo, 2010; Raybould & Wilkins, 2006). Thus the aim of HE to provide the skills, attributes and proficiencies necessary for graduates to move between organisations and sectors of the labour market (Dearing, 1997) is not being achieved. Evidence suggests that the transferable utility of degrees is not always recognised by students (Morrison, 2014) and that not all graduates are 'fit for purpose' in terms of their actual skill development (De La Harpe, Radloff & Wyber, 2000), or the skills that they are expected to develop as a part of their degree (Mason *et al.*, 2003).

However, the unknown trajectories of graduates means that it is difficult to learn skills for the future; there is no guarantee that the skills currently classified as generic and incorporated into degree programmes will in fact be appropriate in future employment (Barnett, 2012; Oxenham, 2013). This has raised questions as to whether or not HE is the best place to develop some skills in line with the needs of the labour market (Keep & Mayhew, 2004) or whether HE has adapted sufficiently in order to serve late modernity (Oxenham, 2013). According to Keep (2012) some skills are better developed within the workplace and as such students with work experience often find it easier to gain employment upon completion of their studies (Mason, Williams & Cranmer, 2009). Workplace located skills are not developed in the decontextualized manner associated with HE and are therefore more practically applicable (Morley, 2001). This also demonstrates that the value of a degree alone has only limited worth in the labour market; thus there are limits to the human capital framework (Tomlinson, 2008).

According to Naidoo (2003) focus on the employability agenda has eclipsed the social and cultural objectives traditionally associated with the conception of HE as a public good. The pursuit of 'knowledge, truth or scientific advancement' have been eroded as the overriding purpose of HE (Williams, 2013, p.57). The act of participation (in HE) is often seen as more important than the content with which students are engaging (Williams, 2012) and

transferable, employability skills and values have become a core component of the taught curriculum (QAA, 2008a) as universities move to provide skills for life rather than for a specific job (Dearing, 1997). This is directly tied to the notion of individualism or agency which has been elevated in importance as employability, and success in HE, is measured as a result of individual interaction with the labour market as a result of acquiring these skills. However the conception of employability, where there is a linear link between education and socio-economic attainment does not take into consideration the competitive nature of the labour market (Tholen, 2015). This conception of employability also detracts from the importance of self in the construction of personal capital (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004), and downplays socio-cultural, structural, influences in that way in which people approach work and education (Tholen, 2015). The current purpose of HE has thus become indistinguishable from recent policy reforms. This has shaped both an increased demand for HE, from a diverse range of students (Ball *et al.*, 2002; Bok, 2010) and the way in which these students engage with the curriculum and approach their learning once at university. However, it does not assist in the development of a conception of employability which is representative of experiences within the labour market.

#### **2.4.2 Employability in the Social Domain**

It is evident that the dominant employability discourse ignores discrimination and socio-cultural influences within the labour market (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004; Moreau & Leathwood, 2006; Rivera, 2012; Thomas & Jones, 2007) as they view employability as separate from employment. Thus in order to gain a more holistic interpretation of employability it should be considered as embedded in a social context (Boden & Nedeva, 2010). This is not suggesting that employability should be directly linked to employment, but that it cannot be interpreted in isolation of the structural influences of the employment market which shape decisions and the capacity to act as an autonomous agent. Morley (2001, p.134) suggested that 'the same qualifications and skills have different exchange values for different social



groups' thus there is no consistency in the value of a degree and associated skills for individuals. Brown, Hesketh and Williams (2004) also claim that employability is dependent on how one's talent is judged dependant on others; therefore it is naturally concerned with location and relative competition. For some disadvantaged students, who according to Furlong and Cartmel (2005) tend to remain in their locality with limited mobility, this can become a barrier to 'graduate level' employment regardless of skills and attributes developed through HE. Thus the focus on individual agency and conceived ability for students to develop some form of absolute employability for the knowledge economy is at odds with the realities of the graduate labour market. The simplistic link between employability and the labour market results in a de-contextualised account of employment. It is therefore proposed that the employability be conceived beyond the skills and human capital agenda. However, according to some, discussions surrounding the knowledge economy and increased demand for knowledge workers have not evolved despite their continued influence on political reform (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2009; 2011; Department for Education and Skills, 2003; Leitch, 2006). This has resulted in the nature and prevalence of the knowledge economy being questioned (Keep & Mayhew, 2004) along with the links between education and economic growth (Wolf, 2002).

Conceptions of employability have, for some, led to an over inflated demand for graduates; (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004; Gorand *et al.*, 2006). In some instances, HE has provided employers with a ready trained and cheap supply of talent (Boden & Nedeva, 2010).

Employers have come to expect these 'oven ready' graduates which do not need considerable investment (Atkins, 1999; Boden & Nedeva, 2010) and as such they have maintained a demand for graduates within the labour market. This has led to a number of suggestions surrounding the nature of graduate jobs; for Keep and Mayhew (2004, p.230) the notion of a graduate job no longer has 'hard and fast meanings or boundaries', thus any job that is undertaken by a

graduate could be classified as a graduate job. It has also been suggested that the entry tariff to employment has increased as a result of the oversupply of graduates to the labour market (Warhurst, 2008) thus jobs which previously did not require a graduate to complete them are now being classified as graduate jobs. This results in a lowering of the graduate premium in earnings associated with the completion of a degree (Gorand *et al.*, 2006) and a weakening of qualifications as a currency in the graduate search for employment (Tomlinson, 2008). Within hospitality employment this is particularly salient as Richardson (2009) found that often the hospitality industry does not offer the attributes that students see as important when considering their long term career trajectories; pay, promotion opportunities, career prospects, job security and the working environment are all key areas which can negatively impact on students desire to work within the industry (Josiam *et al.*, 2010; Kim, McCleary & Kaufman, 2010; O'Leary & Deegan, 2005; Richardson, 2009).

Disparity in supply and demand has also meant there are a large number of graduates unemployed (Universities UK, 2010), underemployed within the labour market (Moreau & Leathwood, 2006; Scurry & Blenkinsopp, 2011), or that perceive themselves to be underemployed (Mason *et al.*, 2003; McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011; Watt & Hargis, 2010). Thus they are, or at least feel, underutilised, over-educated, over-skilled, or overqualified for the position with which they are employed (McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011). They may also be in part-time or intermittent employment (Scurry & Blenkinsopp, 2011). This form of employment is often negativity related to personal wellbeing (McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011; Watt & Hargis, 2010), again detracting from some of the benefits associated with participation in HE as the congruence between expectations of graduate level work and experience of this is of particular importance within hospitality (Maxwell, Ogden & Broadbridge, 2010). Thus it is evident that despite HE initiatives some students are not graduating with the capital required by industry. However, Purcell and Elias (2004) advocate that initial graduate underemployment is not



always a reliable gauge of more long-term market outcomes, suggesting that initial transitions into the labour market are not representative of a graduates' long term trajectory.

Other economic impacts have also affected graduate employability. For instance there has been a general trend in young adults choosing not to move out of their family homes until they 'are on a stronger economic footing' (OECD, 2013, p.40) amidst insecurities in the labour market, increasing house prices and increasing levels of debt (Heath & Calvert, 2013; Stone, Berrington & Falkingham, 2012). 'Moving 'home' on completion of a degree also has the potential to limit opportunities within the labour market as those graduates who are less mobile cannot compete for positions within the national labour market (Furlong & Cartmel, 2005) thus there is a potential that skills developed through HE will not be capitalised upon due to more long term concerns faced by graduates, resultant of their underlying *habitus*..

As a result of these influences on employability conceptions of the concept, which consider the structural influences shaping student progression, have been developed. Incorporating a sociological perspective, these approaches connect individual behaviour to society; as such they take into consideration the competitive context of the graduate labour market. The relational and contextual natures of graduate employment (Tholen, 2015; Tomlinson, 2010) are therefore given primacy within definitions of employability.

As a means of considering employability beyond the skills agenda Fugate, Kinicki and Ashforth (2004) suggest that it can be depicted as psycho-social construct. They suggest that it 'embodies individual characteristics that foster adaptive cognition, behaviour, and affect, and enhance the individual-work interface' (Fugate, Kinicki & Ashforth, 2004, p.15). This definition takes into consideration the changing and unknown future that many graduates encounter, individual agency remains important however focus is also given to enhancing the relationship that individuals have with employment or work. Following this the authors propose a heuristic model of employability which incorporates career identity (cognitive career experiences and



aspirations), personal adaptability (willingness, ability and self-efficacy required to change and learn) and social and human capital (ability to draw on social networks, education and experience in order to progress). As a multidimensional construct this notion of employability goes some way to explaining the socially grounded nature of agency.

For some authors (Warhurst, 2008) employment in industries such as hospitality favours those from certain backgrounds. Early socialisation and acquisition of social capital means that many middle class students have the soft skills required for successful and efficient customer service interactions (ibid). They therefore require very little training in order to become valued employees. In accordance with this Brown, Hesketh and Williams (2004) highlight the importance of personal capital within the competitive context of employability. They suggest that personal capital is an amalgamation of hard and soft currencies packaged as a narrative of employability. Employability is therefore concerned with how the self is presented to employers and the value associated with 'being able to present one's experiences, character and accomplishments in ways that conform to the competence profiles scrutinized by employers' (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004, p.36). In light of this, the recent work of Tholen (2015) and Tomlinson (2010) suggest that in order to encapsulate the complexities of employability both structure and agency should be considered.

### **2.4.3 Employability; Structure and Agency**

Issues surrounding structure and agency are a key consideration in the study of employability. Structure refers to the social institutions and networks of social relations which, combined, shape the structure of society (Browne, 2011). These influences have the capacity to shape and influence the opportunities available to individuals. In contrast to this agency describes the capacity of an individual to act of their own free will (Barnes, 2000). The extent to which each influences society is debated within the social sciences.

Contemporary interpretations of society, in modernity (Bauman, 2000b; Beck, Giddens & Lash, 1994; Giddens, 1994) suggests that individuals have greater capacity to exercise agency. According to Beck (1994, p.174) 'the more societies are modernized, the more agents (subjects) acquire the ability to reflect on the conditions of their existence and to change them accordingly'. This increased capacity to act reflexively has been linked to a decline in the impact that existing socio-cultural structures have. Thus the individualised and constantly changing nature of society means that pre-existing social structures cannot be relied upon in order to construct identity (Bauman, 2000b; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Giddens, 1990). Established interpretations of structure have been eroded (Dorling, 2014; Rollock, 2014; Savage *et al.*, 2013); the traditional sociological middle and working classes have been divided as individuals draw on economic, social and cultural capital in different ways (Savage *et al.*, 2013). As a result, agents are increasingly seen as 'free' from the structural constraints which may previously have shaped their trajectories. They are compelled to craft their own individualised identities.

In line with this, the dominant approach to conceptualising employability gives primacy to agency and the individual way in which actors negotiate the labour market. For Tholen (2015) this aggregates the labour market to the level of the individual agent in line with methodological individualism. Thus socio-economic explanations of employability can be sought from the purposive actions of the individual actors who constitute them (Weber, 1968). However, the idea of a reflexively constructed identity has been questioned. Adams (2007) suggests that the notion of a weak social structure is a key criticism of this approach to identity. The social constraints associated with the capacity to act reflectively are not taken into consideration (Meštrović, 1998), thus there is a presumption that all agents are capable of constructing their own, individualised identity. For Meštrović (1998) culture is of particular significance as the meaning of agency and reflexivity vary across different cultures; the

understanding presented by Beck, Giddens and Lash (1994) and Giddens (1991) is specifically relevant to modernity and the western societies that this is associated with. This could impact on hospitality students ability to reflectively construct narratives of employability as UK based programmes often contain a diverse mixture of international students (Barron & Arcodia, 2002; Lashley & Barron, 2006). However by studying in the UK, and engaging with experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) embedded into the curricula, the capacity to act reflectively will be developed as students draw on the dominant cultural framework in order to succeed in their studies. The embedded nature of reflexivity within contemporary societies has become a part of the socio-cultural environment that UK based students inhabit. As a result of this Adams (2006) suggests that reflexivity is in fact habitual; therefore for students the reflexive construction of employability or identity would in fact be an outcome of negotiating the educational *field*. This is supported by the work of Sweetman (2003, p.537) who suggests that 'reflexive engagement is a characteristic of certain forms of contemporary culture '. For Lash (1994) this contemporary culture is defined with a new set of structural conditions acting on the knowledgeable and 'free' agent, within this there are reflexive 'winners' and 'losers'. Thus some members of society are better situated to benefit from reflexivity.

It is therefore apparent, as suggested previously, that by not taking into consideration the structural influences in society which shape *habitus* and the capacity to act reflexively, the agency dominant depiction of employability does not fully encapsulate the lived experiences of graduates transitioning into the labour market. As a result of this the use of structuration theory in conceptualising employability has been said to offer, 'a fuller insight into the social processes involved in the way people construct, negotiate and manage their employability' (Tomlinson, 2010, p.81).

Structuration theory was developed by Giddens (1984) as a means of giving primacy to neither structure or agency, thus neither exist independently of each other (Parker, 2000). Through



the reflexive monitoring of independent action agents have the capacity to effect the social world which they inhabit (Giddens, 1984). According to Giddens, structural influences characterised in an objectified manner, isolated from agents control, as 'ways of acting, thinking and feeling which possess the remarkable property of existing outside the consciousness of the individual' (Durkheim, 1982, p.51) no longer pertain within the modern social world. The free will of agency asserted by subjectivism is also rejected (Parker, 2000). According to Barnes (2000, p.4) 'a free agent acts without restrictions on [her] will: [she] acts without compulsion or coercion'; agents are therefore not limited in the choices that they make. In light of this Giddens (1984) suggests that the agent routinely monitors both their own actions and those of others in order to maintain an understanding of their activity. Through this reflexive process there is a duality of structure; 'the rules and resources drawn upon in the reproduction of social action are at the same time the means of system reproduction' (Giddens, 1984, p.19). This is achieved through both practical consciousness and discursive consciousness; what is said and what is instinctively done (Giddens, 1984). Agency is concerned with both the intended and unintended consequences of actions (Giddens, 1979); these are the result of subjective processes sustained by an agent (Cohen, 1989). The individual only needs to be tacitly aware of skills and procedures in order to reflexively monitor them at the level of practical consciousness; this 'knowledgeability' represents what agents do and why they do it (Giddens, 1984). However, not all of these acts may be discursively characterised and interpreted by agents (Cohen, 1989) therefore not all of a student's actions can be explained through discursive reflexivity.

In a similar vein, the work of Bourdieu and negotiated order also addresses the structure-agency debate. Bourdieu (1984) suggests that that the middle and upper classes of society have been capitalising on embodied forms of capital throughout the twentieth century

through the negotiation of *field* and *habitus*. *Fields* represent social networks and according to Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p.101) [emphasis original];

*the strategies of agents depend on their position in the field, that is, in the distribution of the specific capital, and on the perception that they have of the field depending on the point of view they take **on** the field as a view taken from a point **in** the field*

This, in congruence with the work of Giddens, highlights the relational nature of society and the educational *field*, and the way in which agents position themselves in relation to peers.

Within Bourdieu's work the objective *field* (structure) only exist as a result of agents' interaction. This is supported by King (2000, p.420) who suggests any action performed by an individual 'is derived from their socially created sense of practice learnt from other individuals'. As a result of socialisation within a *field* and exposure to objective conditions, agents develop dispositions, tastes and preferences; these are referred to as *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). *Habitus* is embodied and internalised by agents in such a way that leads to an objective division into classes. Thus society becomes divided; based on social class, age, and gender; this function occurs below the level of explicit consciousness and discourse (Bourdieu, 1984). The implications of this are naturally embedded into recruitment processes and the ability to obtain graduate level employment; this was confirmed by Rivera (2012) who found that elite professional service firms prioritised cultural similarities; thus hiring managers often used themselves and their own skills and experiences when assessing both hard and soft skills of job applicants.

When employability is considered in the context of the social domain and structuration based approaches the structural characteristics of society are deemed important. Student's agency is based on a reflexive understanding of themselves and the wider social world through which meaning is generated; their purposeful, intentional actions in light of this are highlighted (Tomlinson, 2010). Within this understanding graduates are not seen to act in a homogenous manner; instead individual circumstances and life histories are taken into consideration. As a



result structural influences such as class, gender and ethnicity which impact both learning (Arum & Roksa, 2011; Kuh *et al.*, 2007; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) and employability (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004; Furlong & Cartmel, 2005; Morley, 2007) are used to help explain decisions of agency. Thus as individuals navigate social structures parameters for action are set in relation to these; therefore the way employability is approached is mediated by socio-cultural perceptions and experiences. The relational and changing relationship that subjects have with the labour market is therefore taken into consideration.

#### **2.4.4 Employability and Self-Identity**

Employability as a form of identity is one means of considering the way in which individuals negotiate employment and future development upon completion of their studies. According to some, identity is integral to life; a central character of our time (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). It is, on a practical level, concerned with 'synthesising relationships of similarity and difference' (Jenkins, 2014, p.19) and is fundamentally concerned with the link between self and society and the way in which self is presented to others (Goffman, 1990). For Giddens (1991) it is also representative of the existential questions which individuals ask of themselves; 'what to do?' 'how to act?' and 'who to be?'. Despite some of the claims of modernity the notion of identity is not a new one. Within the 20<sup>th</sup> century authors such as Mead, James, Cooley and Goffman discussed identity in the context of sociology and psychology; following this Holland *et al.* (1998) and Jenkins (2014) suggests that in order to understand individuality, collectively and their relationship in sociology identity and identification must be understood. Thus the study of identities needs to be both broad and specific in context; for Holland *et al.* (1998, p.7) this is;

*the development identities and agency specific to practice and activities situated in historically contingent socially enacted, culturally constructed 'worlds': recognised fields or frames of social life*



Identity in relation to employability therefore represents time spent in the 'world' of academia and the impending transition into the wider 'world of work'. Brown, Hesketh and Williams (2004); Fugate, Kinicki and Ashforth (2004) and Tomlinson (2010) support this by exclusively linking identity, along with other components, to employability. Holmes (2001) also suggests that graduate identity can be used as a means of developing a new conceptualisation of employability. Another body of literature discusses the importance of career identity (LaPointe, 2010; Meijers, 1998; Meijers & Lengelle, 2012; Weber & Ladkin, 2011), a graduate's pre-professional identity (Jackson, 2016) and identity within the workplace (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Within each of these bodies of literature experiences are assimilated into meaningful structures which link motivation, interest and competencies to employment (Meijers, 1998).

There are also a number of broad issues surrounding social identity which can be used in order to highlight the importance of identity to future employment and employability. One example, specifically relevant to hospitality graduates (due to the balance amongst male and female hospitality graduates) is that of gender. Evidence suggests that this element of identity can have a bearing on future employment prospects, and will shape the way in which graduates approach the labour market (Fawcett Society, 2014; Fetterolf & Eagly, 2011; Hausmann, Tyson & Zahidi, 2012). Thus the identity of graduates' can be seen as an important component of employability.

Identity in itself can be interpreted through either a functionalist or interpretivist perspective. Functionalist approaches to self-identity represent a static sense of being. According to Collinson (2003, p.527) 'western thinking has traditionally viewed human beings as unitary, coherent and autonomous individuals who are separate and separable from social relations and organizations'. Literature suggests that while identities may change there is a 'true' self



that exists. There are two key theories associated with this approach to interpreting identity; social identity theory and identity or role theory.

Identity theory and social identity theory are similar in that the reflexive self categorises, or identifies, itself in relation to social categories or classifications (Stets & Burke, 2000).

Developed by Tajfel and Turner in the 1970s as a means of explaining intergroup behaviour (Postmes & Branscombe, 2010) social identity theory situates self-categorisation as a cognitive function related to perceived similarities between the self and group members in relation to the 'Other' (Turner, 1982). Identity is thus formed through affiliation with different social groupings or categories and the way in which, within these, perceptions, self-esteem, attitudes and behaviours are shared (Turner, 1982). An individual's identity or self concept is essentially unique as it is comprised of multiple social categories (Stets & Burke, 2000). It is therefore possible, by using this approach, for students to identify with a 'graduate identity' and be categorised as such within society.

The roots of identity theory and role theory can be found in symbolic interactionism (Burke & Stets, 2009; Stryker, 2006). The interaction between 'me' (internalised attitudes of others) and 'I' (the response of an individual to others) (Mead, 1934) situate identity as a social and relational construct; thus according to Turner (2013, p.331), when considering symbolic interactionist theories of identity, 'people's behaviours in interaction with others in social settings are governed by their conception of themselves'. Unlike social identity theory which relies on 'uniformity of perception' individuals categorize themselves as occupants of roles, thus there are differences in the perceptions and actions associated with a role (Stets & Burke, 2000, p.226). Role identity theory focuses on the concepts of commitment and identity salience (Stryker & Serpe, 1982). Commitment is concerned with the degree that relationships (with others) is dependent on an individual's identity; the greater the dependence the more committed an individual will be to maintaining a particular identity (Turner, 2013); it is



therefore concerned with social networks. Identity salience is concerned with conceptions of the self. According to Stryker and Serpe (1982, p.207) identities are organised into salience hierarchies;

*an identity's location in the salience hierarchy will affect its threshold for being invoked in situations and thus the likelihood that behaviour called for by the identity will ensue*

From this definition it is clear that when an identity of employability, being employable or 'graduate identity' is more salient *vis-à-vis* other identities the graduate will value the status and roles associated with 'graduateness' above other identities that may be embodied. However, commitment to such an identity will only pertain if significant others value the contribution of this identity, thus through the notion of role theory if a graduate is not employed in a position requiring a degree then they may lose their graduate identity. The notion of this form of graduate identity as a construct of employability suggests that there is some degree of absolute employability and homogeneity between graduates; thus in being a graduate an individual will be employable. However, structural influences impact graduates in different ways and this conception of identity does not take this into consideration; a more personally interpreted notion of identity is therefore required in order for it to contribute to discussions of employability.

Sitting in contrast to functionalist conceptions of identity a more interpretivist approach to studying graduate identity can also be taken. Here identity is presented through language. There are two key approaches to identity as language. A post-structuralist conception embeds identity in discourse; this linguistic approach situates meaning as shared and co-constructed. For authors such as Foucault (1972), language is one of the most significant forces which shapes experience; this is subjectively interpreted in order to construct identity (Danaher, Schirato & Webb, 2002). Identity therefore is;

*an emergent construction, the situated outcome of a rhetorical and interpretive process in which interactants make situationally motivated selections from socially*



*constituted repertoires of identificational and affiliational resources and craft these semiotic resources into identity claims for presentation to others*

(Bauman, 2000a, p.1)

Thus, like discourse itself identity is fluid and flexible, changing dependant on situations and circumstances. It is regulated by the self as subjects embody dominant discourses and situate themselves in relation to these (Adams, 2007); identity is, in this instance, the relationship between subjects and discursive practices (Hall, 2000). According to Hardy, Lawrence and Grant (2005) a discursive approach places attention not on the intentions and attitudes of individuals but on observable linguistic practices. It can also, according to Harré (1991) be representative of both personal identity and presented identity .

The emergence of identity from within discourse means that they (identities) are affected by modalities of power; according to Hall (2000) difference and exclusion are thus of importance as subjects relate to the Other at both micro and macro levels (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000).

The process of identity formation is complex and multifaceted and produces a; 'socially negotiated, temporary outcome of the dynamic interplay between internal strivings and external prescriptions...between regulation and resistance' (Ybema *et al.*, 2009, p.301).

However, for some there is a distinct undervaluing of agency within the notion of the regulated self (Adams, 2007). The importance of the panoptican as a metaphor in Foucault's writings (Foucault, 1977) highlights the disciplinary nature of society and the conscious recognition of power dynamics within the social world. This panoptican represents the structural constraints governing agency and highlights a need to balance these within conceptions of identity related to employability. As a result of the focus on structural constraints within many of these post-structural approaches to identity, LaPointe (2010) highlights the requirement for a more reflexive approach to identity be considered. These more reflexive approaches to identity are often described as socio-cultural.



The linguistic perception of identity is distinctly different from the socio-cultural perspective (Hall, 2012). For Vågan (2011), discourse analysis needs to consider questions of presupposed knowledge. Thus the cultural world needs to be considered in the construction of graduate identity. For Giddens (1984; 1990; 1991), this recognition of the social and cultural world can be achieved through reflexivity. The construction of identity through this process is a core component of his work (Giddens, 1991). In light of the modern times that we live in he suggests that reflexivity;

*consists in that fact that social practices are constantly examined and re- formed in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character*

(Giddens, 1990, p.38)

In linking reflexivity to self-identity it is suggested that it [self-identity] is 'routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual' (Giddens, 1991, p.52); it is a flexible and fluid construct based on becoming, as against the passive being (Gergen & Gergen, 1983). This approach to identity is orientated around the 'life project' of construction and exploration, language has a constructive role in the formation of identities in this context (Wajcman & Martin, 2002). For Giddens this occurs through the ability to maintain a particular, continuous narrative (Giddens, 1991). Here the notion of narrative represents an event or series of events; it is essentially constructed from a story (an event) and the subjective interpretation and representation of these events through narrative discourse (Abbott, 2008). While the reaction of others and an individual's behaviour are important in the construction of identity the primary focus of this approach to identity is concerned with the biography present in a narrative as it is assumed that;

*the individual's biography, if she is to maintain regular interaction with others in the day-to-day world, cannot be wholly fictive. It must continually integrate events which occur in the external world and sort them into a 'story' about the self*

(Giddens, 1991, p.54)



This idea of identity being bound to a story or narrative has been used extensively in the construction of career (Bujold, 2004; Cohen, 2006; LaPointe, 2010; Meijers, 1998; Meijers & Lengelle, 2012). From both a social constructionist (Cohen, 2006) and constructivist (Bujold, 2004) philosophical perspective evidence suggests that the use of narrative is valuable in developing a better understanding of career and career identity. The idea of a career identity provides a representation of career experiences and aspirations (Fugate, Kinicki & Ashforth, 2004) which helps an individual negotiate and conduct oneself within the dynamic boundaries of contemporary careers (LaPointe, 2010; Meijers & Lengelle, 2012). This depiction is similar to that of employability as emphasis is placed on negotiating transitions into other employment or progression.

Within this narrative interpretation of identity the development and identification of employability attributes is important (Daniels & Brooker, 2014). Identity emerges as a result of the developmental journey associated with learning (Daniels & Brooker, 2014) and the interactions that occur between the student and the social world which they inhabit. For many reaching the end of their degrees identity thus reflects the relationship between study and employability; it is constructed from both the positive and negative elements of student life and social relations along with personal growth and development (Lairio, Puukari & Kouvo, 2011). For some, employability is however not the most important consideration. Nairn and Higgins (2007) identified young people as social subjects who present their identities and desires through a cultural economy discourse, which mediated the impact of economic rationality. Not all students want to be caught up in the competition associated with labour markets, with many, particularly female graduates opting to pursue 'lower entry jobs markets where their anticipated trajectories would follow a smoother, more stable path' (Tomlinson, 2007, p.298). The importance of friends, family and work life balance therefore needs to be



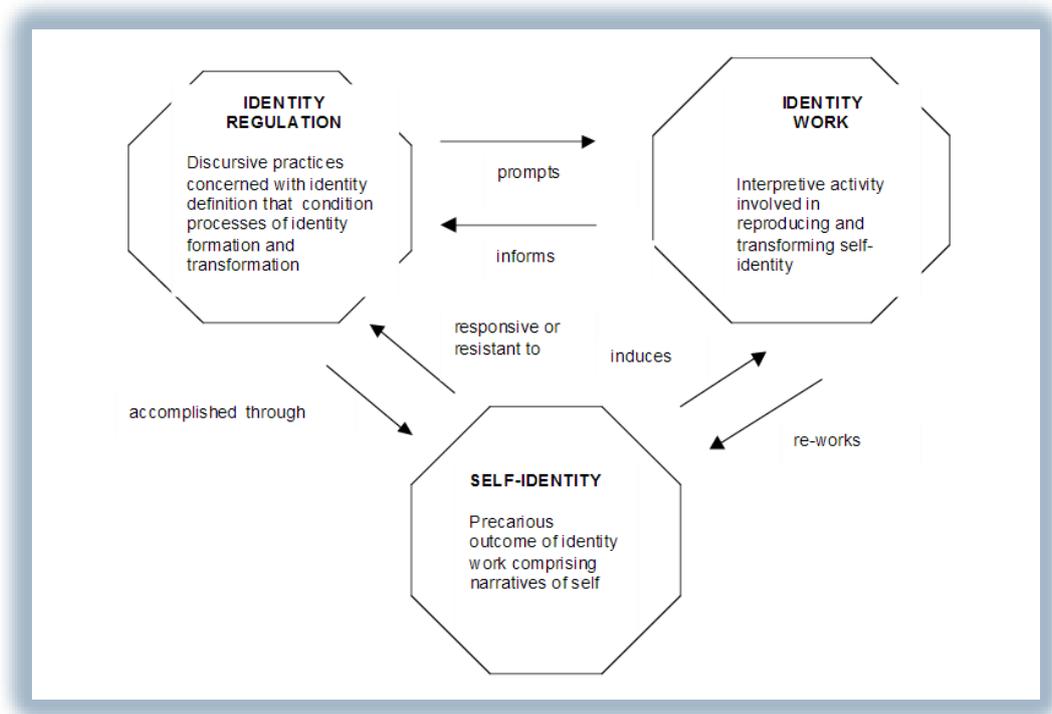
taken into consideration when discussing employment (Martin, 2005; Morton, 2002; Sheahan, 2005).

Identity can be seen as important in the way that students and graduates' construct their employability. The narrative approach to identity in particular allows subjects to draw on the socially situated nature of learning and the unconscious acquisition of capital throughout their time in HE. The way in which students prepare to negotiate the graduate labour market by reflexively considering their capacity to exhibit agency and the structural constraints imposed upon themselves provides some degree of balance to the importance of each construct.

The work of some authors have attempted to combine the reflexive narrative approach and the discursive approaches to identity. Davies and Harré (1990) for example utilise the notion of positioning within speech. They suggest that in speaking and acting from a particular stand point individuals not only reflect on their history, but position themselves in relation to Others, resulting in a linguistically orientated social analysis (Davies & Harré, 1990). Other here, is intentionally written with a capital 'O', in line with the phenomenological understanding of the Other as an opposition to Self. The Other is different from social identity and identity of the self yet incorporates the history, being, and culture of another person; within sociological inquiry understanding the Other is often a central component of research (Schwandt, 2007). In addition to the presence of Others within a narrative individuals also position themselves in relation to the audience in order to shape how they are understood (Bamberg, 1997). This has been supported by the work of Wortham (2000) and Hermans (2001) who also advocate a positioning approach within the construction of self. Thus despite the autobiographical nature of narratives, interactional factors and the influence of the audience also have a bearing on the resultant discourse and should be taken into consideration. Thus the way in which a self is enacted within a narrative is as important as how the self is represented (Bamberg, 1997; Wortham, 2000).

The work of Hermans (2001); Hermans and Dimaggio (2007) and Grossen (2010) draw on a dialogical perspective in order to analyse this interaction. Based on the work of Bahktin this perspective argues that there are a number of different i-positions that can be occupied by the same person. These positions may stand in agreement or disagreement with other i-positions, they may also oppose, contradict or challenge each other (Hermans, 2001). The dialogic self is however always tied to a particular time and space. The interaction, broader social environment and Others present therefore all influence discourses. For Bahktin there is ‘an “i-for myself” (how I feel from inside to my own consciousness) and an “i-for-the-other” (how I look from the outside to someone else) (Grodén, Kreiswirth & Szeman, 2012, p.35). Only the latter of these two perspectives is palpable, yet identity is essentially bound between them.

In a slightly different manner work such as that by Alvesson and Willmott (2002) and Watson (2008) also base analysis of identity on a discursive approach, however in both of these instances broad organisational and managerial discourses are analysed in conjunction with self-identities within the process of ‘identity work’. Figure 2:1 demonstrates the interaction between self-identity, identity regulation and identity work. As an approach to considering identity this model includes the reflexive ‘identity project’ approach; the linguistic choices made as noted in the post-structural and dialogic approaches and the way in which these are linked. For Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003, p.1165) this notion of identity work refers to individuals being engaged with ‘forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness’.



**Figure 2:1 Identity Regulation, Identity Work and Self Identity (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002, p.627)**

Research conducted by Holmes (2001), approached graduate identity, drawing on the interactionist approach associated with discourse. This study was based on the work of Harré and Secord (1972) thus there is a distinction between activity and practice in understanding performance [of identity]. As a result the situated nature of identity for Holmes (2001) is based on self-identification (of the graduate) and social ascription (from significant others / employers) in the construction of a graduate identity. Holmes (2001, p.115) suggests;

*different modalities of emergent identity arise from the interaction between claim / disclaim from the individual and affirmation / disaffirmation from significant others*

Here the employability of students leaving university represents an indeterminate identity; as the students transition into employment they only develop a true 'graduate identity' once employed in a 'graduate job' and significant others have 'affirmed' the identity claim. This approach represents the processual nature of employability and the developmental nature of identity (Holmes, 2013). It is apparent that when considering identity as a component of



employability both the reflexive, narrative and interactive approaches can be used. However, consideration needs to be given to the structural influences on student's transitions and employers perceptions in order to gain a better understanding of employability. The reflexive nature of identity and both the conscious and unconscious acts of identity work need to be taken into consideration as individuals narrate their experience and development in order to postulate a more holistic understanding of the way in which educational narratives contribute to employability.

In transcending the structure agency divide, by situating employability beyond the individual, this approach naturally encapsulates some of the foundational components of identity formation. Who to 'be' and how to present oneself to potential employers through identity thus have greater salience in the debated notion of employability. In considering identity as a life project, organised around on-going trajectories (Giddens, 1991) employability becomes just an element of self-identity. It is therefore proposed that in order to gain a better understanding of hospitality student employability that the reflexive construction of narratives be considered in analysis.

## **2.5 A New Understanding; the development of hospitality graduates' narratives of employability**

### **2.5.1 Introduction**

The literature presented in this chapter has reviewed hospitality education in HE. The hospitality curriculum and some of the market forces impacting upon this have been discussed. Following this, learning and the constructivist nature of HE will be explored so as to identify opportunities for students to enhance the benefits which can be gained from HE. For many employability is a key outcome of participation in HE; this has not been contested, however, questions have been raised as to the extent that the current hospitality curriculum supports employability.



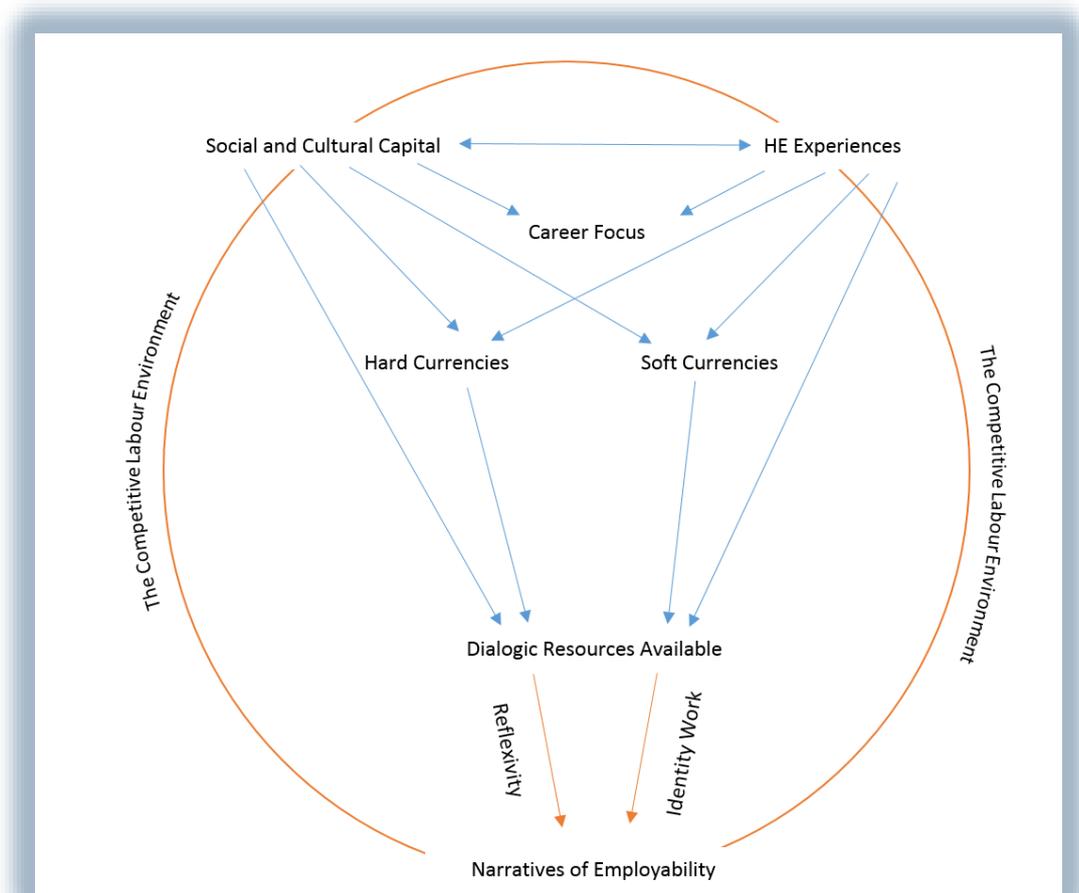
In discussing both learning and employability it is clear that structural influences need to be taken into consideration in order to gain a holistic understanding of student development. There is a limited volume of work relating to the socio-cultural dimension of student engagement making it an under researched area (Kahu, 2013). Much of the current research on student engagement and the constructivist nature of learning in HE has been conducted from a behavioural perspective, or has identified the relationship between engagement and cognitive outcomes as consequences of engagement. Where sociological research has been conducted in this area studies have focused on specific groups of students, for example; those at single institutions (Heikkilä & Lonka, 2006; Tomlinson, 2008); non-traditional students (Ball *et al.*, 2002; Ball, Reay & David, 2002; Reay *et al.*, 2001; Schuetze & Slowey, 2002); mature students (Kahu *et al.*, 2014) or those living at home (Christie, 2007; Gürüz, 2011; Holdsworth, 2009). Alongside the core hospitality curriculum engagement with extracurricular activities (Roulin & Bangerter, 2011; Stuart *et al.*, 2008; Stuart *et al.*, 2011; Tchibozo, 2007) and employment experiences (Mason, Williams & Cranmer, 2009; Yorke & Knight, 2006) can contribute to enhanced employability and as such increased opportunity within the labour market. These experiences are used by students in order to help construct their employability alongside degree credentials (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004; Tomlinson, 2007; 2008). However participation in these activities varies amongst students and some identify with these additional experiences to a greater degree than others. The extent to which degree credentials dominate an individual's employability and identity therefore needs to be considered in greater detail.

The 'skills agenda' dominates much of the discussion surrounding hospitality graduate employability, and as such, structural influences and student or graduates' identity are not taken into consideration. It is therefore suggested that a more sociological interpretation of employability is required in order to better conceptualise hospitality graduates' transitions out

of HE. In order to achieve this both structure and agency need to be taken into consideration; thus a student's background and how this influences their choices needs to be included. The duality of structure and agency in line with structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) and Bourdieu's (1977, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) work on capital, will therefore be considered. In addition to this identity as a component of employability should be considered. This relates to the way in which employability is presented and perception of self that an individual wants to portray in different situations. The notions of identity work and reflexive understanding of self are important here.

### **2.5.2 Towards a Model of Employability**

In order to inform this study a visual representation of employability and its components has been developed. This will help to inform the research questions and subsequent design of the research methods in order to develop a new understanding of hospitality graduates' employability and thus achieve the aim of this thesis. It incorporates the key elements of employability, as discussed throughout this chapter, and the way in which these are interrelated.



**Figure 2:2 The Development of Narratives of Employability**

Figure 2:2 therefore illustrates the way in which narratives of employability are developed and the interrelated nature of concepts discussed within this chapter. At the top of the model an individual's social and cultural capital, derived from their socio-cultural background and existing *habitus* is represented. In part this is developed prior to attending university. The inclusion of capital within the model recognises the importance of background in the development of employability and ensures that the model is grounded in the broader social world and structural influences are taken into consideration when narratives are crafted and analysed. The development and changes in this capital and *habitus* as a result of engagement within the *field* of hospitality education and HE more generally are important in terms of the benefits of HE and potential to enact social mobility (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). This capital

sits alongside the students HE experience. By connecting HE experience and capital with a two-way arrow the model demonstrates how (as discussed in Section 2.3.2) participation in HE can aid the development of social and cultural capital, influencing existing *habitus* so as to benefit individuals within the labour market. However, the students existing background and personal circumstances can mediate this influence, and the way in which they engage with programmes (Arum & Roksa, 2011; Coates, 2007; Coates, 2009; Kahu, 2013; Kahu *et al.*, 2014; Kuh, 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), thus the benefits of participating in HE can be different for individuals of differing socio-cultural backgrounds. Both of these elements transcend the competitive labour environment, not least because factors influencing both education and the socio-cultural world are not limited to the business environment and development of employability.

Both socio-cultural background and HE experiences are linked to a graduate's career focus. The terms career focus has been used, as against career orientation in order to highlight the immediacy of the concept and how this may change and develop over time. Career orientation often implies a longer trajectory and would therefore consider a life-long approach to career. This element of the model represents the psychological and motivational aspects of employability and career development. Here the importance of self-efficacy, attitude and individual agency can be noted in relation to career. The capacity to act in an agentive manner makes career different from that of Others (Ladkin & Kichuk, 2017). Prior experience within the industry or related occupations can also be considered here as this demonstrates commitment to or knowledge of a specific career path. These motivational factors and experience will also shape the way in which hard and soft skills are developed. A student's commitment to a specific career, and knowledge of the skills and attributes required in order to pursue that career, has the potential to shape the activities that they engage with and thus the way, and extent, to which they develop both hard and soft currencies required for employment.



The development of both hard and soft currencies is influenced by the socio-economic background of an individual and their HE experience. As suggested in Section 2.3 the way in which students spend their time outside of the classroom, the activities that they engage with and their degree programme in itself all contribute to the development of skills necessary for future employment (Arum & Roksa, 2011; Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tomlinson, 2008). However, the way in which these skills are discussed is also a key element of employability. Being able to effectively articulate the skills developed and the way that these may be of benefit to a business is an essential component of employability (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004). As noted previously the dialogic resources available and ability to package a narrative is influenced not just by the skills that an individual claims to possess, but also the factors that have affected the development of these. Thus this central component of the model (dialogic resources) is integrally linked to both the students' background and their HE experience as well as the skills developed.

The dialogic resources available to discuss and narrate employability could be deemed an appropriate conclusion or end point of the model. However, in line with the interactional nature of discourse (Bakhtin, 1981; Grossen, 2010; Hermans, 2001; Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007; Holquist, 1990) and the requirement for reflexivity (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Beck, Giddens & Lash, 1994; Giddens, 1991) within the development of employability, these elements have also been included. The arrows here have been presented in a different colour in order to represent the interactional nature of this section of the model. Reflection and identity work have thus been included in order to highlight how narratives may change dependant on the situation and influence of the Other. This process of considering and articulating identity in itself contributes to the presentation and regulation of self-identity (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). At the bottom of the model narratives of employability are situated. These are developed by graduates and used in order to represent employability.



They incorporate reflection and are understood by the audience. These narratives also transcend the competitive business environment, this demonstrates how other influences can also shape an individual's narrative as they not only consider their employability but other factors within their life and how these impact employability. Positional competition and socio-cultural constraints and prejudices within the labour market are therefore taken into consideration by including this element. It is also important to note that there is a shared responsibility for employment and career, as linked to employability, between organisations and individuals (Ladkin & Kichuk, 2017).

### **2.5.3 Research Questions**

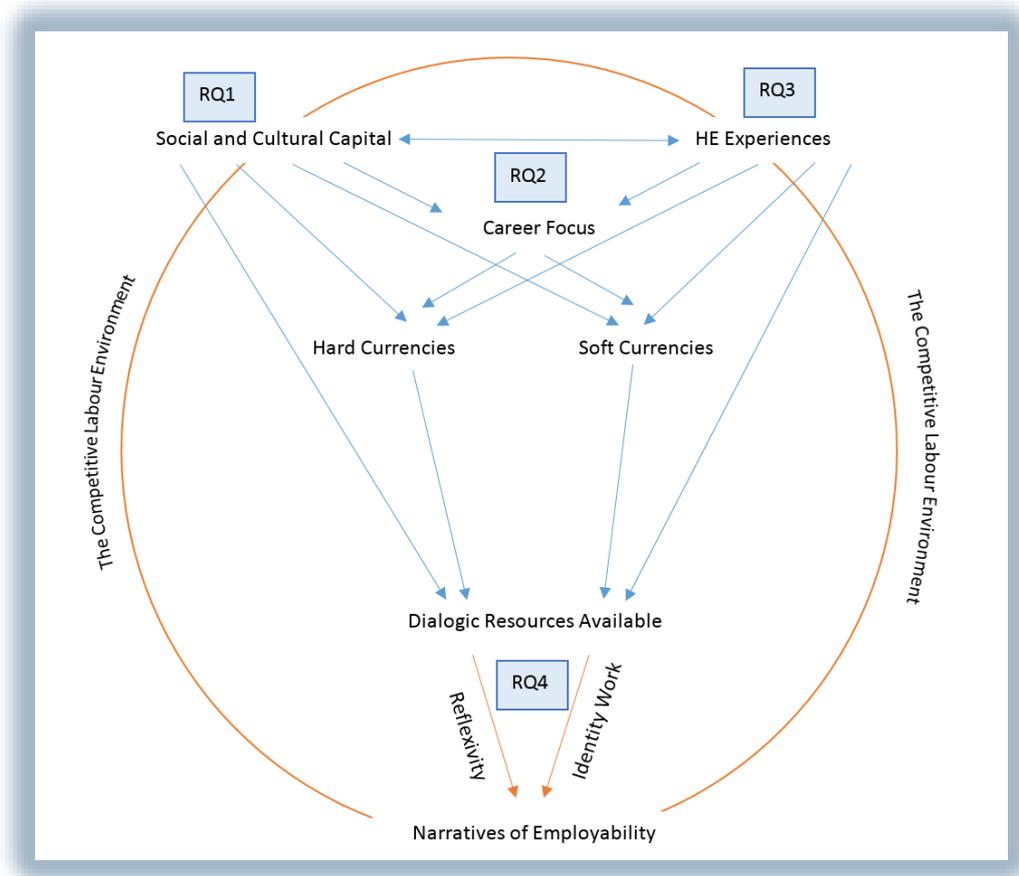
As stated in the introduction (Section 1.3) the aim of this research is to develop a new understanding of the way in which hospitality students and recent graduates construct their employability. This will ultimately inform policy and curriculum development for hospitality education. However, in order to achieve this a number of research questions must be identified in order to shape the practical, methodological component of this thesis. Thus drawing on the model presented above a number of research questions have been identified. Figure 2:3 illustrates how these questions directly related to the model.

RQ1 *Where do UK hospitality graduates come from?*

This question will help to gather essential information in order to help inform the rest of the study. Gender, age, ethnic origin and prior experience of HE for example are all considered structural influences on both HE participation, experience and subsequent employability. Therefore, basic demographic data will be collected from each individual participating in the study in order to frame analysis within the broad social environment.

RQ2 *How do hospitality graduates narrate their career focus?*





**Figure 2:3 The Development of Narratives of Employability and Situation of Research Questions**

In order to establish the extent to which graduates were focused on a career in hospitality and the likelihood that they may subsequently pursue a career within the industry will be established with this question. Specifically the questions; *‘What motivated final year hospitality students and recent graduates to complete a hospitality based degree?’* and, *‘What do final year hospitality students and recent graduates intend on doing upon completion of their studies?’* will therefore be addressed in answering this question. Despite the vocational nature of hospitality management qualifications this research question will establish if the hospitality industry offers a career trajectory which appeals to graduates. It is anticipated that this will influence the way in which narratives of employability are constructed.

RQ3 *What have final year students and recent graduates done during their time in HE in order to enhance their employability?*

This question will highlight the aspects of graduates' HE experience that have contributed to the development of employability. It will include programme specific and extra-curricular activities. Alongside this the positional competition that is recognised by graduates will be explored; thus how graduates perceive their employability narratives in relation to Others will be considered.

RQ4 *How do final year hospitality students and recent hospitality graduates construct narratives of employability, as understood in the social domain?*

Drawing on the discursive practices employed by individuals this question will establish the way in which narratives of employability are constructed and deployed in order to project employability. The key influences upon these narratives will also be identified in order to help better understand hospitality graduates. The interactional nature of employability construction will also be considered in answering this question, thus positional competition and the influence of the researcher in terms of the way questions are answered will also be noted.

## **2.6 Concluding Comments**

This chapter has considered key literature surrounding the construction of employability in hospitality graduates. As a result a model has been presented in order to inform the development of research methodologies appropriate in order to answer the research questions and achieve the ultimate aim of this thesis in developing a new understanding of employability in hospitality graduates. The following chapter (Chapter Three) will discuss the way in which this research project will be executed based on the literature presented here. Following this results and discussions related to the research questions will be answered in the final chapters of this thesis.



## **3 Researching Graduate Employability**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the theoretical framework and methodological choices made in order to inform data collection and analysis within this study. The rationale behind the decisions made with regards to methodologies, selection of research methods and sampling technique will be discussed. The work presented in Chapter Two identifies the theoretical basis for using narrative as a means of understanding employability. It has been argued that by taking into consideration socio-cultural contexts and the individual, narratives provide a means of understanding structure, agency and identity within constructions of employability. There are however different interpretations of narrative (Chase, 2005; Czarniawska, 2004; Frank, 2010; Riessman, 2008), linked to different research philosophies, and different ways of 'doing' narrative analysis (Chase, 2005; Riessman, 2008). Lincoln and Guba (2000) also suggest that research should be underpinned by a clear set of beliefs, a worldview. Therefore, initially the ideological and epistemological assumptions underpinning this research will be discussed. The theoretical perspective identified will directly inform research design and the specific techniques and procedures used in order to gather and interpret data (Crotty, 1998). The way in which data will be presented in latter chapters will also be noted in order to assist with the reading and understanding of the remainder of this thesis.

### **3.2 'Constructing' Graduate Employability; philosophical underpinnings**

In order to understand how hospitality graduates construct employability upon completing their degrees this thesis will be underpinned by a worldview compatible with the literature presented in previous chapters. In order to develop a substantive understanding of a subject area Howell (2013) suggests that a distinct paradigm of inquiry must be adopted. This paradigm represents the underlying values and worldview which support the generation of

new knowledge (Howell, 2013; Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). The following section will detail this paradigm of enquiry.

Congruent with the aim to better understand employability this research will be underpinned by a model of study that sits in contrast to the positivist orthodoxy which has traditionally dominated research paradigms (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000; Bryman, 2012; Crotty, 1998).

Positivism, as an underlying paradigm of enquiry is often associated with hard science and a quest for truth (Denzin & Lincoln, 2012). However, despite their credibility and historic origins within the *field* of research these positivistic empirical studies are not always appropriate.

Qualitative approaches aim to gain a better understanding of the subject matter at hand, as such they employ a range of interpretive practices in order to illuminate the world around them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2012; Silverman, 2013). Instead of attempting to discover some sort of objective reality whereby the researcher is detached from the investigation, qualitative approaches highlight the relationship between individuals within the research process and locally constructed nature of findings (Howell, 2013). The following table (Table 3:1), adapted from the work of Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2013) and Howell (2013), outlines the basic beliefs and positions associated with key research paradigms. The approaches noted here are not exclusive to each specific paradigm and there is often some overlap between interpretations of paradigmatic components. The table includes reference to: ontological assumptions (the nature of being); epistemology (how we know what we know) and methodology (the way in which these are investigated). The nature of knowledge, inquiry aim and quality criteria have also been included in order to elaborate on the practical implications of each theoretical worldview.

In drawing on a paradigm of enquiry situated within the qualitative *field* this research does not privilege elite or *a priori* forms of knowledge which underpin more critical or normative forms of research (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000). More specifically, this research will be underpinned by



Item	Positivism	Post Positivism	Critical Theory	Constructivist/ Constructionist
Ontology	<i>Naïve</i> Realism- 'real' reality but apprehensible.	Critical Realism- 'real' reality but only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehensible.	Historical Realism- reality shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, gender and ethnic values that are crystalized over time	Relativism- local and specific constructed and co-constructed reality. May be dependent on person / group and changeable.
Epistemology	Dualist/ objectivist; findings true; investigator and investigation are totally separate	Modified dualist/ objectivist; critical tradition/ community; findings probably true; abandonment of total separation between investigator and investigation	Transactional/ subjectivist; value mediated findings; investigator and investigation linked.	Transactional/ subjectivist; created findings. Interactive researcher – participant role; interaction uncovers meaning and insight.
Methodology	Experimental/ Manipulative; only quantitative methods	Modified experimental/ manipulative; pursues falsification of hypothesis, primarily quantitative methods; some qualitative methods.	Requirement for dialogue between investigator and subject; structures may be changeable; actions affect change.`	Hermeneutical / dialectical; create a consensus through individual constructions, including the construction of the researcher
Inquiry Aim	Explanation; prediction and control.		Critique and Transformation; restitution and emancipation.	Understanding; reconstruction.
Nature of Knowledge	Verified hypothesis established as facts or law.	Non-falsified hypothesis that are probable facts and law.	Structural / historical insights.	Individual / collective reconstructions coalescing around consensus.
Quality Criteria	Conventional benchmarks of rigor; internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity.		Historical situatedness; erosion of ignorance and misapprehension; action stimulus.	Trustworthiness and authenticity; including catalyst for action.

**Table 3:1 Research Paradigms; adapted from Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2013) and Howell (2013)**



constructionism. Writings on constructionism discuss it in terms of being both an ontological (Bryman, 2012) and epistemological (Crotty, 1998; Schwandt, 2000) consideration. This is somewhat consistent with the work of Hacking (1999), who suggests that a broad array of philosophical and sociological ideas can be encapsulated within the term. Constructionism, like other theoretical underpinnings within the *field* of social science research relies on the use of language in the making of meaning (Burr, 1995).

It is important to note the spelling of constructionism here, as it is often used interchangeably with the term constructivism (Bryman, 2012; Hacking, 1999; Patton, 2002). Qualitative career and employability based research can be based on constructivist perspectives and it has been suggested that the use of constructivism has grown exponentially, particularly within the psychological disciplines (Young & Collin, 2004). Within this paradigm of enquiry the focus of meaning making occurs through cognitive processes centred on the individual. Agency is therefore given primacy as the process of knowledge production occurs within an individual. The work of Bruner (1990), a social constructivist, argues that social relationships influence this individual construction of knowledge. However, this work upholds dualistic assumptions despite its recognition of the social dimensions of knowledge construction therefore the individual's internal state can still be separated from the narrative. It is therefore distinctly different from the social focus associated with constructionism which is less interested in the cognitive processes associated with knowledge; instead viewing narratives as social phenomena in themselves (Crotty, 1998; Esin, Fathi & Squire, 2014; Young & Collin, 2004).

As an epistemological stance constructionism is heavily influenced by the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966) (Crotty, 1998; Schwandt, 2000). Here it is argued that 'all human 'knowledge' is developed, transmitted and maintained in social situations' (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p.15), it is therefore a result of interaction and social processes, produced both consciously and unconsciously. Gergen (1994, p.78) supports this, by suggesting that 'it is



human interchange that gives language its capacity to mean'. Thus meaning within the constructionist view is not uncovered, it is not 'waiting for someone to come upon it' (Crotty, 1998, p.43), instead it is constructed as individuals engage with the world and each other. It is therefore historically and socially grounded as interpretations cannot exist in isolation of language, shared understanding, and time (Burr, 1995; Schwandt, 2000). Social and economic arrangements within a culture therefore directly impact upon the meaning or knowledge that can be derived from a study (Burr, 1995).

As a theory of knowledge constructionism is aligned with the writings of Bourdieu (1977, 1984) in the way in which the subject / object divide is conceptualised, thus society is seen to exist as both an objective and subjective reality. Through interaction human activity is seen to be subject to *habitualization*, a phrase, again, synonymous with the work of Bourdieu (1984). For Berger and Luckmann (1966) this process of embedding meaning in society is referred to as institutionalisation. 'Objective' worlds are created as patterns of behaviour are reproduced and meaning becomes embedded into these. This body of knowledge is then transmitted to other generations who internalize it (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Society can however also be experienced subjectively, as individuals are 'socialized' there is a 'temporal sequence' through which individuals are inducted into 'participation in the societal dialectic' (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p.149). This process is naturally different for everybody and as such their perception or subjective understanding of reality will be different. It is therefore apparent that there is no 'one way' of understanding within constructionist critiques (Gergen, 2001); there is no definitive version of reality.

In rejecting the dualism between subject / object within the constructionist (and/or constructivist) paradigm Lincoln and Guba (2000) suggest that a relativist ontology is assumed. Emphasis is therefore given, again, to the locally constructed and context specific nature of reality. It therefore follows that what is seen to be knowledge and truthful is relative to a



cultural context, setting or historical epoch. Thus the interaction between researcher and researched influence and shape the research outcomes, meaning that only limited generalisations can be made beyond the final results, thus participants are not seen as just a source of information. Crotty (1998) supports this by asserting that relativism is essential in understanding constructionism, however highlights how description and narration cannot be seen to provide a straightforward representation of reality. It is also suggested that a realist stance (relative realism) be taken when considering the ontological underpinning of constructionist research, as for many, the traditional opposition between constructionism / constructivism and realism is incompatible (Crotty, 1998; Cupchik, 2001; Delanty, 2005; Howell, 2013). Realism is often associated with positivist paradigms of inquiry as it asserts that there is an external world waiting to be uncovered, that an external reality exists (Bryman, 2012; Howell, 2013). Relative realism within the constructionist paradigm does not adhere to this naïve realist approach, however it does assert that a socially constructed reality can be real. This understanding of realism is referred to in a number of different ways, for example, reflexive realism (Beck, 2007) and constructivist realism (Barkin, 2003; Cupchik, 2001). Within each case there is an acknowledgement that social phenomenon can exist within communities, these 'real' phenomena will be understood by members of a community and potentially by the researcher (Cupchik, 2001). Through being empathetic these phenomena can be understood from the perspective of the research participants, providing a multidimensional understanding of ideas such as employability. This perspective also conforms with the idea that there is not a clear divide between socially constructed and elite or *a priori* forms of knowledge; instead there is a continuum on which all research can be situated (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000).

The theories discussed here represent the main theoretical underpinning of this research study. The constructionist epistemology and relative realism ontology both highlight the importance of language and interaction in the construction of knowledge. This theoretical



underpinning will inform the methodological choices and design of this research which will be discussed in the following sections.

### **3.3 Understanding Language through Narratives**

There has been a discursive and narrative 'turn' in social and human research (Brockmeier & Harré, 2001; Czarniawska, 2004). This is consistent with anti-Cartesian orientations and a move away from positivistic modalities of knowing (Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001). As such narrative inquiry or a narrative methodology naturally sits within the broadly interpretive tradition of social science research. It is an amalgamation of different disciplinary perspectives but is often seen as synonymous with the notion of story (Bruner, 1990; Chase, 2005; Frank, 2010; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998; Riessman, 2008). Thus narrative inquiry understands human existence through the telling of personal stories (Lemley & Mitchell, 2012). Within this study both the methodology and data collection will be informed by narrative inquiry, therefore in the following sections the narrative approach adopted, and the rationale for this choice will be discussed in order to facilitate an understanding of research and analysis methods.

Following the theoretical underpinnings of this research study a number of different methodological choices could have been adopted; these were researched before the decision was made to embrace a narrative approach. Grounded theory (Charmaz, 2000; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1994); phenomenology (Patton, 2002); ethnography (Howell, 2013; Patton, 2002; Pollner & Emerson, 2001); and action research (Baumfield, Hall & Wall, 2013; Brydon-Miller, Greenwood & Maguire, 2003; Reason & Bradbury, 2001) were all considered as viable alternatives, however the key characteristics of narrative inquiry and the natural line to identity (Giddens, 1991) as a component of employability, alluded to an appropriate means of capturing and understanding the experiences of graduates.

For authors such as Brockmeier and Harré (2001, p.47) narratives are ‘universally present in everything that we say, do, think and imagine...[they are a] given mode of thought and action’. This is consistent with the work of Bruner (1990) and Frank (2012) who both suggest that the construction of stories and narratives is a common element of everyday life. This depiction of narrative as a means of understanding also translates across cultures as White (1980, p.5) suggests that; ‘we may not be able fully to comprehend specific thought patterns of another culture, but we have relatively less difficulty *understanding* a story coming from another culture’ [emphasis original]. Narrative is therefore universal in its ability to convey shared realities. However, despite their prevalence within discourse there is no one-way of studying narratives (Chase, 2005; Riessman, 2008), therefore narrative inquiry can draw on a number of different research methods, and approaches to data analysis.

For Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber (1998, p.2) narrative inquiry refers to ‘any study that uses or analyses narrative material’, therefore in some instances narrative inquiry may refer only to a format of data and utilise a different methodology, such as grounded theory. Thus for some, narrative inquiry identifies narratives as self-contained texts, therefore the object for investigation is the story itself (Riessman, 1993). Within this context narratives are seen to provide an insight into the speaker’s reality; they are ‘oral versions of personal experience’ (Labov & Waletzky, 1967, p.12). Through this perspective the narrative gives access to the speaker’s identity (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998) and subsequently their employability. When narratives are considered in this manner thematic and structural means are most often used in order to analyse data.

Thematic analysis, also referred to as content analysis, involves identification of the core themes within data through the frequency which they are mentioned by research participants (Bryman, 2012; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998; Riessman, 1993; 2008). These themes are identified through a process of open and axial coding dependant on the extent to which

inductive or deductive reasoning underpins the research questions (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). While all narrative analysis is concerned with what is said, this is the key focus for thematic analysis (Riessman, 2008). There are however differences in the extent to which the narrative text is broken-down in order to be analysed. Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber (1998) suggest that narratives can be dissected into single words or utterances for analysis, or that sections can be interpreted in relation to the whole text, in a more holistic approach. This latter approach elevates the importance of individuals within the research and starts to move away from the quantification of results which can often accompany thematic analysis (Bryman, 2012; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998).

In a similar vein to the thematic approach to data analysis, structural analysis also breaks down texts. However, the focus here is primarily based on how narratives are organised and crafted in order to persuade the audience that events occurred (Riessman, 2008). The work of Labov and Waletzky (1967) has been particularly influential in the *field* of structural analysis. Their work focuses on the syntagmatic structure of words and phrases within clauses. It is formal in its nature and relies heavily on linguistics. Labov and Waletzky (1967) highlight their understanding of narrative as a means of recapitulating experience, however not all experience is recounted as narrative. A 'fully formed' narrative contains six elements; a abstract or summary; an orientation (to key players and the setting); action or the key plot; evaluation or reflection on the action; a resolution or outcome; and a coda or ending (Riessman, 2008, p.84). These can vary in terms of their focus throughout the narrative and as suggested by the notion of a 'fully formed' narrative, not all elements may be present. This approach to narrative analysis, with its focus, again, on what is said does not consider the context or reason that a narrative is crafted. The socio-cultural dimensions of language are therefore generally ignored within these forms of analysis.

Research can however utilise these approaches to narrative analysis and still incorporate a sociocultural dimension. For example within social research on self and identity, Smith and Sparkes (2008, p.7) suggest that there is a continuum with perspectives at one end of the scale offering a focus on the individual (a 'thick' individual and 'thin' social relations) and at the other end a 'thin' individual and 'thick' social relations. The former of these perspectives lends itself towards a more constructivist underpinning, however the 'traditional' approaches to narrative analysis, mentioned above, are often adopted (Riessman, 1993). While useful, these methods are not fully consistent with the philosophical underpinnings of this research.

Within this study, narratives will be treated as a distinct form of discourse. Narratives incorporate emotions, thoughts and interpretations of events which are voiced, drawing attention to versions of self, reality and experience (Chase, 2005). They are also associated with retrospective meaning making (ibid) and are not merely storied accounts of personal experience. Within this perspective language is seen to construct a narratives focus, thus they are a form of discursive action. As such the researcher and researched must both be considered. De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2012) have therefore redefined the idea of narratives as interactional practices. In line with this Riessman (2008) and Frank (2010; 2012) suggest that a dialogic approach be taken to narrative analysis. The following section addresses this in greater detail.

### **3.3.1 A Dialogic Approach to Narrative Analysis**

Within the preceding sections the foundations of constructionism were introduced. The importance of language and culture highlighted here insinuate that an approach which recognises the researcher, the research participants and the socio-cultural context is required. In order to achieve this a dialogic approach to narrative analysis is suggested as this incorporates the interactional, institutional and historical context which narratives are composed and received within (Riessman, 2008). The dialogic approach to understanding

language offers a broad and varied approach to interpretation and analysis (Frank, 2010; Riessman, 2008). As a method of understanding, dialogic analysis has evolved from the work of Bakhtin (1981) on literary theory. However, the dialogic nature of language does not only apply to literature, it is present throughout the social world. For Bakhtin self is dialogical (Holquist, 1990) thus, as with constructionism, the simultaneity of relationships between self and other are fundamental in understanding.

Constructionist approaches to research highlight how narratives and meaning are constructed between speaker and listener (Esin, Fathi & Squire, 2014). The physical context or external environment is thus constructed by the individual that actively interprets it (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Crotty, 1998; Grossen, 2010). However, within some approaches to interpreting data, such as discourse analysis, a focus is given to the way in which this is achieved through conversation (Frank, 2012). The notion of a co-constructed story is therefore central to analysis. However, within this methodology power relations and ideology are considered in detail, often with the aim of uncovering social wrongs and, in some instances, establishing ways of mitigating these (Fairclough, 2013). Discourse analysis is thus synonymous with the work of Foucault (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). However, there are a number of criticisms that can be raised in relation to the philosophical underpinning of this methodology (Sullivan, 2012). Drawing on the work of Taylor (1984), Sullivan (2012) suggested that discourse becomes ungrounded in voice or human experience. The resultant analysis gives structural relationships precedence, reducing the extent to which agency is given consideration.

Dialogic narrative analysis overcomes this focus on structure by assuming that subjects are complex and agentive. Thus, in contrast to some conversation based analysis dialogism considers situation transcending phenomena within the analysis (Gillespie & Cornish, 2010; 2014). Thus discourses, institutions, relationships and identities are considered as an

important component of the way in which dialogue is shaped. This contextual information helps to ground utterances within a social situation, providing meaning to the utterance.

Sullivan (2012) explicitly focuses on voice in order to emphasise emotion, feeling and subjectivity within discourse based analysis. A number of rhetoric features are identified within his work in order to frame dialogic analysis. The identification of rhetoric features is synonymous with the identification of self-self, and self-Other relationships, within dialogic analysis. This is central to dialogic analysis, as is the idea that within an individual there can be a multiplicity of voices present; due to the interactive and social nature of humanity no voice can be seen to be isolated from the Other. As a result words contain meaning and ideology derived from previous usage. Thus individuals will not talk from a single position or stance within a story, this will change as Others stories, and public discourses are woven into the conversation (Esin, Fathi & Squire, 2014). Bakhtin (1981; 1984) used the terms *polyphony* and *heteroglossia* in order to describe this multivoiced dialogue. *Polyphony* refers to the way in which a single voice echoes the various voices and viewpoints of specific others (Frank, 2012; Holquist, 1990; Todorov, 1984). For Frank (2012) this is apparent in discourse through borrowed words and phrases. *Heteroglossia* is similar, however emphasis is on how the generalised Others' voice is used in speech, this therefore represents the sociolects or social languages associated with specific groups or perspectives (Holquist, 1990). The incorporation of utterances and perspectives derived from others in *polyphonic* and *heteroglossic* narratives can occur consciously and unconsciously within an individual. Narratives analysed for these voices can therefore highlight the structural influences on employability as individuals utilise and borrow utterances from their socio-cultural upbringing and significant others.

The idea of multiple voices within an individual was an important consideration for Hermans and Dimaggio (2007) in their work on self and identity. They suggest (as discussed in Section 2.4.4) that through globalisation there has been a merging of cultures. Thus within an

individual there may be multiple identities or versions of the self, developed as a result of local and global circumstances, these are expressed through a number of voices and counter-voices. Grossen (2010, p.11) supported this by further suggesting that ‘individuals construct themselves as subjects through the words of others’. A dialogical approach can therefore help in understanding the heterogeneous nature of individuals who were traditionally seen to be a part of more closed or homogenous societies (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007). Dialogism highlights the variety of social language adopted by individual speakers and the way in which these are made meaningful (Bakhtin, 1981).

Another means of considering social language in discourse is through the identification of master narratives arising within dialogic interactions (Bamberg, 1997; Thorne, 2004); these are similar in focus to the voice of the Other in Bakhtin’s *heteroglossia*. However, the notion of master or grand narratives was developed by Lyotard (1984) to describe narratives primarily about historical meaning. These large scale philosophies provide ways of knowing and shape our expectations; they can also shape stories through identification with their underlying message. Within the *field* of employability many of these master narratives have been identified in Section 2.4.1 (The Dominant Approach to Considering Employability). The extent to which research practices focus on these dominant social discourses is an important consideration within dialogic analysis. For Alvesson and Deetz (2000) a focus on *dicensus* not consensus separates dialogic analysis from more traditional interpretive approaches to analysing qualitative data. This means that instead of attempting to understand how meaning is negotiated together and within groups dialogic approaches separate research participants, concentrating instead on how language and meaning differ between individuals.

In addition to the voices present within dialogic analysis the audience also needs to be considered; this is termed *addressivity* (Gillespie & Cornish, 2010; Wertsch, 1991). Utterances are not only ‘tailor –made’ for a specific audience, they also anticipate the audiences response



(Gillespie & Cornish, 2014). Thus as we speak we consider how the audience is reacting to utterances, within that anticipation a second voice can become present (Vice, 1997). Dialogue can also address third parties who may not be present within the interaction (Gillespie & Cornish, 2014). Thus an utterance may be a response to a preceding utterance. According to Wertsch (1991) a number of linguistic devices can be deployed in order to identify *addressivity*, including the way in which arguments are formulated in order to avoid counter arguments.

Within dialogic analysis the stability of meaning is not assumed. Within his writings Bakhtin referred to the capacity for utterances to create something new, extending into the future (Holquist, 1990). The future cannot however be predicted or known entirely therefore Bakhtin (1984) highlights the *unfinalizability* of persons. Thus an individual cannot be fully understood, their stories are never entirely revealed and cannot be seen to be static. Individuals cannot therefore be labelled and categorised as it is assumed that they can and will change communicatively and expressively as time and circumstances develop. The *unfinalized* nature of narratives does not imply that they are unfinished, instead highlighting the *polyphonic* nature of dialogue and influence of social encounters on self. The *unfinalized* nature of discourse also highlights how changing context can influence individuals. Thus structural characteristics can inadvertently influence an individual's narrative and the way in which they discuss this.

In relation to this study a dialogic approach provides opportunity for structure, agency and identity to be considered in relation to employability. However, the way in which this is achieved also needs to be addressed. The following sections will detail the research design and methods adopted in order to conduct dialogic analysis within the context of employability.

### **3.3.2 The Ethnographic Dimension of Researching Language**

Within all research that relies on interpretive approaches the influence of the researcher is a key consideration. Due to the vested interest in hospitality education and prior experience of

both hospitality education and hospitality based employment held by the researcher explicit consideration as to how this impacted the research process was thought to be required. Ethnographic or auto-ethnographic approaches are often utilised in order to help the researcher identify how their own experience, culture and situation may influence the research process and data collection (Patton, 2002). In line with this research diaries have been advocated as a means of recording information which may help in the analytical process; they often include reflections on the research process, contextual information and future plans for the research (Altrichter & Holly, 2004). They can also help the researcher to identify issues and problems within a study as it progresses. Throughout the course of this PhD a research diary has been kept in order to support the research process and data analysis. Particular thought was given to the way in which prior experiences and understanding of both hospitality education and hospitality employment shaped questions asked to research participants. The researcher's response and feelings associated with this were also noted in order to help identify researcher influence on analysis. According to Bryman (2012) these personal documents are not often meant for official use however they can be drawn on in order to support decisions made as the research evolves. It is therefore important to note that this ethnographic approach will be utilised.

### **3.4 Research Design**

The following section will detail the approach taken to the research design. There were a number of choices that have to be made in terms of the practicalities associated with conducting research into hospitality graduates' employability. It will therefore provide an overview of these decisions including the sampling strategy, methods of data analysis utilised and ethical considerations. This will provide a comprehensive account of the way in which data was collected in order to inform the findings chapters which follow (Chapters Four, Five and Six).



### 3.4.1 Interviews as a Method of Data Collection

The focus of this research is to develop a new understanding of hospitality graduates' employability. In order to achieve this interviews will be used in order to collect data from hospitality students and recent hospitality graduates. According to Rapley (2004, p.16) interviews are social encounters where 'speakers collaborate in producing retrospective (and prospective) *accounts* or *versions* of their past (or future) actions experiences feelings and thoughts' [emphasis original]. It was therefore thought that this method of data collection would be most suitable.

The extent to which interviews are structured means that, as a method, they are extremely flexible in terms of the type of data that can be elicited. At one end of the spectrum are closed, fixed response interviews which rely on pre-determined response categories (Patton, 2002). These lend themselves towards an approach that quantifies data due to their somewhat simplistic nature. At the other interviews can take an informal conversational approach. This form of interview does not utilise pre-set questions, instead allowing the immediate context to inform direction (Patton, 2002), an approach often used in life history interviewing (Bryman, 2012). This variation of the interview means that questions can be determined based on their relevance to the participant and direction of the conversation. However, this approach can be highly unsystematic and it is not always possible for questions to arise naturally. It was therefore decided that an interview guide (Appendix 1 Interview ) be used in order to help direct interaction and ensure that pre-defined topics relevant to employability be covered within the conversation. For Bryman (2012) an interview guide is less structured than an interview schedule. Instead of pre-determined questions, the guide provides a number of prompts, in order to help ensure that topics are covered in a way that will help to answer the overriding research question. This meant that interviews could be adapted dependant on the participant and the interviewer (I) could work with participants in order to gather complimentary and contrasting perspectives leading to greater breadths within resultant data

(Fontana & Frey, 2000; Rapley, 2004). This form of interviewing is also conducive to the production of *polyphonic* and *heteroglossic* narratives. Fontana and Frey (2000) suggest that through reducing the impact that a researcher has on the interview multiple perspectives can be reported. This highlights differences between individuals and allows space for any problems or disjuncture to be discussed. It also helps to move the relationship away from the traditional interviewer / interviewee relationship that participants may expect to encounter and closer towards the narrator / listener relationship associated with narrative inquiry (Chase, 2005).

Despite the comparatively natural and conversational approach that has been adopted within interviews the process in itself can be seen to be unnatural and staged. Often the information gained through the interview would not be produced in normal settings and it is for this reason that the interview approach to data collection has been criticised by ethnomethodologists (Bryman, 2012; De Fina, 2009). Georgakopoulou (2006) also suggests that the type of narratives found in interview data is often different from that which arises naturally, in everyday conversation. However, due to the nature of this study it would not be pragmatic to elicit employability narratives through participant observation. The advice of De Fina (2009) has therefore been used in that interviews are seen as a distinct form of interaction. Therefore instead of treating the interview context as unnatural it will be analysed and discussed in order to facilitate interpretation of narrative constructions.

The interactional nature of the interview is important in order for employability narratives to be constructed. As mentioned previously (Section 2.4) the construction of employability narratives occurs through interaction. However Cassell (2005) suggests that both the interviewer and interviewee actively construct meaning and interpret the interview process, potentially in different ways (Cassell, 2005); it is therefore important to ensure that consideration is given to both parties within the analysis process. Interaction is also used in

order for the interviewer to develop rapport with research participants. For Fontana and Frey (2000) being able to understand a participant's situation or viewpoint is extremely important in order to facilitate the interviews' progression. This was echoed by Rapley (2004) who suggested that if a participant feels comfortable then they will be more forthcoming with information and will find it easier to talk within the interview context. In analysing the interaction between individuals issues of neutrality are also addressed within the interview context (Rapley, 2004). Probing participants and encouraging talk on specific subjects can lead to bias within data collection processed. The primary way in which this is overcome is through the use of pre-worded questions (Patton, 2002), however as already noted these have not been deemed suitable for this research. Therefore in order to avoid bias interviewers are often expected to remain natural and somewhat passive throughout the interview, thus not offering their opinions, experiences or the like. Yet this is not always possible, especially when a relaxed and conversational approach is taken to interviews, to do this while maintaining flow of the conversation can be challenging (Patton, 2002). The interaction and lexicon of both interviewer and interviewee therefore needs considering in order to account for any bias that may have been unintentionally introduced.

In general it is suggested that the most effective form of interviewing is face-to-face (Bryman, 2012). However, this form of interviewing can be expensive if participants are geographically dispersed, it is not always a pragmatic option. Telephone interviewing is often cited as an alternative to the traditional face to face interview, however the non-verbal elements of communication are lost through this medium and data is often not as rich (Bryman, 2012). Some authors suggest that online methods can also be used instead of traditional interviewing formats (Fielding, Lee & Blank, 2008; James & Busher, 2009; Sedgwick & Spiers, 2009). Internet based interviewing has been extensively considered by James and Busher, however their work often focuses on the use of web based technologies as distinctly different from

more conventional models of data collection, using email and IM (Instant Messaging) software for example (James & Busher, 2006; 2009). This approach where both time and space are separate within interaction was not considered as suitable replacement for first person contact within this research. However, technological advances were thought to be able to enhance the data collection process (Moynlan, Derr & Lindhorst, 2015). Both Hanna (2012) and Deakin and Wakefield (2014) suggest that using Skype can be an effective alternative to traditional face to face interviews. Skype offers a VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) service; this form of communication is increasingly being used by consumers (Keynote, 2014) with 60% of 16-24 year olds having used it in the past three months (Mintel, 2014). The majority of research participants were familiar with the software and had experience of using it previously, this meant that they were comfortable talking and answering questions via this medium. Skype provides both visual and audio communication via a web connection, it therefore means that through this medium non-verbal cues can be elicited within interaction this facilitates the building of rapport with participants. It was therefore decided that when it was not possible to conduct fact to face interviews that Skype would be adopted instead. The majority of interviews were conducted in this manner with three and a half<sup>1</sup> being conducted without Skype. This was due to technical difficulties in two cases and because the participant did not have access to a web camera in the other instance. The data gathered in these interviews was reminiscent of the telephone data discussed by Bryman (2012). It was not as rich and it took longer before the participant started to elaborate on responses.

Throughout the research process there were a high proportion of absentees. Deakin and Wakefield (2014) reported similar findings when using Skype as a data collection method. In four instances the participants were able to reschedule and the interview took place.

However, six potential participants did not reply to follow up emails and interviews were not

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<sup>1</sup> The internet connection failed during one interview, we therefore resumed the interview later in the day on the telephone.

conducted with these students. This was unfortunate as valuable and interesting data could have been gathered from these participants, they would also have broadened the heterogeneity of the sample.

### **3.4.2 Capturing Narrative Data in Interviews**

In order to understand the dialogic nature of interviews it is important that the words used by participants are captured. It was therefore essential for these to be available within the data analysis and interpretation phase of the research (Patton, 2002). Therefore, all of the interviews were recorded and transcribed. This process means that the interviewer cannot distort participants' responses, which is possible if only notes were taken. During face to face interviews a Parrot Application on the researchers' mobile phone was used in order to record data. It was thought that participants would be comfortable with having a mobile phone on the table as some participants are distracted by having a dictaphone / microphone in front of them, and this impacts the quality of data (Bryman, 2012). The commonality of mobile phones within modern society (Madden, 2013; OECD, 2012) was therefore an advantage in this instance. During the Skype interviews this was not a problem as the recording device was not visible on the screen and therefore would not provide a distraction. In terms of planning, the ability to capture narrative data was dependant on battery life, storage capacity and connectivity. As such capacity was always available on electronic appliances, to store data, and access to a power supply (and reliable internet connection) was considered throughout the organisation of interviews. This meant that no data was 'lost' or missed as a result of technological failures.

Interviews were transcribed using a verbatim transcription system. As Shown in Table 3:2 this system not only captures the words spoken by participants but also intonations, pauses and speed of speech. This results in the transcripts providing greater depth than if just the words

were transcribed as the way that they are said can have bearing on their meaning within interaction. In doing this an accurate reflection of the words used in the interview is created.

Symbols in Text	Notes
//	The point in time when the utterances of the next speaker begin to overlap
=	Two utterances closely connected, without a noticeable gap
[ ]	Additional notes, for example speech that cannot be deciphered, non-linguistic actions or interruptions within the interview
(.)	Micro-pause within speech
(.2)	Longer pause (in seconds) within speech
> <	Faster than normal speech
< >	Slower than normal speech
↑ ↓	Rising / falling intonations
:	Vowel or consonant lengthening
@	Laughter
-	Self-interruption
?	Question

**Table 3:2 Transcription Conventions, Adapted from De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2012, p.xiv)**

For Lemley and Mitchell (2012, p.219) this means that ‘readers can draw their own conclusions before seeing others’ as through the detailed transcripts they may be able to identify overlooked or undervalued features through the representation of experiences . However, in order for the reader to be given the opportunity to interpret data for themselves relatively long excerpts of the transcriptions will be used within the analysis. In order to help gain familiarity with the research data all of the interviews were transcribed by the researcher and time within the research process was allowed for this. The experience of transcribing dialogue meant that the researcher was closer to the data which in turn facilitated the development of a detailed research diary. This diary was kept throughout the whole process of data collection and associated transcription, as a part of the reflective process associated with research this helped to raise awareness of the socio-cultural impacts on one’s own perspective (Patton, 2002).

### **3.4.3 The Ethical Considerations of Interviewing**

Ethical considerations are extremely important to the outcomes of this research project.

Reliability and validity have traditionally been the criteria used to judge the quality of research (Lincoln & Guba, 2000), however within interpretive and constructionist approach to research trustworthiness and authenticity are considered as important (Howell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Silverman, 2006). The rejection of validity and truth within the research process means that the ethical relationship with research participants is increasingly important as this influences both the interpersonal and epistemological way of knowing (Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

Each element of the research process received approval before data collection commenced; the application (Appendix 2 Ethics Approval) was reviewed and approval granted on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2015. The research was designed and undertaken in a way that ensured integrity of the student participants. Information regarding the research process, methods and use of data was provided to all participants (Appendix 3 Participant Information and Informed Consent). A consent form was also signed by all of the participants stating that they had read and understood the information provided and that they were happy to be interviewed (Appendix 3 Participant Information and Informed Consent). Through email contact and before the interview itself it was reiterated that participation was voluntary, students had the right to withdraw at any time, ask questions or refuse to answer a question.

Confidentiality of information has been upheld throughout the research process. Every effort has been made to anonymise individuals who could have been identified within the research. Therefore, pseudonyms have been given to all of the participants and the universities that they attended have not been named. All of the data gathered has been stored in a confidential and safe manner so that it may not be used by any third parties. The research participants were also able to withdraw data after the interview was complete. This meant that if participants

felt that they had been lead or coerced into answering any questions their data would not be used within the study.

Finally, the wellbeing of participants was considered throughout the research process.

Students and graduates are not commonly thought of as a vulnerable group however, life events which have impacted progression through education or labour market considerations may be stressful or upsetting for some, particularly those that may be anxious about their future. Being conscious of this was important, yet during the interviews none of the participants exhibited signs of being upset or uncomfortable. Some commented that they actually found the experience useful in helping them to consider their future plans and reflection on their time and achievements as a student.

In addition to the research participants the wellbeing of the researcher was also considered. According to Bloor, Fincham and Sampson (2008) this is often an area which is overlooked. There are implications, particularly in relation to female researchers undertaking qualitative studies, in terms of physical harm and emotional strain. Physical risk was partly mitigated by the use of technologies and the physical space between research and research participants (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; Hanna, 2012). However, when face-to-face interviews were conducted the guidelines produced by Social Research Association (2006) relating to the safety of researchers were followed. In terms of emotional strain the research diary was used in order to document thoughts and feelings related to the research participant and research process. This was consciously monitored by the researcher in order to avoid any undue distress resultant of emotional connections with the research participants (Bloor, Fincham & Sampson, 2008).

#### **3.4.4 Selecting Research Participants**

There were a number of sampling considerations to be made within this study. Initially a definition of 'hospitality graduate' was required in order to inform the sample. As noted

previously there are a number of different programmes broadly associated with hospitality (Doherty *et al.*, 2001). However these are not always easily identifiable; the QAA (2008b, p.5) suggest that as a subject group Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism subjects have been 'poorly served' by the JACS subject classification which is used by UCAS and HESA in order to identify programmes, as such those containing the word 'Hospitality' are classified under N2 (Management Studies or Institutional Management) and various N8 (Hospitality, Leisure, Sport, Tourism and Transport) codes. Selecting students enrolled on a specific classification of programme was therefore not deemed a suitable method for selecting participants. It was also apparent that some specialist programmes exist where the primary field of study is hospitality however this is not represented within the degree title (for example Cruise Management, or Hotel Management programmes). Students were therefore selected on a case by case basis in order to establish that they were studying on a degree course which provided a focus on hospitality. This included students on joint honours programmes (eg Hospitality and Tourism) but did not include students enrolled on Tourism or Events Management programmes as these were considered to be distinctly different in their focus (QAA, 2008b).

The geographical location of participants was important within this study. All participants primarily studied at UK based institutions in order to receive their bachelor degree. This meant that they were enrolled on programmes that adhered to similar standards set by the QAA (QAA, 2008a; QAA Scotland, 2014). It was important that students also studied within the UK so that they were exposed to the institutional *habitus* of UK based HE providers (as against studying predominantly at international partner institutions which would reflect the home country to a greater extent). This ensured that the macro context of employability was taken into consideration as all students would have been exposed to similar labour market conditions throughout their time studying (Tholen, 2013). It also elevated issues concerning

the level of qualification that students were studying, as this is not always comparable across national borders (Billing, 2004).

In order to make contact with potential research participants a list of HEIs which delivered hospitality based programmes was created. Programme leaders / managers and personal contacts were then used in order to help engage participants. Emails were sent to students asking them to participate. A purposefully heterogeneous sample was sought, therefore the aim was to capture the diverse nature of hospitality graduates (Patton, 2002). This type of sampling can help document individuals' uniqueness and the highly personal experience that each participant has had. However, shared patterns and reoccurring discourses found in hospitality education and employability narratives can also be identified through heterogeneity (Patton, 2002). The self-selecting nature of the recruitment process was convenient however due to the nature of this research the aim was not to make generalisations regarding all hospitality graduates therefore a quota based approach was not deemed necessary (Bryman, 2012). All of the interviews were conducted between April and July 2015 and May-June 2016, therefore all participants were considering their transition beyond HE, prior to formal graduation. A relatively small proportion (14%) of UK based students continue to further study (HESA, 2015), for these students entering the labour market may not be an immediate consideration however the reason for continuing to pursue education as against seeking employment will contribute to the construction of employability later and is therefore still relevant.

In order to help encourage participation a £20 Amazon Voucher was offered as remuneration for participants' time. This amount was thought to provide a fair return for participating in an interview (Head, 2009). The issue of compensating interviewees can raise questions as to the way in which this effects data and the possibility of introducing bias within the sample (Head, 2009; Patton, 2002), however in line with the suggestion made by Patton (2002) participants

were told that they were being compensated for their time and not their responses. It was also thought that if compensation was not offered a section of the potential sample may not be included, notably those who have struggled financially throughout their time at university and place greater value on their free time (Head, 2009).

Despite the incentive offered contact with potential participants was often influenced by chance, something which Rapley (2004) suggested is often the case. As participants were predominantly contacted through their university email accounts once they had completed their studies many stopped using these regularly, making communication difficult. This has naturally impacted the size of the sample. Some basic information about the research participants is given in Table 3:3. Participants were gained from eleven different institutions, seven were international students and one was a mature student, in terms of gender there were five males. This gender and nationality bias is somewhat archetypal of the student population and therefore follows an expected pattern.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>University</b>	<b>Programme</b>	<b>Interview Date</b>
<b>Abi</b>	British	Scottish City University (1)	International Business with Hospitality and Tourism	18.05.15
<b>Alicia</b>	British	South Coast Town University	International Hospitality Management	29.04.15
<b>Alisha</b>	British	South West City University	Hospitality Management	21.04.15
<b>Ava</b>	British	South Coast City University	Hospitality Management	09.07.15
<b>Ben</b>	British	Northern Town University	Hospitality and Culinary Arts	09.06.15
<b>Daney</b>	British	South Coast City University	Hospitality Management	21.04.15
<b>Elena</b>	British	Northern City University	Hospitality with Events Management	27.04.15
<b>Jennifer</b>	British	Scottish East Coast University	International Hospitality Management	12.06.15
<b>Johannah</b>	German	South East Hotel School	Hotel Operations Management	24.04.15

<b>John</b>	British	South Coast Town University	International Hospitality Management	24.04.15
<b>Julie</b>	British	South West City University	Hospitality, Tourism and Events Management	02.06.15
<b>Kari</b>	British	South Coast Town University	International Hospitality Management	27.04.15
<b>Karin</b>	Dutch	South East University	International Hospitality Management	02.07.15
<b>Kristina</b>	Lithuanian	Scottish East Coast University	International Hospitality Management	11.06.15
<b>Laura</b>	British	Scottish City University (1)	Hospitality and Tourism Management and Human Resource Management	05.16.15
<b>Liese</b>	Czech	Scottish East Coast University	International Hospitality Management	04.06.15
<b>Lili</b>	Hungarian	Scottish City University (2)	Hospitality Management with Entrepreneurship	17.07.15
<b>Maisie</b>	British	South West City University	Cruise Management	06.05.16
<b>Manoj</b>	Indian	South Coast City University	Hospitality Management	02.07.15
<b>Mikkel</b>	Norwegian	South West City University	Hospitality Management	22.04.15
<b>Olivia</b>	British	Northern City University	International Hospitality Management	22.05.15
<b>Pippa</b>	British	Northern City University	International Hospitality Management	21.06.15
<b>Rob</b>	British	South Coast Town University	International Hospitality Management	05.05.15
<b>Ruth</b>	British	South West City University	Hospitality Management	08.05.15
<b>Sarah</b>	British	Northern City University	Hospitality with Events Management	29.04.15
<b>Ting</b>	Honk Kongese	South West City University	BSc (Hons) International Hospitality Management	18.05.15
<b>Vanessa</b>	British	Welsh City University	International Hospitality Management	27.05.15
<b>Wong</b>	Honk Kongese	South West City University	BSc (Hons) Hospitality Management	06.15.16

**Table 3:3 Research Participants**

Additional demographic data regarding each research participant has not been presented in a tabulated manner as, having met and interviewed participants it was not possible to accurately



characterise them in terms of this additional information. For each participant in the study a short biography was written in order to condense important information and provide a reference document when writing up findings. The following text (Excerpt 3.1), is part of the initial biography that was written for Ava;

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**I first contacted Ava through a mutual connection. I sent her a direct message through LinkedIn which she responded to and we organised an interview from this point of contact. Ava had completed her degree when we first spoke. She was working on a fixed term contract in sales for a local event.**

**Prior to university Ava went to a private school in order to complete her A Levels. Her parents however, left school with minimal qualifications, thus she could be considered a first generation student. Yet there was an expectation that she would attend university. As such, her parents helped to financially support her throughout her time as a student, so that she could lead an active social life and fully enjoy her time at university.**

**Ava originally started a Biology course at South Coast City Uni' however at the end of her first year she decided to change programme. She was particularly interested in events management and her parents encouraged her into this field. However, she wanted to remain at the same HEI, partly due to social commitments (being a member of the Cheerleading Society), and therefore opted for Hospitality as this was the most similar programme available. Ava completed a placement year and worked part time managing and promoting events throughout her time studying hospitality.**

**Ava aspires to have a career in events and anticipates being able to use family friends and networks in order to secure relevant work experience and a management based role. While she does not want to live and work abroad Ava admits that she does not have any commitments which would impact her ability to move for a job; she anticipates being based in London in the near future. Ava appeared to be quite confident in her ability to secure a graduate level position in the near future however admitted that she needed to update her CV and start actively applying for positions in order to achieve this.**

---

***Excerpt 3.1 Ava- Diary Entry***

In terms of characterisation Ava could be classified as a first generation student attending university. Her parents' lack of experience within the *field* of HE would normally be considered a disadvantage for students such as herself. However, she attended private school and this would put her at an advantage in terms of the social and cultural capital acquired within this exclusive educational environment. The latter parts of this excerpt also allude to social

networks and the way in which some individuals, often from advantaged backgrounds use these in order to secure future employment. Thus despite, in some ways, coming from a non-traditional background Ava cannot be categorised in this manner due to her privileged schooling. This is one example of how it was not possible to accurately characterise individuals based on their socio-demographic data. As a result, the important components of research participants' backgrounds have been presented in prose within the findings chapters.

### **3.4.5 Analysing Data**

In line with the approach described previously dialogic narrative analysis has been used within this study. This method of analysis is also referred to as dialogic / performance analysis (Riessman, 2008) or the social talk-in-interaction approach (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012). Dialogic analysis draws on the interactional elements of speech alongside more traditional thematic and structural interpretations (Riessman, 2008). However, the extent to which these are incorporated into this 'version' of narrative analysis varies. For Frank (2010, p.2) the study of narrative is 'less about finding themes and more about asking what stories do'. This notion of what stories do is central to Frank's (2010; 2012) work; instead of defining what a story is he questions its capacity, rejecting traditional mimetic understandings of how experience precedes a narrative. Thus the ability to construct employability is more important than the individual components of a graduate's story. The dialogic approach to narrative analysis does not specify particular methods (Frank, 2010) therefore various approaches will be drawn upon in order to consider the content and form of narratives. All of the approaches adopted will be discussed in order to provide a detailed account of the analysis methods employed within this study.

The work of Gillespie and Cornish (2014) identifies six sensitizing questions within their method of analysing the meaning of an utterance. In-keeping with the theoretical underpinning of this research these questions draw on the work of Bakhtin to analyse social

encounters in a manner which takes into consideration situation-transcending phenomenon and acknowledges the importance of agency. These questions are: (1) what is the context? (2) what is the speaker doing? (3) who is being addressed? (4) who is doing the talking? (5) what future is being constituted? (6) what are the responses? (Gillespie & Cornish, 2014).

Arguably the most important of these questions is ‘who is doing the talking’, as one of the key elements of dialogic narrative analysis is concerned with the way in which multiple voices are heard within texts (Aveling, Gillespie & Cornish, 2015; Frank, 2012; Gillespie & Cornish, 2010; Gillespie & Cornish, 2014; Grossen, 2010). Thus linguistic choices will be considered in order to establish how participants position their employability and draw on the voice of the Other within their dialogue. Sullivan (2012) noted a number of rhetorical features of discourse which help to identify voice; these are presented in Table 3:4.

Rhetoric Feature	Relationship to Other	Otherwise Known as
<b>Hidden Dialogue</b>	The Others voice continually anticipated	Reservations and hesitations
<b>Micro dialogue</b>	An internal dialogue with self, re-creating Other’s point of view	Private discourse
<b>Penetrative word</b>	Capacity of Other to reassure us when we are torn between different judgements	Interruption
<b>Word with a sideways glance</b>	Fearful of Other’s judgement	Disclaimer
<b>Word with a loophole</b>	Escape from a definitive statement. Hope of vindication	Disclaimer
<b>Sore-Spots</b>	Strong reaction to Other’s words	Extreme-case formulation
<b>Stylisation</b>	Agreement with Other’s words	Stylisation
<b>Parody</b>	Disagreement with Other’s words	Parody

*Table 3:4 Rhetoric features of discourse interpreted dialogically (Sullivan, 2012, p.60).*



These features offer one means of considering transcripts, however the work of Aveling, Gillespie and Cornish (2015) provides a systematic approach to considering both positioning and voice within narratives. Table 3:5 provides an adapted version of the methodology employed by the above authors in their multivoiced analysis. This step-by-step approach was used in order to help identify how individuals positioned themselves and the identity they narrated. Aveling, Gillespie and Cornish’s (2015) approach to coding and analysing data not only helps to identify the voices present within discourse, it also helps to identify the interaction between these. This interaction between voices can illuminate the structural influences on individuals and situation-transcending phenomena which has impacted on agency. Addressivity is also considered here and the features of speech noted by Wertsch (1991), such as the voice of inner others, quotations and formulating an argument in order to circumvent a counter argument can be used in order to inform the identification of this.

### Data Coding and Initial Analysis for each Participants Dataset

#### Which i-positions does the self employ in speech?

- Code all of the utterances with first person pronouns, group names and first person possessives.
- Group coded segments into clusters which have a common voice.
- Assign each coherent group of sentences an i-position label.

The i-position labels identified have been presented in in Appendix 4 ‘i-positions’.

#### What other voices can be heard (inner-Others)?

- Code all the sentences with named Others or third person pronouns and identify who is being referred to, to create a ‘reference list’ to help identify the social origin of voices.
- Identify ‘direct voices’ by finding all the direct quotations and who they are attributed to.
- Identify ‘indirect voices’ by finding all indirect quotations and who they are attributed to.
- Identify echoes and the possible social origin of those echoes; the concept of ‘ventriloquation’ – where one voice speaks through another voice or social language – may be useful.

The Others identified have been presented in Appendix 5 Referenced ‘Others’ as Identified.

Reoccurring societal echoes or ventriloquism has been identified in Appendix 6



- 
- Guided by the concept of addressivity, identify which Others (beyond the researcher/interviewer) are being addressed. Referenced 'Echoes' as Identified.
  - Assign labels to each voice, and characterise them based on the content of each voice. Addressivity identified within transcripts has been presented in Appendix 7 'Addressivity' as Identified.
- 

### **Identify interactions between voices in the self?**

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- Examine the interactions between voices identified previously. There are three types of relations:
    - Relations between specific i-positions and inner-Others.
    - Relations between the different i-positions.
    - Relations between the different inner-Others.
  - For all relationships, use the following questions to explore the autodialogue and relationship between voices:
    - How close is the relationship between these voices?
    - How does one voice respond to the other?
    - What are the 'evaluative overtones' in each of the voices?
    - Is there a power dynamic between the voices?
    - Are there any 'dialogical knots' and how can these be explained?
- 

***Table 3:5 Analysis of Multivoicedness; adapted from Aveling, Gillespie and Cornish (2015, p.6)***

In addition to the multi voiced nature of discourse the dialogic approach also calls for the context of the interaction to be considered. The context of an utterance includes both the setting and participants (Gillespie & Cornish, 2014). Individuals move between contexts and demands of each context can have a bearing on the way in which questions are answered and utterances posed. Thus for each research participant consideration will be given not only to the nature of the interview and location of the speakers but also the broader context as to timing on the interview in relation to the completion of a student's study and their current employment status. Analysis of context will also help to identify what the speaker is doing and



what prompted utterances (Gillespie & Cornish, 2014). Within narratives individuals often try and craft a future and establish what is going to happen in the future. This is concerned with what Bakhtin referred to as the capacity for utterances to create something new (Holquist, 1990). Again, by considering this in analysis dialogism helps in identifying how individuals position themselves and Others as they narrate issues concerning employability.

In addition to the dialogic approach to analysis a thematic approach will also be used in order to help frame the analysis and identify key themes within the constructionist research paradigm. Broad themes will be identified from the literature presented in Chapter Two, these will be centred on hospitality education and the impending transition that students / graduates are about to make into the labour market. Here focus will be placed on what is said (content) within interviews (Riessman, 2008). As an approach thematic analysis can rely on intuition and is relatively straightforward (Bryman, 2012; Riessman, 2008). However, both open and axial approached to coding data will be adopted. Thus pre understanding of theoretical frameworks and experience will naturally inform this process. Howell (2013) notes that axial coding models such as those developed by Strauss and Corbin (1994) can be seen to create a framework that forces data into the emerging categories and as such detracts from the inductive nature of the study. However, the drawbacks of this form of coding will be overcome by the inclusion of open coding which allows emerging patterns that may not have been previously considered to be included

For Frank (2012) this approach can help to build a typology of stories so that reoccurring narrative resources, plots, or dominant discourses can be identified. The development of typologies can risk putting narratives into boxes (Frank, 2010) therefore it is important that these remain open, and attempts to finalise the typology are not made, so that other narratives may be included. Despite the weaknesses of developing typologies they can be

useful in helping individuals to identify how their stories are impacting on their lives or assisting professionals to better understand those they are working with (Frank, 2012).

### **3.5 Concluding Comments**

This chapter has presented the theoretical underpinning and research approach that was adopted within this study. A constructionist research paradigm was advocated with a relativist realism ontological stance. Following this narrative methodologies and dialogic narrative analysis were discussed as the primary means by which data would be analysed. The practicalities surrounding the research design, use of interview as a method of data collection and sampling procedure adopted were then highlighted. This discussion clearly lays out the framework for which data was collected. The findings resultant of this process will now be discussed in Chapters Four, Five and Six.

## 4 The Hospitality Graduate in Context

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter is the first of four findings and discussion chapters. These chapters will analyse and interpret findings and then develop discussion before highlighting key issues so that recommendations can be made in the final chapter (Chapter Eight). Chapter Four will reflect on key elements of graduates' backgrounds and circumstances that contributed to individuals' participation in HE. The completion of a degree as a core component of a graduate's employability and the narratives that individuals develop surrounding this will be considered. These narratives represent the life stories and identity (Giddens, 1991) of graduates, they are influenced by internalised discourses which are present within the social domain (Bakhtin, 1981; Frank, 2005; Holquist, 1990). The rationale and impetus behind wanting to complete an undergraduate HE level qualification will also be reflected upon within this chapter, as this also shapes future trajectories. Chapter Four acts as a precursor to the following findings chapters as it helps to illuminate the motivations and agentive behaviour exhibited by graduates.

This contextual background information will therefore inform discussions presented in the other analysis chapters. Chapter Five will specifically draw on this socio-cultural information in order to consider the way in which graduates reflect upon their engagement with HE. The activities that they undertook as a component of their degrees as well as the other commitments and priorities which shaped their HE experience will be contemplated. Chapter Six will then address transitions beyond HE and the trajectories that graduates anticipate taking as they progress beyond their UG degrees. Within this chapter perceptions of the competitive labour market will also be discussed in order to establish the way in which positional competition is narrated and graduates negotiate the labour market. The last of these four chapters, Chapter Seven will provide a synthesised depiction of hospitality graduates' and their narratives of employability. This chapter will draw on the findings

presented in Chapters Four, Five and Six in order to provide a holistic interpretation of the way in which employability is constructed and narrated by hospitality graduates. This will specifically inform recommendations resultant of this study.

The discussion and analysis within this chapter (Chapter Four) will specifically answer Research Question One, concerned with the background of hospitality graduates'. Initially the differences in student backgrounds will be discussed, this will include issues such as differences in schooling, and parental engagement with HE, in order to consider the lived trajectories of individuals. Thereafter a more detailed account of subject and HEI choice will be presented alongside the overriding rationale that graduates narrated in terms of their decision to attend university.

Both thematic and dialogic approaches to considering the narratives which graduates presented will be included. This will help to develop a cohesive understanding of who the hospitality graduates that participated in this study are. Excerpts from interview transcripts will be used in order to illustrate key findings and highlight the multitude and complexity of perspectives held by individuals. These key findings will then be discussed in relation to the literature presented previously in Chapter Two. Discussion and analysis will identify implications for hospitality education so that recommendations can be made in the final chapters of this thesis, addressing the aim to inform curriculum development in hospitality education. It will also contribute to and develop further knowledge of the way in which hospitality graduates prepare themselves for progressing beyond HE by highlighting motives for action.

## **4.2 Graduate Backgrounds**

Hospitality graduates came from a range of background with varying levels of educational experience. There was a broad mix of backgrounds described by the group of graduates that participated in this research. The research approach, in developing an understanding

individual narratives did not lend itself to using existing classifications in order to group the research participants. In line with the work of Dorling (2014) and Savage *et al.* (2013) some of the more traditional methods of categorising individuals, for example, by class was not appropriate. This became more evident as the graduates' backgrounds and levels of social and cultural capital possessed were uncovered throughout the research process. There was also a limited number of students from what could be considered a 'working class' or 'precarious' background. Therefore traditional class based diversity amongst students was somewhat limited, in line with the dominance of the middle class within HE (UCAS, 2012; 2017a).

Some graduates had come from highly traditional backgrounds, including private schools and grammar schools. For many of these graduates their parents had attended university and progression into HE was a natural step. Their trajectories followed a path similar to that discussed by Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) whereby the education system is seen to reproduce social relations. Their cultural values were reproduced throughout their time in HE and the benefits of having a degree are evident within their impending transition beyond education. However, the decision to study hospitality management at a Post-92 HEI could indicate downward mobility due to the nature of hospitality employment and synonymous relationship with poor pay. This is consistent with the work of Bukodi *et al.* (2015) who note an increase in downward social mobility despite increased number of individuals entering HE.

For some of the participants who had attended private or selective types of school, they did not neatly fit into the categorisation of 'traditional students'. They were first generation graduates, with no prior familial engagement with HE. An example being Ruth, who demonstrated that her experience of HE was very different to that which may have been expected. She had not internalised the institutional *habitus* associated with her grammar school which, under normal circumstances this may have seen her progress into a more traditional subject area, possibly at a 'red brick' establishment. This is explored in more detail

through Excerpt 4.13. By not internalising this *habitus* her experience of HE was immeasurably different from that which might be anticipated. She remained living at home and followed a trajectory similar to those discussed within the literature surrounding non-traditional students (Adnett & Slack, 2007; Hockings, Cooke & Bowl, 2007; Reay *et al.*, 2001; Schuetze & Slowey, 2002), particularly in regards to her debt adversity (Callender & Jackson, 2005; 2008). These individuals, like Ruth, have limited social mobility and financial capital. In exhibiting adversity to debt they often benefit less from HE than their counterparts who have come from more traditional backgrounds, or those who have internalised the cultural norms surrounding HE participation as being more than just engagement with a core educational curriculum.

Similarly Daney was brought up in an environment where her mother ran a successful law firm. She had originally wanted to study medicine and her desired trajectory involved completing A-Levels and attending university. However her family circumstance changed after her step-father suffered a life altering accident which meant that Daney's mum sold her business in order to care for him. Daney decided to pursue what some may consider a less prestigious and more vocational path (Leathwood & Hutchings, 2003) and having completed a BTEC Catering course she eventually started university at 21, slightly older than many of her peers. During her time at university Daney sent money to help support her family. Daney's underlying *habitus* and her approach to the HE environment had therefore changed. She became more reflexive and considerate towards the risk involved in HE participation as she actively considered the consequences of her actions in terms of future career trajectory (Bauman, 2000b; Beck, 1992). Thus she studied a subject that she was familiar with, both in terms of prior education and employment, helping to eliminate the 'risk of the unknown' apparent if she were to enter a different industry. The value ascribed to HE pertained throughout her narrative and as her story evolved cultural and social capital associated with her upbringing became prevalent. However, her lived experience of HE meant that, like Ruth, she did not

adhere to the norm of socio-economic or 'class' based classification. Thus the social and cultural capital that individuals could be expected to possess, was not always evident within the research population.

There were also a number of first generation students studying on hospitality programmes, whose parents had not attended university. Many of these students had completed A-levels and then progressed into HE, in line with the trajectory of many key stage five students (Department for Education, 2016). Again, for these students there was very often a narrative adopted whereby HE was a natural progression route. However, there were also a number of students that had completed more vocational courses prior to attending university. Thus, instead of following the somewhat traditional route into HE they had completed BTEC and equivalent programmes, which would have already prepared students for a career, albeit at a different level. Less of this 'type' of student generally progress into HE (Department for Education, 2016). This variation in backgrounds is consistent with the governmental plans to expand the provision of HE (Dearing, 1997; Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2009; 2011; Leitch, 2006) and widen participation (HEFCE, 2013). It is also consistent with the work of Dorling (2014) and Savage *et al.* (2013) who suggest that greater proportions of society have adopted dispositions and cultural norms once associated with only the highest echelons of society, and this has resulted in an increasingly fragmented range of backgrounds associated with those entering HE.

In a similar vein the international graduates that participated in this research also presented a variety of backgrounds. Some had parents who had attended university within their home nations, others were first generation students. In some instances their narratives did not fit with the expectations that a similar career path within the UK would involve. For example Karin claimed that her parents were both teachers, however neither of them had attended university. International students came from a number of different countries, including parts

of Eastern and Northern Europe as well as Hong Kong. This diversity amongst applicants is consistent with the international nature of hospitality education and the appeal to study abroad (Gu & Hobson, 2008; Huang, Turner & Chen, 2014; Jayawardena, 2001; King, McKercher & Waryszak, 2003; King, Findlay & Ahrens, 2010; Lashley & Barron, 2006). The level of educational experience amongst the international student that participated within this study also varied significantly. For example three had started degrees within their home countries before starting to study in the UK. This shaped their expectations of HE and in some instances the lived reality of education within the UK was markedly different to their home countries.

A graduates' underlying *habitus* prior to attending university influences the reasons why they decide to attend university and their subsequent choice of institution (Ball *et al.*, 2002; Burke, 2016; Reay *et al.*, 2001). Similarly prior educational experience also shapes future engagement and expectations (Burke, 2016; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). In order to categorise students and graduates' class delineations are often used (Ball *et al.*, 2002; Ball, Reay & David, 2002; Bourdieu, 1984; Burke, 2016; Reay, Crozier & Clayton, 2010; Reay *et al.*, 2001; Shiner & Noden, 2014; Van De Werfhorst, Sullivan & Cheung, 2003), but these have been questioned within the modern world within which we live (Bauman, 2000b; Beck, 1992; Beck, Giddens & Lash, 1994; Giddens, 1990; Oxenham, 2013). The narratives told by the graduates within this research support the idea that individuals cannot be easily categorised. Their background stories incorporate details that cannot be captured through basic socio-economic or educational attainment data. Therefore, it is important that HEIs recognise the diversity within cohorts, particularly with reference to the high percentage of non-traditional students entering hospitality programmes and the way in which this may impact their perception of HE and subsequent engagement with programmes of study.

### 4.3 Attending University in the UK

Consistent with much of the literature explored previously (Ball, Reay & David, 2002; Christie, 2009), the decision to attend university and complete a degree has, for many students, become a somewhat normalised progression route on completion of FE courses, such as A-Levels (Department for Education, 2016). For many of these individuals, including those that participated in this study, there is an expectation that they will attend university and throughout their education they are supported by teachers and parents in making their applications. Dominant discourses surrounding the provision of HE clearly align the completion of a degree with increased opportunities within the labour market (Dearing, 1997; Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2009; 2011; 2012; Leitch, 2006); for many students this narrative has become internalised and underpins their decision to attend university and work towards gaining a degree level qualification. This appears to occur regardless of their career motivation and long term plan, post completion of their qualifications. This scenario is particularly evident for Jennifer.

- 
- Cat:** and why then did you decide to go down the university route? (.2)  
<had your parents been to university?>
- Jennifer:** ↑no (.) no one of my family have apart from my brother (.) ah:<but it was almost like expected of me to go>(.) like all my friends were going=
- Cat:** =okay
- Jennifer:** I remember in college we <↑had> to apply (.)>even if you didn't want to go<(.) ↑everyone had to apply for university (.1) um:: (.)>and I just ended up thinking<(.) what else am I going to do? (.1) I could get a job at a call centre or something (.)↑I felt that this would give me a better chance of being like <a manager> at a senior level really
- Cat:** ↓that's okay (.)↑and did your parents >kind of< support that notion that you <↑had> to go to university?
- Jennifer:** yeah (.) I think they wanted me to go to university (.1) because they couldn't at the time (.) so they just wanted me and my brother to make the most out of what we could and to have opportunities (.)↑so yeah: (.) they kind of pushed me to go↑ there (.) so they were the ones who were taking me around >all over the country< to see all the universities and stuff (.) so they were quite supportive (.)
- 

#### *Excerpt 4.1 Jennifer*



Within Excerpt 4.1, above, Jennifer claims that there is an 'expectation' she will attend university. Her use of the plural pronoun (we) and emphasis of 'everyone' (having to apply) suggests that this expectation is extended to all of her cohort at college, supporting the notion of encouraging increased participation in HE. A number of authors (Bowden & Doughney, 2012; Cullinan *et al.*, 2013; Winterton & Irwin, 2012) note the importance of teachers within the decision making process associated with HE attendance and Jennifer's narrative is therefore consistent with expectations surrounding the influence of teachers, as significant Others within the transition process. Within her dialogue the generalised 'we' becomes more specific ('I') as the narrative progresses and Jennifer provides additional information to support her decision. Through her autodiologue Jennifer positions the inner-Others of her college and parents as actively supporting progression into HE. Despite her parents having not had personal experience of HE their encouragement and support echoes the wider discourses of the benefits of HE through Jennifer's ventriloquism. Jennifer also positions herself in agreement with the notion that the completion of a degree would have benefits specifically within the labour market. This again supports the notion that she has internalised the broader societal discourses surrounding participation in HE and the value that this has within the knowledge economy (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2011; Leitch, 2006; Wilson, 2012). The prolepsis demonstrated through her use of rhetorical self-questioning ('what else am I going to do?') and immediate response ('I could get a job at a call centre...I felt this would give me a better chance') work to strengthen the argument for participation in HE. This section of her narrative also demonstrates how Jennifer is exhibiting agency within her discussion, having been free to make her own decision based on an analysis of the options. Giddens (1984) would describe this as reflexively considering her options in order to inform choice, however the duality of structure is still present through the somewhat limited number of options that she considers and the stark contrast between options narrated.

---

**Kari:** [...] I went (.) did my GCSEs did my A-Levels (.)↓>didn't do very well< (.)↑so I decided that I probably wasn't going to go to uni (.1) um:: so I worked in a restaurant and um >really enjoyed it< and thought <you know: I want to be more than just a waitress> and I will go to uni to >↓you know< get the management degree ↑<and I did >↑am:↓ doing international hospitality management at [South Coast Town University]

---

***Excerpt 4.2 Kari***

For Kari (Excerpt 4.2), the decision to attend university was also closely linked to labour market outcomes, however she did not enter HE directly after completing her A-Levels and therefore her narrative is slightly different, and as such, more closely linked to the hospitality discipline. Kari does not refer to others when narrating her decision to attend university, there is no explicit mention of Others voices within her dialogue. She is therefore positioning herself, exclusively, as the agent within the decision making process. Kari goes some way to rejecting any initial expectation that there may have been for her to attend university on completion of her A-Levels, as she had not achieved the results or outcomes she would have liked, on completion of these qualifications. However, her use of 'probably' suggests that she had not completely eliminated the possibility from her mind, thus greater reflexive consideration was required as she negotiated the potential risk associated with her decision (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1984; 1994). Kari also uses the proposition 'thought' when considering her future prospects. This may highlight some uncertainty as to the value of HE, yet is contrasted with wanting to be 'more than just a waitress'. As with Jennifer in Excerpt 4.1, the choice of lexicon within this utterance appears morally loaded and positions those with degrees as advantaged within the labour market. It is therefore apparent that the societal echoes surrounding the link between education and employment (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2011; Leitch, 2006; Wilson, 2012) have been internalised by prospective students.

Kari's narrative also makes direct reference to the hospitality industry, this demonstrates the importance of this entity as a component of her career related identity. The decision to attend

university could therefore be linked to the availability of a specific programme of study; the reflexive consideration evident within her dialogue is therefore again brought to the fore as she negotiates the construction of her narrative and the 'life-story' about herself (Giddens, 1991). By incorporating the specific reference to being a hospitality student, and as a result a hospitality graduate Kari is also positioning herself as being different to other graduates. The vocational nature of her programme is therefore being recognised as she transitions beyond HE and into employment.

- 
- Olivia:** uh: @@@ I've got two older sisters@ and an older brother ↑and a younger brother as well=  
**Cat:** =and did they all go to university as well? are you following in each other's footsteps?  
**Olivia:** yeah I'm lucky enough (.) it's funny enough ↑all my grandparents went to university to ↑my parents went to university as well (.) the rule in our house was always that you're going to university (.) >which was nice< (.) to go to university ↑yes to get a degree but fifty of it (.) fifty percent of it- ↑it's to leave home and start meeting new and different types of people as well (.)
- 

#### ***Excerpt 4.3 Olivia***

In comparison to these labour market focused decisions to enter university Olivia had somewhat different expectations. Within Excerpt 4.3 parental experiences appear to have informed the way in which university is perceived by Olivia. This is consistent with the influences that shape student transitions into HE (Cullinan *et al.*, 2013; Winterton & Irwin, 2012) and, more specifically the conclusions drawn by Bowden and Doughney (2012) regarding the importance of parental advice and cultural and economic backgrounds in decisions to attend HE. There was an explicit expectation that Olivia would attend university ('the rule in our house') suggesting that the voice of the Other (her family) had a significant bearing on her decision to undertake a degree. Thus their experience, supported by broader discourses have resulted in a somewhat limited choice for Olivia in her progression from school. This is not to say that Olivia did not make the decision to attend university, however the habitual tendencies

associated with her background and the structural influences of her social world, influenced her decision and subsequent progression. Within her narrative the more traditional, developmental and social aspects of HE appear to be prevalent for Olivia. The importance of social capital as a component of the HE experience is thus highlighted. The work of Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) on reproduction can be used to explain how this individual, from a highly educated background is both approaching and subsequently engaging with the HE experience in a different manner to those who may be first generation students. Olivia's background therefore supports the development of social and cultural capital through the HE experience.

The expectation to attend university was not exclusive to home students. For example Liese suggested that there are 'pressures of society in the Czech Republic' which encouraged her to attend university. She also claimed that she 'didn't have any kind of education (.) properly (.) in any area', on completion of high school. Thus, for some students who do not pursue more vocational subjects throughout their schooling, it can be perceived to be difficult to transfer into the labour market at this age. The influence of globalisation, and increasingly interconnected nature of society (Giddens, 1990) therefore impacts demand for knowledge based employment as described by Gürüz (2011). This finding is also consistent with the work of King, Findlay and Ahrens (2010); Knight (2004) and the OECD (2013) who purport an increasing demand for education.

It is apparent that the progression into HE is, globally, a somewhat normalised experience. From within the sample, both those individuals with prior family experience of the HE environment, and those that could be classified as non-traditional students have internalised dominant discourses surrounding the benefits that HE can bring to individuals. Demand is therefore strong for HE, in general terms. This obviously has advantages for hospitality educators however the decision to attend HE is only part of the narrative, subject choice is also important for prospective students.

## 4.4 Hospitality as a Subject Area

While the decision to attend university has become a commonplace narrative, the choice of degree subject is dependent on the individual. Hospitality, as a subject area, is said to be highly vocational (HEFCE, 1998; QAA, 2016) and, as a result, hospitality based qualifications are delivered at a number of different levels. Thus the level of formal educational experience both within and beyond hospitality as a subject area varies considerably amongst applicants onto hospitality programmes, with some students having never studied hospitality or associated subjects prior to undertaking their degrees. A number of different rationales for choosing hospitality as a subject area were therefore put forwards within this research. Many of these were based on prior experience within the industry, however a number of students had never worked in the industry before making the decision to undertake a hospitality degree.

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**Cat:** and what about the decision to go into hospitality? what was it about hospitality?=-

**Daney:** =well I started (.) u:m well working from um fourteen an (.) in mums law firm (.1) ↑and halfway through being fourteen I got offered an (.) <um> well it's >kind of like< (.) >well< it's called the Floating Bridge Shop and <well it's basically a ↑little shop where you serve like tea and coffee and you also serve <like> bacon and sausage and egg baps (.) and (.) but I was only fourteen and ↑I was by myself every weekend↓ and (.) um: it was quite busy (.) and um like >I'd really enjoyed < (.) and as the years went on I have worked in pubs (.) ↑I've worked in fast food chains (.) ↑restaurants and um B and B's >and now< <obviously> in a four star hotel (.) so as times gone on I realise how much I ↑love it (.) >and it was only really when I was doing my A levels< and um ↑I was↓ um also working full time as a stand in for a general manager at a <um> B and B (.) um (.) that I realised that medicine ↑wasn't what I wanted to do ↑and I was going down the wrong track (.) so I left A-levels and decided to work there for a year and finish up what I was doing (.) ↑get some money↓ behind me (.)↑ move back to the Isle of White↓ <and uh> do the college course >to make sure I wasn't making a mistake< (.)

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### Excerpt 4.4 Daney

Daney started university at 21 having completed a BTEC Level 3 in Hospitality and Catering Supervision. As suggested in Excerpt 4.4, she wanted to be sure she had selected the correct subject before starting her degree. Daney draws on both her experience within the industry



and education in order to help inform her decision to complete a degree in hospitality. In listing all of the different businesses that she has worked in, Daney emphasises the diversity of the experience that she has gained in order to help inform her decision. Drawing on experience in hospitality is, according to Chuang and Dellmann-Jenkins (2010), a key factor that influences career intentions within the industry. As a theme within this research, it was also common amongst those graduates that had industry experience, prior to undertaking their degree, to draw on this within their narratives. This reflexive approach to decision making and developing oneself is consistent with the work of Beck, Giddens and Lash (1994) and the notion that individuals must negotiate disparate social identities as they progress through education and into their chosen careers. In addition to this identity negotiation Daney also highlights the responsibility that she was given whilst in employment. Here she is projecting a number of identity traits emphasising her commitment, and hardworking nature as she undertakes identity work within her narrative. It is interesting to note that Daney does not refer to the voice of Others or use third person pronouns in order to support the experience narrated. Her voice within the narrative is therefore the only, and as such, most powerful voice. The overriding aim of Daney's narrative here is a form of identity regulation. In providing motives for her actions Daney is ascribing meaning to her decision and actions so as to create reference points regarding what is important within her identity construction (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002).

Like Daney, Johanna is another student that changed her career direction. Her choice was primarily influenced by not achieving her A-Levels. As a result she started a short course, learning to be a receptionist. It was here that she discovered a self-confessed passion for the industry and went on to complete a BTEC course. With the support of a teacher, she then progressed to enrol on hospitality degree. The practical approach to hospitality as a HE subject appealed to Johanna as she positioned herself as preferring this method of learning. The

vocational nature of the course and subject made HE more accessible to this graduate (Leathwood & Hutchings, 2003; Ross, 2003).

- 
- Cat: um: and you said you had >↑previous experience< in the hospitality industry (.) and you took your> gap year< to help work out what you wanted to do? (.) ↑what was it about the hospitality industry-?
- Olivia: @@ >this is going to sound so silly now< @ but em: @@ <um:> it was a Christmas um: ↑I was in about year twelve or thirteen >and my sister< got me the box set for hotel babylon >which is about a hotel in London< (.) and there was the woman <and she was all> ↑very controlling of the hotel ↑and she had lovely suits and she just totally seemed <to be quite in control of life> (.) obviously >but not really< but that was <like> the way she portrayed- ↑and it was that moment >and I was like< ↑wow (.) ↑I would really like to run a business ↑and wear a suit to work ↑and be in control like that ↑and know everything (.) and now like <being at university> I'm like >I'm not really sure where I'm going< @ >it was the nice little idea and stuff< (.) and then I developed that idea a bit more and I went- ↑I travelled a bit and went and saw the other options that I could work in <and I am> (.) I dunno (.) and I'm quite into >growing food< and >organic food< and stuff ↑and learning where it comes from ↑so I quite like the idea of hotels and little hotels and B and B's and stuff (.) //yeah// ↑and I just really like the practical side of like ↓meeting people and stuff (.) and getting- ↓ (.1)
- Cat: no (.) that sounds fantastic (.)
- Olivia: @@ and no (.) I know it should- >↑such a silly idea< ↑but that was it like at seventeen years old ↓like@ hotel babylon ↓and-
- 

#### **Excerpt 4.5 Olivia**

Olivia (Excerpt 4:5) also drew on knowledge of the hospitality industry in order to inform her decision to study in this area. Despite her own practical experience she refers to a television drama series based in a hotel in order to justify her choice. Using this as a form of augmented reality Olivia creates an image as to what she may be able to achieve within the future.

Fictional characters act as an inspiration for her choice, they also act as a means of supporting the luxury hotel brand image which is often driven by the aesthetics of staff (Nickson & Warhurst, 2007). The selection of this narrative, where managerial gender stereotypes are inverted and the aesthetic dimensions of the hospitality industry are highlighted, is particularly interesting as the hospitality industry is often associated with negative perceptions of working

culture (Barron, 2008; Barron *et al.*, 2007; Harkison, Poulston & Kim, 2011; Maxwell & Broadbridge, 2016; Maxwell, Ogden & Broadbridge, 2010; Poulston, 2008a; Poulston, 2008b; Teng, 2008). Olivia does not continue to identify with this character and her own identity work begins to take place as she moves beyond discussing the Other and starts to define herself. Thus her change of track, and movement of discussion to the present means that she is able to project characteristics relevant to her current employability. Olivia is also able to reflexively highlight how her developmental focus remains aligned with the hospitality industry and the practical (as against managerial) aspects of operations. Thus it is apparent that while her ambitions have changed, hospitality and the hospitality industry still appear to provide her with a favourable career path. This is further supported by her intermittent laughter and the apparent self-criticism ('this is going to sound silly' / 'silly idea') which again supports the emblematic detachment from the Other in her initial narrative.

---

**Cat:** so what made you then choose hospitality as a subject?  
**Ava:** um:: (.) well. I wasn't enjoying biology (.) and I uh: chatted it over with quite a lot of people (.) and uh (.) >my dad actually said< he thought I'd be really good at uh: >like running events< (.) like operations <side of things> (.) ↑and I thought that sounds so much fun (.) um:: >and then I change-< (.)↑ I did look into it ↑quite a lot (.) but [South Coast City] where I went to uni did ah: >did a degree in hospit-↓< (.) hospitality management so ah: >it was easy for me to swap< (.)↓ uh:: ↑so I looked into it ↑and it looked really interesting and ↓you know (.) > if I got to the end of it< and I didn't still want to do events (.) ↓<its quite-> (.) pretty broad (.) >you know< ↑its not very hospitality specific (.) like ↑ I would have qualifications in business management (.) ↑we've done accounting (.) ↓and (.) uh:: things like that (.) so (.) ↑I thought it was quite a (.2) really that (.) quite like broad (.) business wise (.) and I just kind of got really into it (.) and really loved the events (.) so uh:: ↑yeah >carried on really< (.) I really enjoyed it as soon as I started the course

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#### **Excerpt 4.6 Ava**

For others such as Ava and Rob, the decision to undertake a hospitality degree was heavily influenced by their parents. This is consistent with the work of Mehboob, Muhammad Shah and Bhutto (2012); O'Mahony, Whitelaw and McWilliams (2008); and Simon Chak-keung and

Gloria Jing (2010) who all identify parental advice as key to decisions. Both of these individuals had other career paths in mind before starting their hospitality degrees. In Ava's case, she had embarked upon a Biology degree (Excerpt 4.6). Ava had previous experience within the hospitality industry and exposure to her parents' leisure attraction business, however she says these factors did not heavily influence her decision to undertake a hospitality degree. The indirect quote ('my dad actually said...') is used to characterise her father's thoughts, and she uses this metaperspective in order to inform her choice, demonstrating the influence that her dad has had on her decision. This is consistent with the previously noted work of Bowden and Doughney (2012); Cullinan *et al.* (2013); Winterton and Irwin (2012), who emphasised the importance of parents within the decision making processes associated with university. In terms of narrative structure there are a number of 'um:' and 'uh' utterances made by Ava in the initial section of her narrative. These suggest that she feels a greater explanation is required in order to justify her choice. She does not finish the sentence 'and then I changed', and she interrupts her own dialogue in order to, again, further justify the decision thus ensuring that her identity is not explicitly tied to her family. Echoes of the transferable nature of HE (Leitch, 2006) and the broad relevance and applicability of a management degree (Wilson, 2012) are highlighted in order to validate her selection in light of the reservations that she had ('If I got to the end of it and I didn't still want to do events'). Thus it is clear that Ava has approached HE having internalised the expectation that education in itself will provide benefits within the knowledge economy, regardless of the subject area studied.

The conception of hospitality management programmes essentially being business or management based degrees was common amongst graduates. Karin (Excerpt 4.7), for example wanted to undertake a management degree, however, like Olivia, specialising in hospitality offered a certain allure; it also connected some of her other interests. The nature of hotels and links with socio-cultural expression and identity is well documented (Gillespie &

Morrison, 2001; Lashley, Lynch & Morrison, 2007a) and provides something of an appeal to Karin as she considered her future prospects. Once again there appeared to be a need for Karin to elaborate on her decision and she repeatedly used 'um' between utterances as her narrative paused, before further justification was made. This implies that it was not necessarily an easy, or clear-cut decision to select hospitality as a subject area.

- 
- Cat:** that's okay (.) and what made you decided that you wanted to study hospitality then?
- Karin:** well I think it was (.) well I always wanted to do like >a management degree< but (.1) perhaps ↑just management↓ was maybe a little dry and boring >and hospitality< sounded a bit more exciting: I done quite a bit of traveling and was quite abreast with tourism industry um:: (.) an:d: um:: hotels um: indeed I speak a few languages so I thought just >all in all< it just kind of made sense and uh food was a big aspect of the degree and um: um which >I'm quite foodie< (.) um:: and yeah things just kind of ↑added up ↓and I just thought (.) um at least it's quite a broad degree and um I love baking as well so um >one of my pension plans< is to open up my own tea rooms or something so it wouldn't be bad to have a little bit of theory behind that so uh <that's- a kind of why I uh started that (.)
- 

#### ***Excerpt 4.7 Karin***

In some cases the characterisation of hospitality as a management degree is also reflected in the fact that hospitality degrees are housed within management schools and business faculties without their own, separate identity as a programme. For Abi, who studied a Joint Honours programme (International Business with Hospitality and Tourism) this was particularly relevant. Within Excerpt 4.8 she suggests the decision to study hospitality was initially due to an interest in the subject area. However, the rationale behind continuing to specialise in hospitality was concerned with it being perceived as easier than other subjects. In this instance Abi situates the value of a good degree as more important than the subject area itself, or the associated learning. This is consistent with the somewhat instrumental approach to education that some students have been found to take (Black, 2010). The transferable nature of HE qualifications is thus highlighted again and the question as to whether or not the

emphasis on a specific area of management is required in order to create successful narratives of employability could be asked.

- 
- Cat:** okay (.) so you said you're doing a generic business degree with hospitality and tourism (.) ↑what made you choose that specialism then?
- Abi:** well um: un our first year we got to pick (.) I don't know whether it was four or five sort of business topics and from there going into second and third year we had to pick kind of two of them (.) so (.) I kinda tried to get a mix of subjects em so I picked hospitality and tourism and just because it generally seems quite interesting ↑and I picked finance as well >'cause I thought it would be another extreme< ↑and I thought it would be good to have ↓um: ba bit of variety (.) and for this year >the final< ↓yeah >we had to pick one of them< and I wasn't very good at finance @ so I had to pick hospitality.
- 

#### **Excerpt 4.8 Abi**

The narratives presented in this section demonstrate that there are a range of different rationales behind undertaking the decision to study hospitality in HE. However, it is clear that the management focus of degree programmes is an important component of study for prospective students. This has implications for the marketing of programmes in light of the management *versus* studies focus often debated by academics (Airey & Tribe, 2000; Airey, Dredge & Gross, 2015; Dredge *et al.*, 2012; Gross & Manoharan, 2016; Lashley, Lynch & Morrison, 2007a; Lashley, 2004; 2015; Morrison & O'Mahony, 2003; Tribe, 2002; Van Hoof, & Wu 2014; Wilson, Small & Harris, 2012). The somewhat 'sexy' nature of hospitality, contextualised by management was also highlighted. Thus it is apparent that the unique nature of hospitality and the hospitality industry helps programmes to differentiate themselves from other more generic management based programs. The social understanding of hospitality as glamorous (sexy) and therefore warranting this disparate identity has arisen from socially grounded depictions of the industry gleaned either from first-hand experience or through other channels.

## 4.5 The Higher Education Institution

The decision to attend university and, for the majority, the decision to study hospitality management as a subject, are only two considerations when negotiating the move into HE. Prospective students must also select the institution that they would like to study at, and consider the advantages that this may have in terms of their HE experience and future employability. The following section will address this element of graduates' backgrounds.

When choosing an institution to study at there are a number of considerations that are made by students. Methods of assessing quality, based on league table ranking, and future employment prospects are often cited as important (Briggs, 2006). However, for those graduates represented within this study there was limited engagement with these hierarchical measures when choosing a HEI. While some students did take these into consideration, others were considerably less concerned with these quality measures. In fact location was the most commonly cited factor influencing choice of HEI and students did not deem their degrees as being inferior to those gained at other institutions within the UK. This is consistent with the work of Briggs (2006) Callender and Jackson (2008) and Reay *et al.* (2001) who all note the importance of institutional location for prospective students.

For Alicia a seaside location was particularly important, however it was a combination of factors that influenced her final choice of institution. Within her narrative (Excerpt 4.9) the holistic university experience was important in her selection of HEI. Drawing on both the social and academic dimensions of education she highlighted how education incorporates more than just a degree. This consideration of entertainment and nightlife was one of six core factors identified by Wilkins, Shams and Huisman (2013) as being attractive in terms of students overall experience, thus the importance of this factor could be deemed influential in terms of HEI choice. For Alicia the idea of attending an institution where she would not know anybody was also important; she uses friends as an example, constructing a scenario where they are

attending different institutions. She then positions herself in opposition to them, drawing on her projected identity as a 'people person' to help support this. A favourable location and quality accommodation were also integral to her decision. These factors were given

- 
- Cat: [...] and what made you choose [South Coast Town University] as a university?
- Alicia: um:: @the beach (.)
- Cat: @@ that's good
- Alicia: um:: I didn't-(.) a lot of people went off to like places (.)↑like all my friends went to like Nottingham and Leeds (.) Birmingham and them kind of places ↑but ↓I didn't want to go where they went (.) because I'm a peoples person I wanted to go where I went on my own and didn't know anyone here ↑and I came here↓ to do the open day and I was like <literally> accommodation was really nice (.)↑obviously the beach is here: >the night life looked good< (.) and yeah: just the course seemed really good and especially the hospitality course it's in [university town] >it's a seaside resort< (.) there's so many (.) they told me there's people going to come in and talk to you and there's so many links with the industry (.) so: that's why I chose [South Coast Town University] and (.) I wanted to do a placement year and I think its [other university] they do the placement year in the second year (.) [//uh hum//] but [South Coast Town University] do it in the third year and I thought ↑you have a year at uni↓ and then you go off to placement and I just (.) >I'd rather have two years< at uni when you settle in more and ↑then↓ go on placement and then come back (.) which is what I done so that's why I chose [South Coast Town University]
- 

#### **Excerpt 4.9 Alicia**

precedence within the narrative, before dialogue turned to the degree programme and how this influenced her choice. Particular emphasis was placed on the structure of the degree and the core elements of the programme that connect with the hospitality industry. Reference made to other institutions and information gleaned at open days in order to evaluate how the programme would prepare her for the labour market were also used, again to support the decision made. In order for this to have significance it is apparent that Alicia connected in some way with those marketing the hospitality programme at her institution. Thus, in line with the work of Thomas (2002) the institutional *habitus* and cultural similarities between the

way in which South Coast Town University marketed themselves as a HEI, and their programme appealed to Alicia and her cultural values, thus helping to inform her decision.

John, a student from what could be described as a more privileged background attended the same South Coast Town institution as Alicia. Within his narrative (Excerpt 4.10) John talks of

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**Cat:** and why [South Coast Town University] as your university choice?  
**John:** um:: (.) again that was a bit of a strange one ↑'cause↓ I'd already been told that [South Coast Town] was really good (.) >and id talked to my brothers mate< and yeah (.) it's a really good night life (.) really good place for rugby (.)↑ I've actually got parents↓ (.) well my mums uh side of the family (.) she grew up in [South Coast Town] so she knows it very well (.) and so we've got family down here (.) <and um> (.) yeah I was always sort of told it was a really nice place to go and this this and this (.) so I was always quite keen to go (.) <but uh> when we were trying to talk to uh (.) <my> at the time (.) head of sixth form ↑he said↓ there's no point in go here because your predicted grades aren't good enough (.) so I didn't ↑<actually> apply but then at <uh when> (.) ↑then when I got my a-level results my mum said she just had a quick look on [South Coast Town University] and they were clearing for hospitality management (.) ↑so I quickly phoned them up↓ ↑and I managed to get a place (.)

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#### ***Excerpt 4.10 John***

how he has drawn on existing knowledge and trusted sources (friends) in order to inform his decision. According to Slack *et al.* (2014) these are 'hot' sources of information, access to this form of knowledge about a HEI's location can add value to the university experience and decision making process. The use of these voices derived from parents and extended social networks support John's sociocultural background and the anticipated way in which he would use information in order to make his decision (Slack *et al.*, 2014). Familial knowledge of the UCAS application system and, in particular, the clearing process also demonstrate how John had benefited from advanced social capital. It could therefore be noted that those individuals from backgrounds who have experience of HE are therefore advantaged. This resonates with the sociocultural writings (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Burke, 2016) which note those from advantaged backgrounds benefit most from social networks and the way in which these can

habitually support development within society, thus reproducing inequality within the social world.

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**Laura:** <yeah um basically> (.) I also have a lot of things that I do outside of university and dance classes and all that kind of stuff that I didn't really wanna move away from really (.) ↑because I enjoy it (.)

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**Excerpt 4.11 Laura**

For both Laura and Abi location was also important, both of these individuals wanted to remain in Scotland to complete their university education and, as a result, both remained living at home throughout the duration of their studies. Laura (Excerpt 4.11) applied to a number of institutions within the same city so that she didn't have to move out of her family home in order to complete her degree. Remaining in the family home whilst studying at university is often associated with those from non-traditional backgrounds (Christie, 2007) and Laura adheres to this trend. The rationale behind this decision is often influenced by both financial and cultural reasons (Ball *et al.*, 2002; Ball, Reay & David, 2002; Christie, 2007; Reay *et al.*, 2001). In this instance it can be assumed that Laura does not possess the cultural capital required to move away from her current familial environment. Her narrative, is short and concise, highlighting the definite nature of her decision. There was no attempt to further justify her choice. The prioritisation of social activities, outside of university has implications for the holistic university experience that Laura will engage with (Arum & Roksa, 2011; Holdsworth, 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), as does the fact that she has decided to remain living at home (Fugate, Kinicki & Ashforth, 2004).

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**Cat:** did you choose [Scottish University] because you were based in [University City]?

**Abi:** em ah partly (.) em I applied for a couple of courses in [local Scottish City] as well (.) I got into [other university] in [local Scottish City] but sort of ultimately (.) ↑ looking at the sort of em tables and everything (.) and at the time Scotland had am [Scottish University] was the best university to go to for business (.)

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#### ***Excerpt 4.12 Abi***

For Abi (Excerpt 4.12) the decision to continue living in the family home was influenced by university league tables. While she had made the decision that she wanted to remain in Scotland to study, her final decision was made based on statistical data. This demonstrates that in some instances the power of the institution is important in the decision making process of potential hospitality students. However for Slack *et al.* (2014), this form of information is considered 'cold', and is frequently used by contingent choosers (Ball, Reay & David, 2002) who often do not have friends or family that have attended university. This again is consistent with Abi's background demonstrating the impact of limited social networks available in order to support a decision to attend university. Thus for Abi, she has been limited by her *habitus* and desire to remain close to home.

Ruth, another non-traditional student, also opted to remain living at home throughout the duration of her degree. However, consistent with the findings of Wilkins, Shams and Huisman (2013), the financial costs associated with participation in HE were the overriding concern within her choice. The narrative presented in Excerpt 4.13 demonstrates some of Ruth's defining identity work. She positions herself as 'scared' and 'shy' in terms of personality characteristics, and the support of existing friends and family was integral to her as she progressed into HE.

These characteristics are however situated in the past tense and thus there is distance between them and Ruth's current identity. The importance of moving out of her family home is however noted as she progresses her story, she suggests that there is an 'understanding', presumably between herself and her parents. Yet the laughter and lack of concrete plans currently in place ('@ just whatever') suggests that this position (moving out) refers to a potential-self as against an actual-self. This emphasises the lived experience within Ruth's narrative and highlights the possibility that she may not enact her original plans and thus may

not leave home. As such she may not have developed the cultural capital required in order to make this move (Christie, 2007), despite having now completed her degree.

- 
- Cat: and what made you stay in [university town] to do your degree?
- Ruth: so for me it was just a lot cheaper (.) yeah (.) so to stay at home (.) plus I was a bit ↓scared to move away< (.) ↑I was always quite shy↓ so I didn't really want to move away ↑so I felt well they do it here so why would I move away to do it (.) >I've got my family here < I've got friends here it was just a <uh> understanding that once I'd done my degree ↑then I planned to move away (.) <if that makes sense?> (.) that was my initial plan (.) and now it's just what I can (.1)- just whatever@@ ↑just whatever comes along@
- Cat: were you worried about the reputation of [South West City University] or the programme or anything? [South West City University] is not the best university in the world >↑particularly as you had such good grades<?
- Ruth: <yeah> (.) I think for some subjects it comes across that way (.) and I got lot of (.) ↑especially at [high school]↓ >there was the expectation that you would go on to universities< like the top ones in London ↑you would go to [Northern City] where the universities (.) they're obviously (.) they're producing students that are of that higher calibre and that↓ (.1) ↑>and I know for this course I only needed two: hundred and forty UCAS points< I think it was (.) and all of my teacher were like <that's really low> (.) are you not going to go for something a bit higher? (.) but I said to them do you not think that I'm going to learn the same sorts of things if I go to a different university? ↑but have to pay more money↓ (.) because >essentially for me< I'm learning the same topic (.) you teach it but (.1) but I did get more than enough UCAS points but it was like ↑what's the point in me going to [local red brick university] and doing business? (.) >which is what they suggested< (.) but I wasn't interested in business (.) ↑I didn't want to do business I want to do hospitality↓ (.) so I just thought <for me> that's the alternative they had ↑but for me it was↓↑ I actually want to work in this industry >so why don't I just study it<? because I want to know more about the industry ↑>because I'd not previously researched it< so I thought it would be good to get that understanding of hospitality and then >from there< go on to wherever else I want to work in the world <so (.)
- 

#### **Excerpt 4.13 Ruth**

Having achieved very good A-Level results, the latter section of Excerpt 4.13 questions the potential that Ruth had to attend a higher ranking HEI with the number of UCAS points that she had gained. Ruth uses direct speech and indirect quotes to emphasise the voice of her teachers in advising her as to which universities to consider studying at. In line with literature

discussed previously (Reay *et al.*, 2001; Slack *et al.*, 2014) these Others offer advice and seemingly try and persuade Ruth to attend a different university to that which she is graduating from. Repetition is used in order to reject their suggestion that she should study business as against hospitality. The juxtaposition that she places between these subjects sits in line with the discussion of hospitality as a specialist management degree (Jones, 2004a).

Theoretically, this positioning is also consistent with narratives presented previously which suggest that hospitality programmes develop generic business and management based skills and knowledge alongside a more interesting and somewhat exciting vocational focus.

Financial motives ('but have to pay more money') are also used in defence of Ruth's choice of HEI, highlighting their ongoing influence over decisions made. However, one of the most revealing elements of Ruth's narrative is her questioning of the contents of a degree. She suggests that she will be 'learning the same [things]' regardless of the institution that she attends. This suggests that subject area is more important than the credentials of the HEI. This belief also echoes the dominant discourses within society regarding the value of a degree, thus for Ruth completing a degree and learning about a particular subject area in order to enhance employability in this industry is of greater importance than university and league table rankings, and the individual components of education which contribute to these. Thus data such as DHLE statistics are seemingly not being taken into consideration by some prospective students, and instead, students like Ruth herself, are drawing on the UCAS entry tariff as a measure of evaluating the quality of a programme, with higher entry requirements symbolising a better quality programme.

An analysis of Ruth's narrative demonstrates that her decisions are consistent with those of many other non-traditional students (Ball *et al.*, 2002; Ball, Reay & David, 2002; Reay *et al.*, 2001; Schuetze & Slowey, 2002). However, her attendance of a grammar school for GCSE and A-Level qualifications meant that she had access to warm and hot sources of information

regarding HEIs (Slack *et al.*, 2014). That said, she did not utilise these information sources, suggesting social mobility is not always achieved through educational opportunities.

- 
- Cat:** and what made you come to [South West City]?
- Mikkel:** I applied via a programme in Norway that helps you to study abroad (.1) <and uh> (.) they had a couple of contact universities in the UK (.) was (.) [South West City] (.) [South Coast City] [other city] (.) and I think it was [university name] in [Scottish City] (.)
- Cat:** ↓okay
- Mikkel:** >and I looked at all of th-< (.) and I thought [South West City] is by the sea (.) >its quite a big city< (.) ah (.) >I could only read good things about [South West City]< ↑so I decided [South West City]
- Cat:** ↑fantastic (.) >and what made you study abroad?< (.) as against studying in Norway?
- Mikkel:** >there's only one school that offers hospitality in Norway< (.) um (.) <it doesn't have the best reputation> (.) and it's also in a city where the living costs are extremely high (.) so the return on investment would be none (.) in fact I would be ↑bankrupt (.)
- 

#### ***Excerpt 4.14 Mikkel***

Both Mikkel (Excerpt 4.14) and Karin (Excerpt 4.15) were international students and their choice of HEI also included a conscious decision as to which country they wanted to study in. For Mikkel his choice of institution was somewhat limited due to the application path that he took in order to study in the UK. Despite this he still positions himself as both academically and financially advantaged having made to the decision not to study in his native Norway. The relative maturity of the UK's HEI's thus helps to encourage international applicants. This echoes some of the existing literature suggesting that there is an international demand for UK based HE qualifications (Bennell & Pearce, 2003; King, Findlay & Ahrens, 2010; Universities UK, 2014; Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007). Mikkel had no direct experience of South West City before he applied to complete his degree in this location therefore much of his research was based in literature that could be accessed from home. Following Excerpt 4.14, Mikkel stated that the UK was his 'number one' destination, as he had had prior experience within the country as a result of family holidays. This suggests a level of familiarity with the country which would have naturally informed his decisions. This is similar to Karins story (Excerpt 4.15) below, however

in contrast to Mikkel's narrative Karin was much more focused on the programme, as against location, when making her decision as to where to study.

- 
- Cat:** and what made you choose [South East University]? >what made you come to the UK to do your hospitality degree<?
- Karin:** i've always had a thing with UK British people (.) ↑my grandfathers' born in Guernsey so we got like a >little holiday home< there and spent every summer there as a child (.1) um: (.1) <plu:s I wanted to get away from Netherlands> (.) plu:s um:: (.1) and >↑I liked the fact that it was university degree↓< rather than like practical one like the Hague is really good >like obviously Switzerland< but no way I could afford that (.) so then >I guess< [South East University] was good option and yeah (.) >well at time it was a good uni< and it is now ↑even a better one and the school was good ↑and so I liked the fact that it was just outside of London (.) so it would lead <perhaps> to all the hotels in London (.) that were not too far away <so (.) yeah> (.1)
- 

#### *Excerpt 4.15 Karin*

Within her narrative (Excerpt 4.15), Karin values the academic as against practical focus of UK based hospitality programmes, despite the inclusion of practical skills within her course. This is consistent with more traditional interpretations of university study, as against the European model (Formica, 1996) of hospitality education that she also considered. Her approach to considering institutions, and selecting [South East University] demonstrates what Burke (2016) refers to as binary choice. Also discussed by Leathwood and Hutchings (2003) this notion refers to a divided educational system whereby those from more privileged or middle class backgrounds actively seek to attend HEI's with institutional capital. This naturally limits the number of institutions delivering hospitality based qualifications as these courses are often taught in Post-92 HEIs.

Financial implications were also taken into account with the high prices of European schools being noted. This price comparison sits in contrast to existing literature which often cites European programmes of study as being cheaper than UK based degrees (Universities UK,

2014), however the practical nature of European hospitality programmes means that they may not conform to the norm in terms of cost.

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**Cat:** and what made you choose [Scottish city] and [University] ?  
**Lili:** <e:::h I choose it because (.) e::h (.)> well we chose Scotland and [Scottish city] because we heard you can also study for free (.) ↑So in Hungary we had been studying for free and well (.) and we heard the is a SAAS programme (.) >and you can apply for the fees< (.) and that's what we did (.) and basically (.) <that was e:::m> (.) that was one of the main point (.) that is we didn't get the money from SAAS to get the free education then we probably wouldn't come (.) that's- that was one of the main points for us (.) >↑but we got it< (.) and we came (.) >and for that it was much easier< (.) and we needed the money to (.) to live and like paying the rent and all stuff (.)

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#### ***Excerpt 4.16 Lili***

For Lili (Excerpt 4.16), originally from Hungary, the cost implication of moving to the UK and the potential that she would have to pay for her education were of primary concern. UK based degrees are some of the most expensive in the world (Universities UK, 2014), thus the cost is obviously a key consideration for many students. However, coming from an EU country meant that Lili was eligible to apply for funding in order to support her during her studies. Within her narrative she admits that if she was unable to receive support in paying her tuition fees she would not have come to the UK in order to complete her degree. This is compounded by her use of 'we' as Lili actually travelled to the UK with her partner (now husband). This meant that the tuition fee cost of both her course and her partner's programme were taken into consideration. The funding mentioned by Lili is specific to Scottish universities and therefore her choice of institution was limited to this part of the country. The availability of programmes suitable for both herself and her partner therefore also limited her choice of institution. This approach to selecting HEI highlights how the financial implications associated with participation in HE has become increasingly important (Wilkins, Shams & Huisman, 2013). However Lili's relationship has also influenced her choice, highlighting how Others can have a bearing on decisions made.

The findings presented in this section have explored the array of reasons why HEIs were selected when, as prospective students, the graduates that participated in this study chose the institution that they would like to study at. In general terms, the underlying impetus appears to be concerned with institutional *habitus* and the culture of student life surrounding particular HEIs. It is this combination of features which has influenced the final decisions made by individuals. However, in addition to institutional *habitus*, location was also deemed important. For a number of graduates wanting to remain ‘close to home’ was a key consideration and therefore HEI choice directly correlated with location.

#### 4.6 Concluding Comments

This chapter has identified a number of key findings surrounding the background of hospitality graduates and circumstances that existed relating to their participation in HE. Through both thematic and dialogic approaches a number of crucial narrative typologies can be identified. Each of these has implications for the *field* of hospitality education; they have been identified in Table 4:1.

Key Findings
HE attendance is often an embedded narrative, therefore it is ‘expected’ that students will progress into HE.
Hospitality is deemed by some students to be a somewhat ‘sexy’ discipline area and is perceived as an alternative to generic management programmes.
Experience of the industry has influenced subject choice.
Prospective students are often contingent in their choice of HEI and rely on sources of information gained beyond their social network in order to establish alignments within institutional <i>habitus</i> .
Location is an important factor in HEI choice.
Socio-cultural factors influence decision making

**Table 4:1 Key Findings; the hospitality graduate in context**

The marketing of hospitality programmes and the way in which prospective students engage with the recruitment processes has implications for hospitality education. It is clear from the findings presented in this chapter that there are a broad range of individuals entering

hospitality education. Their rationale for choosing to enter HE and selection of hospitality as a primary *field* of study varied, however there is a general consensus that the decision to enter HE was an anticipated trajectory. Thus regardless of their HEI or subject choice they would be attending university. The choice of hospitality as a subject area is partly due to individual programme's unique identity derived from their vocational focus, however the management content and transferable nature of having a 'management degree' is also important for those students and graduates who have some reservations regarding the longevity of their careers in the hospitality industry. Thus it is clear that a range of different motivations have driven graduates' trajectories into HE. This naturally impacts on the way in which individuals engage with their subjects and the holistic HE experience. This focus will now be explored in Chapter Five which develops the understanding of hospitality graduates by considering their time in HE and the activities that have contributed to development.

## 5 The Higher Education Experience

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter progresses the discussion and analysis found in Chapter Four which provided an interpretation of who the hospitality graduate is, and the decision making process each undertook prior to entering HE. It includes a discussion regarding the way in which the participant's HE experience and curriculum impacted upon employability narratives, thus addressing Research Question Three '*What have final year students and recent graduates done during their time in HE in order to enhance their employability?*'. Both the core, taught curriculum, and other activities engaged with outside of the classroom will be considered consecutively. This will include reference to some of the activities often embedded within programmes. Due to the vocational nature of hospitality programmes work experience is often a component of a graduate's employability. However, for many students, work is also a necessity in order to afford living costs. Therefore the personal circumstances resultant of students' backgrounds impact on the way in which time is managed whilst studying. The type of establishments that this work experience is gained in and the support given by HEIs in order for students to gain this experience is therefore also considered. As a result the balance between work and social commitments is explored.

In addition to answering Research Question Three noted above, discussion will also directly inform the way in which Research Question Two ('*how do final year hospitality students and recent hospitality graduates narrate their career focus?*') is addressed in Chapter Six by considering the way in which career is considered when discussing engagement and learning associated with degree programmes. Motivation and approaches to career planning adopted by individuals will therefore be noted in relation to the bearing that this has on the activities that are engaged with throughout the students' time in HE.

## **5.2 The Core Hospitality Curriculum**

### **5.2.1 Introduction**

There are a number of pedagogic approaches which are often adopted by hospitality educators, thus the interaction between students and educators and the type of activities integrated into programmes varies at different HEIs. These approaches to curriculum delivery often differentiate programmes particularly with regards to the vocational focus of a hospitality degree, and are therefore somewhat unique to the discipline area. This section will explore some of the key learning opportunities embedded into the core, taught, hospitality curriculum, including the areas of curriculum unique to hospitality education. Initially training restaurants and placement experience will be discussed in relation to narratives elicited by graduates. The discussion will then move to other forms of industry engagement embedded into programmes in order to evaluate the specifically vocational elements of hospitality programmes. Following this the less subject specific areas of the hospitality curriculum and the core management focus associated with the majority of programmes will be explored. The final element of this section will address the specific approaches that graduates took to engaging with their programme and the perspectives narrated regarding learning and development and the importance of this as a component of the HE experience.

### **5.2.2 Training Restaurants**

Traditionally training restaurants have been considered a key element of hospitality education (HEFCE, 1998). However their use has been deemed somewhat contentious within the discipline area, with many questioning their relevance and effectiveness in meeting learning objectives (Alexander, 2007b; Hine, Gibson & Horner, 2015; Roberts, 2011). The type of learning associated with training restaurants is common within other hospitality qualifications, however a more academic approach to education is often advocated within HE (Lashley, 2004; Lashley, Lynch & Morrison, 2007a) meaning that this form of learning is by no means a

compulsory element of degree level programmes (QAA, 2016). As such their use and students reception to this type of learning environment was specifically addressed within this research.

Of the graduates that participated in this study, fourteen attended HEIs which utilised facilities which could be described as training restaurants. Some of these facilities were open to the public on a daily basis, others were dedicated spaces which hospitality students could utilise in order to cater for events. In one instance training was delivered in partnership with a local college, however in all other instances the facilities were owned and managed by the HEI.

Consistent with the work of Roberts (2011) many of these offerings differ from the traditional model so aptly described by Alexander (2007b), instead offering students a more contemporary and industry relevant experience (Alexander, Lynch & Murray, 2009).

Graduates' had differing opinions as to the value of these facilities and the learning associated with them. However, in the main, graduates accepted that this form of learning was integral to their programme and offered an opportunity for learning.

When asked about employability and elements of her programme that had helped to develop this, Alicia made specific reference to her time in the training restaurant at South Coast Town University (Excerpt 5.1). Alicia uses this opportunity to narrate how the experience of working in a training restaurant has aided her development. She therefore positions herself as experienced in both front of house and kitchen operations as a result of her time working in this environment, however her discourse is not explicit in the way that this is conveyed. She thus positions her past self as inexperienced, through statements such as, 'because I've never done anything like that before' and 'I've never been like a chef in a kitchen', thus by engaging with this learning opportunity, she has become experienced in these areas and gained a broader insight into hospitality operations. She is also positive about the 'managerial positions' that she was able to undertake, suggesting that this opportunity to take on a position of responsibility, may not be present through other means. However, the extent of

her experience is mediated as she draws on the presence of Others (such as the head chef) and the way that they supported her when she was working in roles with which she was formerly unfamiliar. Alicia also draws on her peers, their influence on her learning, and contribution to experience as a whole. Her narrative is then cut short as she begins to discuss other areas of her degree which have contributed to the development of her employability. Thus, while she positions this learning opportunity as important in terms of her employability how and why this is the case is not fully addressed.

- 
- Cat:** and any other elements or specific elements of your programme that have sort of ↑specifically↓ helped you out in terms of employability?
- Alicia:** erh: we've done (.) like a food and beverage course (.) <where> (.) within the uni (.1) what we do (.) is we have a canteen just for the lecturers (.) and we basically run that canteen (.) so (.) like there↓ (.) ↑ in our group and there's like a weekly thing ↑so we go in there at like eight in the morning and it finishes at three (.) and we've split into like three groups (.) and like operation: front of house and er:: (.) kitchen (.) ↑so one week were like operations and the week later we like rotate (.) so I feel like that (.) because I've never done anything like that before↓ (.)↑and we done it in our second year (.) I think I was like head chef one time and I've never been like a chef in a kitchen (.) >like obviously< you'd have like the head chef who was there (.) like helping you out but even then there skills (.1) and I was like a cashier and I think I was the waitress at one point (.) and because you're doing different things for the week it's >like< really interesting (.) and its interesting how you see other people work (.) as well (.) like your <peers> because (.) >I dunno< it's like really good because you get managerial positions (.) so it's interesting how you see people working (.) you take on their advice as well (.) when they're like in the same position as you (.) yeah ↑I feel like food and beverage is definitely (.)↓ yeah (.)↑I've also done finance as well (.) in the last year (.) I feel like that helped me (.) like things like the balance sheet and I can do that if anyone needs that doing (.)[...]
- 

### ***Excerpt 5.1 Alicia***

The precedence that Alicia places on this experience could be attributed to the limited proficiency that she has gained through part-time employment and her placement year. Within each of these employment positions her experience has been restricted to operational roles and therefore the opportunity to work alongside managers and gain management

related experience has been constrained. The positive orientation provided within this narrative is also consistent with the dominance of Alicia's 'i-as-experienced' positioning. It is therefore clear that, as an individual, Alicia has recognised the importance of experience within the hospitality industry (Harkison, Poulston & Kim, 2011; Nolan *et al.*, 2010; Raybould & Wilkins, 2005; 2006) and shaped her narrative in order to include this.

John attended the same institution as Alicia however his experience of working in the training restaurant was very different (Excerpt 5.2). Repetition surrounding 'not enjoying' the experience and being 'annoyed' dominates John narrative as he positions himself in opposition to his lecturers' 'voice' and as such the core content of his degree programme. John's negative portrayal of the experience draws on the imagery of 'slave labour' in order to illustrate his feelings regarding his time in South Coast Towns' training restaurant. For O'Connor and Bodicoat (2017), this notion of exploitation is common amongst many students that undertake unpaid internship based experiences. The referral made to 'slave labour' could also be considered consistent with John's background and predisposition to think of the financial reward associated with employment and work (which occurred elsewhere in his narrative). Having watched his family work hard and subsequently been able to receive a private education, it is not surprising that John naturally perceived that work should be rewarded, a trait consistent with Generation Y (Malone, 2007; Sheahan, 2005). Thus by being asked to 'work' for free within the training restaurant John believes that he is being taken advantage of. The time commitment associated with working in the training restaurant also presented a challenge for John. Balancing this with a part-time job and continuing with lectures meant that there was very little work-life balance for John within his second year of study. This desire for work life balance is, again, consistent with Generation Y students who often feel a sense of entitlement in regards to work-life balance, particularly if they, like John, have seen their parents make sacrifices in this regards (Malone, 2007).

- 
- Cat: did you have to do things like >training restaurants< and things like that in the first year where you are?
- John: ↑yeah(.) so (.) <well> first year we didn't we just had kind of practical lessons >which were quite interesting< second year we had what was called [Restaurant Name] which was where (.) [exhales loudly]::: uh: so ever four weeks you had to go into the restaurant >which was also the staff canteen< (.) so uh (.1) you were either front of house ↑ stores or ↑ kitchen (.1) so that's what we did (.) then you sort of swap round your roles every week (.)
- Cat: and how did you find that, did you think it was useful?=  
 John: no=  
 Cat: no?  
 John: not at all(.) our um: (.)↑ in my opinion our course leader is very sort of >stuck in his ways< and the fact was that a lot of us felt that it was sort of (.) to put it <mildly> slave labour (.) 'cause uh (.) we would get (.1) ↑we were having to do all this work and we were like working eight till three o'clock and none of us felt like we got anything out of it (.) I didn't feel like I got anything out of it (.1) ↑ if the fact was (.) I was doing a (.) doing a um I was uh actually working at the time in a kitchen in a school (.) >just doing< (.) uh↑just like a little weekend job (.) I was having to work nine days a week sometimes (.) and I was(.) it was really eating into everything as well I did not enjoy it at all 'cause I felt that they really(.) it did make my second year quite rubbish to be honest (.) I didn't enjoy it at all ↓so (.) in my opinion< there not> (.) I think if they were done differently they would be a better idea (.) there was a lot of things that annoyed me about it(.) like the fact that I (.) uh >lots of people in your class< that you could have got on with >you started falling out< with 'cause everyone was getting a bit <↑wound up> with each other (.) then the staff would say ↑oh (.) ↑oh that's because we want you to do this >because it's about your learning process< (.) and I just think that (.) it's not about your learning process (.) I just think that it <uh really> (.)> it just annoyed a lot of people< (.) about the whole situation (.) I think it would be fine-(.) I think it would hard pressed to find anyone in my year who really would have fond memories and would really say >↑I liked doing it< ↑'cause I don't think any of us did (.)
- 

### **Excerpt 5.2 John**

Within his narrative John moves from self-positioning to a group-positioning within his dialogue. Thus at the beginning of his account it is his opinion that is being relayed, however towards the end John positions the whole of his cohort as having the same opinion as himself. He suggests that nobody would say that they enjoyed the experience, thus drawing on the collective voice of the Other in order to support his narrative. However, from Alicia's

statements above (Excerpt 5.1) it is clear that his representation of the Others voice is not entirely true. Thus there is evidence of a divided opinion as to the value of this form of experience.

- 
- Cat: okay (.) and did you have any other (.) <sort of> (.) practical experience as a part of your programme?
- Ava: (.) er::: we had to run (.2) >↑I can't even remember now< (.) er: over the four years we had to run <like> two events in groups of students (.) erm so [south coast city] university works> really closely< with [local] college(.1) ↑which is one of the colleges in [south coast city] and they have kitchens (.) they have a restaurant <and um:> for us to use >for training< (.) er:m:: and yeah (.) ↓so (.) >for us< (.) ↑one of our >kind of< coursework's in uh second year >and also in first year< ↑we had to put on an event ↑and we had to come up with a theme (.) and we had to decide on the menu ↑and the pricing and the whole >thing really< (.) and the advertising >and all of this< (.) ↑ but in the end it just ended up like everyone's parents turning up >no one else@< (.) <because it's not>(.) >the restaurants only open when students put on events<(.)
- Cat: =okay=
- Ava: =>so it's not really somewhere that people just turn up for and go to dinner< (.)↓ er:m: (.) ↑so we did that >and it was good< (.) but um:: it was >very much< er:m: <you were guided> (.) like they held your hand through the whole process (.) ↑and for a lot of people that's really good (.) and they learnt a lot (.) but I feel like I could of done that with my eyes closed (.) >kind of thing< (.) >and it wasn't very challenging< (.) problem is that with my part time work (.) ↑although it was promotions >it was running events< (.) even though it was just at a night club ↓erm: and ↑I was kind of doing that >week in week out< (.) and then I got a team of <like> ↑twelve people and >they all think< (.) like they all think it's ↑so easy (.) and I didn't really get so involved in the process because I (.) I already felt like I knew how to do it (.) erm: so I just left other people to it >and just got on with whatever they asked me to< (.)
- 

### **Excerpt 5.3 Ava**

For Ava (Excerpt 5.3) the experience of having to work in a training restaurant as a part of her course also presented a somewhat artificial environment. As noted by Alexander, Lynch and Murray (2009) the environment that Ava had to work in did not provide a truly realistic setting in which to develop skills, the experience was therefore compromised.

The artificial nature of some training restaurants was noted by Alexander (2007b). Providing an industry relevant and realistic environment is therefore an important component of the training restaurants successful integration into the curriculum (Alexander, Lynch & Murray, 2009). The criticisms of training restaurants, as simulated environments, is highlighted here by Ava (Excerpt 5.3), therefore in this instance it is clear that the learning objectives, in terms of providing 'real life' practical experience, have not been fully achieved. Her experience of the use of training restaurants as a part of the core hospitality curriculum occurred both in the first and second year of her degree, and involved working within the kitchens at a local college, in order to organise events. She suggests that the main audience for these events were other student's parents. Laughter accompanies this statement as she inadvertently suggests that the students are unable to market their events to a wider audience. Thus the *ad hoc* opening hours of the facility (as a training restaurant) were a disadvantage to the perceived success of the event.

While she initially claims that the experience was 'good' Ava does not identify with the positive learning narrated. Instead she positions the experience as beneficial for Other students. She indirectly draws on the voice of these Others in order to portray their learning, yet claims that she could have completed the task 'with her eyes closed'. In order to support this Ava highlights her additional learning from part-time employment to position herself as experienced and therefore justify her admitted lack of engagement with this component of the curriculum. Thus the facility has not been successful in its aim to develop industry relevant skills as a part of the vocational curriculum (Alexander, 2007a; Alexander, Lynch & Murray, 2009; Hine, Gibson & Horner, 2015). There is however somewhat of a dialogical knot within her narrative as she downplays her experience with the statement 'it was just a nightclub', suggesting that organising events in this context is less challenging than within the restaurant environment. It is apparent that if Ava had not been specifically asked about practical

experience as a component of her programme this learning opportunity would not have been presented within her narrative. The interviewer is therefore being directly addressed, evidencing the way that Ava's employability narrative is shaped by the social situation of the interview.

- 
- Cat:** and what about things like (.) did you have to work in >like training restaurants< as a part of your course?
- Vanessa:** um: in the first year then they have this thing called [facility name] and they <like um:: er:> like a professional kitchen and we would like >set up our own restaurant< and would open like >one day a week< and we would swap like ↑from one week in the kitchen and then ↑one week in the restaurant <and ↓then all the time ↑and then there was one time when we were like ↑>in groups< and you had to put on like <er: your er:> own like >special meal< so we had like Italian ones or like that (.) and that was ↑really ↑really good in the sense that like you had to work in hospitality and then again >like I said< you had experience in doing it and I did think that was very important (.) however: (.1) >it was only in the first year< and I think that <like> it was quite an important thing ↑and in second and third year we did no practical work and (.1) and I'd like to suggest to them (.) that maybe >second or third years< um: (.1)> would go in with the first years< (.) ↑um: >as managers< ↓so um ↑>you would take it in turn to manage the first years< (.1)
- Cat:** yeah
- Vanessa:** >in the restaurant< and in the kitchen (.) so as we're training to be managers that's ↑that would be quite a good experience to have ↓um:: ↑so I do feel >that that< side of it it was really useful but (.) really limited (.) we didn't really get a chance to use that to its full potential (.1) ↑I don't think
- 

#### ***Excerpt 5.4 Vanessa***

Vanessa (Excerpt 5.4) valued her time working in the training restaurant to the extent that her narrative directly addresses her institution in asking for more practical experience to be incorporated into her programme. Thus the value of industry related experience has been internalised in order to improve employability (Harkison, Poulston & Kim, 2011; Raybould & Wilkins, 2005). Her experience appeared, however, to be primarily operational and therefore the associated learning was somewhat limited in value. Despite her supervisory experience (gained through other employment), she suggests that 'we're training to be managers' thus

more managerial training would be beneficial for the cohort. Her orientation towards more management training and learning opportunities as a component of her degree is consistent with the holistic content of her narrative, which submits that experience within the industry has helped her to gain graduate level employment and positively influenced her employability as she transitions into the labour market.

It is clear from the narratives elicited that training restaurants, as a component of hospitality education are received with mixed reactions. For some graduates the vocational experience gained through engagement with these facilities is viewed positively. However these facilities do not appear, in general, to meet their core objectives in terms of delivering high level skills based training to hospitality students. As with other forms of short term placement (Thompson, 2017) the negative perceptions of working in training restaurants has the potential to shape graduates' trajectories and deter them from wanting to enter the industry. It can also can lead individuals to disengage with their programmes of study when they do not see value in their learning experiences.

### **5.2.3 Placements**

Placement are often considered a core component of hospitality degrees (HEFCE, 1998; QAA, 2016) and have become a key feature of many other degree programmes (Wilson, 2012). In many instances students were expected to complete a year's industry experience as a part of their standard bachelor's degrees; in the majority of cases this occurred between the second and final year of taught content. However, in line with existing literature (Aggett & Busby, 2011; Bullock *et al.*, 2009; Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2011; Nixon *et al.*, 2006; Wilson, 2012), not all students completed a year in industry as some made the conscious decision that this year of experience would not benefit them in terms of their employability. The type of jobs that students were expected to engage with also varied considerably, with

some students given a great deal of responsibility within their positions, while others undertook operational duties for the entirety of their year in industry.

- 
- Cat: so you did your placement in Dubai!? whereabouts were you working then?
- Liese: the Ritz Carleton=
- Cat; =oh yeah=
- Liese: =I worked there >in the Ritz Carleton resort< in Dubai.
- Cat: and what did you do for your placement year – what job did you have >as it were<?
- Liese: um: (.) well ↑I started in the club lounge which was kind of a combination of reception ↑food and beverage (.) and concierge >all together< (.)↑ and I was there for six months (.) and then I went out to the purchasing department↓
- Cat: ↑yeah
- Liese: for three months (.) >and then I went to housekeeping< for ↑another three months (.) I was actually only supposed to be in the club lounge (.) >but I kind of asked for the transfers< just to learn a bit more
- Cat: that's brilliant (.) that sounds like a >fantastic< position
- Liese: it was really good (.) ↑I really enjoyed the experience (.) ↓um: (.)↑ I think this is actually something that is fantastic at these placements (.) a whole year placement >I think that is really important< you actually ↑know what you are getting into
- [...]
- Liese: um: I think that the placement year has been the most important (.) >and the thing that employers <↑appreciate> the most< (.) I think it has given me a lot↓ (.) ↑I have learned things that you cannot learn in a university (.) >so I think< that the year that I've been actually working (.1) ah (.) ↑and every time I go for any kind of interview (.) ↑>of course they look at< (.1) ↑of course they look at the fact that I studied hospitality (.) but they never ask in an interview which kind of modules that I've taken >you know<=
- Cat: =↓yeah
- Liese: >they never< ask me if I have taken anything to do with accounting (.) ↑or management skills ↓or anything like that (.) but when they see that I have worked in Dubai (.) they think ↑oh (.) ↑this is impressive (.) you have worked in Dubai (.) ↑this is really good (.) so what did you learn there?< <↓yeah> (.) so they mostly focus on the practical experience (.) um: (.) at least they do in hospitality I feel (.) so I don't think the hospitality industry focuses that much on the university (.) in terms of the degree
- 

### *Excerpt 5.5 Liese*

Once in employment, on their placement year, some of the students found that their job roles were quite flexible. For example, Liese (Excerpt 5.5) positions the variety of experience that



she was able to gain as advantageous in her development. She utilised her placement as a learning experience, stating that she ‘asked for the transfers just to learn a bit more’. Within her discourse there is a broader echo that the placement provided her with the opportunity to understand the hospitality industry (‘know what you are getting into’). Thus it is evident that she has internalised the academic discourses surrounding the value of placement experience (Aggett & Busby, 2011; Boud & Solomon, 2001; Lester & Costley, 2010; Nixon *et al.*, 2006) as she approached and reflected on her time in industry. Liese also positions her placement experience as integral to her employability. Within the hospitality industry, in particular, the value of experience is often favoured by employers (Connolly & McGing, 2006; Harkison, Poulston & Kim, 2011; Harris & Zhao, 2004; Jauhari, 2006; Raybould & Sheedy, 2005; Raybould & Wilkins, 2005; Raybould & Wilkins, 2006; Ruhanen, 2005; Spowart, 2011). Liese recognises this within her discourse. She uses the voice of the industry (an unidentified individual recruiting within the hospitality industry) in order to support her feelings as she poses questions that may be asked within an interview situation, designed to elicit and frame narratives of her experience.

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**Cat:** did you do a whole year then↑?=-

**Manoj:** =it was a whole year <yeah> (.1)

**Cat:** what kind of <job roles> did you take within that year then?

**Manoj:** ↑yeah (.) ↓so it was for a hotel (.1) um: >I was just< (.1) um working as a front of house assistant(.) >so just as a receptionist< (.1) and then uh: just ah moved on to am supervisory duties (.) um: (.) there were opportunities to >eh: possibly< move around (.) >to explore< like the food and beverage side of things (.1) Um: (.) and sales and marketing (.) but I thought that I wouldn’t do any (.) ↑just because uh of the level of team that >there’s a great team there<(.) um::(.) eh that I was working with↑ (.) so I just decided to uh just to stay and do that (.) <a:nd> <and as it was> my first job in hospitality(.)|- >I wasn’t too sure what I wanted to do< (.1) ah (.)↑but I actually <↑I really enjoy:ed that side of the (.) ↑that side of the business>(.) so (.) so that is what I’m modelling myself around for the future(.).↑in a front of house ↑operations role(.1)

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**Excerpt 5.6 Manoj**



Manoj also found that there were opportunities to move between departments as a part of his placement opportunity. However, instead of doing this he opted to remain in one department. Initially Manoj (Excerpt 5.6) positions his role as ‘just a receptionist’, his repetition of ‘just’ could represent that there is some level of ambivalence in the value of this position. This is however repeated, when he mentioned the supervisory duties that he was also tasked with, suggesting that he is downplaying the extent, and value of, the experience that he was able to gain on his placement year. This positioning of limited experience is supported as Manoj states that his placement year was the first time that he was employed in the hospitality industry. He does, however, note that he enjoyed the experience and teamwork associated with his job and, having reflected on his time in industry, has decided that he will pursue a similar career path. Thus his placement has been instrumental in helping him to decide upon a career in hospitality. This narrative is interesting as, while some authors suggest this is a key outcome relating to placements (Wilson, 2012), it sits in contrast to the often cited experiences of students disengaging from the industry as a result of negative placement experience in hospitality (Richardson, 2008; 2009; 2010; Richardson & Butler, 2012).

For Alicia her experience on placement was primarily operational, however the opportunity to work abroad was a key differentiating factor within her narrative. She repeatedly drew on this experience as a core component of her employability narrative; during this section of the interview (Excerpt 5.7) Alicia describes her placement.

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**Cat:** um (.) >have you?< (.) you mentioned your placement?  
**Alicia:** um: (.) yeah ↑I worked in a country club in Florida (.) erm called [property name] um >near Miami< (.) I was a server (.) er ↑and a hostess and cashier ↓er >and that was for ten months< (.) er: it was amazing experience (.) er and the hours were really long (.) ↑my longest hours we- ↑I was there from ten AM until four AM the next day (.) <like> we had this set up for lunch (.) it was amazing <like> being there and I loved it ‘cause everyone was <like> so happy (.) like excited (.) like they gave us <lovely accommodation> and >you can



imagine< you're in Florida so you've got er: a apartment got ↑a pool  
↑a basketball court ↑a tennis court (.) volleyball court (.) gym (.) they  
gave us all the↓ (.) food was provided when you was at work (.) >so  
like< that day I'd go in >and have a roll for breakfast< then lunch  
dinner and snacks >at any time< so you get pretty well fed (.1) um yes  
you'd go in (.) set up for the members (.) er:: brunch yeah breakfast  
lunch dinner and then you'd clear that away and then you'd reset for  
like a wedding (.) so: >there would be a lot of events going on< so  
>you'd like< clear the whole dining room (.) and bring everything  
>like< all the banquet equipment out (.) and then you'd set all the  
tables for that (.) and I loved working in the banquet↑ all the events  
and weddings and that (.) ↑bar mitzvah ↑bat mitzvah's (.) ↑yeah all  
the bridal stuff (.) I just thought it was ↑so much fun (.) but then when  
you get to like <one AM in the morning> and they all go home (.) and  
you have to set up for the next day >and I think< them last three hours  
are just like ↑urg:h:: (.) I just want to go to bed //(.)//

Cat: @

Alicia: (.)>but it was really challenging but it was amazing (.) ↑I had an  
>amazing time< (.) I toured Florida while I was there (.) met some  
people from all around the world like ↑South Africa ↑the Philippines  
(.) like all around (.) like worked with different people (.) like tried new  
things (.) like >I do hospitality< but I've never like >worked in a  
restaurant< (.) working in ↑like these members was like the richest  
people you'd come across but↓ (.) mind about two like >two dollars<  
extra so it was like ↑oh ↑God >its like< uh::(.) but they were very  
demanding and they always wanted it the right way and on time (.)  
>so working like< (.1) providing a service to them (.) <was challenging>  
(.1) but >at the same time< they all loved us but cause obviously we  
were English they were ↑so excited to hear like >all our stories< and it  
was nice getting to know them (.) and hearing how they became like  
how they are today (.) >and it was like a golf club< so they would all go  
play golf and then come back and have their lunch ↓<and yeah> (.) it  
was a really good experience ↑and I really enjoyed it (.)

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### **Excerpt 5.7 Alicia**

Alicia was required to work long hours as a part of her placement. The tasks that she describes above are operationally based and therefore it is apparent that, unlike some students, she received limited exposure to supervisory or management based experience whilst on her placement. Her placement was however enjoyable and her 'love' for the job is primarily positioned around the people that she worked with and customers that she served. This highlights the importance of good organisational fit, as without this there is a risk that placement students will not enjoy their employment and subsequently leave the hospitality



industry as a result of the negative experience (Richardson, 2009; Richardson, 2010; Richardson & Butler, 2012).

The overriding value gained from Alicia's placement has been derived from the international nature of the working environment and the challenges faced by the customers that she was serving. Opportunities to travel and engage with a culturally different working environment have contributed to Alicia's employability as her social capital has developed in light of this experience (Clark & Zukas, 2016). Thus while she may not have developed a broad range of hospitality based operational skills, or started to develop management skills her placement experience has assisted in the acquisition of capital integral to future opportunities. The broader benefits of travelling, living away from home and engaging with individuals that do not share the same habitual values has, in itself, provided learning opportunities for Alicia.

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**Cat:** ↓so >what was particularly< good ↑about your placement then?  
**Kari:** um:> its very small< (.) there were sixteen bedrooms (.) um:: (.) >no restaurant< (.1) and the innkeepers were a really young couple (.) ↑I think about thirty six (.) or thirty five (.) um: >with three young kids< (.) ↑so they weren't there very often (.) and once you'd been trained and shown the ropes (.) >you know< it was your-(.) they'd come in in the morning and do breakfast >and meet and greet< and get all the ↑official stuff done <and then> from about ten↑ eleven o'clock onwards >it was ours< (.) you know (.) ↑we had to clean (.) ↑we had to organise ourselves (.) you had to make sure all the jobs on the list were done(.) how-(.) >you know< (.) how we wanted them (.) then we had the afternoon to do like↓ (.1) projects (.) >so like uni' projects< (.) or if we wanted to do anything to improve the inn (.) ↑ that's when I brought in like soup >for afternoon tea< (.) we just had <like> ↑cakes and biscuits and I thought >when it was cold< and in the winter why don't we do soup? (.) so I got to like price >all that< up (.) made a big portfolio of it (.) ↑what we were going to serve(.) ↑how we were going to do it. (.) ↓so (.) procedures and all of this (.) so >that was really good< (.) ↑really added a lot of value to my CV (.) 'cause it was something I done off my own back (.) and I really thought everything through (.) and they were >really impressed< with it so ↑I was really pleased with that↓ (.) I wouldn't have been able to do that in like ↑a big chain that just wants <like yeah> and >an extra pair of hands<

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*Excerpt 5.8 Kari*



In keeping with a love of travel expressed throughout her narrative Kari also worked abroad on her placement year (Excerpt 5.8), she was employed in a small inn on the Cape Cod. Within her position, there were opportunities to gain additional experience on top of the operational duties that she was responsible for. Throughout her narrative Kari draws on the term 'ours' and 'we' to highlight how she was a part of a team in working at the inn. She has clearly internalised her position, demonstrating a connection with the organisation. The skills developed through her experience are not all highlighted, however learning is implied as she positions herself as responsible in her job role. The reflexive account that Kari provides of her placement demonstrates how she has woven her experience into her narrative of employability. The opportunities that she had, to work independently, and complete a project that was beneficial to her employer, highlights the value that can be gained from a good placement. Her engagement with this academic project, as a component of her year is particularly interesting as she notes how this has added 'value to her CV' highlighting the significance that Kari places on this experience in terms of her future employability. The success of this project is supported by the voice of her employers, who according to Kari 'were really impressed' with her work. Within Excerpt 5.8 Kari presents a somewhat well-developed narrative, she successfully links her placement experience to future employability and offers a critically reflexive viewpoint.

Unlike the students already mentioned, Mikkel (Excerpt 5.9) opted not to complete a placement year as a part of his degree. This choice is to some extent common amongst students that do not have a placement year included in their programme as core (Aggett & Busby, 2011; Bullock *et al.*, 2009; Morgan, 2006; Wilson, 2012). However, his narrative takes a number of turns. Initially he suggests that he wanted to complete a placement year. Despite his prior industry experience the way in which the placement experience and associated learning was advertised appealed to him, thus the value of this type of experience was

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- Cat: um: (.) did you do placements at all?
- Mikkel: ↑no (.) uh (.) >I was going to do a placement< (.) uh I think the placement aspect is one of the most disappointing aspects the degree as a whole (.) I do have ↑some experience working in entry level positions in hospitality (.) >so for me< (.) when we >sort of< started hearing about the placement (.) ↑and when I read about it online before applying (.) it was sort of implied (.)↑ that you would be doing more than an entry level position
- Cat: [okay]
- Mikkel: [um::(.)] so obviously me- ma- and ↑so a lot of my peers were >sort of thinking< (.) ↑obviously won't be coming as↑ assistant general manager or anything but maybe you will sort of be ↑F and B supervisor (.) ↑reception supervisor >or do something like that< (.) and then you see the jobs that are sort of >popping up< and its sort of ↓<waitering> and working for a year (.) ↑or working for a office for a year (.) and (.) it was just <↑a very big disappointment> (.) I was ↑not wasting a year of working (.) I have five of them already (.)=
- Cat: [okay]
- Mikkel: =>and that's just of hospitality< (.) ↑ I don't need another one (.) so I skipped it ↓for that reason.
- Cat: that's (.) that's completely logical with your additional experience
- Mikkel: and like I said again (.) for those that don't have any experience↑ I think it is essential ↑ to do a placement (.) I am quite happy that I could choose >in a way< (.) ↓yeah (.) if it was mandatory then I would be banging on your door (.) >or someone else's door< and be like <↑this is not happening> (.) so it (.) >you choose< and you can say no and that's okay
- 

### *Excerpt 5.9 Mikkel*

recognised. However, the reality of the jobs available, and marketed as placement positions did not meet Mikkel's expectation. In congruence with many of the other students in this study Mikkel found that operational positions were advertised through his university. While students such as Manoj and Kari (Excerpt 5.6; Excerpt 5.8) gained valuable experience and took on supervisory responsibilities as a part of their primarily operational roles, Mikkel did not anticipate this happening. From elsewhere in his narrative it is clear that Mikkels cultural upbringing, and the labour market conditions of his native Norway have affected his understanding of the competitive labour market. He suggested that career progression in Norwegian hotels was somewhat limited, therefore it follows that he would not anticipate an operational post offering career advancement opportunities. He therefore missed the

opportunity to undertake work based learning as a part of his course. In order to help justify the decision he positions himself as experienced (having spent five years working in hospitality), a status that is often cited as a reason for not participating (Bullock *et al.*, 2009). However, these were not five years in continual full-time work and therefore the skills developed through full-time as against part-time employment have not been gained. Opportunities to develop social and cultural capital through supported employment have also been missed, limiting development achieved through HE. For those unfamiliar with learning environments and potential developmental opportunities information regarding what is, and is not beneficial, is assimilated from academics (Lave & Wenger, 1991), therefore in this instance it is clear that the additional benefits associated with placement experience have not been successfully relayed to this individual.

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**Cat:** and what about ↓? (.1) have you had to do things like work based learning? >have you had to have a job< ↑ or a placement ↑ or anything ↓ on the course?

**Wong:** yes (.) in hospitality management it provide a year placement for us (.) >but I didn't< choose to do the placement (.) because I wanted to finish my degree ↑ then find a job (.) yeah (.) I don't want to do a job then come back to ↓ (.1) I think it is a really long way (.1) ↓ I don't know (.) ↑ my parents also want me to finish the degree then continue (.1) ↑ then they want me to find a job (.)

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#### **Excerpt 5.10 Wong**

Wong (Excerpt 5.10) also opted not to complete a placement year. However unlike Mikkel (Excerpt 5.9), she did not evaluate the potential to undertake a year in industry. Instead she claimed that she wanted to complete her degree and then 'find a job'. For Beck (1992) this type of decision may reflect anxiety in entering a new situation, and having to undertake the application process, therefore in not undertaking a placement she has reduced the risk associated with this process. Wong also draws on the voice of her parents in supporting and directing her decision. She claims that her parents also wanted her to finish her degree. Their influence over her decision is evident and represents a habitual process whereby parental

direction has shaped Wong's progression through HE. As a first generation student, studying in an international environment the benefits associated with attending a HEI in the UK may not be entirely realised as a result of this approach.

In contrast to the narratives presented previously, one of the students who participated in this research was given the opportunity to complete a structured placement as a part of their degree which did not adhere to the common 48-week sandwich placement structure. Vanessa had the option to spend either 20 days, three months or twelve months in employment. In each case the experience was core to a module and therefore she would gain academic credits. Vanessa opted to undertake a three month summer placement in Australia, where she worked in a luxury lodge. Thompson (2017) suggested that this type of short term placement can be valuable for students in helping them to gain experience and assess their career direction. In completing a shorter placement some of the reasons relating to time (not wanting to spend an entire year working) (Bullock *et al.*, 2009) can also be combatted, thus encouraging more students to undertake placements. Her position was operational, however the opportunity to develop industry relevant skills and knowledge, and benefit from having completed a placement (Thompson, 2017; Wilson, 2012) still exist.

Placement experience, as narrated by graduates is a core component of employability. It is used as a differentiating factor by graduates when undertaken. However, as much of the experience gained through placements is operational, it is therefore often the international dimension associated with experience, or the additional management or project based experience that acts as a means of differentiating individuals when competing with others that have similar credentials. This has implications in terms of the way in which placements are negotiated and the type of placements that are offered by HEIs. However the value of operational experience cannot be undermined as important, because this can form the foundations on which individuals build their career and progress into management based



positions. A number of students did not engage with placements and therefore did not see the value in these. It is therefore important that other means of acquiring similar experience is offered to students and supported by HEIs so that this core vocational learning is not neglected if students opt not to complete a year in industry.

#### **5.2.4 Other Practical Experience**

In addition to placements and practical training restaurants HEIs also adopted a number of other initiatives in order to embed practical, industry related training into their programmes (Connolly & McGing, 2006; Hine, Gibson & Horner, 2015; Littlejohn & Watson, 2004; Maher & Graves, 2007). This experience varied between universities, with some using engagement with industry instead of training restaurants in order develop technical skills. These initiatives were, in the same way as for the training restaurant, perceived both positively and negatively by students. In many instances students also mentioned consultancy based projects an initiative noted by Maher and Graves (2007), which students completed in their final year of study. These projects were used widely and involved students working with industry practitioners to solve a problem or help develop a business idea or event in order to gain credits for their degree. These projects gave many of the students an opportunity to develop practical, industry relevant skills beyond the food and beverage curriculum which appears to dominate practical training. There were also numerous links made between these consultancy projects, points of discussion on CVs, and the narratives graduates are able to construct in job interviews, demonstrating that they contain obvious value in terms of employability. However, despite these initiatives, not all students felt that there was enough practical or work based learning embedded into their programmes.

As a part of her degree Jennifer (Excerpt 5.11) had to spend time in the kitchens of a local hospitality business. It appears that this experience was embedded within her programme. Utilising industry in order to develop practical skills can present challenges in terms of

consistency of experience (Hine, Gibson & Horner, 2015). In this instance it appears that Jennifer has not had a particularly positive experience. Jennifer suggests this experience has

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**Cat:** did you have any other sort of practical experience ↑as a part of your course?

**Jennifer:** no >it was just that< (.) well (.) >I don't know< (.) we did have ↑like a week's worth of work (.1) one of the modules >in the second year< was about food (.) and we had to <like ↑cook> (.) and a week of experience in a local hotel (.) <↑I think I was in a lodge> (.) it was a golf club ↑> a lodge thing< (.) ah (.) and we just cooked there (.) >but that didn't really help< because <I ↑don't> like cooking (.) <↑I am not a food person> (.) so that didn't really help me in a way (.) it was more↓ (.2) and I don't think a week is long enough (.) um: (.) >to kind of< get a lot of experience (.) because I think that >in the second year< you are still a bit overwhelmed by everything (.) um: (.) I can't really remember what I did (.) ↑I made a lot of salads that week@ (.)

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**Excerpt 5.11 Jennifer**

not been beneficial in her employability. She positions herself as 'not a food person'; her emphasis on the phrases 'we had to, like, cook' and 'I don't like cooking' support this positioning. Thus it is apparent that working in the food and beverage industry does not appeal to her. However throughout her narrative she proclaims a 'love for hotels', which as businesses, often incorporate a food and beverage offering. It may be that she did not make a connection between her time in the kitchen and the future impact that this may have on her if she chooses to pursue a career in hotel management (for example working alongside food and beverage departments and potentially managing individuals employed in food related positions). Thus the academic links between work based learning and future career prospects does not appear to have been clearly relayed in order for Jennifer to have reflected on the experience in a more positive manner. This reflective process is highlighted by Alexander, Lynch and Murray (2009) as a core component of successful WBL initiatives. Elsewhere in her narrative Jennifer notes that she is not very academic, and thus it follows that the higher level reflexive thinking to connect this experience with future career prospects may not have taken place in this instance (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

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Cat: did you have to do ↓um (.) >sort of< work based learning through the programme at all?  
Mikkel: we had in one module >we had a< work based learning  
Cat: and did you find that that was of <benefit> to you?  
Mikkel: ↑no  
Cat: no? >could you< <expand> a little bit?  
Mikkel: it (.) uh (.) <↑first of all it clashed> (.) at the time with a lot of other things that we were doing ↑so it added just to the stress level (.) >I think< for someone who has never <worked> ↑it could probably be of benefit (.) >like if you have nothing on your CV< then work based learning could get a part time job ↑or at least a good reference (.) >I have no need for it< ↑so for me it was a sort of ↑waste of time.

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### ***Excerpt 5.12 Mikkel***

In a similar vein Mikkel also had negative feelings with regards to the work based learning that he was expected to complete as a component of his programme. Within the adjacent section of discourse (Excerpt 5.12) he is forthcoming with his negative response to a question about work based learning. He suggests that the initiative was a ‘waste of time’ due to the experience that he had already gained in the industry. He therefore did not engage effectively with the task, a factor common to other WBL based initiatives (Bullock *et al.*, 2009). Mikkel reflexively acknowledges some of the benefits for those students that have entered university with less experience, yet maintains that these were not relevant for himself. In holding this perspective Mikkel does not recognise the benefits that could have been gained in terms of networking and social capital development, his focus is wholly on practical skills. It is also apparent that the work based learning which this student was asked to complete was operationally based. This was confirmed by Daney who attended the same institution (the students essentially had to find a job and work for a set number of hours as part of a food and beverage module). In congruence with other comments, such as those presented in Excerpt 5.9; in Mikkel’s perspective it was not possible to gain additional experience or learn anything new through this time in industry. He did not however consider opportunities which could have incorporated more than just operational tasks within the WBL remit. As the onus was placed on the students to secure WBL, scenarios’ such as the management shadowing

initiatives discussed by Hine, Gibson and Horner (2015) were not considered as a means of ensuring that this time spent in employment was both beneficial and engaging for individuals like Mikkel. Thus the parameters of this initiative, and focus on food and beverage also appeared to influence Mikkel. As an individual that had a clear focus on developing his career in revenue and sales based positions it is not surprising that he was disengaged by topics and activities that may not appear to be directly related to his career interests. Ritzer (2007) supports this argument in suggesting that the centrality of food and beverage curriculum could be seen to be outdated.

Johanna's programme incorporated work based learning at every stage, this was delivered in a hotel attached to the university and therefore involved working at operational and supervisory levels in a number of different departments. The nature of Johanna's programme and the associated assessment methods have encouraged her to be reflexive when undertaking supervised periods of time in work (Excerpt 5.13). It is important to note that Johanna has been unable to undertake additional work experience throughout her time as a student due to the time commitments associated with her programme. Therefore the vast majority of her hospitality based experience has been gained through her time at university. However, her experience has been extensive and she has undertaken supervisory and management based roles which has been relatively uncommon amongst other students participating in this research, despite commentary from Farbrother and Dutton (2005); Farbrother and Thomas (2008) suggesting that this can be beneficial for students. There is also clear evidence of reflection within Johanna's narrative, as she openly asks rhetoric questions, repeating the phrase 'should I have'. Incorporating reflection is a key consideration when attempting to design successful WBL experiences (Alexander, Lynch & Murray, 2009; Dredge *et al.*, 2012; Tribe, 2002) and suggests that the assessment methods undertaken as a part of her programme are encouraging this behaviour. However in terms of voice, Johanna is

questioning Others expectations of herself and her actions. She is drawing on the voice of Others, presumably academic staff at her institution in order to reflect, and subsequently

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Cat: [...] you obviously do a lot of work based learning (.) and working >in the hotel< as a part of your course (.) ↑how have you gotten the most out of that?

Johanna: (.3) um: I think for (.) I mean (.) when er first started it was really hard for us to see how it all works together(.) ↑'cause you get so caught up in your daily running of the hotel >and the gossip< and the department↑ that you're working in ↓that (.) ↑>especially when we do seven weeks< at a time (.) you become a member of the team (.) ↑you don't really stand back >and think< that >↑should I have been more of a supervisor?<(.) >↑should I have been more of an assistant manager?< and you just (.) >you get on with the work< (.) >and I've always had that problem< when I was working (.) ↑I am too operationally based ↑and I think too much of the customers (.) when I should be thinking (.) ↑oh >should I have given them that coffee? or ↑>should I have charged them for that? (.) and ↑>what should I have done then?< so (.) now being a level six (.) >and working with the younger students< (.) ↑I've only just started in January (.) ↓it well >really opens your eyes< when you are working with them (.) ↑'cause when it like ↑>have you thought of this?< and like ↑>are you going to write about that in your diary entry? ↑>are you going to mention that in your interview later? (.) and >you kind of< you push them as well (.) ↑like I've had one student >I was working in the restaurant< with recently and she was a really >little shy< girl ↑and it was the first job ever and she wasn't really sure what she was going to do (.) and it was one of the simplest things (.) >just bring a cup of coffee to a table< and it was like ↓<oh ↓I'll do that than> (.) and it was like >once you sat down with them< and explained ↑how to do it and ↑how the service works (.) she just came out of her shell over the next two weeks ↓<and er> she was very nearly able to run an afternoon tea service >as a host< herself (.) an I'm like ↑I'm so proud that I have been here >and to of witnessed< that happen ↑in another student (.) and you don't think >well how have I progresses< since I've been here (.) have I had the same sort of moment >where I have < of ↑come out of my shell ↑and become myself? (.) so it really makes you think ↓<sometimes> of what you have ↑actually learned over the years that you have been here (.)

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**Excerpt 5.13 Johannah**

construct her self-identity, thus reflecting the social nature of identity construction. Johannah also draws on scenarios where she can evidence taking on leadership-type roles, helping other students to develop. In terms of employability it is clear that she therefore has some well-

developed narratives with which to support job applications. Johanna's dialogue suggests that she has been engaged fully with her work based learning, manifesting both the formal and informal organisational culture. Thus the fit between herself and the organisation has supported development (Clark & Zukas, 2016).

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- Cat:** >and if I was to ask you< to pull out a couple areas of your degree  
↑that have <specifically> helped you with employment (.) what would  
you pull out?
- Elena:** well I would (.) uh (.) um:: I would pull out the conference >that I'm  
working on at the minute< (.) I feel like it the most↓ (.) ↑it's the most  
beneficial event I've worked on (.) ↑because the job I do >right now< ↓  
<you know> is just a waitress in a big- ↑>for like weddings< ↑and  
events and conferences >and parties< and that (.) and this is like my  
first >real life< coordinating an event (.) >and its pretty big< you know  
↑this event is on for like three days ↑and like people coming from like  
all over the world that's (.) <for me> that's like >really exciting< and I  
think that <for me> > that's like< where I'll learn the most (.) ↑ gain the  
most experience >for the year< (.)
- 

#### ***Excerpt 5.14 Elena***

In terms of employability Elena specifically mentioned a service consultancy module that she was working on at the time of her interview. For Maher and Graves (2007), this is a key type of initiative that can help increase the vocational relevance of hospitality programmes through industry engagement. Within her narrative, Excerpt 5.14, Elena positions herself as experienced in operational roles, however in completing the consultancy module she has been able to develop herself as an event coordinator. While there were a number of students and some lecturing staff at the university overseeing and assisting with the organisation of this event Elena was able to take a leading role in the organisation and planning. At the time of interview the module was yet to conclude and the conference in question had not taken place, however Elena still positioned the experience as one of the most beneficial activities that she had engaged with throughout the course of her degree. The scale of the event and the learning that she had already acquired were important, as was the anticipated learning. She draws on the notion of a 'real life' experience, highlighting the importance of environments

within which employability related skills are developed. This perspective sits in line with the work of Alexander (2007b) who suggests that some forms of WBL are somewhat outdated, and provide an artificial environment in which skills are developed. Thus the authenticity associated with this project in particular has been noted by Elena.

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**Lili:** e:::r:m: (.) I think the modules were really good (.) e:::r especially the entrepreneurship modules >they were mostly based< (.) >not in the first year< but after the first year ↑they were based on a very practical (.) so uh every (.)1) >in every semester< (.) we had to find a local business (.) get a connection with them (.) ↓and e:::r basically make an interview with them >and this is what my< ↓e:::r e:::r:m: import ( ) ↓am: ↑assessment >was based on< (.) so it was quite challenging because I had to find a business that's going to be (.) > at least have me< and going to be happy to help me >and have a chat< and stuff (.) and so it was very interesting (.)and >in the beginning< we just had to collect some information about them ↑and then analyse it in terms of creativity and innovation (.) ↓but (.) e:::r: yeah (.) ↓it was (.) I think for my last project we had to >like< find a business that has a problem >and we had to solve it< (.)2) so (.) so that was really practical (.) ↓but also it's a bit (.) 'cause if we didn't solve it and for a business >to work together< with a total stranger <who is still studying> (.) but it was more like to have a discussion with them (.) >with the manager< (.) >talk about their problems< and then we have some suggestions and how to solve it (.) and after that ↑>its like their decision< if they're going to take it <or if they aren't> and if they don't do anything about it (.)

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#### ***Excerpt 5.15 Lili***

Lili shared a similar experience with one of the industry based modules that she completed. When asked about some of the activities that she had undertaken as a part of her programme she elicited the narrative presented in Excerpt 5.15. Here Lili suggests that as a part of her programme engagement with industry was important, and linked to assessments. Within her narrative, it is suggested that students had to 'find a local business', thus it is apparent that she has had to develop networking, communication and negotiation skills in order to access businesses that may be suitable for the project. Throughout her programme Lili has had to elicit information and in her final year of study she has had to work with businesses to solve a problem in a consultancy based fashion, similar to that mentioned by a number of other

students. She notes that this involved working with a ‘total stranger’ therefore it is evident that she has engaged with an unfamiliar business and not been able to draw on her place of employment, or similar, in order to gather data for her assignments. This naturally helps students to develop their social capital as they are engaging with individuals, who as professionals are likely to come from different backgrounds and share different values, even if this is purely confined to generational differences. For Lili, as an international student, working with professionals from different cultural backgrounds will also help develop cultural and social capital beyond that which she has been able to achieve through socialisation on her programme and part-time employment.

- 
- Cat:** um: (.) <as a part of your degrees themselves>s have you had to do >sort of< work based learning and placements or anything?
- Julie:** I haven't had to (.) I actually think that that would have been really useful (.) and in the foundation degree (.) >to have done a work placement< (.) I think <more time> is needed within the industry (.) >even on a degree level< (.) ↑that's how >I think< I would probably try to organise it (.) >because I don't think< (.) you don't know until you get there (.) and uh: (.) it's a little bit like being a soldier >joining the army< (.) you join as an office (.) you don't quite understand what it's like to >be the cleaner< and >the bed maker< (.) >you know< in the hotel industry ↑the cleaner (.) ↑the pot washer (.) I think I've done a lot (.) <well> all of those jobs↑ and I think it's helped me understand it >almost grass roots up< (.) >I think I'd like to see< (.) ↓um: (.) students do something similar (.) ↑ or even offer junior (.) junior >assistant manager< (.) junior assistant management roles within companies (.) just to see what's going on (.) >and how they do it< (.)
- 

***Excerpt 5.16 Julie***

In contrast to the other graduates that participated in this research Julie (Excerpt 5.16) did not have to undertake practical work as a part of her degree. Having completed a foundation degree before progressing onto a BA Hospitality, Tourism and Events programme Julie did not have the opportunity to undertake any practical work experience as a part of her programme. There was no opportunity to undertake a placement year and she has not had to spend any time in operational, or similar roles, as a part of her programme. As a result Julie addresses

the university within her narrative, her discourse is positioned in such a way that she drawn on her own experience in order to suggest what students could do in order to better prepare them for work. Having gained extensive experience within the industry prior to undertaking her degree Julie is able to reflexively consider the way in which this has shaped her management learning. In order to express and support her views Julie starts to draw on a metaphor using an officer in the army as an example, however this construct is left incomplete as her example become hospitality focused, thus not broadening her argument (supporting the necessity for experience) in the way that it appears intended. It is clear that Julie recognises the disparity between the majority of graduates and managers within the industry (Harkison, Poulston & Kim, 2011; Raybould & Wilkins, 2006), however having completed her studies there is little that she can do in order to change her circumstances at this stage.

The approaches to industry engagement noted within this section, like other vocationally orientated initiatives has been met with mixed reactions by graduates. The propensity to encourage engagement with F&B based operations was not always favourable for graduates, particularly those that do not want to progress into this area of the industry. However there did appear to be a positive reaction towards consultancy based projects and having the opportunity to engage with industry on a meaningful level, utilising skills developed through other areas of degree programmes. This again has implications for the future development of hospitality education and the way in which curriculum can evolve in order to support industry engagement and the development of employment specific skills.

### **5.2.5 Subject Areas**

Within hospitality programmes a number of different subject areas are covered. This often includes specialist management functions such as HR and Marketing along with hospitality specific operations and operational management subjects (Jones, 2004a). All of the students that participated in the research had either 'Management' or 'Business' within their degree

titles and therefore it is assumed that these areas played a predominant part in their programmes (Jones, 2004a). While much of the current literature on hospitality education debates the merits of a 'Hospitality Studies' curriculum (Airey & Tribe, 2000; Airey, Dredge & Gross, 2015; Dredge *et al.*, 2012; Gross & Manoharan, 2016; Lashley, Lynch & Morrison, 2007a; Lashley, 2004; 2015; Morrison & O'Mahony, 2003; Tribe, 2002; Van Hoof, & Wu 2014; Wilson, Small & Harris, 2012), and more critical approaches to the study of hopsitality (Lugosi, Lynch & Morrison, 2009; Lynch *et al*, 2011) it is clear from this research sample that while this content may be embedded into programmes the more traditional 'management' focus remains dominant.

Management modules were delivered in a variety of means with some students such as Manoj, Ava and Vanessa completing specific management modules. These were delivered across the business school, by specialists in each area, and classes were taught to hundreds of students in some cases. In parallel to these core management modules students also completed programme specific modules, exclusive to hospitality programmes and delivered by hospitality specialists. In line with the work of Jones (2004a) it is apparent that within these large management modules content will not be specifically focused on the hospitality and related industries at all times, as it will have to remain relevant to a broad range of business or management students.

---

**Rob:** [...] so >I focused< (.) so when you were saying about doing things in uni >for the future< (.) I spent a lot of time on finance >this year< ↑so even though I knew it was the hardest >and the most time consuming< ↑but I knew it was the one with the most practical use (.) ↑whatever I do (.) so that was >obviously< very useful >and the lecturer for that was fantastic< (.) and you can just talk to him for ages about it ↑and he's saying >all this stuff< that's sort of (.) ↑you know sometimes it goes >over your head< because it's just <so complicated> but he's talking about it every week an (.)↑ every week >in different ways< and talking about the same things↑ but with different companies (.) so you start getting to grips with the terminology ↑>and like< understanding what finance is about ↑and it was really interesting <@difficult@>

↑<really difficult> but like really quite enjoyable (.) >especially being taught< by someone with quite a big passion for it (.)

---

**Excerpt 5.17 Rob**

Rob was one of a number of students that found the financial topics covered in his programme of particular value. He positions himself as challenged by the finance module that he took and suggests that he has had to dedicate a lot of time to this subject area, and did not always understand content. He draws on the societal metaphor 'it goes over your head' to illustrate his lack of understanding at times. He also laughs (nervous laughter) when suggesting the subject was 'difficult', reducing the stress and anxiety that may have been faced in light of the challenges that this module presented. There is also an echo from both academic and broader societal discourses within his narrative that suggests this subject area will be of particular value, regardless of the career path that is pursued, thus the transferable nature of his programme is recognised (Dearing, 1997; Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2011; Leitch, 2006). It is interesting that Rob mentions this as throughout the rest of his dialogue he is focused on moving into a food and beverage based management position, yet at this point he uses the phrase 'whatever I do' to describe his future career. Thus it is apparent that when considering this topic, in particular, Rob is drawing on the voice of an Other who has used this notion in order to encourage learning. Rob also refers to the lecturer who taught this subject and it is clear that this individual has had a positive influence on his learning. Developing positive relationships such as this one is essential in order to help engage students and ensure learning (Kahn, 2014; Kahu, 2013; Kuh, 2003; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Trowler, 2010; Zepke, Leach & Butler, 2010).

Similarly for Maisie (Excerpt 5.18), the specialist management subjects have also been of use. Maisie reflexively considers some of the subject areas that she has covered on her programme. She reflects on how these are applicable to her career choice and the cruise industry. This links her academic learning to employability within her constructed narrative. The way in



which cruise is integrated into her narrative and the continued use of 'we', by Maisie suggests that she is positioning her sense of self as inextricably linked to cruise and her future career.

- 
- Cat:** [...] any sort of subject areas that have been particularly useful?
- Maisie:** I don't- (.) I- (.) >for me< I- ↑the main things I've enjoyed doing are <like> the >talent management< and showing how businesses adapt to change >and stuff< ↑so for us >it is something< you ↑<have> to know (.) and even a module >all about innovation< its service ↑especially on the sea we're talking about <like> service quality ↑constantly (.) >and in the ship industry< that is what we live by so (.) ↓no (.) >so understanding< how people perceive service >like for my dissertation< (.) I did it on how the guests see service quality >and things like that< are obviously very important (.)
- 

#### ***Excerpt 5.18 Maisie***

Consistent with previous work on career identity (LaPointe, 2010; Meijers, 1998; Meijers & Lengelle, 2012) Maisie's identity as an individual and as an employee is thus linked specifically to the cruise industry. In addition to this identity positioning Maisie also notes the importance of specific subjects and the development of her final year dissertation in providing learning relevant for her career. A mixture of management and service based subject are noted as important in helping her to develop employment related knowledge. She specifically mentions talent (HR) management, business development and service quality within her narrative. The integration of these areas demonstrates the importance of both generic management subjects and the more hospitality specific service areas of academic learning (Jones, 2004a).

- 
- Cat:** are there any >sort of<(.) <core things> that you can pull out from your time at university? that have >kind of< (.)↑ those are the things that have <really> helped you out >in terms of your future< and your employability?
- Olivia:** uh (.) <I think> the idea that >and that I haven't ↓just got- ↑done a straight <business course> (.) I done ↑<I've looked at operations>-↑ I've done finance >and marketing< ↑I've done >I've also done< this year ↑done a big subject on uh: >human resource management< which I think↓ (.) is: something I didn't know anything about ↑>didn't really think< that it effected me <at all> (.) but actually knowing the employment laws (.) ↑knowing what is actually okay >and not okay< and especially looking at it from a international point of view as well

↑<especially >↓uh: really: opened my mind up to the realities >of it all< as well (.) so I think that's really nice ↑and with those nice theories subjects I have (.) ↑I mean >at the end of the day< I have worked in a kitchen and plan- ↑<tried> to plan meals ↑and work under pressure >as well and trying< to be out the front of house of that ↑as well working on bars and stuff as well (.) so I think ↑<yes> ↑it is a business degree <and yes> ↑it's a hospitality degree >but I think< it's all been so (.) >touched on so many different elements<↓ even so if i- not any of- ↑even if I go into a business >where you say< ↑yeah >I've touched on that< at least you've got a better idea (.) that's what (.) that beauty of the fact that if I >if I go into a restaurant< I know what it's like to be on the other side (.) ↑and I know what it's like >to be above that< (.) and I know what it's like to be ↑beneath that as well >and that's what's nice< about the degree as well (.)

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### *Excerpt 5.19 Olivia*

In a similar vein to Maisie's narrative, Olivia (Excerpt 5.19) highlights the importance of the hospitality focus throughout her degree. For Olivia the broad range of subjects that have been covered in her degree programme has been of particular value. This, combined with the practical elements of a hospitality programme and the operational learning that she has engaged with, have shaped her employability narrative. Consistent with the models of hospitality education discussed by Tribe (2002), she draws on both academic learning and engagement with theory alongside experiential learning from practical modules and placement in order to illustrate a broad range of learning relevant for her future. Acknowledgement of an unknown future is also made as she refers to the possibility of working in business or going into a restaurant. This suggests that societal narratives surrounding the transferability of a degree, and the broad range of careers that can be achieved with a degree in business or management has been internalised. Throughout this section of her narrative Olivia is reflective. She clearly articulates the way that her degree has been of benefit to her and her future employment. This ability to demonstrate social and cultural capital is consistent with her upbringing and the way that participating in education and HE as a means of developing oneself was encouraged throughout her childhood. Her ability to effectively draw on societal

narratives and integrate them into her discourse also shows how these are linked to her *habitus* and are, in effect, an integral part of who she is.

In contrast to this somewhat well-developed narrative, Ting (Excerpt 5.20) initially struggled to make a connection between the subjects that she had been taught and her employability.

- 
- Cat: are there any things that you've <kind of> learned as part of programme ↑maybe modules >or assignments< or anything that have been <particularly> interesting for employment?
- Ting: apart from assignments?
- Cat: yeah (.) so it could be an assignment topic that you thought had been ↑really interesting and you thought is going to help you out (.) or it could be >a module< where you've thought (.) ↑wow (.) ↑>I can't live without this one<↑
- Ting um: (.) like a specific module? (.2)
- Cat: or it could be a subject area (.) >it might just be that ↑<everything> has been really good:
- Ting I think like this year <we had innovation and social media>
- Cat: ↓oh okay (.)
- Ting ↓yeah >it's kind of like because< (.2) this year I did my dissertation on social media (.)
- Cat: okay
- Ting so I've looked into a lot more like journals about it (.) and I've also learned about different [inaudible] companies (.) ↑and how like >the whole industry< are adjusting their ways into the social media world (.) and this thing is also still going on (.) >like the technology< is still going on in the industry (.) ↓maybe for the next ten years (.) and when I did a module called culture and society ↓ (.1)
- Cat: yeah (.)
- Ting and I also looked through <like> different marketing material (.1)
- Cat: ↓oh ↑wow=
- Ting =to do with like wine tourism in France@=
- Cat: =@nice@
- Ting: ↑yeah (.) ↑analysing different companies (.) and like their promotional material (.) so it was >like an essay< and this made me know more about this subject (.) especially when I was looking for graduate opportunities (.) some of them would talk about the opportunity to look at their social media (.) like I think this thing is really important (.) and I also want to try it (.)
- 

#### *Excerpt 5.20 Ting*

Despite having a good level of spoken English language skills, and having completed her degree in English it appears that Ting did not initially understand what was being asked when

questioned about the subjects that she had studied and her employability. As noted by Lugosi and Jameson (2017), some international students do struggle with their language skills, despite the requirements set prior to undertaking their degrees. She eventually draws on her dissertation and learning about social media and marketing in modules in order to position these as important in her employability. In order to do this she draws on the voice of a graduate recruiter that she encountered when looking for a job. This subject area was mentioned by the potential employer and therefore Ting has elevated its importance, and included it within her narrative as a means of responding to the question posed. Unlike Olivia, Ting has not considered her holistic educational experience and been able to package this into her narrative. This demonstrated that despite having completed a similar degree and gained comparable experience to other students Ting has not internalised dominant discourses surrounding the value of her degree. There is also less extensive evidence of reflection in order to inform the way in which she narrates her employability. She does not have the dialogic resources available to construct her employability in the same manner as Others within the competitive business environment. This has the potential to disadvantage her when applying for jobs (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2003).

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**Laura:** I think the management development programme >that I spoke about earlier< (.) it's not always everyone's favourite class (.) bu- ↑ it certainly wasn't my favourite class >in first year< (.) but (.) in that class you're ↑<forced> to do presentations >quite often< ↓>and um::< I think that was something that I struggled with >in the beginning< (.) but (.) seeing that (.) you just have to overcome it (.) ↑you just have to ↑do it >if you want to get ahead anywhere< (.) I think that's been a huge change for me (.) >the class also< (.) it focused on getting you to (.) >work in groups< (.) ↑think about new ideas (.) all the projects that we had to do were <like> research projects (.) or they were like ↑>come up with a business< (.) ↓and (.) mm: see how you would run this ↑and see how you would do that (.) ↑um:: (.) and I think that was really good (.) >it kind of showed you< ↑ what you can do with a plan (.) <obviously> it was all hypothetical >in our situations< but (.) I do think it does give you a wee bit of inspirations (.) but (.) ↓um: (.) ↑like



this ↑ might actually be possible > if I wanted < to pursue this (.) ↓ um:  
↑ so > that's been good for me <

---

### **Excerpt 5.21 Laura**

For Laura a Management Development Programme, specifically targeting the development of core and employability related skills was a particularly important component of her degree.

Yorke and Knight (2006) suggest that the use of modules such as this is useful when it is difficult to track student's engagement with modules across the whole of their programme.

For Laura who's module choice was quite flexible, this meant that this core module incorporated all of the key skills required across a degree programme.

Within her narrative (Excerpt 5.21) Laura draws on the collective student voice as well as emphasising her own dislike of this module. However, the distinction between the generalised Other and herself quickly becomes clear as her narrative integrates the personal (i) pronoun.

On reflection Laura can see the benefit associated with the tasks that she was made to engage with. She stresses how she was 'forced' to complete presentations suggesting that this was assessed and, therefore in order to pass she had to complete these activities. For students who take an instrumental approach to learning this is a key method in ensuring engagement.

Laura also positioned herself as overcoming a number of challenges as she had 'struggled' initially. Thus in completing tasks Laura has been able to reflexively consider the change in herself as she learnt and developed through the core curriculum associated with her degree.

She can therefore position herself as knowledgeable and experienced. These modules have also proved inspirational for Laura as they have provided opportunities to work on research

projects and business development ideas which, while hypothetical, have had practical applicability for future career options. It is interesting to note that, consistent with the

dominant discourses on employability Laura highlights the skills that she has developed in order to articulate her employability. Thus the skills and attributes discourses (Dearing, 1997;

Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2011; Leitch, 2006) surrounding employability and the transferability of a degree have been internalised here.

The broad management based learning and transferable subject knowledge associated with hospitality programmes appears to be of significant value to graduates. This section has highlighted how various core management subjects are narrated as important in terms of future employability. It is therefore apparent that management as against 'studies' based subject content is deemed important for future trajectories. Key skills (such as group work) embedded into modules were also noted as valuable due to their transferability into employment specific domains.

### 5.2.6 Engagement, Learning and Development

The way in which students approached their learning and development varied considerably. Some took a highly instrumental approach to learning, particularly in the initial stages of their degrees, while others were conscientious and engaged with the learning process throughout their time in HE. The way in which learning across the programme was approached also varied. In some instances students approached modules individually, and in one case information was disposed of after the module was complete. While others perceived the modules that they were taught as interconnected and drew on knowledge from different areas of their degree in order to inform other assignments and modules. The following section will consider some of the different learning styles adopted by individuals..

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**Liese:** [...] my grades are not the greatest (.) but I do have a good level of attendance↑(.) I enjoyed going to the classes (.) ↑and getting all of the knowledge (.) that is what I appreciated the most >when I was in Dubai last year> (.) ↓um: in my internship (.) and every week we had one of the managers coming to speak to us about their experiences (.)

**Cat:** okay=

**Liese:** =and what they did in their career (.) and I found it >to be the best< ↑I really enjoyed it (.) >kind of< ↑getting their experience (.) >the lecturer's ideas< of how to manage (.) and manage any issues (.)

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### ***Excerpt 5.22 Liese***

When asked about how she had ensured she would be successful as a student Liese (Excerpt 5.22) discussed the importance of attending sessions. Within her narrative Liese repeatedly drew on ideas noted here. Thus, for her, engagement with academics and industry professionals has been an essential component of her learning. For Kuh (2003); Kuh *et al.* (2007) this is common amongst international students, however this engagement does not always transpire into learning. This is also evident within Liese's narrative as she positions her grades as 'not the greatest'. In valuing the opinions of her lecturers it may be that Liese has become reliant on the voice of the Other in developing her knowledge base. Thus Liese has positioned their voice as authoritative and as such down played her own agency and ability to manage any issues or problems that may arise within her future. This also has implications in the development of critical thinking and analytical skills integral to her programme (QAA, 2008a).

Her focus on the acquisition of tangible knowledge is consistent with the picture that Liese paints of her cultural background and how, in the Czech Republic the completion of qualifications and tangibility of this is deemed as important. Thus for this individual the development of soft skills and attributes as a component of her degree is deemed less important than hard knowledge. Brown, Hesketh and Williams (2004) and Tomlinson (2007); (2008) both suggest that this focus on hard credentials can negatively impact employability within the competitive labour market. It is also apparent that the UK's dominant employability narrative surrounding skills development in HE has not been internalised by Liese. Instead the more long standing, habitual discourses linked to her home country have shaped the way in which she has engaged with her degree and associated learning.

The narrative put forward by Liese, regarding attendance, was echoed by a number of students. Consistent with the literature on learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and engagement

(Arum & Roksa, 2011; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) they saw the benefit, particularly with attending lectures, as this provided opportunities to expand their knowledge base and was an easier way of learning than independent study. However, some students felt the need to prioritise which sessions they attended. Kristina, for example admitted to missing some lectures when she had other coursework assignments due. This suggests that as an individual she has been unable to manage her time effectively in preparing to submit her summative assessments. She therefore has taken an instrumental approach to her education in that she is prioritising tasks which directly impact her degree classification and not her holistic learning and development; Black (2010) suggests that this is common amongst Generation Y students. When discussing taught sessions with Elena she was asked if she attended all of her lectures.

- 
- Cat:** [...] <so> have you found them useful? (.) >have you< gone to all your lectures? (.) or do you just go to the ones >when you have an assignment due< on that topic?
- Elena:** um::: ↑I think that most of them are (.) the smaller seminars >that we have< are like ↑with our intimate class >some of them< (.) ↑we have <one lecturer> and like he's very interactive >and all his classes are very interesting< (.) ↑they're more fun (.) and we have our events class >which I always go to< and any events that were planning ↑'cause I need (.) ↑I always need to be there for them (.) <lecturers> sometimes if I'm ↑>I have work< or something ↑<I wouldn't> >you know< I wouldn't be too bothered if I missed one or two of them ↓(.)
- 

#### ***Excerpt 5.23 Elena***

Elena suggests that the smaller, more interactive sessions are of greater benefit to her. One lecturer in particular is considered 'fun' and therefore she attends all of his classes. This suggests that the personal relationship that she has with specific lecturers is impacting on attendance and therefore engagement with learning. In turn this supports the cognitive and psychological dimensions of engagement discussed by Appleton *et al.* (2006) and Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris (2004), and the importance of good relationships between academic staff and students in encouraging engagement. In addition to this, the module content also impacts attendance and engagement, with Elena suggesting that she attends all of her events



sessions while she is happy to miss some of her other lectures. In the instance of her events lecturers Elena is alluding to learning for enjoyment's sake and to benefit her future career. There are clear developmental opportunities associated with these modules and the value of learning is acknowledged.

Elena also notes that work sometimes clashes with lectures and at times she prioritised this over her academic learning. For some students, including Elena, employment has been essential in order to financially support themselves whilst at university, hospitality based employment has also helped develop subject specific technical skills and provided knowledge of the industry beyond that which is available within the classroom. However, while this learning is beneficial to individuals it can negatively impact scholarship when, as in this instance, it is prioritised over attending lectures (Arum & Roksa, 2011; Callender, 2008; Hall, 2010; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

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**Cat:** >and looking back< on your degree (.) do you think it was the right choice for you?

**Jennifer:** >yes and no< (.) I don't like education (.) ↑I'm not the sort of girl who is into education (.) I was always one of those girls >who couldn't be bothered< to get up at seven o'clock to go to a nine o'clock lecture ↑ (.) ↓um: >but the last year< with the placement year included ↑>I got to work in London< (.) I learned so much (.)>I got so much experience< which I think has then helped me <to kind of> apply for like >graduate jobs< and stuff (.) it is beneficial (.) but yeah (.) >all the studying< ↑I hated (.) if I could >kind of< get to this level ↑or do a graduate programme <without> studying ↑I would have done it (.)

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**Excerpt 5.24 Jennifer**

Excerpt 5.24 demonstrates a different perspective to the notion of missing lectures. Jennifer did not enjoy attending lectures. She positions herself as 'not into education'; it is clear that she has therefore not engaged fully with her programme. She has not attended all of her lectures and therefore it can be assumed that she has taken a somewhat instrumental approach to learning consistent with many of her counterparts (Black, 2010; Maxwell &

Broadbridge, 2016). However, Jennifer enjoyed working whilst on placement and suggests that she learnt a lot from this experience. In completing her placement and engaging with a kinaesthetic approach to learning she is able to ascribe value to her degree. Consistent with the work of Warhurst (2008) is clear that having a degree is an entry requirement for jobs and therefore the associated learning is not as important as the degree in itself, for Jennifer.

- 
- Cat:** [...] with those >sort of< members of staff >that possibly don't do as much< ↑do you feel that they've <negatively> impacted on your experience as a student?
- Vanessa:** yeah (.) >in a way< (.) ↓uhm: we had a uh: >quite a big problem< last year <with uh> people not turning up to:: lectures >or being late< or whatever (.) >and obviously< for the amount of money we're paying (.) ↑it felt >it was< frustrating (.) ↑because obviously we're paying for education >and then not to get it< was quite annoying to (.) ↑>in that way< in a way ↑did obviously negatively impact it↓< and uh:> (.) >like I said before< about wanting to leave >half way< through last year <obviously> that didn't help the fact that I wanted to leave (.) because >if they kind of< can't be bothered >to turn up< then it's kind of reflecting on the fact then ↑<oh>↑>why should I bother turning up< and whatever (.) ↓um:: >so yeah< I think in that sense ↑yeah it probably did (.)
- 

#### ***Excerpt 5.25 Vanessa***

In contrast to students missing lectures, Vanessa mentioned that sometimes academics that taught her missed lectures, and some were not as supportive as others. She was questioned further about this in Excerpt 5.25. This was one of the few occasions where the notion of students being consumers, and paying for their education was highlighted. The idea that students are perceived to be consumers is embedded into current literature (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2011; Naidoo & Williams, 2015; Tomlinson, 2017), therefore it was surprising that this was not drawn into conversation more often. Vanessa however explicitly positions herself in this manner as she airs her grievances regarding her lecturers. She repeats a point that she had made previously, that she had considered leaving university during her second year and had questioned the value of having a degree in light of the financial commitments associated with completing a HE level qualification. This situation has

naturally impacted on Vanessa's approach to learning and development, she used the phrase 'why should I bother', a rhetorical question to demonstrate how she has lost engagement with her programme of study.

This perspective, of lecturers missing sessions and not providing the level of support expected, can be contrasted with Alicia's narrative. Like the majority of graduates she found the academic staff that she engaged with both helpful and supportive throughout her time as a student.

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**Alicia** [...] I think all the lecturers are really helpful (.) >whenever we need them< they're there >and really supportive< and <like> when I email them they normally email them back within twenty four hours (.) <if not> I can just go and see them in their offices (.) em: the feedback from assignments has been really good (.) and >if I don't understand< I can go and ask them (.) there've been the <odd> few occasions >where they've not been helpful< (.) but (.) they've got their own problems as well (.) @so <like> >let them have their own life<

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#### ***Excerpt 5.26 Alicia***

Within Excerpt 5.26, Alicia notes how approachable her lecturers have been. She suggests that they are quick to respond to email messages, in line with modern expectations of technology (OECD, 2012). She also suggests that they are receptive to visitors within their offices, thus she is able to call in on them in ask any questions that she may have. In addition to this, feedback, another method of facilitating learning and development (Ramsden, 2003) has been particularly good in Alicia's opinion. This level of support is not always available, however it is noted that 'they've got their own problems' thus Alicia appreciates that at times it is not possible to maintain the high levels of support that she has become accustomed to, however this does not happen often. This caveat also acknowledges the identities of the Others that provide this support, and their sense of self.

In order to help facilitate learning graduates noted that they had received a great deal of individualised support throughout the course of their degrees. In some instances this support

was directly related to employability and their development beyond the core curriculum of their programme. However, in other narratives individualised support was available throughout the school or faculty that the students studied at, this included both specialists and lecturers that taught on the students' programmes of study.

For Olivia (Excerpt 5.27) the support that she received while at university was extremely important to her. She highlighted having dyslexia twice within her dialogue. The first time she mentioned it in passing when discussing grades and the second time, when asked her about part-time employment. During this section of her discourse Olivia started to position herself as disadvantaged as a result of her dyslexia therefore she was questioned further about this. Having this learning difficulty meant that she faced a number of additional challenges and as such specialist help was available.

- 
- Cat:** [...] your dyslexia (.) have you felt that that has really ↑<negatively> impacted you >I know you said you found< assignments [difficult] >did you get help and things?
- Olivia:** [>yeah it really<] (.2) ↑yeah >I'd already been tested< when I was <ur> at upper school >and in my GCSEs< so I got extra time for: er: my exams at GCSE and uh A-Level (.) and I came to university >and got ↑retested again <(.) and that in (.)>↑it took< quite a while <actually> to get in ↑tested and that >so it wasn't until I came back <till Easter>< of my first year <where> (.) ↓em: ↑well uh: they were > they were really great to me< (.) um: (.) ↑they gave me a free laptop and gave me- >which had loads of new equipment< <↓and um> software >which would< read back my work to me (.) >would help me with uh my graphs on it >and stuff< (.) and I got a printer >so I could print off a lot more work< and bring it into teach- ↑bring it into teach- <like er::> get lecturers to read through it and stuff (.) ↓um >↑I got< dictaphones >I got< lots of headphones >it was like just a< really gave me a <really> loads of stuff (.) I also got <a uh: a> given a mentor >that I could see once a week< and she would help me plan my assignments and read through my assignments and stuff >so that was< really::: like@< ↑really good for that <and like> (.) and um ↑yeah but that did take quite uh long time to get implemented > (.) ↑and to do the assignments< <↑yes it really< uh: was challenging >but I didn't get any extra time for those assignments< ↑but to go >but it was a absolute possibility< to go to- ↑and talk to my lecturers about it and <stuff> (.)>↑and the thing is< at the end of the day I've always been <like>the type of person that's <↑I really don't want this to fault me to much>

and I can do it (.) so I ↑like it wasn't until (.) ↑I think the first couple of years I just (.) I kind of accepted that I wasn't (.1) that I wasn't going to get as higher grades as everyone else < and stuff> (.) but ↑I did have some really good friends that would er:: read through my work >and they would help me plan my work< and stuff >↑but then this year< like I say (.) with my er balance of being at the library and reading and stuff >it meant that< <theo:retically> I had all of the knowledge >and stuff< it was just like ↓>my writing would let me down< (.) these exams >>↓↓oh my God these exams<< exams wasn't great@ (.) so I mean it has been challenging but I have been ↑I have had <<quite a lot of support>> (.)um: and i- and I wouldn't <not> go to university because of it and stuff >and I think< (.) I think >but< I mean I went to university (.) <I went and asked about um support> and they're basically ↑they're cutting it now (.)

Cat: ↑oh

Olivia: ↑I know <it's really sad> (.) so students like me >I wont< I wouldn't have had (.) >and as I said the computer and that< I had was really really like a luxury but um: >to not have a mentor< to go and talk to once a week ↑for students that could be <re:ally> ↑cause even if we didn't like go through work and that it would be sitting discussing <li:ke> (.) research topics and like <um:> where to find certain research and actually <like> actually you don't just have to look on like completely on hospitality websites > so you can go and look at like psychological websites >and you know it was really good< and yeah you have your lecturers and other students did not have that support (.) but >↓it's just really sad<

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**Excerpt 5.27 Olivia**

Within Excerpt 5.27 Olivia positions herself as somewhat advantaged in light of the additional support that she was offered whilst at university. In order to help overcome her learning needs the university provided her with what she deemed 'luxury' products in order to help her complete assignments. She also had access to a mentor who was employed to help her plan and write coursework based assessments. This support is consistent with government guidance on Disability Support (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2014). While this support was not available to her during the first year of her studies, Olivia suggests that it has been extremely helpful throughout the latter stages of her degree. However the support that Olivia notes, such as 'where to find certain research' does not appear to be directly related to her learning difficulties and could be deemed to be general academic support. By engaging with this network of assistance Olivia has therefore benefited from both generic and

specialist support. It is also interesting to note that Olivia has had the time to engage with these support sessions. Her family have offered financial support so that she has not had to find employment throughout the course of her degree, thus allowing her the time to engage with the additional help. For Callender (2008) this type of scenario can lead some to benefit more from their time in HE as they can commit greater time to their studies.

Despite the somewhat positive narrative surrounding support that she has been provided to Olivia, there is a dialogical knot within her narrative. She claims that her time at university has been 'challenging' and she postulates that 'I kind of accepted that I wasn't going to get as higher grades as everyone else'. This suggests that her dyslexia has presented concerns and inhibited Olivia reaching her self-perceived full potential. She exhibits laughter when mentioning exams, and her voice is almost a whisper it is so quiet, these discursive practices suggest that she is hiding her true feelings about these elements of her programme, and that they may have caused greater worry than she is relaying. Her narrative then repeats sentiments made about the support she has received, compounding the importance of this. It appears that Olivia does not want her identity to be defined by her learning difficulties, and does not want to use them as an excuse for not achieving the highest grades possible. Thus while her dyslexia is a component of her identity she does not want to position it in such a way that it defined her sense of self.

Engagement with taught sessions are essential for learning and development. While some graduates noted this, there was also evidence of instrumental approaches to learning within narratives. This has the potential to undermine the learning and development processes associated with HE. Therefore the implementation of assessments and pedagogic approaches that encourage engagement should inform developments in the hospitality curriculum.

Influence of key members of staff was also noted as important; both positive and negative interactions were discussed highlighting how this form of social interaction has the potential to

heavily impact development and the propensity to engage. While the vast majority of narratives were positive the actions of a few individuals has the potential to disengage students and undermine all of the other hard work that academic put into developing curriculum. Student feedback therefore needs to be encouraged in order to identify these areas for improvement.

## **5.3 The Extended University Experience**

### **5.3.1 Introduction**

In addition to the core hospitality curriculum presented above the extended university experience is also a central component of students learning and development whilst at university. Thus the knowledge and skills acquired outside of the classroom are often deemed valuable in terms of employability (Jackson, 2010). Many of the social and cultural benefits associated with HE attendance are also integrally linked to time spent outside of the classroom, it is often here that students are able to forge and develop friendships and networks that help in the development of capital. It has been suggested that these experiences are as important as the knowledge and skills gained through the core curriculum in HE.

The following sections will therefore discuss the key areas of the extended university experience which were discussed by graduates within this research. Initially additional employment will be considered. Following this engagement with extra-curricular activities such as societies will be explored. Both of these areas resulted in a discussion regarding priorities and the balance required between work, study and social commitments when managing time as a student. Living arrangement are then discussed as these are often a key concern for students, and play a key part in the holistic HE experience and individuals transition through their studies. The final element of this section will address the holistic HE experience more generally, drawing on the unique nature of graduates' narratives. The way in

which this has contributed to narratives of employability and graduates' perceived ability to successfully transition beyond education will therefore be discussed. This will, once again, inform the discussion in Chapter Six surrounding transitions beyond HE and perspectives on the competitive labour market held by hospitality graduates.

### 5.3.2 Additional Employment

For many of the students the opportunity to work alongside their degree has been a vital means of gaining industry experience and improving employability. However the balance between work, study and social time has in some instances been a challenge. For some students there was a necessity to work as their student loans were insufficient to cover living costs. However for others, additional employment meant that luxury items could be purchased so that individual living standards did not need to be compromised as a result of becoming a student. The following section will discuss the different approaches that students took to considering additional employment and the challenges that some faced as a result of their jobs.

- 
- Cat:** and if (.) ↑in hindsight (.) >is there anything else that you could have done< or feel you <should have> done >in order to< get the ↑most out of your degree? And out of your time at university?
- Kari:** ↓um:: (.2) I wish I'd worked less in my first year: (.1) because everybody else could just >being first year< everybody else was just out and were just >out having fun:::< and really enjoying the university experience <whereas:> and >you know< joining in with like fifteen societies that you >you actually< never went to after the first meeting and li:ke >little things like that< ↑I was just <working> all the time and (.2) and then I kind of (.) at the ↑time it was great >'cause I had so much money< ↑and like I love my job <and then> it got at about march time and I was like I've got a lot of work to do and >du du du< (.) <a:nd> I was like (.) >I've missed out on< so mu:ch: and my like ↓friend was like< ↑oh:: ↑do you remember this? do you remember this? >du du du< >↓an I was like I was at work then< (.) and that (.1) that was quite upsetting as well (.) and getting close to people on my course as well (.) and considering my course socials <and I couldn't go↓> (.1) ↑its fine now >I go< out and stuff with my course mates and that >but first year I was kinda distant from everyone ↑and I think that was: (.) I

**don't think it effected my work too much: >but it definitely did all my friendships<**

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**Excerpt 5.28 Kari**

Kari prioritised her employment at a local restaurant over social interactions in the first year of her studies. Within her narrative (Excerpt 5.28) Kari recognises the importance of social networks in her development. While she has enjoyed working she inadvertently suggests that this has distracted her from the university experience and the holistic nature of learning beyond the curriculum associated with her degree. In particular, she was unable to attend social events with students on the same programme as her. This has the potential not just to impact on the development of social and cultural capital but also engagement with group and peer learning activities within the classroom, as relationships with these individuals are essential to support learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Kari was also unable to engage with societies that she had expressed an interest in joining. The benefits, associated with participating in societies and the learning that can be gained through doing this has also been missed (Greenbank, 2015; Roulin & Bangerter, 2011; Stuart *et al.*, 2011). Kari uses both the voice of the Other (her student friends) and direct speech in order to narrate her feelings. Thus it is apparent that her university friends have influenced her approach to the HE experience and the focus that she places on balancing employment and social commitments.

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**Cat:** and how did you find that sort of fitted in <with> sort of >the amount of time< that you had to spend on work and study (.) ↑and then having a social life as well?

**Manoj:** <yeah so:> when I was working I would usually have a contracted shift (.1) and the employer was actually quite flexible with me (.1) um:(.) so when I did get my timetable >at the start of the year< I would discuss that with the employer (.) um:(.) so Wednesday afternoons were our sport days (.1)

**Cat:** yeah (.1)

**Manoj:** if you are part of a group (.1) >I wasn't< part of a ↑playing sports team at university (.) so I thought I could use that time ↑just to work (.1) ↓um:(.) and I had overtime available >if and when< I needed it though (.1) ↓um:(.) so that flexibility helped me (.) >but a few of my colleagues< who were working didn't have that flexibility (.) and I'm

↑sure that affected their education slightly (.1) ↓but (.) <for me>  
having that flexibility was perfect (.)[...]

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### ***Excerpt 5.29 Manoj***

For Manoj the balance between work and social commitments was easier to manage. Within his dialogue (Excerpt 5.29), Manoj refers to his employer and the flexibility that was offered to him as a student, working. The understanding demonstrated by his employer made it easy for Manoj to manage his time between work and study commitments. His shifts were scheduled on days, such as Wednesday afternoons, when he didn't have timetabled lessons or other commitments, therefore could naturally prioritise work. As a result Manoj claims that his part-time work did not have a negative influence on his studies in the same way that some of his colleagues found. Despite this, it is however unclear how many hours Manoj worked. Thus the balance between work and other commitments may have been easier for Manoj to manage based on a relatively limited number of shifts that he was working. Elsewhere in his narrative he notes that his parents offered to provide him with financial support, a benefit of those from middle class and wealthier backgrounds who have access to greater financial resources (Callender, 2008; Hall, 2010). Thus in the final year of his studies Manoj did not work, instead taking his parents up on their offer to help him. It is also interesting to note that Manoj was employed in a retail operation with somewhat fixed opening hours. This sits in contrast with some students' employment in the hospitality industry where finish times may be dependent on demand, thus resulting in fluctuation in hours worked each week. Like some of the other students that participated in the research Manoj has also utilised time allocated by universities for societies and sport in order to balance his employment. Thus, consistent with the findings of Hall (2010), part-time jobs are, in this instance, being prioritised over engagement with other educationally relevant activities which may help to improve employability and holistic development.

This type of narrative was not uncommon with many prioritising work over other commitments, including the ability to have a social life. Karin, for example, positioned herself as not having a day off each week, as she worked all weekend and studied all week. Thus once again the social dimension of the HE experience has been sacrificed for financial and work experience related gains. For Laura (Excerpt 5.30), the opportunity to gain valuable work experience has been at the expense of her grades.

- 
- Cat:** >and while you have been at university< (.) I just want to think about some of the things that you've done >to ensure that you'll ultimately be successful< (.) ↓maybe um: ↑>as a part of your course< as well as outside of your taught classes?
- Laura:** I think I've just <always> kinda aimed for probably the best grades that I can get (.) but then I have sacrificed some of that to get (.) uh (.) work experience ↓uh: >because I think that's so important< um: (.) seeing as so many people have degrees (.) even though I've worked at a supermarket >throughout my time< I also had uh human resources internship (.) uh >last summer< (.) and I did a events internship (.) uh: two Novembers ago now (.) er ↑ I went Chicago with a big airline company and I was working at a conference for them >and I think things like that< >kind of< set you apart (.)
- Cat:** and how did you get those internships then? (.) were they through the university?
- Laura:** ↑yep (.) >both of them were< (.) the one in Chicago (.) <the manager> who er: who owns that company (.) he went to [university] when he was a student (.) er: so he likes to >give back< to the students there (.) so he comes back most years >and tries to offer a internship< to um: students (.)↑ and then the other internship >I heard about< through the university careers service (.) ↓so yeah.
- 

### **Excerpt 5.30 Laura**

Within Excerpt 5.30, Laura highlights how she has not only held down a part-time job in a local supermarket, but also undertaken a number of internships whilst she has been a student. These temporary, training based positions have provided Laura with experience with which to craft her narrative of employability. She positions herself as different by drawing on these experiences as a means of differentiating herself within the competitive labour market. Thus it is clear that the competitive nature of the labour market is a concern for Laura and she has therefore prioritised her time in order to improve employability throughout her time as a

student. This is consistent with the notion that having a degree is not enough (Tomlinson, 2008). The internships that she participated in were marketed through the careers service within the Scottish University that Laura attended. These additional support services which universities offer are therefore being utilised by some students in order to positively impact employability.

Similarly Ruth also undertook a summer internship while she was a student at South West City University. Having opted not to complete a year-long placement the need to gain additional, hospitality based work experience, was important for her development. In order to be accepted onto the internship programme Ruth had to prove that she was a student, and members of the career and employability team at the university were able to help her do this. However additional assistance was not available to Ruth. The level of support, specifically available to placement students, was not offered to Ruth as her internship was not recognised by the placement team. Thus the university has focused resources on encouraging participation in longer placements, integrated into degree programmes, neglecting support for other opportunities. In effect this devalues the benefit that other forms of work experience provide students and graduates. For Ruth the opportunity to work in the Maldives and move away from home for a three month period was invaluable to her employability and this experience dominates much of her employability narrative. Her habitual nature prevented Ruth from moving away from home to study, both the perceived financial implications associated with HE, and her own personal confidence, influenced this decision. Thus having the conviction to undertake this internship, and exhibit agency beyond her self-imposed structural constraints is in fact a considerable achievement for Ruth. In contrast to some of her counterparts Ruth will be leaving university with less industry specific experience and, arguably, less of a holistic HE experience. This further increases the significance of this internship within Ruth's employability narrative as work experience directly impacts perceived



employability (Jackson & Wilton, 2016). It raises questions as to why such a life changing experience was not better supported by the university that she attended as these can be just as valuable to graduates as longer placements (Thompson, 2017).

For Ting the balance between additional work and study commitments was not something that she could easily control. As an international student studying on a tier four visa there were restrictions on the number of hours that she could work. Thus she was constrained to 20 hours of paid employment; this meant that she regularly worked Friday and Saturday evenings in a local restaurant, however could not work more. The legislative constraints meant that her employer did not ask her to do more and as such the balance between work, study and social commitments was relatively easy for Ting to negotiate.

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**Vanessa:** [...] >I mean<< for me personally> I've worked a lot <like> um: alongside the degree <a:nd> I think that's been very important because obviously hospitality is >you've got to love hospitality< to do it ↑ you cant not (.) and a lot of people on my course <have <<barely>> worked> >in hospitality< <and I'm like ↑w:o:w:> you're going to struggle because like >when you have< to ↓it's like (.2) it's (.) um:: >totally different< (.1) and I've learnt a lot like and sometime I could have been <put off> ↑because where I first worked was like >kind of< the <best> scenario ↓and >↑everything always went well< and customers were always happy really and it's a small place and it was never really any issue (.) and now I've worked in places an' <obviously I know> I never get weekends off and its late nights >and all the rest of it< so I'm like ↑oh gosh (.) do I@ ↑do I actually still love it but I think (.) >↑I can't imagine myself> doing anything else so I think I think in a way that has:: driven me to <kind of> continue and progress with it (.)

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### ***Excerpt 5.31 Vanessa***

For Vanessa her self-confessed love for the hospitality industry has helped motivate her not just to complete her degree but also to gain additional work experience throughout her time at university. In addition to the three month international placement that was core to her programme, Vanessa positions her experience in employment as important. In line with the work of Moreland (2005) this work experience has provided opportunities for learning, in both

positive and negative ways. Despite the negative dimensions associated with hospitality employment Vanessa's decision to pursue a career within the industry has been confirmed by her time at work. Within her narrative Vanessa draws on the notion that you need experience in order to succeed within the industry. It is clear that the voice of industry professionals has therefore been internalised, supporting her commitment to the industry. She is therefore positioning herself as advantaged as a result of her experience. However, Vanessa also suggests that she 'can't imagine doing anything else' thus she is, in effect, imposing a career within hospitality upon herself. This symbolic violence has arisen from the completion of her degree and perseverance within the industry. Thus instead of looking at careers outside of the industry and drawing on the transferable nature of her employability Vanessa is internalising structural constraints on herself. By choosing such a vocational programme and focusing her efforts on this area she appears to have internalised the notion that thus what she 'should do'.

Additional employment has been narrated as both important in terms of gaining valuable experience in order to aid progression into the competitive labour market, and as a means of survival. The financial implications associated with study have meant that some graduates had to work alongside their programmes of study in order to financially support themselves, others used the money associated with additional employment in order to fund lifestyle choices. Within the narratives presented focus upon work, study and social commitments has been highlighted, suggesting that there is a careful balance to be made by individuals when prioritising their time.

### **5.3.3 University Based Extra-Curricular Activities**

Engaging with extra-curricular activities is a key method of developing employability and can help graduates to create rounded narratives when attempting to apply for jobs within the competitive labour market. In many cases employability specific initiatives are delivered, not as a core component of the hospitality curriculum, but running in parallel as non-credit bearing

courses (Yorke & Knight, 2006). For those students that take an instrumental approach to their learning (Black, 2010) this may mean that they do not engage with these, as they will not have a bearing on degree outcomes. Within this section extra-curricular initiatives have been separated into two sections; employment specific initiatives, and society and student union engagement.

### *Employment Specific Initiatives*

Many of the graduates discussed help and support that they had been given, directly relevant to their employability. This was provided both through centralised, university wide career services and as a result of departmental initiatives, thus specifically relevant to hospitality graduates. Levels of engagement with both generic and hospitality specific employability initiatives varied greatly. In addition to this the way in which initiatives were advertised and communicated to students also varied.

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- Cat:** =which sort of aspects of university have really (.) <sort of> (.) >helped you out< in that department?
- Ava:** (.) um:: (.) we have a::> I don't know what you call it< (.) a department (.) <at uni> (.) called [department name] and they're really good (.) um: and in the lectures they're saying >↑you should sign up for [name]< and they're kind of a <recruitment agency> for uh: graduates (.) ↑>purely for [south coast city]< (.) er:m: (.) but they don't just help you get jobs (.) <they also> er >help you< get into >like if you want to start your own company< they will help you find support and get funding for it >and things like this< (.) so it's really good for like lots of different things (.) <and um:> (.) >you don't even need to be a graduate< that's why they get you involved in at as soon as you start uni ↑you know (.) they can help you make your CV >just to help you< find a part time job while you're at uni (.) eem: (.)>so that really helps< (.) I used them quite a few times (.) erm:: (.) but I think (.2) <like> (.) the fact that I've been involved with lots of different things >while I've been at uni< has been one of the best things for my employability ↓<effectively <↑I suppose>
- 

#### **Excerpt 5.32 Ava**

When discussing employability, specifically, Ava commented on the support that she received from a specialist career service at her institution. In terms of learning and development this

service has been able to offer additional help and advice to students, beyond learning associated with their programmes of study, however reference to this service has been embedded into her programme. This approach to supporting co-curricular activity has been endorsed by a number of authors in their commentary on employability (Jackson, 2010; Tomlinson, 2008; Yorke, 2004; Yorke & Knight, 2006). Within her dialogue (Excerpt 5.32) Ava draws on the voice of her lecturers to support the benefits that the employability service at her HEI is able to provide, thus linking co-curricular initiatives into the core curriculum. While she has engaged with this service she does not stipulate exactly how they have helped her in order to improve employability. Instead she lists some of the services that they provide to students at the university. Ava also suggests that the service acts as a 'graduate recruitment agency', however they also provide assistance for undergraduate students looking for part-time work during their studies. It is unclear as to whether this department's remit includes helping students secure placement opportunities as well. However, at the end of this section of discourse Ava notes that it is the variety of different things that she has done whilst at university that have helped support her employability. She is therefore recognising the importance of her holistic experience (Jackson, 2010). Despite the additional support that is available through this department it is the way in which Ava has been taught to package her knowledge and experience into a cohesive narrative that has been of greatest benefit to her. While part of this ability to craft a narrative may have been derived from her prior university experience, and individual background (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004; Tomlinson, 2008), it is clear that in engaging with this employability service, and receiving individualised support, she has proactively developed her narrative. Thus in this instance the support received by Ava has inadvertently improved her employability.

For Jennifer (Excerpt 5.33) the career and employability service at her HEI did not appear to be very well signposted. In contrast to a number of other graduates, reference to this service and

the support that they were able to provide was not embedded into the hospitality curriculum during the final stages of Jennifer's degree. As a result she was unaware of the support that they could offer and delayed applying for graduate jobs. Later in her narrative it transpired that the same employability service had offered a great deal of support for students when they were applying for placement opportunities. Jennifer assumed that this same level of contact and support would therefore be offered in the final year of her studies, in order to help her

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**Cat:** do you feel that the university could have done anything <↑more> to help you out (.) >in terms of developing your employability<?

**Jennifer:** um: yeah (.) they're very (.2) they're not so >kind of< (.1)↑what is the word? (.) well (.) their careers depart- (.) department (.) they don't really push things on you (.) they just say >↑we're here if you wanna come see us (.) but >I always thought< they'd come in and kind of (.) and do the kind of (.) >I dunno< (.) <and they'd do lectures> <o::r> workshops or something (.) but it was never like that (.) and I actually thought this last year >that they were going to come in and see us< and ↓show ↑I thought they were going to talk to us about all the different graduate programmes that there are >and stuff like this< but they never did (.1) so that is why I am quite late in applying for a few programmes 'cause I thought you waited until they came to you (.) <but it wasn't> (.) >it just wasn't really explained very well< (.) so <you know> I think they're kind of:: (.1) they're there ↑but it is not really kind of showed or kind of >pushed onto you< which I think for some people (.1) well >personally for me< I think >kind of< I would ↑prefer that because then I would be like ↑>okay ↑what do I wanna do< are they talking about CV's today or whatever (.) or graduate programmes? (.) I would prefer it if they had a bigger (.) <presence> really (.)

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**Excerpt 5.33 Jennifer**

secure a graduate job. However, her placement had been integrally linked to her degree and as such lectures and contact time with the career and employability service had been included in her timetable, helping to ensure engagement. This approach to considering engagement is consistent with the work of Bryson and Hand (2007), who suggested that engagement can occur at different levels. Thus it is apparent that Jennifer has been engaged with her programme of study and employability specific initiatives associated with this, however she is

not engaged with the university as a whole and the additional support that centralised services can offer. It could be suggested that during the final stages of her degree it is assumed that students have become more autonomous, and therefore engagement is less well supported as students are expected to proactively seek out the help that they require.

- 
- Cat:** <so> are there any things >that you have done< (.) either as a part of your course >or sort of< additionally <that the uni has pushed you to do> er:↑that are going to help you out? (.)>↑I know< we've already talked about your placement year and that (.)
- John:** ↑yeah <well> placement year was really important >so they wanted us< all to get a really good placement (.) um: (.1) >they do< (.) they do push loads of stuff and so the >↓you know< the sort of >and this is going to look great on the CV< (.) they have this ↑they have this little (.) uh (.) uh (.1) once uh:: (.) uh: once a week uh (.) session just uh (.) uh:: >talking about< (.) employment issues >and stuff like that< so: >they have done quite a lot< (.) um (.) >>to be honest << >I think it's more down to the fact that I just haven't taken advantage of that< and that I've been doing other stuff and that I was going to leave it until I've finished ↑but (.) to be fair to them I think they have done quite a lot (.) 'cause that's apparently one of the feedbacks (.) ↑of they <↑hadn't been> (.) and then they decided to: (.) >they wanted to< do as much to help help us out <post> er post graduation (.) ↓so I think that's helped ↓quite a lot of people (.)
- 

#### **Excerpt 5.34 John**

Learning associated with hospitality varied amongst the graduates that participated in this study, however in Excerpt 5.34 John highlights how he consciously opted not to engage with additional sessions offered by the department that he studied in. Thus extra-curricular sessions, designed to support the development of employability related skills, were ignored by John. While he recognised that there was some need to develop these employment related skills and attributes, he suggests that he wanted to do this on completion of his degree, this is interesting as John does not fall into one of the categories of students often cited as avoiding co-curricular activities (Stuart *et al.*, 2008). For John, who has come from an advantaged background there appears to be no impetus on development whilst at university in order to support employment on the completion of his degree. For somebody in John's position, with

social and cultural capital which may be able to support employment it is clear that these sessions do not appear to be of immediate value. Recognition is given to the university in developing these employment related initiatives and John draws on the voice of his academic lectures who have acted on feedback in order to improve the programme of study and opportunities available to students. It is therefore clear that John has recognised the benefits of these sessions. He also draws on the voice of Other students in that these opportunities have provided an advantage to some who have engaged.

Like John, Daney was also given the opportunity to engage with additional workshops and sessions in order to support the development. However, as suggested in Excerpt 5.35, she opted to engage with these, dedicating time and effort to the learning opportunities in order to enhance outcomes associated with her education (Trowler, 2010).

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- Cat:** [...] what've you done (.) >to make the most of your time< as a student<sup>↑</sup> and make sure you are successful >in getting to where you want to be< while you have been at university?
- Daney:** >you know< obviously [lecturer/ employability placement manager name] sends all of those courses >that she does< (.) like she (.) like the Excel (.) the First Aid (.) >things like that< (.) <sup>↑</sup>I do all of those (.) every time she brings one up >I sign onto it< because (.) because (.) >it sounds really bad to say this< but <it's free> (.) and its bettering you as a person <sup>↑</sup>and making you more employable (.) I do a lot of volunteer work (.) I work for the university (.) [...]
- 

#### ***Excerpt 5.35 Daney***

At South West City University there is a member of staff within the hospitality department who, specifically, helps students to develop their employability. They help organise courses and activities that may be of benefit to students. However, the students have to apply to be considered for these opportunities, thus in order to benefit they must be proactive in engaging with a system to ensure they are selected. As Daney mentioned in her narrative (Excerpt 5.35), this has included gaining First Aid qualifications as well as Excel training. Both the learning associated with these courses, and the tangential benefits of having the associated

qualifications are of benefit to Daney. This approach to learning is consistent with the rest of Daney's narrative in that it demonstrates a commitment to both learning and development, as well as a focus on employability. Consistent with the model of education put forward by Jackson (2010), Daney has integrated learning and development beyond the core hospitality curriculum into her time as a student.

It is clear that both hospitality specific and general employability related support is available to students. In a similar vein to the core hospitality curriculum engagement with services varied significantly. It was also notable that some hospitality teaching teams had closer links with centralised services than others meaning that the type and level of information passed to students differed. This also impacted engagement with initiatives meaning that some graduates benefited more from the delivery of employment specific sessions than others. In addition to this the career focus exhibited by individuals influenced engagement with those who were highly motivated in terms of their orientation to the labour market naturally perceiving value in these activities.

### *Societies and the Students Union*

Engagement with societies is often considered a core component of students learning beyond the core curriculum associated with their degree. Societies provide opportunities for students to pursue interests beyond their degree, all of which can contribute to the development of key skills and attributes relevant for employment (Jackson, 2010; Stuart *et al.*, 2008; Tchibozo, 2007). Engagement with societies is also one way in which students can expend their social networks (Little *et al.*, 2009), thus aiding the development of social and cultural capital through interaction with a broad range of individuals. While some societies are based on team sports and activities others have a more academic focus; thus the extent to which experience gained through engagement with societies is translated into narratives of employability can vary dependant on the ease in which explicit links can be made between experience and skills



developed and future employment prospects. Despite the benefits associated with becoming a member of a society not all students choose to engage with them, this is consistent with literature discussed previously (Arum & Roksa, 2011; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Stuart *et al.*, 2008). In many instances the benefits are not realised, particularly by non-traditional and first generation students (Arum & Roksa, 2011; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Stuart *et al.*, 2011; Tomlinson, 2007). There are also time commitments associated with these activities and therefore some students prioritise work, either due to their financial need, or because they value the resultant experience associated with employment over other means of developing employability.

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**Cat:** [...] what are the things that you have done >to make the most out of your time< as a student?

**Maisie:** @@ ↑I don't actually know (.) I've done <like> a few night courses and stuff (.) during the first year I did like a french course ↑I did a leadership overnight (.) I didn't like utilise the SU (.) I didn't <like> join any societies or things like that ↑I think that's as well where I came older (.) I didn't care for that@

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#### ***Excerpt 5.36 Maisie***

Maisie presents a somewhat mixed narrative in relation to extra-curricular activities (Excerpt 5.36). Within her narrative she highlights the academic activities that she has engaged with. In addition to her degree she has completed language and leadership based courses which will naturally support her employability as she leaves HE. This demonstrated a somewhat strategic approach to engagement with HE, highlighting the importance that Maisie places on employability as a result of her extended time in education. As a first generation student, who did not fully internalise dominant narrative surrounding participation in HE, the work of Stuart *et al.* (2008) suggests that this approach to engagement could be anticipated from an individual such as Maisie.

Within her dialogue she also claims that she didn't 'care for' societies or the SU. Again this is consistent with the findings of Stuart *et al.* (2008), who suggested that more mature students are less likely to engage in extra-curricular activities, the prospect of joining a society did not appeal to Maisie. While she may not have technically been a mature student (only a few years older than many of her counterparts), she regularly positioned herself as older. It appears that she is referring to the dominant narratives surrounding the drinking culture associated with students and student union facilities; social events, often involving alcohol are also often included in the activities organised by societies, regardless of their key aim. In positioning herself as older, and as a result more focused on learning and knowledge acquisition directly related to the development of her employability, this narrative sits in contrast to some of the dominant depictions of students and student culture (Lewis *et al.*, 2011). However in doing this the additional benefits of participating in societies and the development of interests beyond her degree and career focus are thus not recognised by this individual. This may, in part be due to the value Maisie places on her education as a first generation students and the societal discourses that she has internalised in order to gain an understanding of the HE environment, and as a slightly more mature student who has experienced living away from her family home prior to attending university.

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**Cat:** and did you join any clubs or societies >or anything like that< on the social side of things?

**Karin:** I did: um: although I must admit that that was pure:ly for uh CV reasons (.) >nothing else< like (.) >like I say< I'm really not that social person (.) I really couldn't stand that sort of things (.) <but I did> I joined the uh entrepreneur society uh >hospitality entrepreneur societ:y< and I was treasurer in uh first year and the president in second and uh (.) then I just stopped the whole society >because it wasn't anything other< tha:n a <uh stupid> uh thing@ (.) to be honest >but uh< (.) ↑yeah that ↑that was the only one (.1) um ↑also 'cause (.1) >I don't know< there's only so much (.) <time> or something (.) >like I say< at the time I still did my hospitali-↑sorry my psychology degree (.) er: which was part time <er> which I also need to invest in (.) >you know< you can't do everything >can you?<

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### **Excerpt 5.37 Karin**

Karin's narrative surrounding societies was somewhat mixed (Excerpt 5.37), although she did acknowledge the perceived benefits of engaging with this type of extra-curricular activity. Within her dialogue she suggests that her engagement with the Entrepreneur Society was purely related to her CV. During her time in the society she undertook committee roles including the position of president. Therefore it is clear that there are perceived benefits in terms of employability narratives, in undertaking such positions. However, in a dialogical knot, Karin also suggests that she 'stopped the society' and that it was 'stupid'. It is therefore clear that she was acting strategically in her engagement, a position highlighted by Roulin and Bangerter (2011). Thus despite drawing on the academic discourse surrounding the benefits associated with joining a society Karin did not fully internalise these. Instead she undertook positions that she did not fully appreciate in terms of their value and did not optimise the opportunities available to her through the society. Her identity positioning, as not- social may have contributed to this as she, presumably, did not enjoy the social aspects of being in a society. As a result the potential to develop social capital through the society may not have been fully achieved. Karin also positions other learning ahead of commitment to the society thus demonstrating that she values tangible qualifications and knowledge above the development of softer skills, associated with the societies.

- 
- Cat:** >and what made you choose< (.) ↑was [South Coast City] your first choice when you stated biology then?
- Ava:** um:: (.) when I was looking at universities (.) it was really important for me to find somewhere (.) um: <basically> like (.) >I don't really like exercising< (.) but I'm- (.) ↑I really enjoy cheerleading (.) and like (.) it was really important for me (.) <like> >whatever university I went to< that they had a squad so that I could carry on exercising and so I don't just >sit around< and do nothing (.) that's kind of like my first criteria (.) I know that's really bad @ ↓um:: but then (.)
- [...]
- Cat:** you have mentioned your placement year (.) but are there any <other> things like that that really helped you to get the most out of your time as a student?
-

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Ava: um: <well> (.) what I said about the cheerleading (.) that really really made a difference (.) like (.) I think (.) that if people come to uni >and they don't join< (.) like a sports team or club or like anything ↑then I feel there not getting the best of the experience (.) but (.) uh: >that's only from personal experience< I suppose (.) er:: so I was (.) ↓yeah ↑I think for the cheerleading I was on the team for the whole time I was here (.) and it's almost like a second family (.) and ↑that really made university work for me (.) er:: <but also> I'm er: worked like part time while- >throughout being at uni< (.) for an events company ↑but just for promotions and stuff >like that< really ↓and (.) again (.) ↑It's just like getting to know more people >and being around more people< like >you know< (.) and people who are like minded (.) and yeah (.) that kind of thing really (.) >so yeah <I don't think there has been anything else (.) work and cheer >and that's< about it (.)

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### ***Excerpt 5.38 Ava***

For Ava (Excerpt 5.38) the opportunity to join the cheerleading society at university was immensely important. This social and active dimension of university was prioritised over the programme of study that she undertook. Within her narrative Ava repeatedly highlighted her experience within the cheerleading society as important for her development and in contributing positively to her university experience. Her self-identity is linked directly to this activity as she positions her choice of HEI as linked to the opportunity to join this team. It is apparent that being healthy and active is important to Ava as this is one of the few sports that she enjoys, hence her prioritisation of it. Her passion and commitment to the team result in her referring to her fellow participants as 'family'. In drawing on the societal understanding of family Ava is positioning these friends as highly important in terms of her socialization, thus recognising the importance of societies in development beyond the core curriculum associated with her degree. This approach to considering the broader HE experience as valuable is consistent with the private school background of Ava, and subsequent understanding that merely having a degree is insufficient within the competitive labour market (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004; Tomlinson, 2008).

The narratives presented here demonstrate the competing perspectives regarding engagement with societies as a component of the broader university experience. While some students recognise the benefit of engaging with these activities there is also a certain amount of stigma attached to engagement and the social dimension associated with societies. This has obvious implications for graduates development and their ability to differentiate themselves within the competitive labour market. However it also highlights how differently hospitality graduates prioritise their time when studying and the way in which this frames narratives.

### 5.3.4 Living Arrangement

The living arrangement made by the graduates within this study differed. Many were able to live in halls (university provided accommodation) during the first year of their studies, however during their later years students moved into private rented accommodation, often with friends or partners. The experience of living in halls was not always favourable, however some students made good friends whilst living in this form of accommodation.

---

**Cat:** okay (.1) and has> university life< been as you expected?  
**Karin:** um::: (.) I think it might have been: (.1) >better< in a way (.) I think (.) between perhaps coming here in first year and the whole >sort of< campus experience and living in halls was a bit more daunting than it actually turned out to be (.) um::: (.) a:nd yeah >to be fair< I did like move away from that quite quickly and <indeed> then I never really went into the more social thing (.)

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#### *Excerpt 5.39 Karin*

For Karin (Excerpt 5.39), living in halls and the associated university experience was not as daunting as she had first anticipated. For many the transition into HE, including moving away from home is somewhat emotional as new identities are developed (Christie, 2009).

Consistent with the rest of Karin's narrative (including Excerpt 5.37) the social dimension of the university experience did not appeal to her. Within this section of her dialogue she positions herself as somewhat unhappy about the prospect of living in halls at the beginning of her degree. However, despite her initial fears the reality of living in halls was not bad. Karin

acknowledges here that she did not engage with ‘the more social thing’ associated with her living arrangements thus it is apparent that she did not participate in some social activities and thus potentially limited her contact with other students and the potential to develop broad social and cultural networks. As an international (Dutch) student whose family did not have a university background it could be that Karin’s background influenced her decisions not to engage as fully with the social dimension of the university experience. Instead she has remained focused on the completion of her studies and, as noted previously, the tangible dimensions of education associated with the completion of her degree and good grades. Thus rejecting the dominant discourses surrounding life in halls and associated drinking culture alluded to within Karin’s dialogue. However, her emphasis on moving away from this environment ‘quickly’ demonstrated how she did not want to be associated with this element of university life.

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**Daney:** um:: I suppose (.1) >looking at like the university experience as such< (.) um I guess living alone has defiantly prepared you (.) I’ve got >I mean< I’ve got OCD so I’m a clean freak <bu:t> uh living with other people is:: ↑has been a nightmare (.) um: (.1) but its prepared me for what I’d have to deal with in the real world (.)

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#### ***Excerpt 5.40 Daney***

For Daney living in halls and with others has not been a pleasurable experience. Daney’s dialogue (Excerpt 5.40) is interesting and draws on a number of different social constructs in order to illustrate her experience. Her speech is broken, with the central component of this excerpt acting as a means of qualifying her self-positioning (i-as- experienced; prepared). She positions herself as ‘OCD’ (understood to represent Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, a mental health problem) and a ‘clean freak’ in order to justify why her experience was negative. This positioning sits in direct opposition from anecdotally dominant ideas that student accommodation is often unclean. Due to the light-hearted approach that Daney takes to discussing this matter it is presumed that she does not have OCD, thus this phrase purely

highlights the difference between Daney and the some of the stereotyped depictions of student living, which permeate in society. Her overcoming of this divide has provided experience and prepared her for what she calls 'the real world'. The use of this phrase demonstrates an ideology based depiction of life. She appears to support a habitually learnt and culturally specific notion of how individuals should behave, yet acknowledges that not everybody will adhere to her hegemonic ideals. In drawing on this statement Daney is also suggesting that she does not live in 'the real world' currently. Thus in her positioning as a student (studying and living in student accommodation) she is identifying with a sense of self which will not pertain as she graduates. Thus while she is at university she is content with conforming to dominant identity constructs surrounding 'being a student' yet she realises that upon graduation she (and Others) will be expected to behave differently. This approach to identity development is consistent with the work of Jackson (2016), Meijers (1998) and Stringer and Kerpelman (2010) who all suggest that identities will develop alongside career and as such will change as a result of the transition into full time employment.

---

**Cat:** that's fantastic (.) and how important is your career to you?  
**Olivia:** um:: (.2) well yeah I think it is fairly important (.) >I think< (.) as I say after this least year: <um:: with me and um: >my ex-boyfriend breaking up and then coming to university and realising that I couldn't really <settle myself> in [Northern City] again >because I knew I was going to leave again< (.) within nine months or so (.) so that's quite ↑it's quite good training >and I suppose< when I was on placement as well you know <you can't really make too (.1) to much of a foundation 'cause you know you'll be off again (.) so (.2) um:: sorry what was the question?

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#### ***Excerpt 5.41 Olivia***

Many of the students that participated in the research completed international placement years and therefore living arrangements were naturally influenced. For Olivia (Excerpt 5.41), her final year of studies became somewhat unsettled. The notion of creating a 'foundation' or colloquially, 'putting down roots' has not been possible for Olivia. Having left university to

complete a placement year in Canada she found it difficult to relax into her former routines on return to Northern City. The added anguish associated with separating from her former partner has also had a negative bearing on her perception of living arrangements. Bullock *et al.* (2009) noted that both accommodation and social life concerns were factors associated with student uptake of placements, thus Olivia's experiences are not unique. The uncertainty associated with moving frequently, while a part of modernity, does not appear to be favourable to Olivia, despite her love of travel. Thus, it is clear that having a permanent base and continuity, or security in living arrangements is important for Olivia. With the placement year that she completed during the third year of her study, the uncertainty of employability is compounded by the uncertainty associated with living arrangements.

As noted previously some students such as Ruth lived at home during their studies. As a result of this her integration into the broader university experience has been somewhat limited. She has not experienced the challenges associated with living away from home or become fully integrated into the social life surrounding HE. In contrast to this Pippa has been able to benefit from both living at home and in student accommodation through her time in HE. She had planned to attend South West City University however due to her mother's ill health she decided to study closer to home.

- 
- Cat:** oh okay (.) and how has it been (.) has it been beneficial >you being at [university name]< and being that little bit closer.
- Pippa:** ↑oh yeah loads (.) yeah >and financially< as well 'cause I commuted in in my final year (.) this last year I lived in [nearby city] and got the train into [Northern City] for studying (.) so >rather than< living in [Northern city] city centre
- Cat:** that's okay (.) so you lived in [Northern City] for the first couple of years then?
- Pippa:** >yeah yeah< (.) so first and second year (.) then we had a placement on our degree >so I went to America for third year< [(.)]
- Cat:** [oh wow]
- Pippa:** than back for final year (.)
- Cat:** that's fantastic.
- Pippa:** >↑I get about@<
-

- 
- Cat and do you think it was the right choice for you (.) ↑staying that little bit closer to home and going to [Northern City University]?
- Pippa oh yeah (.) >it's like the best of both worlds< (.) if (.) 'cause where I live is only like half an hour on the train or a 45 minute drive (.) so that way I could get home easy enough (.) like if I'm getting sick of [Northern City] and things (.) I think it was a lot better (.) <I mean> I still think I would have enjoyed it if I had gone further >but it was like< getting home (.) looking at tickets it was like two hundred pound return or something >it's just not worth it< you know
- 

**Excerpt 5.42 Pippa**

Pippa (Excerpt 5.42) suggests that the financial aspects of being close to her mother's house have been of benefit. While it was her mother's health that shaped her decision to stay closer to home during her initial time as a student this did not impact her choice of living arrangements in that she still moved into halls during her first year of study. However, during her final year, when she had less contact time with her programme she was able to move 'home', reducing the financial burden associated with her accommodation. She describes her situation as 'the best of both worlds' suggesting that throughout her time as a student she has been able to benefit from both situations at the same time. Thus it is clear that she recognises the positive benefits associated with being able to move away from home, while maintaining a close relationship with her immediate family. This close connection to family, and the impact that it has on Pippa's choices could be deemed a disadvantage and is representative of those of a specific *habitus* and class (Ball *et al.*, 2002; Reay *et al.*, 2001).

Living arrangements were touched upon in Chapter Four, however this section has explicitly considered the impact that living arrangement have had on graduates. In a number of instances the complexities surrounding moving away from home and living with strangers was challenging for graduates. This has natural implications for the holistic HE experience. Being relatively close to family homes is also an important consideration for some; this can however also have implications in terms of the university attended and subsequent transition. The impact that living arrangements can have on habitual dispositions is immeasurable as time

spent in living accommodation and the relationships that develop alongside this will naturally dominate students time as they transition through HE. Therefore this element of the HE experience should not be overlooked.

### 5.3.5 The Holistic Experience

The holistic experience of attending university and being a HE student is a core component of graduate development and associated employability. In many instances it is not one element of education, or the student experience that contributes to development, instead it is a combination of many. The balance between study, work and social activities is important in terms of student engagement (Arum & Roksa, 2011) and ensuring that students are benefiting from their time in HE. As students progress through their degrees their priorities change as they become better informed regarding the competitive labour market (Wilson, 2012). Within this section the way in which the whole university experience has contributed to employability will be explored. Many of the skills, attributes and competencies required for future employment cannot be developed in one module, or even through the subject specific content of a hospitality degree alone (Jackson & Wilton, 2016; Jackson, 2010; Yorke & Knight, 2006). Thus the way in which the entire experience has been perceived by graduates is important.

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**Ting:** yeah because even in my class there were around <I think:> (.) ten (.) and we got to know each other quickly (.) and (.) um:: we are still very good friends now (.) and when we go back to Hong Kong we still meet up (.) and we spend a lot of time together (.) and because we have like a similar culture (.) >and also like< [South West City] is a very convenient place (.1) like we didn't live very far from each other so after the lecture >or even at night< we could spend time together (.)

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#### **Excerpt 5.43 Ting**

The transition into HE is often a concern for potential students (Choi, 2015; Christie *et al.*, 2014). However, the majority of students adapt to their new environments and subsequently progress through their degree. For Ting, an international student, the prospect of studying in the UK was particularly daunting. However, when she arrived at [South West City] to start her



degree she found that she was not alone in her situation. Her apprehension regarding not 'fitting in' was somewhat short lived. The section of dialogue shown in Excerpt 5.43 demonstrates how Ting has befriended individuals of a similar background to herself. This practice, of gravitating towards those with similar cultural backgrounds echoes the work of Maringe and Carter (2007) who suggest that some international students do not gain the 'international experience' that they anticipated when studying at a UK based HEI. While their research was based on African students studying in the South East of England; comparisons can be drawn between their study, and the experience of Ting and her friends. Learning and development can also be affected when international students do not integrate with their peers (Lave & Wenger, 1991), or feel as if they belong (Kahu, 2013) within the HE environment. This can be compounded by issues surrounding intercultural sensitivity (Barron & Dasli, 2010) and differences in learning style preferences amongst home and international students (Barron, Watson & McGuire, 2006; Lashley & Barron, 2006; Wong, Pine & Tsang, 2000). As a result it is likely that Ting has not fully internalised the institutional *habitus* and cultural norms associated with the international environment that she is studying in. Having not augmented a complete, or holistically natured, international experience Ting will have limited her development whilst at university.

For Ben, being a student and using this as a means of engaging with industry professionals, has been advantageous for his development. Ben's dialogue (Excerpt 5.44) draws on societal echoes of students being perceived in a derogative manner. However, his narrative sits in opposition to this preconception as he positions himself as advantaged through his status as a student. For Ben the experience narrated, that he was able to gain access to prestigious businesses, has actively contributed to his development and learning in HE. His engagement with industry has not been linked to specific modules or assignments, instead Ben has highlighted the learning that he attempted to gain from interactions. It may be that this was

an omission of information however it is clear that Ben has taken a proactive approach to development, beyond the core curriculum associated with his degree, this is consistent with the mixed, and somewhat mature, background that Ben approached HE with. In approaching university as an opportunity, and having made a somewhat calculated decision to participate in HE Ben has strategically utilised his time on order to improve employability. He does not consider that having a degree will ultimately result in graduate employment. His approach to

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**Ben:** [...] (.) the term student er:: it er: it can be used in a in quite a derogative >kind of way< (.) but it can also be used to your advantage because obviously <you uh:> >as a student you want to learn< (.) and: companies are always wanting: to pass on their knowledge to students (.) things like that (.) >so uh what I've been doing< uh:: (.) so I second year I started just uh mass posts and uh mass letters and uh sending >out uh< (.) >just a round robin really< was a standardised letter really <and uh> it was just >↑do you mind< if I just come and speak to you <uh::> (.) and uh to London and uh <into Scotland> and then obviously emails to abroad (.) so >do you mind if I come and speak to you< and meet with you and >you know< (.) look around your establishment <and (.) discuss> uh industry things that might affect you (.) ↑so uh I was back and forth from London every week and speaking to luxury hotel down there er so Claridges (.) er Berkley (.) uh <Connaught> Rad-uh (.) Oriental (.) met with major general managers (.) met with Sir Roco Forte and visited Forte Hotels last year <and:> uh: you know uh (.) for me it was all about um >I'm an outsider to the business< so (.)>at the end of the day< I'm only looking > I'm just a student looking to learn< (.) so I had the freedom of just going in there (.) and uh saying what I wanted >and just being critical< so and saying like I've got your annual reports here and I'm a little a little bit concerned about >this this and this< (.) so say uh could you (.) ↑although you can't give me what ↑so you can't give me< what you're doing ↑because that's confidential but >you know< (.) >how are you looking to overcome these things?< (.) and and you know what I was looking to do was just (.) to obviously use the term student and to use <the> the connections we of [Northern Town University] and also the connections I went out to get <uh independently> just to further my learning and (.) ↓so to (.) uh ↑the book will only teach you so much (.) but you know when you go out there by yourself >all I had< was a train ticket on me [...]

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**Excerpt 5.44 Ben**

networking is somewhat reminiscent of an individual with existing cultural and social capital which enables them to excel within this area. However, Ben comes from a somewhat non-



traditional background, and his parents never expected, or encouraged him to attend university suggesting that this capital may have been developed individually and through exposure in HE. Ben also positions this development of social capital ahead of academic learning, both through his narrative itself ('the book will only teach you so much') and through action (the time he spent away from university campus during term time).

- 
- Cat:** fantastic (.) um: (.) do you think that it was the right choice for you (.) >the degree< that you have done ↑and staying at home?
- Laura:** I think so (.) >as I said< with [University] ↑I think it was five subjects that we could do in the first year (.) because I'm always very indecisive@ about what I wanted to do at the end of it all (.) so it's given me the (.) kind of >flexibility< to try some things out and do some things (.) um:: (.) and this sort of third year >of the hospitality< and tourism course there was a um: >a events management< um:: semester (.) so that appealed to me quite a lot (.) um: ↑and yeah staying at home was (.) I think in some ways it's given me more freedom: (.) um: because I've had more money and not had to travel over the summers um: and stuff (.) it's also meant I could stick around with my friends and things@ (.) ↓and its been good
- 

#### ***Excerpt 5.45 Laura***

For Laura (Excerpt 5.45) university has helped her to refine career choices and develop her interests. The degree of choice that she has been able to exert within her programme of study has meant that she is able to specialise in hospitality and tourism based subjects, even though this was not her original plan when starting her degree. Laura laughs when mentioning that she did not know what she wanted to do upon graduation, highlighting how this is a difficult situation. However, the work of Jenkins and Walker (2013) suggests that modular degree courses, where students can choose their subjects and follow interests can have benefits for graduates. As with discussion regarding the hospitality discipline, there are multiple benefits to broadening the curriculum in order to develop well-grounded and employable graduates (Airey & Tribe, 2000; Airey, Dredge & Gross, 2015; Dredge *et al.*, 2012; Gross & Manoharan, 2016; Lashley, Lynch & Morrison, 2007a; Lashley, 2004; 2015; Morrison & O'Mahony, 2003; Tribe, 2002; Van Hoof, & Wu 2014; Wilson, Small & Harris, 2012). In addition to learning Laura

has also been able to travel during her time as a student. Having opted to live at home she has benefited financially and been able to maintain an active social life, thus she has been able to gain life experience which is integral to development and future employability (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004).

When discussing his time at South Coast Town University Rob made the following comments (Excerpt 5.46). In keeping with recent literature (Wilson, 2012) the experience that Rob had on placement compounded his interest in a career in the food and beverage industry. In

- 
- Rob:** um: uh so because I'm moving into food and beverage I've done for my placement >a food and beverage internship< (.) uh at the Burj al Arab hotel
- Cat:** fan:tas:tic:
- Rob:** @@ so I did that because I wanted to learn food and beverage >as well as possible< that I could in a hotel >so that was really good training< (.) loads of courses on wine and things like that (.) I could push myself as much as I wanted outside of work >I had the resources available to me< (.) so I was able to do that (.) from that and discovering this sort of passion I had about wine and that (.) well I always had a passion for wine but it was developed so much more while I was out there ↑and speaking to the world professionals and things like that so when I came back to [university town] I started up the wine society (.)
- 

#### **Excerpt 5.46 Rob**

particular his interest in wine developed and as a result he founded a wine society at his university. Thus as a result of his placement, and engagement with this activity both proximal and distal consequences can be noted (Kahu, 2013). Academic learning in the *field* of food and wine is a clear outcome of Rob's engagement with his placement and the professionals that he has worked with. In addition to this, social gains can also be assumed. Personal wellbeing, associated with knowing what he wants to do (and therefore having a clear career goal) is one of these. However citizenship related consequences, in the fact that Rob has founded a society and therefore is able to share knowledge and make further links with like-minded individuals within South Coast Town is also key. This is a broader antecedent of engagement, however for Rob it plays a large component of his employability narrative as he demonstrates

learning and development beyond the core curriculum and differentiates himself from Others within the competitive labour market.

While Rob's employability narrative focuses on specific and somewhat tangible things that he has done while he has been a student, Kristina's (Excerpt 5.47) development throughout her time in HE is not as closely linked to specific activities. The holistic experience and development through the various stages of her degree have resulted in Kristina positioning improvements in her critical thinking, tolerance and language usage. Skills such as critical thinking are integrally linked to the completion of a degree (QAA, 2008a; QAA, 2016) and the type of development and learning that is anticipated in graduates. Recognition of development in these areas requires a reflexive stance as Kristina considers her employability. Among the graduates that participated in this research, this approach to considering general development was common place. Thus it is clear that the core aims of HE have been achieved by graduates and personal growth has occurred as a result of engagement with HE (Kahu, 2013). This learning is integral to the development of graduate identity (Daniels & Brooker, 2014; Hinchliffe & Jolly, 2010; Holmes, 2001; Tomlinson, 2010), and in particular the processual nature of this (Holmes, 2013).

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**Cat:** [...] do you feel that your time at university (.1) ↑has it changed you?  
**Kristina:** ↑oh yes ↑definitely (.1) um: I think I am now <a bit more critical>(.)  
**Cat:** okay  
**Kristina:** about what I read (.) ↑and what I hear (.) um: and I also try to reflect on that >whether it's really true< maybe it is different in other situations (.) um: then of course my language skills ↑>they got better< um: (.) I also think I'm a bit more open and tolerant as a person (.) um: (.) yeah I think that is pretty much it ↑>that is all I can think of<  
**Cat:** that's really good (.)  
**Kristina:** and I'm also more independent ↑because I was living without my parents (.) and taking care of myself (.)

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*Excerpt 5.47 Kristina*

While the holistic experience has positively contributed to the majority of graduates' development there are a small number of cases where this has not been the case. Julie (Excerpt 5.48) completed a foundation degree before progressing into university in order to complete a BA top-up programme. As a result her HE experience as a whole is somewhat fragmented and she has encountered a number of problems as a result of her circumstance, she also noted that she missed out on opportunities that some students who just completed a BA or BSc degree had been offered. Within her narrative, Excerpt 5.48, Julie suggests that the transition into university from the local college was challenging. Her experience, reminiscent of moving into 'big school' is similar to the transitions that many students face when starting

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**Cat:** do you think that it was the right choice for you?

**Julie:** yeah absolutely (.) I have found a few things about it a bit tricky (.) especially the link between (.) the actual transition between the foundation degree and the degree (.1) I think there are some gaps >within the< foundation degree which don't quite prepare you >in the same< way for your third year top-up (.) there are some challenges ↑<definitely> for the third year > I think I found the third year quite hard (.)

**Cat:** okay

**Julie:** um::: (.) mainly because you feel like you're moving into >what seems like< big school (.) and there aren't maybe enough visits and: (.2) uhm (.) <the lecturing> um: is different (.) the students have already been here for two years quite often >on the programmes< (.) they have their little groups >and I think quite often the (.) um: the top-ups are treated (.1) um: you know a little- a group on their own (.)

**Cat:** okay (.2) has (.) has the whole sort of experience (.) your time at [Local College] as well as your time [at university] been as your expected it to be (.) >being a student<? and studying?

**Julie:** <I think so> (.) >but to be perfectly honest< I don't think (.) you really act-, <know ↑at all> what studying is going to be like >especially as a mature student< (.) I was really nervous about being the oldest <in the class> >by quite a long way< (.) I was worried how I would mix with <those> younger people (.) I was >a little bit< worried about the <academic uh level> being above what I thought I was capable of (.) >a little bit of (.) sort of< lack of confidence >from my point of view< (.) but um: (.) I don't think I- ↑ I haven't studied since I was sixteen (.) so for me it was a little gap (.) but I think from me it was a leap of faith for me (.) uh and the reputation was good I thought >and to be honest< there wasn't anywhere else that I um >like I said< my children are here (.) ↑but (.1) I think I did enough looking into the modules and

though you know >this suits me< (.) I have to bite the things I don't like  
the idea of ↓and like the idea of costings and things like that (.)

---

**Excerpt 5.48 Julie**

HE (Cullinan *et al.*, 2013; Jackson, 2003; Winterton & Irwin, 2012), however she is technically in the final stages of her degree. Integration into the social fabric of the HE environment was challenging for Julie who felt somewhat of an outsider to the existing norms. This has the potential to negatively impact engagement with the curriculum (Kahu, 2013) and learning within the classroom (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Being treated differently has the potential to add to this feeling of segregation. For Julie the transition between establishments, and into HE in general was compounded by her age. As a mature student Julie positions herself as older and as such different from her peers. This again creates another divide between herself and Others amongst her cohort, again potentially alienating her from the social development associated with HE participation. Julie also noted that the foundation degree did not fully prepare her for university. This suggests that the content delivered as a part of each programme was very different. As a result it can be assumed that there were gaps in her knowledge and as such she struggled to adapt to university study. She specifically noted that the teaching style differed. This again has implications for how she learns in the classroom (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

The narratives presented in this section highlight the differences in how employability is constructed from the holistic university experience. The broad array of activities undertaken and the way that these are reflected upon and packaged in order to portray identity and emphasise employability has therefore been presented. The differences noted suggest, in line with the findings of Chapter Four, that hospitality graduates are unique individuals who all have very different experiences of HE.

## 5.4 Concluding Comments

This chapter has discussed the elements of the hospitality curriculum and HE experience that contribute to the development of graduate employability. Vocational and academic components of the curriculum were discussed with findings noting vast polarities in the opinion regarding the practical, vocational elements of hospitality programmes. However, negative comments were balanced against some positive narratives of employability derived directly from experience mediated by HE study. In addition to the hospitality curriculum the HE experience in general was also discussed. Here it was noted that student engagement with extra and co-curricular activities also varied considerably. Key findings have been presented in Table 5:1.

The narratives presented in this chapter, directly related to HE experiences, form a core component of hospitality graduates' employability narratives. However, the following chapter will consider how these experiences are used within proposed trajectories as graduate's transition beyond HE. The way in which value is ascribed to these experiences and learning opportunities will therefore be explored. These finding will also inform recommendations for curriculum development which will be presented in the concluding chapters of this thesis.

### Key Findings

Training restaurants and other methods of developing skills are not all meeting their key objectives in developing employment related currencies.

Placements are viewed positively however the majority appear to be primarily operational in nature.

Industry engagement through live projects and consultancy based work are perceived positively and therefore constructively contribute to the content of employability narratives.

Management based subject knowledge is perceived as beneficial in terms of employability for graduates, and offers a transferable knowledge base for prospective students and graduates.

Hospitality students undertake part-time work experience in order to support their current and future lifestyles while they are studying.

Hospitality students within the sample did not generally engage with societies and university led extra-curricular activities as they do not recognise the value associated with these.

The holistic university experience is viewed positively.



***Table 5:1 Key Findings; the higher education experience***



## 6 Transitioning Beyond Undergraduate Hospitality

### Education

#### 6.1 Introduction

The previous two findings chapters have consecutively discussed graduates' experience prior to and during their time as students. Socio-cultural backgrounds and the rationale behind wanting to complete a hospitality degree has been considered in Chapter Four before the HE experience, and the influence that hospitality education has on employability narratives was explored in Chapter Five. This chapter will continue these advancing narratives and discuss graduate transitions beyond undergraduate HE.

Much of the dominant discourse surrounding HE emphasises the benefits of having a degree, and the links between having a degree and employability are often cited in literature (Becker, 1964; Dearing, 1997; Leitch, 2006). However, these links are not linear (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2003; Holmes, 2013; Tholen, 2013; Tomlinson, 2008; Tymon, 2013; Warhurst, 2008) and some students benefit to a greater extent than others, from their time in HE (Adnett & Slack, 2007; Atherton, 2013; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Fugate, Kinicki & Ashforth, 2004; Tomlinson, 2008). Therefore Chapter Six will consider the narratives presented by individuals as they discuss transitioning beyond their UG degree programmes. For many this involved entering the competitive labour market and therefore their ability to compete with Others in order to secure positions was included within the focus of this chapter. However, some of the graduates were not planning on starting their careers immediately upon completion of their degrees and therefore these narratives have also been discussed so as to encapsulate the range of choices considered by hospitality graduates. The way in which the graduates' backgrounds and HE experience contribute to these trajectories will also be discussed as these factors have a direct bearing on student options.

## **6.2 The Value of a Hospitality Degree**

### **6.2.1 Introduction**

The value, or importance associated with gaining a hospitality UG qualification is directly concerned with its perceived usefulness. The fact that graduates have invested in their education suggests, at least initially, that they supposed having a degree would be beneficial to them as they transition out of education. However, these value perceptions naturally develop with time and experience. Thus, as individuals are socialised into the HE environment and gain a better understanding of HE, the competitive labour market and potential trajectories, their value perceptions will transform. This section will explore the value that graduates ascribe to their HE qualifications upon completion of their degrees. Reference to the uncertainty of value will also be made as many of the graduates that participated in this study questioned the significance of their qualifications, particularly in relation to other credentials. The international currency associated with a UK based hospitality degree will also be noted along with the positional competition associated with the HEI attended.

### **6.2.2 The Value Associated with a Degree**

For many graduates, participation in HE is directly related to the labour market outcomes which they anticipate gaining. This is consistent with the dominant discourses on HE which upsell the labour market returns that can be expected from the completion of a degree (Dearing, 1997; Leitch, 2006). However the following graduates demonstrate a polarity in their positioning of the hospitality degrees, with some suggesting that they are essential in their progression into employment and others ascribing very limited value to their programmes, instead highlight the importance of work experience. Their perspectives showcase the various ways in which education is valued by both the graduates and the labour market. Within this discussion the importance of good grades is noted and the importance of degree classifications is touched upon. Labour market concerns were however not the only way in which value was gained from participation in HE. For some the holistic nature of the HE experience is where

they felt that they benefited most. Thus it is clear that many of the graduates recognised the importance of soft skills and additional experience within their employability narratives (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004; Jackson, 2010; Tomlinson, 2008).

For Vanessa there is a clear link between her upcoming job role and her degree, she states ‘to get a job that I’ve gone in for. I needed that degree’. Vanessa was successful in applying for a graduate scheme with Mitchells and Butlers, where the entry requirements specified a degree level qualification. Without her degree she would have been unable to secure the job, thus highlighting the value of her qualification. However, the job description did not state that her degree needed to be in a hospitality or business related subject, she only needed to have completed an undergraduate level qualification. The value of her degree was therefore not to be found in the subject specific knowledge that she developed but the peripheral development and learning associated with HE. This approach to recruiting graduates could be seen as a means of increasing the entry requirements into certain positions which may not previously have required HE qualification (Warhurst, 2008), as businesses compete for talented individuals within the labour market (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2003; Watson, 2008).

For Alicia (Excerpt 6.1) there was also a clear link between the grades that she received for her degree and the labour market. She was particularly focused on receiving a 2:1 classification. As a hospitality graduate who is looking to pursue a career in HR, and not the hospitality industry, the grades received have been a fundamental component of the value associated with her degree and her perceived ability to develop her career. Like Vanessa the subject specific knowledge associated with hospitality as a subject area is of secondary concern as she proclaims ‘it doesn’t matter what the degree is in its just that you’ve got the degree’. She positions herself as hard working, in order to achieve her goal, which she directly links to the graduate labour market and her future career. It is however clear that Alicia’s employment focus has been targeted at jobs specifically marketed at graduates, a benefit of having

- 
- Alicia: [...] like I wanna <get> a good grade so I can get a <good career> 'cause I think like <applying for jobs everyone's like> ↑two one or above two one or above >so I'll see< (.) but (.) I'm expected a two one ↑which is good (.) but: I just don't wana any lower (.) but realistically but <yeah> so: (.) ↓yeah and- (.) fingers crossed
- Cat: that's good (.) and how do you feel <about> your achievements? (.) how do you feel ( ) >getting a two ones fantastic< (.2) is having your degree important to you?
- Alicia: um: yeah for me it is because I've been here for four years and I've been working really hard ↑especially this year towards getting a two one (.) um:: because I am quite hard worker I don't want anything less ↑and don't wanna (.) I'm not fussed about a first (.) um: like: ↑no job that I have looked at has said you need a first (.) it's always been a two one or above and that's what I'm aiming at (.) um I think <having a degree> is important ↑these days and a lot of people are looking (.) ↑if you start young then it's okay >but I think< (.) if you go to uni' a lot of people are happy if you have the degree (.) it doesn't matter what the degree is in (.) its just that you've got the degree (.) so: (.) I think nowadays it is important especially with the jobs that I've applied for ↑<have asked> like higher education? (.) and if I haven't (.) >I dunno< (.) they probably put you to another side (.1) so I think having a degree is important ↓unless you know someone in the business@ you wanna work in@ (.)
- 

### *Excerpt 6.1 Alicia*

completed a degree (in other elements of her narrative she also discusses applying for graduate schemes) and she uses the voice of the generalised Other from within recruiting firms to support this. It also appears that there has been limited consideration as to other jobs which Alicia may apply for, such as those that do not specify a degree as an entry requirement. This suggests that Alicia is positioning herself specifically as a graduate within the labour market and is therefore looking for a job role that directly recognises this, she does not consider other roles that may utilise her skills, but may not require a degree as an entry requirement. This approach to considering employability is consistent with an individual who has internalised the discourse surrounding the graduate premium that can be demanded upon completion of a HE qualification (Dearing, 1997; Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2009; 2011; 2012; Leitch, 2006). However, at the end of her narrative Alicia notes 'unless you know someone in the business' a statement which echoes the positive influence that networks

built on social capital can have. Her personal search for jobs suggests that she does not have access to this restricted job market, thus recognising that for those without connections, such as herself, the degree classification obtained has a greater importance when attempting to secure positions. This also positions Alicia as disadvantaged in comparison to some of her counterparts who may have greater access to the capital required in order to enter this restricted job market.

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**John:** yeah (.) I mean I always wanted a two one (.) um: I felt that if I really push for a first <I think> I could have got one (.) but I think other things would have been sacrificed and I wanted to get balance (.) I think I was (.) ↑I've always been looking for a >two one< (.) second year (.) second year I got a >two two< this year I kind of (.) I kind of more knuckled down a bit and I've got all like really good grade (.) more than average and that's really good (.)

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#### ***Excerpt 6.2 John***

Like Alicia, John (Excerpt 6.2) saw the value in gaining a 2:1 classification, but not in achieving a first class degree. He uses the idiom 'knuckled down' to demonstrate how over the past year he has been committed to this goal. However, there is a trade-off between success in academia and work-life balance. The word sacrifice is used here to emphasise the value associated with what John would have had to give up, and highlight how he was unwilling to relinquish time not spent studying. This is consistent with the motives of the millennial generations and importance of work-life balance within their priorities (Martin, 2005; Morton, 2002; Sheahan, 2005). The need to apply himself within the final year also highlights how John had not done this within the first two years of his course. The instrumental approach that he has taken to learning throughout his time at university again highlights the value placed on tangible, hard credentials associated with HE.

The notion of sacrifice was also discussed by Laura in Excerpt 6.3. She uses this concept in order to demonstrate how grades and the tangible aspect of her degree are less important

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**Laura:** <I think> I've just always kinda aimed for probably the best grades that I can get (.) but then I have sacrificed some of that to get (.) uh (.) >work experience< (.) uh: because >I think that's so important< um:(.) >seeing as so many people have degrees< (.) even though I've worked at a supermarket throughout my time <I also> had <uh> human resources internship (.) uh last summer (.) and I did a events internship (.) uh: two Novembers ago now (.) er (.) I went Chicago with a big airline company and I was working at a conference for them (.) and I think things like that kind of set you apart (.)

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### **Excerpt 6.3 Laura**

that the acquisition of experience. Instead of focusing entirely on her degree Laura has actively sought work experience in the form of internships in order to complement academic knowledge developed through her degree. This experience has been gained in order to help differentiate herself from other graduates within the labour market, ultimately helping her to improve employability and as such secure a job within the competitive labour market (Mason, Williams & Cranmer, 2009; Yorke & Knight, 2006). Laura has therefore recognised the competitive nature of recruitment practices and the need for skills and experience beyond the hard credentials associated with having a degree (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2003; Tomlinson, 2008). For Thompson (2017) these short terms placements or internships can be as beneficial as longer periods of time in work in helping students to both gain experience and help assess career direction. This approach to developing employability recognises a feel for the game and knowledge of employer requirements. Thus habitually Laura has been able to prioritise her commitments and time in order to better negotiate the *field* (competitive labour market) that she will be entering

Sarah echoed many of the above noted points, however much of her narrative focused on skills acquired through her HE experience and not additional work experience. Despite not wanting to pursue a career within the hospitality industry the management based subjects delivered as a part of her programme have been of benefit to her. The experience gained as a result of completing a year long placement and consultancy based project, where she

organised an event were also highlighted. The opportunity to engage with these activities and the practical experience that she now has, are vital components of her narrative. Sarah also commented on the tangential benefits of her experience, such as the independence gained from flying out to, and working in the USA. This approach to narrating employability where experiences as a component of HE are emphasised is consistent with the way in which middle class graduates are able to package their experiences into a cohesive narrative (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004).

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**Cat:** how do you sort of feel about the fact that you've got a degree now (.) how ↑important is that you've got that >piece of paper< so to speak?  
**Manoj:** well it's important to me as a personal achievement (.1) um: (.) it's important to my family >and things like that< (.1) um: (.) I know when applying for jobs now (.) for most >if not all< jobs (.) they do require you to have that piece of paper that says that you've got a bachelor degree ↓or if you do a masters etcetera (.1) um:(.) but to the end interview (.) to the direct manager (.) I don't really think it matters that much (.1) >so just relating to an interview I had earlier this week< (.) ah (.) they were more interested in the actual skills in a job (.1) so it was more for a management based role (.) but I think they were interested in the actual skills and experience (.) instead of the skills learned at university (.)

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#### ***Excerpt 6.4 Manoj***

In a similar vein to Laura and Sarah, Manoj also noted the importance of experience within his narrative (Excerpt 6.4). Here the requirement for a degree is recognised, however Manoj stresses the significance of skills and experience in addition to this. Thus the importance of soft skills and experience in addition to hard credentials has been identified (Brown, Hesketh & Wiliams, 2003; Tomlinson, 2008). He draws on recent experience within a job interview to formulate this conclusion. Thus the voice of the recruiting manager has been internalised and used in order to support the development of this individual's narrative. The skills acquired as a part of his programme were also given less precedence in his reflexive narrative than those developed elsewhere. Thus greater value was placed on his part-time work experience and placement experience. This approach to considering employability sits in line with the ideas

put forward by Harkison, Poulston and Kim (2011) who suggest that hospitality graduates need to place greater emphasis on the skills and experience and rely less on their hard credentials when considering graduate positions. It also demonstrates an understanding of the *field* that he is entering and the way in which this should be negotiated in order to warrant success.

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- Cat: how important is it now having that piece of paper? having that degree >so to speak<?
- Karin: it's a good question because the funny thing is that ↓I noted: (.) so on my CV (.) <um:: it says: um> I've won the savoy educational trust twice for //my grades// uh um
- Cat: //↓wo:w//
- Karin: in second year (.) ↑yeah so like <okay> that says to them that I'm probably not a bad student <how:ever: none of them> in any of the interviews have ever like asked me are you going to get a two one and you going to get a one ↑like how are you doing at uni' >do you know what I mean?< like it feels like that was needed on paper to get through the door and ever since its only been about my work experience indeed and >you know< me as a person and how I deal with situations (.) <and I do feel that> (.1) um:: >you know< if I am now indeed in a hotel and (.1) I:: ↑understand revenue management and ↑I understand marketing (.) I understand ↓and >you know< >all of that< (.) and I wouldn't know that if I hadn't done my degree (.) so I do feel it will:: still be valuable to me (.) umm: (.) yeah it has (.) it did- it has kind of struck me that why are you all not asking me about my degree (.) ↓<but ye:ah:>
- [...]
- Cat: and do you think there's a demand specifically for <hospitality graduates> as against people with ↑business or geography degrees for instance?
- Karin: um:: (.) I do think it's <favourable within> (.1) o:u:r: (.2) industry (.1) al::though: (.1) well I guess >it- it< depends what company you go for (.) >like I say< Dorchester Collection if you don't even have hospitality degree they won't even look at you (.) if you go to De Vere >for example< which is where I work <for now:> they're happy to take on other graduates ↑if >for example< they still have the work experience and if they have the personality >if that makes sense< (.1) um:: so I guess it indeed really depends what it is you want to go for (.) um: ↑but I <personally> think that even if someone has work experience: >it's not the same as having done< like a module <in: revenue management> and hotel investment and stuff like that because (.) surely I do know now more ↑and understand the hotel industry more than someone who's done an geography degree and worked in a hotel (.) if- if that makes sense?
- 

*Excerpt 6.5 Karin*



Karin shared a similar experience when she was searching for positions on the completion of her degree. She also acknowledged that her degree credentials have allowed her to access the 'graduate' recruitment market. Within her narrative Karin draws on the voice of graduate recruiters in order to reflexively consider the value of her degree qualification. Her ascription of value is therefore directly linked to the perceptions of significant Others within her search for employment. In congruence with both the other research participants and dominant social discourses derived from political initiatives (Dearing, 1997; Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2011; Department for Education and Skills, 2003; Leitch, 2006) value is inextricably linked to employability and how as an individual Karin is able to position herself within the competitive labour market.

Within Karin's narrative company preferences are highlighted. She suggests that some businesses value the subject specific knowledge associated with a degree, whereas other do not specify this as important. Thus it is clear that a range of individuals associated with the hospitality industry have influenced her perception. With each company mentioned there is an expectation that applicants can demonstrate vocational experience within the industry, in addition to an academic qualification, in order to be considered for a post; thus it is clear that experience is valued by the industry here (Raybould & Wilkins, 2005). Unlike some of the other students the grade required to be selected for interview is not mentioned, however only a '2:1' or 'First' classification are noted within her discourse therefore it is anticipated that these were the entry requirements. Karin's narrative advocates that having a degree is not the only entry requirement for positions, thus rejecting any linear link between education and employability and recognising the importance of personal capital (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004). Grade attainment is also questioned as for Karin this has been overlooked in her contact with recruiters, thus the value of hard credentials are again questioned. Despite the requirement for experience Karin positions herself, and other hospitality graduates, as

advantaged as they possess subject specific knowledge in order to support progression into the hospitality industry. This factor maintained a prominent component of her employability narrative throughout our discussion. It can therefore be assumed that this notion has been supported by others within her social circle. This may include academics who have also suggested the subject specific knowledge developed through the completion of her degree is important and valuable for recruiting operations.

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**Cat:** how important that sort of having a degree (.) moving forwards?

**Ruth:** I think its goo:d (.) I think for most jobs >especially in management ones< (.) I'm not saying that for in hospitality you have to have a degree but I think people think differently of you when you do (.) that's the perception that I >sort of< have (.) >but I know you can obviously work your way up< (.) <but> to have a degree just gives you that bit of ^extra (.) and for me not working in the industry before (.) its (.) something I can say >at least I've studied it< (.) <not done> the practical element but <I kno:w what to do> >you know< I know that situation I know what that means and I know how to please the customer >because this is how you do it in theory wise< and you can just apply it to practice (.)

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### ***Excerpt 6.6 Ruth***

Other narratives echoed the importance of academic knowledge which Karin suggested in Excerpt 6.5. For example Ben highlighted a 'fifty-fifty relationship' between the value ascribed to academic knowledge and practical experience when looking to progress in the industry. However, for Ruth, the value of her degree is depicted as a substitute for industry experience. Within Excerpt 6.6 Ruth posits that a degree is not essential in order to progress in the industry, and the traditional promotional paths associated with working 'your way up' still exist. However, as she has very limited industry experience Ruth ascribes increased value to the theoretical knowledge that she has acquired. She suggests that her degree gives her something 'extra' to offer employer. Her narrative also draws on common academic discourses in that she discusses the application of theory to practice. It is therefore clear that she has internalised the voice of individuals, such as academics, that have influenced her

throughout the course of her degree. The way in which Ruth has constructed her narrative is consistent with the notion that non-traditional graduates are less able to adapt their narratives to the changing demand of the employer (Reay, David & Ball, 2005; Tomlinson, 2012); they rely heavily on the hard credentials associated with their degree, they value their educational capital and therefore do not present a cohesive presentation of the self, incorporating the full dimensions associated with personal capital (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004).

- 
- Cat:** in terms of your career (.) how important is that to you (.) moving forwards now?
- Julie:** <moving forwards:> with the degree?
- Cat:** yeah (.) so >having a degree now<?
- Julie:** I never really believed it was going to be important (.) but I think its been important to me as (.) as a woman (.) and (.) as a pers-a person >as a woman of my age< (.) I think its been important to do that (.) ↑where ↑whether its brings me the job (.) er the same as it would somebody (.) >you know< I see a lot of young er: (.) <younger graduates> now they're looking at great graduate programmes and you know they'll be able to work ninety hours a week and get (.) do (.) you know have their life (.) >because you know they haven't had their children (.) haven't got married yet< (.)>you know I think that's great< (.) ↑but I'm obviously (.) I'm at a different side to that (.) so (.) I think for me (.) yeah I'm really looking forward to <the opport-> what the opportunities bring me (.) um:: (.) but um I'm much more on a personal level <I'm> I think (.) ↑you know what (.) >I did that< (.) you know ↑I can do that (.) >and I can go and I can go a little bit further (.) <and> I don't know about going any further than that@@ like you are (.) um yeah (.) it's been fantastic like that

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#### ***Excerpt 6.7 Julie***

In contrast to the narratives presented previously, Julie (Excerpt 6.7) attributed value to her degree in a slightly different manner. Her identity as a mature graduate dominates her narrative as she reflects on her experience. Both gender and age based identity constructs are highlighted as Julie differentiates herself from other graduates, who are predominantly younger than herself. Completing a degree, for Julie, was not a natural trajectory. Her role as a parent provided additional constraints in her ability to engage with HE, thus the achievement is much more meaningful. While employability and the ability to gain employment is noted

here Julie focuses much more on the personal achievement that completion of her degree has given her. Her emphasis on the direct speech 'I did that, you know, I can do that' suggests that her sense of self, and self confidence levels have changed. She can 'go a bit further' (complete a Master's degree) as a consequence of the personal development associated with her degree programme. Thus in this instance HE could be deemed to have provided social mobility in the opportunities that Julie now deems possible.

All of the graduates within this section attribute value to the completion of their degrees. In a number of cases this is linked to the notion of the degree as an entry requirement for specific positions. However, within these discussions a number of questions have been raised as to the extent that a degree aids employability. In line with much of the literature on hospitality education (Harkison, Poulston & Kim, 2011; Millar, Mao & Moreo, 2010; Raybould & Wilkins, 2005) experience is also deemed as important to many of the graduates as they progress. The graduates from less traditional backgrounds (first generation graduates) had a tendency to highlight the hard credentials associated with the completion of their studies. Their reflectivity pulled out this element of personal and educational capital where others were able to create a more rounded narrative which incorporated a holistic insight into personal capital.

### **6.2.3 The Uncertainty of Value**

The possession of a degree level qualification meant a number of different things to graduates. The preceding section discussed the value of a hospitality degree and particularly highlighted the way in which HE is used as a pre-requisite for entry into the labour market. However, within this the idea that that a degree is not the only currency required within the labour market was raised. The following section will therefore discuss some of the narratives which outwardly questioned the value of HE and the currency that their degrees actually provides as they transition beyond their undergraduate education.

- 
- Cat: so were you always going to go to university? (.2) was that always the goal?
- Rob: >yeah< um: <it was very um::> (.) I like the whole logical (.) steps (.3) um: (.) and ↑also I think there's a difference between sort of (.) when you get studying and full time work (.)
- Cat: uhhuh
- Rob: <so sort of holding off from the full time work> sort of in a way (.)↑yeah <and also> with the fact that: (.) you get a degree at the end of it ↑is obviously a big thing (.) but then for hospitality I sort of think (.1) th:a:t (.) you learn more in the industry >and you can move up just as fast <(.)
- Cat: ↓ok (.) yeah
- Rob: but: (.) it's only↓ >at the end of the day <that I did this degree for ↑mainly for this degree and like that piece of paper at the end rather than for the learning (.) >throughout < (.) if that makes sense?
- 

**Excerpt 6.8 Rob**

For Rob (Excerpt 6.8) the tangible aspects of having a degree were important however at this stage of his narrative little value was ascribed to the associated learning and development. It appears that there was a societal expectation for him to attend university; it was a 'logical step', which differentiates him from individuals that have not attended university. Thus value is ascribed to the 'piece of paper' and not the learning and development associated with the completion of a HE qualification. The habitual notion of progressing into HE has been enacted by this individual (Ball, Reay & David, 2002; Bourdieu, 1990). The notion of, 'holding off from full time work' is also interesting as this implies that, despite having held down a number of part time jobs, he did not want to enter the labour market and start his career at eighteen. Thus the latter statement made 'that you learn more in the industry' appears to be retrospectively focused on completion of his degree. This may have been a result of his industrial work placement which, elsewhere in his narrative Rob noted the significance of, in line with the findings of Wilson (2012). The value that Rob places on his degree and the learning that he experienced as a part of his formal education is therefore limited, in his opinion.

- 
- Cat: and how important is it now (.) having that piece of paper (.) and having your degree?
- Ava: um:: it is really important (.) and I'm (.) I am quite proud that I have got a degree (.) >and I was the first one in my family to do so< (.) but (.) ↑ I do feel that I probably didn't need a degree to get into the jobs that I want to go into (.) but I only really know that now (.) >because I didn't really look< into them before I started doing this course (.) er::m: but >you know< it might have taken me a year (.1) er: <or two more:> to get to where I want to be (.) whereas that's the only kind of thing I've got from the degree (.) but (.) er:: I have been in uni' for four year like on the hospitality management course (.) erm:: so it kind of means that er: that's two years really er: that I could not have wasted (.) >but it wasn't a waste< (.) I'm definitely glad I have a degree.
- 

### *Excerpt 6.9 Ava*

In a similar vein to Rob, Ava (Excerpt 6.9) also suggests that she does not need a degree. While recognising that the completion of a degree is an achievement, Ava questions the value of her qualification. A degree is not an entry requirement for the positions that she want to move into. The statement made, 'I only really know that now' is particularly noteworthy as this implies that the expectation for her to attend university and the dominant discourses surrounding the advantage which can be sought in the labour market were so persuasive that she did not question them before starting her degree. This is consistent with the doxic conception of progressing into HE which has been internalised thus, with very little reflexive consideration Ava entered HE at eighteen (Ball, Reay & David, 2002; Bourdieu, 1990). There is further scepticism in Ava's positioning of value, she suggest that her time was 'wasted -but it wasn't a waste'. This again supports the uncertainty associated with the value of HE. For Giddens (1990) this narrative would be deemed evident of the reflexive manner in which identity is narrated. The consideration of HE, based on experience and time have shaped the way in which Ava's graduate identity has been constructed and the value that she ascribes to her degree.

- 
- Cat: so your family supported you (.) when you did decide to go to university?
- Maisie: they wanted me to go more than I did @
- Cat: yeah@? why was that? did they just-
- Maisie: well (.) especially >like nowadays <you just (.) as far as they're concerned ↑you just have to go to university to (.) be able to better yourself.
- Cat did you think that as well? (.) [or was university-]
- Maisie [I did and] I didn't (.) um: obviously after doing beauty therapy too ↑I knew I couldn't do that for life (.) I knew just studying it before I even took a job in it I quit@ I studied it for two years and my parents were like >told me not to do that course as well< (.)
- [...]
- Cat and how do you feel about your achievements? <educationally> you have pretty much got a degree now (.)
- Maisie: >I know its weird@< its weird (.) >'cause as I said< I never planned to go to university (.) it's only just hit me >the last couple of days< when we handed our honours in >when we were done< I was thinking ↑<I've actually done it> (.) ↑who'd of thought it? 'cause I (.) >I didn't think I would last four years< (.) like even on my placement I was thinking of not coming back (.) but I thought >its only six months< <come back> complete it (.) you've got a degree as well as the job (.) that's (.) during my placement I was just like >↑I wanna stay here<
- 

***Excerpt 6.10 Maisie***

As noted in Excerpt 6.10, for Maisie the value of having a degree was only realised upon handing in some of her final pieces of work. Throughout her narrative her parents influence and encouragement is prevalent. Maisie claims that her parents wanted her to complete a degree, she uses indirect quotations in order to represent their voice in suggesting that you have to go to university in order to excel (better yourself). However she does not position herself as agreeing with their perspective. Instead, she draws on her past experience, training to be a beauty therapist, and how she opted not to pursue this career in order to demonstrate other occasions where her parents have made correct assumptions about her future. Her self-doubt is evidenced throughout, initially she positions herself as unsure whether university will provide developmental opportunities, as she did not want to attend. She also proclaims to have considered not completing her degree and remaining in employment when on placement. This again raises questions as to the value and significance that Maisie places on

the tangible aspects of having a degree. However Maisie has been fortunate in that she had secured a graduate level job as a result of her placement year. Therefore the additional year of study was not important in helping her to achieve this labour market return.

---

**Cat:** so now you've >kind of< finished your degree (.) how do you feel about it (.) how important is it that you have got that degree?

**Pippa:** I don't know (.) I don't know as of yet because <I mean> I've always worked (.) >so I worked< first year I had a job ↑second year I had two different jobs (.) I worked a night in Aranda Restaurant ↑and then I went to Disney in the summer between first and second year (.) and then I worked at Disney in Florida (.) and now <whenever I've wanted to> I've always found a job (.) its more based on that experience >rather than my degree< (.) as of yet I'm not sure (.) <'cause I've just applied to go back to America in January> (.) >so I'll be going there for another year< (.) and that was in Florida >and before I graduated< and things so (.) I guess I'll really find out then if <you know> it is my degree or you know the experience as well (.)

---

**Excerpt 6.11 Pippa**

For Pippa the value of having a degree is uncertain as previous experience has always been an advantage when applying for positions. The list of previous employment supports Pippa's ability to secure positions within the labour market. Thus the importance of experience within hospitality has been recognised (Harkison, Poulston & Kim, 2011; Raybould & Wilkins, 2005; Raybould & Wilkins, 2006). The job that Pippa is due to start in the January following the completion of her degree is not a specific graduate job and therefore her degree was not a pre-requisite in securing this. Her experience is therefore much more valuable to her progression than her degree, thus compounding her uncertainty in its value.

The uncertainty of value associated with HE is evident here. Following the previous finding which highlighted that a balance between academic knowledge and experience was important in the construction of employability, the graduates above directly question the importance of their degrees as they transition beyond HE. Some of the graduates overtly question the value and others are somewhat more hesitant in their dialogue however the overriding implication is

that, at this point in their careers graduates do not all see the value associated with HE and therefore may be unable to capitalise on the holistic nature of skills developed as they progress.

#### 6.2.4 International Currency

International students studying in the UK naturally have a different value perception in terms of their degrees. For many the UK is a preferred destination for which to study in (King, Findlay & Ahrens, 2010). Evidence also suggests that the international nature of their degree programmes increases the benefits in terms of future labour market considerations (Atherton, 2013; Hargreaves, 2000; Knight, 2004). The following section will specifically explore the value that international students studying hospitality in the UK have narrated.

---

**Liese:** yeah (.) I picked the UK because I wanted an English speaking country for my degree (.) um: (.) and I travelled to London several times (.) >so I really liked London< (.) and I really thought that would be a great idea (.) um: (.) and also when I was at one of these university fairs (.) >that I went to< towards the end of high school (.) I met many people from London universities (.) and they were so wonderful (.) when I saw how much the tuition fees were (.) there was ↑no way I could afford them (.) and then in the summer I came across the fact that it was free in Scotland (.) so I started researching all the universities (.) and I applied for several of them here (.) [Scottish City]– there were several in [Scottish City] and in [Northern Scottish City] (.) and I got into [Scottish City University]

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#### *Excerpt 6.12 Liese*

Within Excerpt 6.12 Liese was asked why she had opted to study within the UK, and specifically at [Scottish University]. The value associated with completing her degree in English was particularly important for Liese, this is unsurprising as the common language that business is conducted in globally is English, thus there will naturally be labour market advantages to having improved English language capabilities (Atherton, 2013). However there was a particular desire to study in the UK, and London specifically (as against other English speaking countries), which was gained from prior experience. Liese however positions herself as unable

to afford English tuition fees and therefore opted to study in Scotland where these are subsidised. This highlights some of the financial constraints that international students face in order to benefit from the UK education system, particularly when, as in Liese's situation, HE is free within their home country, the Czech Republic. This cost implication, and the narrowing of choice of HEI that Leise was able to attend has the potential to limit the benefits that she acquires from HE. Institutional fit and the way in which non-traditional student's integrate into the existing *habitus* of HE can make it difficult to adapt and learn (Mann, 2001; Schuetze & Slowey, 2002; Thomas, 2002).

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**Wong:** um:: (.) I study in the UK because my parents want me to continue my study (.3) not choose study in Hong Kong because it is really difficult to get a university degree (.) or get in the university in Hong Kong because it just have seven university (.) so maybe come to England (.1) I can improve my English (.) and more independent (.) because I need to cook and learn everything myself (.) so:: (.2)

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#### ***Excerpt 6.13 Wong***

For Wong and Ting, who both originate from Honk Kong the competitive nature of HE in their home country means that it is commonplace for students to study abroad. Wong (Excerpt 6.13) claimed her parents were instrumental in her decision to continue her education and attend university. The competitive nature of HE in Hong Kong meant that Wong looked to study abroad. The additional benefits that accompanied this decision included improved English language skills and increased independence as a result of having to move out of her family home. This latter point highlights how the holistic university experience is important to students within their personal development. Any additional benefit of studying in the UK has however been overlooked.

Ting however recognises that having a UK degree does not necessarily differentiate her from other graduates within Hong Kong. Within Excerpt 6.14 Ting's narrative highlights how a number of her friends have also opted to study abroad, and then returned to the Hong Kong in

- 
- Cat: how important is it that you've got that (.) >that you've got that piece of paper< now?
- Ting: um:: (.) this is one where I'm not sure
- Cat: okay
- Ting: because (.) like (.) in Hong Kong there are more and more people who study abroad (.) and they could go to (.2) >like many of my friends study in Australia< they're only from my high school (.) and some of them have gone to America I think (.) and even when I've had an interview with the hotels in Hong Kong or like when I worked in Hong Kong (.1) I worked there the summer before (.) >and all of my colleagues< (.) they also had studied abroad (.) so it looks like a lot of people study abroad (.) and then come back to Hong Kong to start their career (.)
- 

#### ***Excerpt 6.14 Ting***

order to pursue their career. This could be seen to reduce the perceived value of having an international qualification. It also means that any additional language skills that are developed as a result of spending an extended period of time in an English speaking country will in fact be commonplace amongst graduates seeking employment within Hong Kong, thus reducing their value as a differentiating factor. While the above section of discourse is not explicit, it is clear that Ting recognises that she will require more than her degree in order to differentiate herself.

- 
- Cat: and how do you feel about your educational achievements (.) your grades (.1) the value of your degree? ↓the currency?
- Mikkel: I feel as (.) well (.) >if I go to Norway< with my degree from [South West City University] it will probably count as (.) or will be valued as higher because they will not kinda know what goes into it
- Cat: okay=
- Mikkel: =but for a UK employer (.) >or someone< who might have a background or a UK degree in hospitality >then they might just look at it online< and they might not be as impressed in the courses that we have here (.) that does worry me a bit when it comes to the value of the degree.
- 

#### ***Excerpt 6.15 Mikkel***

For Mikkel (Excerpt 6.15) there is a benefit to studying in the UK if he were to return to his native Norway. Thus within the international market he ascribes value to the credentials

associated with the completion of his degree. This supports the global demand for HE, and specifically UK based HE (King, Findlay & Ahrens, 2010). However within the UK market Mikkel suggests that his programme may not be seen as favourable, suggesting that the HEI's credentials are important (Isopahkala-Bouret, 2015). This sits in line with other comments made by this individual in that the subject specific knowledge associated with his degree did not meet his expectations resulting in gaps in his knowledge. As a non-traditional student whose parents have limited qualifications it is unsurprising that the hard currencies associated with subject specific knowledge are of concern to this individual (Reay, David & Ball, 2005). Individuals from backgrounds similar to Mikkel's often focus on these hard credentials as against crafting a more holistic narrative; they do not, in essence, have the personal and social capital with which to achieve this.

The value of UK based HE qualifications from an international perspective is evident. International students and graduates ascribe value to the additional skills, such as language development which have formed a core component of their degrees. In some instances having these additional skills and broad experience is an advantage when progressing beyond HE. However for some international graduates there is a cultural tendency to engage with international HE providers and therefore having a UK based degree does not differentiate them from other graduates within their home countries, and associated labour markets. Thus the international currency of a hospitality degree from the UK has a different exchange rate depending on where graduates are trying to use their qualifications as differentiating credentials.

### **6.2.5 Positional Competition of the HEI**

For many of the graduates their perception of institutions changed as they became more familiar with the HE landscape. The multitude of reasons for choosing a specific institution did not always endure within the narratives elicited, instead a more employability focused story

became apparent as graduates reflexively considered their education. This section specifically addresses the value that graduates place on the HEI that they have attended and the way in which this may impact on their transitions beyond UG studies.

- 
- Cat:** um:: what about [university]? is it a good thing that you actually got your degree=  
**Jennifer:** =well (.) they were kind of advertising and selling [Scottish University] as one of the top universities in the UK (.) ↑and it's a modern university (.1) what else did they say? >↑they said that you had a good chance of getting a job once you graduate< (.) I think if I went to another university I would probably have had the same sort of experience (.) <the same sort of> (.3) I don't think they're any different from ↑any other university personally (.)  
**Cat:** okay  
**Jennifer:** yeah (.1) I don't really see why they're considered a top university (.) >compared to other universities< (.) like just through talking to my friends <and stuff>
- 

***Excerpt 6.16 Jennifer***

Within her story Jennifer (Excerpt 6.16) draws on the voice of the University in helping shape her choice of institution, she draws on advertising and statistics, relaying these through indirect quotations. However, on reflection limited value is ascribed to these. The experience that Jennifer lived as a student did not, in her opinion, differentiate the Scottish City University attended from any of the other HEIs that she is aware of through third party contacts. Through Jennifer's narrative it is clear that university wide marketing initiatives and quality focused branding do not necessarily transcribe into a different, or higher quality, experience for students and graduates from hospitality programmes.

Johanna (Excerpt 6.17) provides a more reflexive account of university choice and the power of the institution, however her perception of the HEI attended is much more positive. For this individual links with industry and the recognition of her degree from some of the larger hospitality recruiters within the UK is of benefit. This is similar to the rationale Alicia put

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Johanna: I think the [School Name] has such a huge credential at the moment >because it is actually where most of the big companies are looking forward to< at the moment (.) and you've got ↑Marriott ↑Hilton ↑Lawsons >the local company< (.) you've got BaxtorStorey >one of the UKs biggest caters< and all looking at us and saying >↑what are you guys doing?< (.) >↑what are you going to do in the future?< ah >do you want to work for us?< (.) we have got Hilton coming actually next week to speak to us (.) <our intake> about employability <and uh> about the graduate scheme (.) ↑we have one girl (.) ↑one of my friends who has just got accepted on the graduate scheme for BaxtorStorey ↑one of ten people out of three hundred to get that sort of place (.) so it's a ↑huge thing for us to have (.) but that only applies to larger places that know about us (.) if you go to a small local hotel that's an independent one then they might not recognise >it does come with its own downside< ↑but the smaller places will recognise the [University Name] >and so< ↑they will understand that bit and-

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#### **Excerpt 6.17 Johannah**

forward when choosing her institution. In order to support this narrative direct speech is utilised so as to emphasise the voice of potential employers within her narrative. However, the scope of this recognition is positioned as somewhat limited. Towards the end of the excerpt Johanna suggests that some potential employers may not recognise the specialised nature of the degree offering at her university. Thus it is apparent that while having a degree from the HEI attended is important it is the programme branding, the 'credential' and industry specific recognition of this which supports employability. The South East University attended by Johanna had received a lot of attention within the *field* of hospitality due to the unprecedented amount of WBL incorporated into programmes. This model of hospitality education is uncommon within the UK (Barrows & Johan, 2008; Formica, 1996) and therefore as an institution they have been able to differentiate themselves within the UK HE marketplace.

Through the use of the plural 'we' within her speech Johanna situated all positional advantage from attending university as collectively shared amongst the cohort. Despite having not secured a graduate position herself she draws on the experience of a friend who has directly

benefited from the industry links that she deems as important. In doing this Johanna downplays any sociocultural or experiential differences between herself and her friend highlighting the specific value of the institution and degree within her orientation towards the labour market. Thus in this instance the institution is a core element of Johanna's employability narrative. This is however not commonplace amongst the hospitality graduates who participated in this study.

- 
- Cat:** do you think there's benefit that your degrees come from [traditional University] in any way?
- Karin:** (.2) so:m:e: (.1) um:: (. ) I mean yeah (. ) >so have kind< (. ) either kind (. ) ↓because of links >because it kind of< ↑oh yeah >I went to [University]< (. )<↑oh okay> ↑that's good (. ) am::: (. ) o:r yeah (. ) >you know< I do think that our school is: still:: (. ) indeed >one of the top< how:ever: I have been in assessment centres where >you know< I was against Swiss Hotel Schools and whatnot and ↑I mean then you kind of feel like you've already lost before you've even started >to be honest< (. ) because they're just from a whole different level ↑whether I agree with that or not >because I actually don't< (. ) but >you know< that's a reputation that they've then created (. ) <it's still> (. ) ye:a:h different (. ) um:: (.1) but (.1) I guess it's not bad <indeed> to come away with >you know< a first from you know ↑the fourth uni in the country so (. ) um:
- 

#### ***Excerpt 6.18 Karin***

The positive benefits of attending particular institutions was echoed by a number of graduates however when considering positional competition there was one group of students who were consistently deemed as advantaged by UK graduates, these students had attended the European Hotel Schools. Within Excerpt 6.18, Karin identifies that the institution she attended is one of the best in the country however in terms of employability this does not compare to the European model of hospitality education (Barrows & Johan, 2008; Formica, 1996). Within the labour market she positions herself as disadvantaged in comparison to individuals that have graduated from 'Swiss Hotel Schools', suggesting that 'you've already lost before you've even started'. By positioning herself as a 'loser' in comparison to these other graduates Karin is also recognising the competitive nature of the graduate labour market and how both

tangible degree credentials and experience (synonymous with the European Hotel School Model) (Barrows & Johan, 2008; Formica, 1996) are essential in narratives of employability. However, her positioning in such a way is concerned with the credentials of these establishments, and the ‘reputation that they’ve then created’. Karin does not necessarily agree that by attending one of these institutions individuals will automatically be more employable, however she does indirectly acknowledge that personal attributes, or soft skills are important within her discourse. Karin also recognises that she may be advantaged by the HEI that she attended by positioning at both the beginning and end of this excerpt that it is a good university. The repetition of this statement reinforced her belief that HEI credentials are a core component of employability. She also mentions the grade that she received suggesting grades and the work associated with these are important within narratives of employability, again supporting the hard credentials associated with positional competition.

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**Cat:** >and how do you feel about [University]< as an institution? (.) do you feel that having a degree from [University] is a particularly good- [thing]?

**Sarah:** [yes] (.) ↑yes I do actually >because I think< er: (.) <well> [University City] is one of the biggest well known cities >and there isn’t anyone really that doesn’t know [University City]< for one (.) er (.) but the uni is really supportive and they’ve recently done up all of our buildings >and stuff< as well (.) so the fac- facilities themselves are amazing (.) erm: and you know everything’s really well laid out <and clear> and ↑yeah I definitely think it’s a good uni and people would recognise (.) and I think [University] would stand out (.)

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**Excerpt 6.19 Sarah**

For Sarah (Excerpt 6.19) the location of the HEI contributes to the value of her degree. The city that her HEI is located in, is of particular relevance to Sarah. The reputation of this city and its prominence within the UK contribute to the reputation of the HEI by association. Thus Sarah positions the institution in a positive light claiming that it would be recognised, ‘stand out’, or be noticeably better, than other universities. While she notes the supportive nature of the university, other tangible aspects dominate her narrative suggesting that buildings and

facilities associated with the university are important. These obviously have a bearing on the curriculum that can be delivered, however, her narrative does not recognise the contribution of staff knowledge, curriculum focus and quality of teaching associated with her programme of study, which are arguably more important than the buildings which they are delivered within.

The student narratives presented here reflect the array of positions graduates take when discussing the value of specific HEIs attended. The discrepancies between each student's narrative account for the vast array of perspectives on this subject and a seemingly noteworthy divide in the value ascribed to institutions and HE in general. Only one graduate who participated in this study attended a traditional university (the rest all attended Post-92 HEI's) and one attended a HEI that delivers a curriculum similar to the European models of hospitality education. While these two individuals (Excerpt 6.17 Johannah ;Excerpt 6.18 Karin) positioned their university in a positive light, it was common amongst graduates to reflexively consider the positive attributes that the HEI attended contributed to employability. In contrast to this there were however some accounts that did not recognise the importance of the HEI, suggesting that the content of degrees was similar regardless of the HEI and therefore the positional competition of the HEI itself was irrelevant to the graduates trajectory and future employability.

### **6.3 Progressing into the Graduate Labour Market**

As noted previously there are a number of different factors that influence the career choices of individuals; these are not limited to those directly concerned with the competitive labour market. The following section will discuss employment related considerations connected to graduates' transition from student to employee. Initially the importance of career will be discussed, then graduates' ability to secure employment will be considered. The timing of some interviews meant that graduates were at different stages of their transition beyond HE (some had completed their studies and others were in the final stages of completing their

degree programmes when we talked); this has naturally impacted some of the narratives presented.

### 6.3.1 The Importance of Career

The importance, or value that graduates ascribed to their future careers varied. For some there were specific elements of career that appealed and motivated actions. However, for others the balance between employment commitments, and other life goals, became apparent within narratives. The following section will highlight the different perspectives that individuals used to narrate their desired careers as they transitioned beyond their degrees.

Rob noted that the hospitality industry itself was integrally linked to the value that he placed on career. As a highly ambitious individual, who would like to progress quickly in the industry, this is not surprising. Rob aims to be employed as a hotel general manager by the time he reaches thirty, despite the disclaimers found elsewhere in his narrative ('general manager by the age of thirty is my target (.) however its very ambitions so if I don't make it (.) my target is thirty but if I don't make it like hopefully I'm well on my way and can make it by thirty two thirty three') his optimism and drive to succeed is clearly evident. He also plans to complete a Master's degree in Business Administration (MBA) in order to help support this development.

- 
- Rob:** really important (.) um:: >I'm quite< (.2) <as (.) a> ↑strong believer about: (.) doing what you enjoy (.) so that you can >make the best< at <sort of> >what you do< and >problems< you can always overcome them quite easily (.) um: a:n:d I think finding hospitality for me >with the travel and the people and< different things every day (.) like I get >quite bored< quite easily so: being able to have different things every day and then bein' able to move countries with it so (.) you have ↑a complete new scenery <and (.) its:> something where if you do start getting bored there's something you can do about it (.) its not like you're just stuck in [a <rut>] ↓and (.)↑if that makes sense?
- Cat:** [Ye:a:h:] (.3) yeah yeah [it does completely]
- Rob:** [I know that's not for everyone] but I mean for me that's something that ↑really ↑really appealed to me
- 

#### Excerpt 6.20 Rob



Excerpt 6.20 is derived from part of Rob's narrative relating to his career, he was asked how important his career is. Rob's entire focus is linked to the hospitality industry, a factor that is repeatedly implied throughout his narrative. The global and dynamic nature of the industry are highlighted within this excerpt as key elements of the industry that are important in terms of attracting him to, and maintaining his interest, in working in this sector. He positions various components of the industry as favourable and these are supported through his expansion of the narrative. His repetition of 'bored' ('I get quite bored'; 'if you do start getting bored') suggests that his interest in some tasks may wane thus ability to travel and move supports his personality and what he enjoys doing. The negative aspects of the industry highlighted by Richardson (2008; 2009; 2010) are not highlighted by Rob as he focuses on the positive elements of the industry and the opportunities that this will offer him.

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**Cat:** what does career actually mean to you then?  
**John** um: >I think< (2) I think >in my opinion< there's people who want a career (.) so they want this big (.) >you know< (.) there's people who are just happy having jobs (.) you know as long as they're making money >you know< (.) I think there's people who want a career >and want to work< and I think that's true ↑you don't want a job (.) ↑you want a job that sort of <gives you something back> as well ↑and you feel kind of (.) you feel you have >a kind of< rewarding job (.) but I think at the same time there's all of the things that you want to put in it (.) so you want when you're older to have enough time for your family and you want to have enough time to make a family (.) you want to have enough time to (.) enjoy that (.) ↑and you know that's what I always think ↑that I don't want a job that sort of eats into my weekends and things like that (.)

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**Excerpt 6.21 John**

For John career is less important than work life balance. The Other (unidentified Other 'people') are used as a comparison within John's narrative as he positions himself in opposition to both career focused ('people who want a career') and non-career focused individuals ('people who are just happy having jobs'). Throughout his narrative he draws on the collective 'you' in order to state his opinion, depersonalising the narrative and seemingly distancing

himself from his own voice. This may be because, having completed his degree, he is not as career focused as he thinks that he should be, or that his perspective is not echoed by significant Others within his life. In contrast to Rob's narrative (Excerpt 6.20) John is not industry specific with regards to his career narrative, partly because he is not planning on pursuing a traditional hospitality based career. This is repeated throughout his narrative as, in line with the work of Richardson (2008; 2009; 2010), John positions the unsociable hours associated with traditional hospitality employment as being particularly undesirable. His focus instead is on a job which offers a work-life balance so that he may start a family and spend time with that family in the future. This desire for work life balance is common amongst this generation of graduates (Martin, 2005; Morton, 2002; Sheahan, 2005). It is apparent that affording this is more important than a career or job in a specific industry.

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**Cat:** how important is your career to you?

**Manoj:** I think it is very important <obviously> (.1) ah (.) I think <like> the status of a job is quite attractive to me as well (.1) I don't want to be working as a receptionist if I wanted to go to hotels ↑for ever ↓a:h(.) I want to go into the management side of things (.) um:(.) ↑I wouldn't say a career is everything (.) so (.2) obviously >say if< I did find a girlfriend (.) and I had a family and things like that (.) um:(.) in that side of things (.1) um:(.) if something happened in my family and I had to maybe stay in London (.) if I was offered a different job elsewhere (.1) say if I was working for a lesser wage in a lesser job (.) um:(.) but I had to stay here (.1) I wouldn't mind it (.) >but obviously< I'm sure everyone wants a good career (.) >everyone wants a good job< (.1) so it is important (.) but obviously it does depend on your circumstances as well (.1)

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**Excerpt 6.22 Manoj**

The idea of possibly having a family and the importance of being close to his existing family was also echoed by Manoj. Within Excerpt 6.22 he positions his existing family as well as any future family that he may create as being more important than both career and money. A work related position that goes some way to recognising his achievements and ability is also important as he suggests that 'status of a job is quite attractive to me'. Thus it is apparent that

having a managerial based position is important however moving beyond this (in terms of career development) is not essential for Manoj. Towards the end of the excerpt Manoj moves away from using the personal 'I' pronoun and instead draws on the collective 'everyone'. This suggests that the notion of 'career' and 'a good job' mentioned here as important are, for Manoj, dominant discourses that echo societal norms and expectations of graduates, they are not however embodied and projected from self-positions. This is supported by the repeated disclaimer (it does depend) used at the end of the excerpt; again highlighting personal circumstances as important.

- 
- Cat:** how important is your career to you (.) >moving forwards<?
- Ava:** er: my career is very important (.3) but (.) like (.2) I'm not (.) although >I am< money driven (.) >you know< (.) if I'm doing a job that I ↑really enjoy (.) and they can't pay be a lot for it (.) then I'm still going to do it because I'm really enjoying it (.) er:m: >and I'll just move somewhere< that's not quite as nice (.) so my career is really important >and I want to be successful< before I want to settle down and have a family and whatever (.) er:m: but career is very important (.) but I think like (.2) families more-↓ (.) yeah
- Cat:** that's fair (.) that's fair (.) what's your >sort of< like more long term plans (.) do you have somewhere you maybe see yourself being in ten years time?
- Ava:** er (.) ↑okay (.) ten years time I'd really like to be (.) <I'd really like to be a-> >like director of operations< within an events company (.) er:: (.) but at that point I would like to be able to settle down and have a family (.)
- 

#### ***Excerpt 6.23 Ava***

The notion of family was also highlighted by a number of female participants. However, their narratives seemed to include an element of sacrifice in that career and family commitments were not necessarily compatible. For example, Ava (Excerpt 6.23) suggests that her career is important to her and repeats this within her narrative in order to add emphasis to the statement. Having a job that she enjoys is also positioned ahead of her self-confessed drive for money; and family is noted as key consideration moving into the future. Thus it is apparent that despite the repeated discourse surrounding the importance of her career this is not the

most important thing for Ava. She posits that being successful and having a career should also come before settling down and having a family. Her unfinished sentence 'families more-' could also be seen to support the idea that career is less important than family. However, when questioned about her more long term plans, Ava suggested again, that she intended to reach a certain point in her career and then 'settle down'. This implies that further progress and advancement in career terms will not be possible when she decided to have a family. Thus role identity as a female, and as a mother, and the societal expectations that accompany this are alluded to.

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**Cat:** how important is your career to you?

**Alicia:** uh: ↑yeah >I think its important< (.) I don't want to be <like> going from workplace to workplace ↑I want to be <like> in one place going up that ladder (.) <so like> start off at operational and work up to <manag-ral> managerial positions (.) I think ↓that's (.) yeah careers very important to me (.) I can't wait to get a career then family (.) it's like career then family (.) so yeah I think careers important

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**Excerpt 6.24 Alicia**

Alicia (Excerpt 6.24) shared a somewhat similar perspective. However, within her narrative she draws on somewhat traditional notions of career within her narrative. Wanting to remain within a company and work her way up the ladder is no longer considered a standardised approach to career (Bauman, 2000b; 2005; Beck, 1992; Oxenham, 2013), however this is the way in which Alicia considers her future. Like Ava, she repeats the sentiment that career is important, yet this is immediately followed by the expression 'then family', suggesting that once again career is but a precursor to having children. Maisie also positioned career in this manner suggesting 'I want my career before my family, that sort of thing' which suggests that this approach to considering long term trajectories is commonplace. The notion of having a career then family also suggests that the two are not compatible, thus before these girls have even started their careers they are already anticipating having to give them up if they want to have a family.



- 
- Cat:** is it important to you to have a career?  
**Kari:** no (.) I think it's important for me to earn money (.) so I've got enough money to travel at the moment (.)>kinda what I'm focused on@< (.) maybe ↑I think it probably will be in like five (.) >ten years< time (.) ↑like I will start to think that I like >wanna make myself< something <in this industry> >and make a name for myself< or something (.) but at the moment I just ↑don't (.)↑I don't wanna settle down just yet (.) I feel too young yet
- 

**Excerpt 6.25 Kari**

In a similar vein to the above the financial dimension to having a career is key to Kari's narrative, however the reason for this is different to centrality of the family noted previously. Despite having secured a graduate management trainee position prior to completing her degree Kari is not currently focusing on the development of her career. Instead she is intent on travelling and moving around while working within the industry. Her laughter suggests some discontent with her own decision, as it does not comply with either the standard progression routes out of HE and into employment, or her current situation which essentially involves a career development role. However, her latter comments regarding future career plan, and 'making a name for herself', suggest that her depiction of career is to have a tangible legacy of achievement. Thus her current position and experience may contribute to getting her to a position where she is able to achieve this 'career'.

- 
- Cat:** have you got any sort of <long term goals> that you really want to achieve >or a job that you really want to do< or anything?  
**Pippa:** no (.) just (.) myself (.) rather than like vocationally I just wanna do a lot more travelling <and that> the world and things (.) 'cause right now I'm getting to (.) I'd I did want a long term↓ >doing hospitality< that's great ↑but I don't really want that <sort of> unsociable hour work anymore (.) I think that is like my long term goal (.) like when I'm kind of fed up of losing my weekends or working nights or not days or something like that.  
[...]  
**Cat:** how important is career to you long term?  
**Pippa:** oh right now not important at all really (.) does that sound silly?
- 

**Excerpt 6.26 Pippa**



Another graduate, Pippa also felt that she wanted to do more travelling (Excerpt 6.26). Pippa positions career as something she will focus on when she no longer wants to work unsociable hours. This suggests that she does not envisage having a long term career within the hospitality industry as it does not offer the type of working conditions that she deems favourable, moving forwards. There are however discrepancies within her narrative, initially she states that she 'did' want a career within hospitality, however the tense of her discussion changes as she uses the phrase 'when I'm kind of fed up' positioning this as a future activity and thus suggesting that she has not yet developed these negative feelings towards hospitality employment. Her positioning may be both reflective of the situation surrounding her narrative (a conversation specifically about hospitality education); or it may be that her desire to continue travelling means that she does not consider the positions that she has already applied for as work, in so much as they are also opportunities to spend time abroad. When asked to reflect on the importance of career Pippa reiterates that this is not important. However, she asks the rhetorical question 'does that sound silly?' acknowledging that this response may not be considered as appropriate as it does not follow the dominant pathway that society would normally anticipate her to take on completion of her studies.

Progression into the graduate labour market naturally has a different meaning for graduates. For some initial career progression is of limited importance as other priorities are shaping their decisions. However, for the majority some type of development and progression is sought within their desired trajectories. This is balanced against other lifestyle aspirations and future plans which may significantly alter priorities, such as having a family. It is clear that narratives will develop with time and experience however the range of options available to graduates at this point of time in their trajectories is somewhat unlimited in scope.

### 6.3.2 Securing a graduate job

Employability is directly concerned with the ability to gain employment within the business environment, therefore the ability to secure a graduate job or feeling as if one is able to secure such a position is integral to narratives of employability. Some of the graduates within this study had secured graduate positions before they had finished their degrees. Others had not secured employment despite having completed their studies thus there were vast differences in the narratives presented. This section provides a personal and individual response to the way in which hospitality degrees are utilised in order to help secure positions. The tactics that graduates have adopted in order to approach positions are also considered.

- 
- Cat: <so> back on a ship in a couple of weeks' time (.) >what sort of job role are you going into< then?
- Maisie: now (.) >I can't really explain it< (.) it's sort of like an event co-ordinator (.) >that's the easiest way to< ↑but when I started I started as a guest relations officer (.) >so it's the next role up< its more money (.) and it's a better cabin and stuff ↓so:
- Cat: @ it's all about the cabin
- Maisie: @@ and it's a new itinerary this year
- Cat: <is that> (.) >so what sort of level is that< (.) is it supervisory (.) assistant manager?
- Maisie: one under assistant manager (.) so it's my next position within the hotel department >would be assistant manager<(.)
- Cat: that's good (.) so yeah (.) ↑Celebrity Cruises you're going back to? (.) so how important was like (.) <your location> (.) and being at sea and your location to you then?
- Maisie: I (.) I dunno (.) I went quite open minded 'cause I got told (.) well you all get told the one thing of cruise life (.) so I went in >as like what was in my contract<(.) so thinking I was gunna be working twelve hour days (.) seven days a week with a shared cabin (.) >reality wasn't that at all< (.) we were working eight hour days >with our own cabin< so you go in with the worst and its actually better (.) @@ //@// I suppose it varies >who you work for as well< <like Celebrity> was a really good company whereas some other companies are a bit different (.)
- Cat: and so was it important that you went back to Celebrity as against going to a different Cruise employer?
- Maisie: like >I wanted to go back to Celebrity< (.) they're very good with progression and they know where we've come from as well (.) so they want to promote from within as well >so that was my main reason< for um staying with them (.) they actually look after the employees(.)
- 

*Excerpt 6.27 Maisie*



Maisie was able to secure a graduate position as a result of the placement that she completed in the third year of her degree programme. She was offered this position whilst on her placement year and had considered not returning to university in order to finish her degree. This was noted briefly in Excerpt 6.10, however the graduate job that she secured was discussed in greater detail, as noted in Excerpt 6.27. It is apparent from Maisie's narrative that she has been given a promotion from the job role she was employed in during her placement year. It is also clear that the position that she will be entering holds some level of responsibility congruent with the expectations of a graduate as against operational position. However, in addition to the position secured by Maisie, her dialogue suggests that there will be opportunities to progress further through her use of the possessive 'my [next position...]'; progression is also overtly mentioned later in the excerpt. Thus, like with a graduate scheme, it appears that Maisie anticipates developing within the company. The nature of cruise employment was also highlighted by Maisie and her narrative centres on some of the more cruise specific aspects of employment, such as cabins. Having both a 'better cabin' and not having to share a cabin were both noted within her narrative. The comparison between her experience working for Celebrity and the negative employment picture presented to her by Others also supported her decision to return to this company. Thus the discontent between her own experience and the voice of experienced Others supports the decision that she has made in terms of her future employment.

For Karin (Excerpt 6.28), securing a job on completion of her degree resulted in a somewhat conflicting narrative. Despite feeling positive about the transition from student into the labour market Karin does not appear to be completely content with the position that she has secured. Within the initial section of this excerpt she positions herself as knowledgeable about the industry and ready to put everything learnt 'into practice'. This suggests that she has had limited experience within the industry as she has been unable to reinforce her learning with

- 
- Cat: how are you feeling now <about> having left university> and starting your career?< (.1) are you apprehensive?
- Karin: no:: I'm excited <it's been> (.) yeah:: ↑no I've been waiting for this ↑>I mean< it's gone quite quick <like these three years> but you know I really feel like I'm ready now um: it kind of put everything I've learnt into practice (.2)
- Cat: fantastic (.) so- so what are you looking to do now? I know >you said you had< got a job lined up?
- Karin: yes: (.) so um: (.2) next week um I'm going to start >I'm just working my notice at the moment< but um: (.) yeah I'll start as a guest services co-ordinator and em >at Coworth Park< so with Dorchester Collection (.) um >really love the company< love the property (.) i:'ve been uh going for a management programmes um: 'cause that felt like the thing to do but obviously competition is just so fierce (.2) um:
- 

**Excerpt 6.28 Karin**

practical experience. Later in her narrative this was confirmed as she admitted that she had never worked full time in the industry. As such it is apparent that while she 'feels ready' she may not have all of the skills and experience required by employers. However, Karin has secured a position as a guest-services co-ordinator, an operations based post. She suggests that this is a position that she will 'start at' implying that she expects to progress beyond this operational role. Karin appears to defend the acceptance of this position by claiming she loves both the property and company, thus positioning this as more important than the job title and duties that she will be performing. She also highlights the 'fierce competition' within the labour market; including reference to this within her narrative again acts as a justification for having not secured a graduate management programme. It is therefore apparent that Karin has a good understanding of the *field* of hospitality and while she was unable to secure a graduate scheme she has adopted an approach to considering employability that may help her to progress.

When discussing progression into the labour market with Vanessa (Excerpt 6.29), who had secured a graduate management programme with Mitchells and Butler, experience was a key component to her story. Having worked for a number of years within the hospitality industry,

- 
- Cat:** and I know you said you've got a job but how do you feel? are you apprehensive about sort of leaving university >and starting your career<?
- Vanessa:** um: uh excited because obviously I've been working probably <for:: er:> >six or seven years< so I've got to a point where I want to kind of >start doing< something different or progressing (.) <but er:> at the same time it's a bit daunting (.) er (.) in that im going to have a lot more (.1) responsibility (.1) and that's all I'm going to be doing from now on (.2) just working@
- 

**Excerpt 6.29 Vanessa**

Vanessa used this experience in order to support a position of desire for a different job role. The inclusion of the number of years she has been working here adds emphasis to her statement. She suggests that the time she now has available to her (as she is no longer a student) means that her key focus will be on working. Despite her excitement it is apparent that she is also apprehensive and nervous about this, her laughter (at the very end of the excerpt) and use of the term 'daunting' support this.

- 
- Cat:** moving ahead again (.) are you apprehensive about leaving university >and going forward< into your career?
- Elena:** yeah definitely (.) I feel like I'm not really sure what's next.
- Cat:** so do you know (.) >I know you said music events is what you want to go into< (.) do you know ↑what you're going to do once you finish university? have you got anything lined up?
- Elena:** no (.) no I've not (.)
- Cat:** >no that's okay< (.) do you know what ↑type of job you're looking for as you leave?
- Elena:** ah:: (.) just an events co-ordinator (.)> anything like in events< (.1) I can't really decide (.) maybe conference and banqueting or um:: just not really restaurant >like hospitality< that sort of side (.) >I just don't really want to go into↓<
- 

**Excerpt 6.30 Elena**

Not all of the graduates however had clear plans as to what they want to do having completed their degrees. Elena, for instance (Excerpt 6.30), had not secured a job prior to completing her degree. She positions herself as unsure in terms of what she will do on completion of her degree. The fact that she has not secured herself a job makes her apprehensive about her

future in line with the notion of a risk society (Beck, 1992). When asked what she would like to do she uses the phrase ‘just an events co-ordinator’. As an adverb, the inclusion of ‘just’ suggests that she does not feel confident in applying for managerial based roles often associated with graduate employment. While her approach to the labour market may be in-keeping with the expectations from industry, and in line with her current experience it could be seen that Elena anticipates some individuals will not deem this position as a graduate type job. As such the value of her degree is inadvertently questioned. However, Elena’s focus on employment within the events industry is clear and this is echoed throughout her narrative, thus part of her apprehension may be surrounding the availability of positions being advertised, and what she is able to apply for.

- 
- Cat:** <so> are you worried <or apprehensive> about leaving university and starting your career >so to speak<?
- Ting:** yeah (.) very.
- Cat:** ↑yeah?
- Ting:** um:: (.) I think the only thing that worries me (.2) because hospitality in Hong Kong is not really well paid (.)
- Cat:** okay
- Ting:** yeah like I think it has a lot to do with this industry (.) like <for example> the salary wage (.) and it is probably around how much? (.1) maybe four pounds an hour (.) the minimum wage (.) yeah (.) so yeah (.) around four pounds per hour (.) and it also has longer hours compared to the UK (.) so I don’t know how many years it takes for a fresh graduate to get promoted (.) or↓ yeah because it will be pretty like↓ (.1) it will take a lot of years to maybe become a manager or [inaudible] (.) ↑and I can’t live on that little wage
- Cat:** ↓no
- Ting:** so that is one thing to worry about
- 

### ***Excerpt 6.31 Ting***

Ting is also apprehensive about starting her career. Returning to Hong Kong is a central feature of her narrative (Excerpt 6.31). Having completed her degree in the UK Ting is now faced with entering a somewhat challenging labour market. The cultural norms surrounding hospitality employment that Ting has become accustomed to are not present within Hong Kong’s labour market and therefore she feels like she is entering a somewhat unknown

situation. Emphasis is added to Tings admission of apprehension about the labour market through the inclusion of the adverb 'very'. She expands on this statement explaining that financial reasons (pay) are a key constraint. It is apparent that opportunities for progression are also unknown. Thus the dominant discourses surrounding graduate employment and the benefit of having a degree within the UK do not, for Ting, appear to be transferable to her home country. This may be due to her distance from the country (as she has been in the UK for four years) however it may also be related to the competitive nature of employment within the country. It is also apparent that a pre-disposition to worry about the future, a factor consistent with modernity and changing social norms (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991) has been embodied by Ting.

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**Cat:** how are you really feeling about moving on >and your career<?  
**Ruth:** ↑I think I'm trying to put it off really >because it was stressing me out so much< (.) trying to get a job >and now I've got the <(.) ↑I just wanna relax after uni and not worry about it (.) >I've got another assessment day coming< up and so that gives me another option >and I've< applied for the masters >but it's not really something I wanted to do< I didn't really want to go into further education <but it's just like a backup plan> because I wanted a graduate role not a normal job (.) ↑yeah >so for me< it's a bit I don't know what's going to happen yet (.) it's like the unknown (.)

---

### ***Excerpt 6.32 Ruth***

This apprehension about the labour market was also echoed by Ruth. She suggests that the process of trying to find employment is stressful (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991). Within Excerpt 6.32 her discourse continually changes direction as she defends the statements that she has made and offers additional information. It is evident that despite having applied for a number of jobs Ruth is not completely committed to her search for a graduate position. It may be that because she has been unsuccessful, and her identity as a graduate has not been confirmed by an employer (Holmes, 2001) Ruth is losing her confidence in the graduate identity that she embodied. Thus by not securing a position she is questioning her identity. In mentioning that

she has applied to complete a master programme Ruth is also acknowledging the dominant discourses in society surrounding the value of higher education. Thus while the caveat of not really wanting to undertake a masters is included, the idea of completing this qualification as a 'back up' plan suggests that Ruth believes, in line with her background and the value placed on hard credentials that education will enhance her employability. Having options in terms of her trajectory also provides a caveat for not entering the labour market and therefore reducing the perception of risk in relation to her progression beyond UG studies (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991).

Ruth is focused on gaining what she defines as a 'graduate role' not a 'normal job'. This suggests that her graduate identity is integrally linked to the acquisition of a job marketed as a graduate role, or where a graduate level qualification is an essential component of the job criteria. In essence she is therefore limiting her job search and discounting some jobs which may utilise her skills and attributes as a graduate; not all graduate level jobs are marketed as such (Keep & Mayhew, 2004). Ruth's focus on a graduate role also suggests that she has internalised the societal discourse linking HE and graduate employability (Dearing, 1997; Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2009; 2011; Leitch, 2006).

- 
- Julie:** [...] I got quite far with the Carluccios programme (.) I'm ↑I didn't get all the way (.) I um don't know if that's really got something to do with my age >you know<
- Cat:** is that a grad' scheme or [programme↓]?=
- Julie:** =[it's a grad] scheme (.) there's a couple more that I'm in the middle of applying for (.) but there aren't an awful lot here <in the south-west> (.) >I must admit< that's something I didn't do before I started the programme ↑I didn't even think about what would happen (.) I just wanted to get through it (.) I didn't think about what companies employ >or use< graduate schemes in the south west (.)
- 

### ***Excerpt 6.33 Julie***

Julie positions herself in a similar manner to Ruth; unable to secure a graduate job (Excerpt 6.33). Within her narrative she repeatedly positions herself as disadvantaged in terms of her

employability and thus ability to secure a graduate scheme or position. Initially this occurs as she suggests her age may have been considered within the recruitment process (Julie is a mature student). Julie is also constrained by location due to her children and this is alluded to when referring to the 'south-west' and number of positions available. In keeping with the work of Furlong and Cartmel (2005), and like Ruth, the natural progression route for Julie is to engage with a graduate scheme upon completion of her degree. This is qualified by Julie as she suggests that she had not considered employment beyond her degree. Thus gaining a degree and credentials associated with this was a more important consideration than the subsequent employability.

- 
- Cat:** you said you're looking to go to London (.) >what type of work< (.)  
what type of <jobs> are you applying for?
- Lili:** e:::m:: (.) now I'm receptionist >but kind of like< senior receptionist (.)  
I work↓ (.) I'm having more experience in the team ↑and I'm working  
there the longest time (.) so:: I will (.) I think it's not challenging me  
any more at the moment (.) and for that I'm trying at least <some>  
supervisor positions and I'm trying some manager ones as well (.) and  
↑but I get a call back because they think I don't have enough  
experience for that (.) for one of the applications (.) >which I can  
accept< (.) ↑but everyone has to start somewhere.
- 

***Excerpt 6.34 Lili***

Unlike Ruth and Julie, Lili (Excerpt 6.34) was not focusing her job search on specific graduate positions. However, by not targeting these jobs she was unsure as to what type of jobs she should be applying for, having completed her degree. This uncertainty regarding the nature of a graduate job is commonplace (Keep & Mayhew, 2004) and represents a disconnect between HE and industry in that the career path between education and into hospitality employment is not always clear. Within Lili's narrative she clearly positions herself as experienced within the hospitality industry. She also positions herself as skilled enough to undertake a management position. However, this management identity has not been confirmed as she has been unable to secure a management position within the hospitality industry. Like Ruth, the societal

discourse surrounding HE, and its ability to prepare graduates for management based careers appears to have been internalised by Lili, hence her application for these positions within the industry. Within her narrative Lili draws on the voice of potential employers (the Other) who state that she does not have the relevant experience in order to undertake a management position. Lili uses the disclaimer 'which I accept' however this is immediately followed by the statement 'but everyone has to start somewhere' suggesting that there is tension within the dialogical self and she is not happy with the decision that has been made by the Other in question.

- 
- Cat: um: how are you feeling now (.) I mean you're just about to leave university (.) start [your career]
- Olivia: [@@]
- Cat: are you apprehensive?
- Olivia: um: @@ (.) >I suppose< (.) I suppose: I am a little bit (.) In a little bit of <um:> >of a rut< >>not a rut<< um: just a >little bit ↑little bit lost< um definitely (.) um I think about six months ago I was <really> (.1) <re:a:lly> unsure and panicking and stuff and um: then I (.1) [exhales] realised that um: (.) the ↑the whole reason to do hospitality was um to go travel the worlds and I shouldn't um:: ↑and I can work wherever I can with this wonderful degree (.) so I hope↓ (.) >so what am I actually going to go< and do is I wanna go do a ski season @@@ //okay// em:@ this winter and stuff (.) >I'm not sure if I want to< um:: ↑there's quite a lot of opportunities because you can work as em as chalet host girls (.) you can also work in this uh lovely big posh hotels as well (.) you can also (.) as I say just work in (.) you know (.) bars and stuff (.) so you might still be gaining experience which (.) you know is a really nice element <to> like <u:m> working in hospitality um:: and then hopefully (.) as I say wanna go back to Canada as well and (.) and work there as well (.2) so I feel um:: (.) yeah I feel (.) >I dunno what's the question sorry<
- Cat: well it's if you're apprehensive about it?=  
 Olivia: =>>I feel<< ↑yeah >well yeah< I feel like I am quite apprehensive (.) >I mean I am going ho-< back home (.) back home to Bedford for a couple of months because I need to make a> little bit of money< @uh: (.) and I'm going to go and work a couple of bars and restaurants (.) >so I'm not apprehensive in the idea that< im not worried about not getting a job (.) I think I'm more apprehensive in the long term <of wh::at> (.2) >'cause I don't feel<- I feel now after going to university >I feel like< ↑or I don't feel I could <ever be a manager> (.) well I could be a manager <but like> (.) in quite a few years (.) >like with the experience and stuff< whereas >when I came to university I thought I could get a degree and walk into like a management job< (.)



<and actually there's> (.) <↑there's no@ way I could feel> confident doing that >↑so maybe apprehensive about the idea of< (.) <not really sure (.) how:: qualified I am> (.) how confident I am <but (.) in> the way that I say >I've got all these different skills< on paper and that and I've had opportunities to work and stuff and stuff so (.) <↑apprehensive for uh (.) higher level jobs> >but apprehensive for getting jobs in general< I'm not really at all (.) >and I'm not apprehensive about the fact that I can get a job <so@@>

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**Excerpt 6.35 Olivia**

There is also evidence of tension within Olivia's narrative (Excerpt 6.35) as she is unsure what she wants to do having completed her degree, and how her degree may be of use to her. The immediate response from Olivia with regards to the question of her career was laughter.

Reflecting on her position and the way in which her perception of this has evolved throughout the final year of her studied is addressed initially by Olivia. The metaphorical notion of being 'in a rut' and 'lost' is highlighted. Here, Olivia notes how she was unsure of her future, having followed a somewhat predictive path and internalised the values and dispositions associated with HE study. Her own motivations and ambitions appear to have been forgotten as she considers her options within modern society (Beck, Giddens & Lash, 1994; Giddens, 1990; 1991; 1994). However, having reflected on her situation, Olivia is able to re-connect with her original motivations and positions herself as able to go and work abroad, travel and continue to gain industry based experience in line with the international nature of the hospitality industry. There is however a need to be able to financially support this lifestyle choice and as a result Olivia is planning on moving home, to her parents, in order to earn some money. This decision is common amongst graduates who are unable to afford to live independently upon completion of their studies (Furlong & Cartmel, 2005; OECD, 2013).

The most interesting element of Olivia's narrative is the way in which she positions her ability to progress into the labour market. She is in no way apprehensive about being able to secure a job within the hospitality industry. She had a range of experience with which she can draw on in order to be able to support employability and repeats her positioning as employable in

order to maintain this position. However, like many of the other research participants she is unsure if she is able to gain management level employment. She notes that when she stated her course she thought that on completion of her degree she would be able to ‘walk into a management job’, this is a narrative often supported by HEIs as hospitality programmes aim to develop students in a way that means they are able to achieve this. However experience of the industry has meant that she doubts this, and somewhat more realistic in terms of her initial expectations. The societal pre-disposition to worry about the future (Beck, 1992) pertains within Olivia’s narrative as she considers this development and the possibilities to progress as her narrative develops.

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**Cat:** do you feel apprehensive about leaving university? are you leaving university and starting your=  
**Daney:** =↑no I’m coming back (.) I’m coming back to do a masters  
**Cat:** >and you’re doing a masters in?<  
**Daney:** doing a masters in ↑international hospitality management (.)  
**Cat:** and what made you decide to do that?  
**Daney:** because I’ve got hypermobility and arthritis and (.) >I can’t actually go< (.) into the industry (.1) ↑but I love the industry and don’t want to leave it (.) so (.) I’m giving myself a back up plan (.) I’m getting my masters and my PGCE done (.) >so when I go into the industry< (.) when my body says >enough’s enough< (.) I can share what I love with other people (.) and hopefully share that passion

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***Excerpt 6.36 Daney***

Having a physical disability means that Daney (Excerpt 6.36) positions herself as unable to pursue a long term career within the hospitality industry. Instead of entering the labour market she has therefore decided that she will complete a master’s degree and PGCE (Postgraduate Certificate in Education). It appears that this is a somewhat pragmatic decision as Daney still proclaims that she ‘loves’ the hospitality industry and insists that she will attempt to pursue a career in the industry until she is unable to do so. However while she positions herself in this manner, as passionate about the industry, her commitment to education suggests that she has not considered employment in areas of the industry not directly

concerned with operational roles. Thus while Daney has extensive experience within the industry, and proclaims that she has been employed in management based positions her narrative implies that all positions within the industry will be challenging in relation to her disability.

- 
- Cat:** [...] >I know you said< you didn't really want to stay in hospitality long term? [(.)what] is it that you're actually looking to do?
- Sarah:** [yeah (.4)] ↓uh well >I've actually got a graduate job sorted< um: (.) it was (.) I was approached on LinkedIn a couple of weeks ago for a job in recruitment and I:: went through the interview process with them <but had about uh> four interview they contacted me >and said that I< uh had the job (.) ↑and recruitment <honestly> isn't something that I knew much about but I think all the skills and knowledge and everything I've gained from my degree really helped towards that 'cause it's really (.) ↑like its very customer based >and its really< ↑and I was able from like placement and everything I've learnt >I feel like< the job role actually suite me perfectly like (.) having learnt so much about it <em:> >and I decided straight away that this is for me< (.)
- Cat:** that's fantastic (.) and before you got approached by that company did you have anything in mind that you wanted to do?
- Sarah:** um:: it sort of changed quite a bit (.) >I had nothing specific< (.) er::
- Cat:** okay
- Sarah:** I quite like (.) I preferred the events side of my degree so I was considering a comp= a managing position within an events company >or something like that< so that was the only think I'd really considered but I'd not really applied anywhere (.)
- 

### ***Excerpt 6.37 Sarah***

Sarah has also decided that she will not enter the hospitality industry on completion of her degree, however she is able to use her embodied educational capital in order to secure a job as she transitions into the labour market. She was approached through the social networking site LinkedIn and secured a position within the recruitment industry prior to the completion of her degree. Within her narrative (Excerpt 6.37) she claims that the recruitment industry is not one that she was familiar with, as such she draws on the voice of the Other in order to support how the skills and knowledge acquired through the course of her degree have enhanced her employability, so that she was able to secure this job. In addition to this Sarah draws on her placement experience in order to support her customer focused approach to service, and

associated learning (Wilson, 2012), thus defending her decision to leave the hospitality industry. This element of the narrative appears to be present due to the context of the interviews and the direction of this study (hospitality graduates). The focus of addressivity is therefore specifically shaped by the interview context and presence of the interviewer. Towards the end of Sarah's narrative she was asked what she would have done if she had not been approached in order to apply for a position. Here Sarah admits that she had considered an events management position however she had not applied for anything. The indecision here and her potential focus on the events industry (as a component of the hospitality industry) suggests that while she may have claimed that she did not want to enter this industry she was in fact considering this. Thus the defence of her recruitment position is given greater precedence within her narrative than it may normally.

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**Cat:** so what do you want to do now you have finished university?  
**John:** um:: (.) I think I want to (.2) I think I want to (.) probably go into sort of (.) I think I probably (.) ↑it's a shame not to stay in the industry (.) but ↑I don't really like the hours in the industry (.) um >I find them quite< um <not very> not what I like really (.) >I don't really like that I won't< have weekends and stuff like that really (.) so it was quite refreshing when I went to this conference and they talked about contract catering which you can have a >nine to five< job in that (.) and I know someone who's (.) um: (.) very high up in Aramark >so hopefully< I can try and get in contact with him >and see if he can get me anything< so: ↑that's the plan (.)

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***Excerpt 6.38 John***

In order to secure a graduate level job John is planning on utilising existing contacts in order to help him (Excerpt 6.38). Consistent with many other hospitality graduates John positions himself as not wanting to enter a traditional hospitality position that entails late night and weekend working (Richardson, 2009; Richardson, 2010). He draws on an unidentified Other in order to support his decision to explore contract catering where he may be able to secure a nine-to-five position while working in the hospitality industry. Within his narrative he suggests that it's a shame not to remain in the industry, this statement, could be seen to position his

employability in line with the industry in a similar manner adopted by Sarah (Excerpt 6.37). Both of these individuals thus consider that their degrees have greater value within industries associated with hospitality and customer service. The way in which John is planning to approach securing a graduate position is closely linked to his socio-economic background. By claiming to 'know someone' and 'see if he can get me anything' John is drawing on his social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). By suggesting that these Others will be able to help secure him a job John is effectively relying on his network of contacts, as against more common or open recruitment practices. This utilisation of social capital is synonymous with his background as a privately educated individual who has been somewhat advantaged throughout his upbringing.

The ability and motivation to secure a graduate job upon completion of HE has been highlighted. In some instances graduates did not desire a position marketed as a graduate job. However for others, they were unable to secure a position advertised as being of graduate nature. This has led to some degree of uncertainty regarding the type of jobs that hospitality graduates feel qualified to undertake. It also suggests that there is a perceived level of disconnect between the hospitality industry and hospitality education in that graduates do not appear to feel they could offer the skills and experience, be that vocationally specific or generic in nature, that industry desire on completion of their degrees.

## **6.4 Competition for jobs**

### **6.4.1 Introduction**

The demand for hospitality graduates within both the hospitality industry and the broader labour is an important consideration for graduates when looking to progress into the labour market. All HE degree programmes are designed to deliver a range of core and transferable skills; these are developed in conjunction with discipline specific knowledge (QAA, 2016). There is however varying recognition within the hospitality industry as to how important it is for graduates to possess various skills or knowledge (Brownell, 2008; Cheung, Law & He, 2010;

Millar, Mao & Moreo, 2010; 2013a; People 1st, 2016; Raybould & Wilkins, 2006; Sisson & Adams, 2013; Spowart, 2011; Testa & Sipe, 2012). The graduates participating in this study also had differing perceptions as to whether or not there was in fact a demand within the labour market for their specialist degrees. The following section will therefore specifically discuss the perceived demand for hospitality graduates. It will also consider the way in which hospitality graduates position themselves, their skills and vocational knowledge in comparison to Others within the labour market. This will be followed by a discussion on the principles of competition and the way in which hospitality graduates perceive this.

#### 6.4.2 Demand for hospitality graduates

The demand for hospitality graduates is linked to the perception of whether or not hospitality graduates can demonstrate that they have the credential required by industry. The graduates that participated in this study narrated a range of perspectives relating to the demand for their specific skills and knowledge set acquired through the completion of their HE qualifications.

When asked if she felt there was a demand for hospitality graduates Sarah voiced the narrative presented in Excerpt 6.39. Within her discourse there are clear influences on Sarah's voice.

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**Sarah:** um:: yeah (.1) I do (.1) I think it's (.1) there's often (.) a quite a high <sort of> labour turnover >and a lot of hospitality is< sort of one of those industries where finding a manager <that is> you know ready for the job role ↑and you know if you've come out of this degree <and> ↑so you are ready for that manager position >straight away< and you don't need the time to be trained up for it or anything (.1) so I think it's good <like yeah> I think it's ↑it's leadership and those positions are required ↑and obviously people who have got a degree in hospitality are going to be completely ready for that and have a sort of lot of >common knowledge< of the industry and- (.)

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#### *Excerpt 6.39 Sarah*

Firstly the voice of the hospitality industry, who purport issues in terms of recruitment and retention of staff (People 1st, 2016), can be noted. Drawing on the prevalence of high labour turnover within the hospitality industry Sarah postulates that there is a demand for hospitality

degrees, particularly in terms of management positions. The second voice present in Sarah's narrative is an echo of her education and those which have marketed this to her. She suggests that, as graduates, individuals that have studied hospitality should be equipped with the skills to enter a managerial position within the industry. Sarah does not position herself, individually, as having the skills noted, instead she positions the collective 'people who have got a degree in hospitality'; this is perhaps because she is not intending to enter the industry (as noted in Excerpt 6.37) and therefore does not have any direct experience in order to support the claims made.

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**Cat:** do you think <in general> there's a demand for hospitality graduates?  
**Julie:** I've heard that there is (.) I've heard that there is because of the skills that we have (.) because there is (.2) ↑you know (.) but I haven't seen massive (.) >you know< there are messages coming fast and thick through the emails >you know< of graduate programmes that you can apply to (.) and they will say your:: you know (.) degrees from any (.) erh:: (.2)

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#### ***Excerpt 6.40 Julie***

Julie's narrative also recognises the voice of Others that have told her there is demand for the skills developed on a hospitality degree, however her story is much more personal. Like Sarah, Julie (Excerpt 6.40) echos the demand for hospitality graduates, the voice of the Other has been directly invoked in order to support this. However this demand is questioned, particularly in the instance of graduate programmes, and Julie interrupts her skills narrative in order to suggest that it may not be correct. This was also noted by Ruth who suggested that when she had participated in assessment days there were often graduates from other degree programmes in attendance. It therefore appears that in many instances hospitality based businesses are in fact not looking for hospitality graduates, instead they are looking for graduates within the broader labour market. This approach to recruitment is consistent with the war for talent and the demand for graduates because of the combination of skills and attributes required in order to excel within the industry.



- 
- Cat: and do you think there is a demand <↑specifically> for hospitality graduates as against maybe business graduates <or people that have done> >I don't know< <a geology degree> ↑but they've been working in the hospitality industry?
- Daney: I think >and like< (.) this is my own perception of it↓ (.) you do get >at like graduate schemes< people from like geology ↑and fine art and that (.) and trying to come and take our- take our jobs >kind of thing@< (.) and it does <↑bite> a little bit >'cause we've worked hard in this degree< but it does happen (.) um (.) I don't think they should get it (.) but it does occur (.) >as for business degrees< (.) I think that they are >they're too broad< in you're going to go into hospitality >you know< (.) you need to be hospitality >in my opinion< (.) 'cause you learn stuff that you wouldn't learn in business that you're really gonna need (.) um ↑but at the same time (.) the degree we've got ↑it's not just transferable to hospitality (.) its transferable to all kinds of degree class so: (.) ↑I kinda have to retract what I've just said> but not retract it< 'cause I agree with what I've just said ↑but at the same time I could go and work in other areas (.) >but then I'd be a hypocrite<
- 

***Excerpt 6.41 Daney***

For Daney the same conversation surrounding the demand for hospitality graduates evoked an interesting emotional response. Within Excerpt 6.41 Daney starts to, inadvertently, question the hospitality industry and their approach to recruitment in the graduate labour market. She suggests that there should be a demand for hospitality graduates as the addressivity of her dialogue is directed towards non-present industry representatives. However, she also positions herself in competition with other graduates (from various programmes), when attempting to secure employment. As a disclaimer, she acknowledges the transferability of her degree and the benefit that this may give her within the broader graduate labour market as her internal micro-dialogue with herself progresses. Within this section of her narrative Daney also mentions retracting her previous statements about the industry and suggests that she is hypocritical in her acknowledgement of the transferable nature of her qualifications. This dialogical knot acts as a loophole, or disclaimer, in that she is not making a definitive statement or positioning herself in one, clear way.

- 
- Cat:** and do you think there is a demand for hospitality graduates <specifically> within the labour market?
- John:** um: (.3) probably (.) I think ↑ yes if you want to go into hospitality <I think> I think it is ↓ (.1) but for me >who is looking to get out of hosp-< who is looking to get out of uh (.2) the industry ↑ there is (.) uh (.) ↑ I will be focusing more on the fact that I did management than hospitality management and so (.) I'll be kind of wording it differently >on my CV< because I think people (.) ↑ unfortunately when you tell them you do hospitality management >they just think you've been playing around in the kitchen< (.) <where for fact> it's actually a more challenging course than you think (.) <actually> someone told me that's it's like the hardest course in the whole tourism school >'cause um< in comparison to tourism and events >and all this stuff< (.) so I think it's one of those things where >I think people disregard it< and they don't really realise what's involved in it (.3) I think (.) I think employers sort of (.) >in industry< sort of ↑ they have a lot of time for people who have done hospitality (.) so that's that ↓ yeah
- 

**Excerpt 6.42 John**

John also acknowledges the transferable nature of his degree (Excerpt 6.42). Within his narrative a demand for hospitality graduates is noted however this is constrained to within the hospitality industry. This statement is repeated, demonstrating that this is the dominant position that John would like to convey. It suggests that there is a social language, surrounding hospitality education, which is being drawn on; a hospitality degree will help secure employment within the industry. However, from outside of the hospitality industry, John positions his degree as something which is deemed inferior. He suggests that there is a perception from Others that 'you've been playing around in the kitchen' and therefore the skills that you have developed may not be relevant within other industries. John's response to this inner-Other voice is defensive, and draws on a broader societal voice, in order to defend the challenges and difficulty associated with the completion of his degree. The notion of his degree involving 'playing around in a kitchen' is not however addressed, John is therefore surreptitiously not positioning himself in opposition to this viewpoint, suggesting that he may agree with this statement, even though he may not want to admit to it. The transferable nature of John's programme is highlighted as the dominant discourse surrounding the value of

HE, in general, is used in order to support the dialogical self. John also positions himself as having a management degree and suggests that he will be using this focus in order to help him gain employment. Thus it is apparent that despite his repeated claim that there is a demand for hospitality graduates he does not position himself in agreement with this, instead positioning himself in line with the notion that there is a demand for graduates (in general).

- 
- Cat:** and do you think there is a demand for hospitality graduates (.)  
<specifically> ones that have come >out of the< UK?
- Ben:** uh no ↑not at all (.) <I mean> I think I think a lot of people I speak to  
>particularly in London< and at the hotels (.) >you know< none of  
them studied hospitality and a lot have very broad degrees such as  
things like PR or marketing (.) <or business> (.) um:: not specifically  
targeting at hospitality (.1) I mean <I uh:> spoke to um director (.) I  
can't remember which company but I talked to a director of HR <and  
um> she came from a HR background and had worked in HR for fifteen  
years before the luxury hotel (.) >so in all honesty< it doesn't really  
matter (.) from what I gather it doesn't really matter what you study  
(.) >you know< if you study hospitality you know a bit more and are  
inclined to get a position because you (.) you know how it works (.) but  
uh first (.) ↑>a lot of degrees< that a lot of people have ↑especially in  
hierarchy roles a lot of people wouldn't (.) >you know< hospitality  
wasn't a degree that was really respected ↑and hotel management as  
a subject so (.) ↑>so they studied the big ones like business and the  
marketing< (.) PR >and things like that< (.) so maybe that's a question  
(.) maybe the hospitality degree (.) maybe ↑isn't that well respected (.)  
over something that's more >like< perhaps business (.1) who knows?  
(.1) >but as I always say< you've got to look at the <meaning> of  
hospitality (.1) >you've got to look at the< <meaning> of hotels ↑and  
what it's about and ↑and if you don't have someone who is tuned to  
those skills >and needed< you know ↑to a hotel <and uh> restaurant  
(.) then you're going to fail (.) that there's enough business people and  
they can interact with people you know (.) they done have the skills  
>usually< ↑so (.) ↑but that's where university ↑and university helps  
you ↓<so> (.)↑ if you've got the skills that helps you to fine tune  
working position
- 

**Excerpt 6.43 Ben**

Ben's consideration of the demand for hospitality graduates is highly reflective in nature.

Excerpt 6.43 identifies how Ben draws on the voice of Others and his social encounters with these individuals in order to justify his response to the question posed. He suggests that the relative youth of hospitality management, as a degree level subject means that many of the

current industry managers do not recognise or understand the content that is delivered as a part of hospitality HE qualifications. Associated with this Ben draws on a historical lack of respect for hospitality as a discipline area. This is consistent with John's narrative (Excerpt 6.42) and the notion of 'playing' that he highlighted, and suggests that these individuals feel hospitality is not necessarily seen as a credible subject choice within the labour market. While Ben recognises that many industry practitioners have more generic, business and management based backgrounds he draws on what he refers to as the 'meaning of hospitality' in order to position the necessity of hospitality specific information within businesses. This positions value in the subject specific information that Ben and his counterparts have developed throughout their time in HE. He goes on to suggest that without this subject specific knowledge businesses would fail, again supporting his indirect value proposition. Ben also places value on HE qualifications more generally. Throughout this section of his narrative Ben highlights that 'it doesn't really matter what you study' and 'university helps you' supporting the notion that having a degree is beneficial. This sits in line with HE's current focus on skills development as a core component of any degree qualification (Dearing, 1997; Leitch, 2006; QAA, 2008a).

It is clear that graduates hold differing perspectives with regards to the specific demand for the skills and subject specific knowledge developed through hospitality education. As noted previously it is apparent that there is some degree of disconnect between education and industry in that employers are not looking specifically for hospitality graduates. They are instead looking for a broad spectrum of talented individuals, who may or may not have hospitality degrees, in order to fill vacancies. It is therefore important that the positional competition that graduates narrate is also considered within dialogue in order to better understand demand and the way in which hospitality graduates construct their employability within the social domain.

### 6.4.3 Positional Competition

The competitive nature of the labour market is a key consideration for many as they transition out of HE. The ability to secure employment, in particular, is directly related to competition from Others within the labour market (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004). The following section will consider how competitive graduates feel in comparison to Others as they transition out of HE. Their confidence in the ability to secure positions relative to Others and package their human capital for employers will therefore be considered. The elements of their experience that they use in order to construct their positional competition will also be highlighted as a means of considering how graduates construct their narratives of employability.

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**Cat:** in terms of other students >or other graduates< moving into the labour market ↑how do you see yourself in comparison to them?  
**Vanessa:** well I think (.2) I think (.) really I haven't felt too::: threatened or anything ↑because there is so many jobs in hospitality (.2) >so it's kind of like< there's so much opportunity (.1) fortunately I've always got the job I've gone for (.1) so: (.) I've been very lucky in the fact that I've never had to come across the >↑oh I can't get a job< or um: ↑and I think that des ↑depend on what industry you work in (.) um:: >but I do feel< that because I've got that extra work experience (.) um:: (.) compared to quite a few of my uh <course mates> uh that probably would give me the advantage over them >because of that experience< (.)

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#### *Excerpt 6.44 Vanessa*

For Vanessa (Excerpt 6.44) the ability to secure employment has never been a concern. In line with the skills shortages often cited in the hospitality industry (People 1st, 2013b; People 1st, 2016) she suggests that, with her ongoing experience she has been able to differentiate herself from Others within the labour market. She specifically positions herself in comparison to 'course mates' with similar degree credentials, however experientially she has an advantage. The focus Vanessa places on her experience, and related success that this has brought is consistent with the notion that industry experience is essential in order to successfully carve a

career within the hospitality industry (Harkison, Poulston & Kim, 2011; Raybould & Wilkins, 2006).

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**Cat:** and how do you perceive competition <then> (.) >in relation to other people in the labour market< (.) ↑do you think you've got an advantage?

**Johanna:** (.2) I would hope I have a small advantage <um> being that <um> (.) being that we've been practically taught (.) >I mean< I compare myself to my sister at the moment >↑'cause we're both graduating at the same time< and while she's also at the [university] she does mathematics and so we're both looking for jobs at the moment (.) ↑and both going to interviews >and things like that< and her (.) ↑like normally you get asked things like >↑have you get experience doing this<? (.)>↑have you got experience doing that<? well her response will be ↑>no I've been at university< (.) I've <theoretically> been taught how to do it (.) and <↑no> I know the theory about >behind how to do it< ↑but I don't know ↑I've never done it myself (.) or ↑yes I've done a sample of this (.) those sort of answers (.1) whereas I can go ↑yes (.) I've worked for two years in a four start boutique hotel (.) I've done all the departments (.) I've worked my way up (.) ↑what more do you want?

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**Excerpt 6.45 Johannah**

For Johannah (Excerpt 6.45) the competitive nature of her programme is concerned with the vocational focus that she has engaged with in order to improve her employability. In contrast to her sisters' highly theoretical degree programme Johannah positions her practical experience as valuable. She draws directly on her sisters' voice, the voice of recruiting companies and her own auto dialogue in order to craft a narrative. Her confidence is apparent as she finishes her narrative with the question 'what more do you want' addressed specifically towards recruiting businesses. This suggests that there is little more that Johannah feels she could have done in order to improve her employability. Her narrative does not however consider the experiences of Other hospitality graduates, her use of 'we' in the initial section of her discourse suggests that that her peers will have a similar depiction of employability and their position within the competitive labour market. Once again the individual background and individual attributes of persons are not taken into consideration.

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**Abi:** [...] the various things I've got (.) um <studying abroad> and the fact that I've done an internship em (.) >definitely help< (.) um:: (.) in regards to some people who don't have that experience um: ↑I think quite a few people in my course em: (.) ↑obviously all of the ones who've done international business and have done their exchange as well (.) um: ↑yeah I think definitely having the internship as well helps (.)

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**Excerpt 6.46 Abi**

Abi (Excerpt 6.46 Abi) draws on both experience and elements of her programme in order to position her employability within the social domain. She has completed internships and spent time studying abroad as a component of her programme and these experiences are central to her employability. Others who have completed the same programme are positioned as having similar experiences, although this is not fully vocalised.

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**Cat:** and how do you see yourself competitively then in comparison to other students moving into the labour market?  
**Sarah:** um:: (.2) I think (.3) I feel that (.) from everything that I've taken from uni' and especially my placement ↑I feel I have so much to talk about and offer an employer (.) I like to think and I am >sort of< quite competitive ↑and obviously I've had like all these interviews recently ↑and >you know< it's just made me realise that you know you ↑do need to sell yourself >and you know< there might be something small and you thought >↑oh I did that< and it's not <that great> but >you know< if you actually say it to an employer and you know it can make a difference to them and they can say like oh wow and that's really interesting to you (.) and [I mean ] every

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**Excerpt 6.47 Sarah**

For Sarah the notion of having to sell herself was specifically highlighted when considering positional competition. This recognises the dialogic resources which need to be utilised in order to package human capital and relay this in an appropriate manner to potential employers (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004). Having developed a range of hard and soft credentials though the completion of her degree and an industry placement Sarah, like many of the other graduates is able to incorporate both knowledge and practical experience into her narrative, however this does not differentiate her from Others. She notes that there are other

small things that she has engaged with that may also be of interest in order to help differentiate herself. These may not be things that she specifically ascribes value to however employers may consider them to be interesting. Sarah is reflective in her approach to positioning herself within the competitive environment. Consistent with the reflexive approaches that individuals take to constructing their identity Sarah is able to draw on her experience in interviews in order to narrate her current position with the competitive labour market.

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**Rob:** so sort of founding the wine society (.) >objective we had there< and meeting (.) my placements (.) ↑I can talk about my placements <for days> to people (.) >my< ↑my passion for wine >↑my passion for food <and beverage (.) ↓um ↑the amount of countries I've been exposed to as well (.) ↓um ↑throughout my whole life >and especially on placement as well< (.) so many of my colleagues >especially in Dubai< were so multicultural ↑and it was so many nationalities in the one hotel (.) so I was surrounded by so many people >and I really enjoyed it< (.1) um: ↑the fact that I'm often seen as quite a smiley person >by my colleagues< and I think that always helps in hospitality being service orientated (.) um: (.2) I see myself as very approachable as well uh@ (.) ↓differentiate myself to other people (.) ↑I guess just my experience >like everyone's experience< is always completely different <so> (.) I think my experiences are different and they're seen upon quite well so (.) >so far its worked quite well< (.) so I just want to keep developing myself and showing that I want to keep developing myself (.) and I think it's also developing that employers will look upon (.) ↑I'm also quite keen upon >as a manager< to develop the people around me ↑it's not just my own self development that I care about (.) >obviously you can't force someone to do stuff they don't want to do< (.) but making sure that the staff are completely trained (.) which I can clearly see in hospitality is where you go into a restaurant and staff aren't properly trained and that (.) >not that it's their fault< but that they haven't been given the guidance or the steps to make it that way (.) so I've got sort of all my values and things that I want to <hopefully> grow up to as I go through management (.)

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**Excerpt 6.48 Rob**

Within Rob's narrative (Excerpt 6.48) he positions both his current and future self in relation to the competitive business environment. He take a holistic approach to considering his employability, drawing on a range of different factors that have contributed to his identity

development and thus the way in which he is able to position himself. It is clear that in terms of dialogic resources Rob has actively considered identity work and is able to reflexively consider his HE experience in order to construct a cohesive narrative of employability. In addition to noting employment experience Rob also highlights some of the specific elements of this and how these can differentiate him in comparison to Other hospitality graduates who may also have international or UK based work experience. Skills and attributes are listed alongside this, again highlighting some of the criteria that employers may be seeking when recruiting within the competitive business environment.

However, it is not just the current employment situation that Rob is drawing on. He also notes how he would engage with Others as he positions himself as a manager of the future. This demonstrates a level of identity development as Rob is already transitioning from his current student identity into the next phase of his career. In projecting a management based identity Rob is hoping that he will be taken into this role, based on his prior experience and learning.

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**Cat:** [...] how do you see yourself then >in comparison to other students<? do you think that you're better (.) or more prepared than other students?

**Kristina:** no (.) >I wouldn't say that I'm better prepared< (.) um: but like >one thing< that I noticed is that I am always a bit worried about the future ↑and I want to plan everything ↑and have everything in order (.) whereas other students (.1) ↑they're a bit more relaxed (.) ↓um: ↑and I don't know (.) they're not that↓ (.2) ↑they think everything will be okay in the end (.) and they don't worry too much (.) so I think this was one of the differences (.)>↑and about other things<? <↑well> >I don't know< maybe because I know another language >and maybe< that makes me a bit different (.) because some of my course mates here >they only know one language< ↑so yeah (.) this would be the differences (.)

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***Excerpt 6.49 Kristina***

In contrast to many of the graduates Kristina did not consider herself to be better prepared than Others in terms of her employability and transition into the labour market. She suggests in Excerpt 6.49 that she is apprehensive about the future and positions herself in opposition to

her peers in regards to concern in this area. This apprehension, and worry surrounding the future is one of the components of modern society (Beck, 1992; Lash, 1994; Stehr, 2001). Kristina suggests only her language skills as a differentiating factor, having moved to the UK from Lithuania she is proficient in both languages. However, she does not differentiate herself in any other ways. This suggests that she has not fully developed a professional working identity with which to support her transition into employment. Thus despite having finished her degree when we spoke, Kristina has not fully considered her position as she transitions out of HE.

It is interesting to note the different means by which hospitality graduates position themselves in comparison to Others. Experience was without doubt an overriding factor, and for those who had engaged with this, and other areas of the extended curriculum, some well-considered, holistic narratives were presented in order to demonstrate positional competition. However, not all of the graduates were able to positively compare themselves to Others and highlight their unique credentials. This has potential implications for their ability to sell themselves within the labour market when looking for employment.

#### 6.4.4 The Principals of Competition

The level of control that individuals felt they had over their transitions into the labour market varied. Graduates naturally anticipated that they would have to compete with Others in order to secure employment within the labour market. However, the way in which they considered this competition, and as a result approached the labour market differed. Each graduate was asked whether they felt that competition for jobs was fair, the following section illustrates their responses.

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**Cat:** [...] do you think that competition for jobs is fair?  
**Abi:** em: (.) probably not (.) I think em (.) in terms of the >sort of< graduate jobs market I think there are not enough jobs for the amount of people going to university (.) em <I uh> ↑I think it's such a common thing to go



to university I ↓em ↑I think still there's not enough jobs for people who want to leave and get a graduate job (.)

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**Excerpt 6.50 Abi**

Abi (Excerpt 6.50) suggested that there are not 'enough' graduate jobs. She positions this as being unfair because of the discontinuity between dominant discourses surrounding the graduate *prima* that can be earned upon completion of a degree (Baum, Ma & Payea, 2010; PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2007; Purcell & Elias, 2004) and her lived experience of the war for talent which suggests that there is a clear difference in expectations and reality. This reflection on the labour market sits in line with the work of Warhurst (2008) who also noted that there is an oversupply of graduates into the competitive labour market, thus the hard currency associated with a degree level qualification does not differentiate individuals. Abi suggests that she would like to 'leave and get a graduate job', it is therefore assumed that she is anticipating gaining employment which requires a degree as a prerequisite. However, the nature of a graduate job is not explained. Keep and Mayhew (2004) suggest that there is no clear definition as to what a graduate job may look like therefore Abi may be constraining her job search based on an inaccurate knowledge of how her degree may contribute to employability.

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**Mikkel** [...] I really got the see this in the UK by attending two assessment days for grad schemes (.) 'cause it's sort of the worst experience I've ever had in my life (.) ↑it was shocking (.) to (.) to see the length people go to >to try and< portray themselves as who they're really not (.) and you got to these places and you had >you know< students who went to universities similar to [South West University] ↑who made it sound like they were second in line for the thrown (.) and you're like <↑you're not> (.) it's like >↑why are you not being yourself< I think it's (.) you should say like assessment centres (.) ↑it's like thirty bits of bacon and three hundred hungry dogs ↑and whoever <jumps> or barks the highest >gets the piece of bacon< (.) >↑now that's all well and good< but that might not be the dog that people want that pulls the sled ↓(.1) >what are they going to do then?< you got a nice little shitzu there but you're stuck (.)

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**Excerpt 6.51 Mikkel**



Within Excerpt 6.51 Mikkel noted the highly competitive nature of graduate recruitment. He positions the competition associated with applying for graduate schemes as ‘the worst experience’ of his life. The ‘hungry dog’ metaphor that he draws on within his narrative highlights the ferocious nature of recruitment processes and the selling of oneself through highlighting valuable credentials in comparison to Others. Within this environment the way in which cohesive and well-constructed narratives are presented is important in being able to secure a graduate position. The dialogic resources available in order to do this are also significant when the proximity to competition is so close. Mikkel suggests that some applicants are inauthentic in their depictions of themselves and the credentials that they have. This leads him to question how businesses utilise individuals that can perhaps sell themselves effectively but may not be able to deliver on their promises.

Other graduates also made comments surrounding the way in which assessment centres were run having had negative experiences of these days. It appears that the majority of graduate schemes use assessment centres as a means of selecting candidates. These days are also preceded by online based psychometric tests, which individuals such as Alicia suggested were unfair for those who had extensive experience however were unable to complete maths based problems in order for their CVs to even be considered.

Ben (Excerpt 6.52) notes that age discrimination is prevalent within the hospitality industry. In line with the industry narrative surrounding the importance of experience, an individual so young could not have gained an extensive amount of experience. He goes on to position graduates, and generation Y employees, presumably including himself, as being educated and having common sense. He also notes that they are ‘brave’, possibly suggesting that they are less risk adverse than current managers. Ben draws on the unidentified voice of Others in order to support his analysis of the labour market. His narrative moves between the general ‘you’ (young generation) and the personal (I) seemingly drawing on a voice external to himself



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Cat: and do you think that competition within the labour market is fair?  
 Ben: no ↑ >no not at all< (.) I think (.) I mean <I honestly think> that (.2)  
 >age is< obviously very much part of it ↑ and with what I've  
 experienced age is a huge (.) ↑ I mean I'm twenty three and >you  
 know< I walk into these places and >you know< they expect a thirty  
 five ↑ forty year old >that has been in the industry for a number of  
 years< (.) but you know I ↑ I know people say >you know< you're too  
 young for this (.) <they> they um >they're expecting< a: >you know< ↑  
 I firmly believe >and I'm a strong advocate for this< but the graduates  
 >and the younger< ↑ are a lot more brave and ↑ are a lot more  
 educated (.) <a lot more> (.) uh (.) a lot more work <uh um> common  
 sense and they are moving forward (.) ↑ I think there is this barrier in  
 between <uh> the <er:> industry >and the younger generation< where  
 they're- (.) and for me <unfortunately> ageism has been a really big  
 part of that for me and where I haven't been able to move forward (.1)  
 ur: uh >as quickly< as uh maybe I'd expected (.) uh (.) but also these  
 ↓ [inaudible] (.) ↑ but as I say they're looking elsewhere into Europe for  
 uh >graduate placements< where they have more diverse skills and  
 >as I say< languages (.1) <and uh> because the culture ↑ unfortunately  
 us brits don't have that culture ↑ and aren't working as hard as <uh>  
 the eastern europeans (.1) so ↑ so there's still (.) <uh> ↓ I think there's  
 ↑ but I don't maybe think that it's something that we >as an industry<  
 can get rid of (.) I don't think we're going to be as selfish as (.) uh (.)  
 moving forward that's always going to be there (.) but yeah (.) I ↓ but I  
 (.) <again> >as I say <it comes down to the individual (.) if you (.) if you  
 want to achieve it <you will> you've just got to keep pushing ↑ and  
 pushing ↑ and pushing really (.) and then eventually you'll get up one  
 day and >they'll say yes< (.2) so (.) um (.) yeah >as I say< it's just the  
 work that I do >in between< that (.) like now (.) that's what's going to  
 make them say yes (.) and just keep phoning them like >↑ what you  
 doing now< ↑ be passionate about it ↑ believe in it (.1) and um:: that's  
 that@@

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**Excerpt 6.52 Ben**

in order to narrate his trajectory and planned progression into management level employment. Ben uses generalisations within his narrative, including generational divides. He also highlights cultural differences in terms of work ethic and then, in a dialogical knot, highlights the importance of the individual. He therefore positions himself in opposition to the anecdotal stereotypes that he has noted. His perseverance in terms of trying to secure a position is alluded to through his repetition of 'you've just got to keep pushing'. This suggests that Ben recognises the competitive nature of the industry and how the ability to create and

sustain a narrative is essential in order to gain employment. In addition Ben draws on the collective 'we' when referring to the hospitality industry. He is therefore positioning himself as a part of this industry, embodying a professional identity already connected to the *field*.

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**John** [...] it think it's not (.) >and in my case as well< ↑its not what you know it's who you know (.) >but you know the thing is< I think that's been like that forever (.) I think you'll get people whose dads were in a business (.) my dad was in that situation so (.) my dad (.) my late granddad he was a shooter in a ↓ (.) >my dad wanted to be an accountant< and he found my dad a job in this ↑and you know (.) that's been my dads career <ever since> you know even before I was born he's been a stock ship broker (.) that came about from my grandad having a contact <and it's the same with my older brother< (.) my older brother was doing something and it wasn't working out so he went into shipping (.) it is (.) it's what (.) it's not what you know (.) except in situations when >like dads are company directors< and put their sons >in a< really strong role >↓who< that may not be ready for (.) above them sort of people who have been working their way up have (.) then that is different (.) but if you're at the bottom and you've just been there ↑and been able to get that job because someone knows someone↑ then that's acceptable to me (.) then that's fine because >I think that happens to everyone really< we all know someone who knows someone who got that job (.) it all just depends on the individual

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**Excerpt 6.53 John**

In contrast to many of the graduates John (Excerpt 6.53 and Excerpt 6.38) positioned himself as advantaged, he suggests that 'it's not what you know, it's who you know'. This statement is supported by examples from his own family. Having attended private school John has the social capital and social network in order to be able to access this section of the job market. He does however position the notion of being given a job, above ones skills level as unfair. However he does not expect to be in this situation. John recognises that this approach to the labour market is not accessible to all, however habitually this is how he has been brought up to understand recruitment.

The way in which competition was discussed varied greatly. For some the nature of graduate recruitment was situated in a somewhat unnatural environment. As such they seemed to

struggle ‘playing the game’ and negotiating the labour market *field*. For others the use of social capital dominated their narratives suggesting that this, rather than other credentials will help them to secure a position within their chosen *field*.

## 6.5 Concluding Comments

Throughout this chapter focus has been given to the benefits that having a degree has brought to graduates and the way in which, as graduates, individuals positioned themselves in relation to Others as they progressed beyond HE. The majority of graduates were searching or continuing a search for graduate level employment, however this was not a priority for all of the graduates that participated in this study. Lifestyle choices and temporary employment were also included in narratives surrounding transitions and the immediate activities that graduates would be engaging with upon completion of their degrees.

The value associated with having a degree was consistently questioned by graduates as they positioned their employability. In some instances it was merely seen as an entry requirement for certain jobs. Thus for some, work experience was considered as more important than a degree. In line with this value questioning the HEI attended and grade received also received somewhat limited attention. The only caveat here being the ability to gain a 2:1 classification. International graduates looking to return to their home country were able to ascribe some additional value to their programmes of study as UK based degrees seemed to carry additional benefits within the recruitment markets that they were going to be entering. The key findings noted in this chapter can be seen in Table 6:1.

Following these key findings, and those from preceding chapters a somewhat holistic analysis of the employability narratives vocalised by hospitality graduates can be formed. The next chapter will reiterate these and also explicitly answer the final research question ‘*How do hospitality graduates construct narratives of employability, as understood in the social domain?*’. Synthesis of findings will also allow for conclusions to be drawn and



## Key Findings

There is a perception that there is a limited demand, specifically, for hospitality graduates

There is limited value ascribed to HEIs

Competition within the labour market is aggressive

Degrees are often seen as an 'entry ticket' to employment

A number of graduates were unable to capitalise effectively on personal capital

There is a mismatch between the credentials of hospitality graduates, the demands of industry recruiters and dominant discourses within the *field*

### **Table 6:1 Key Findings; Transitioning beyond HE**

recommendations made. These will inform the development of hospitality education and ensure that this research has been effective in meeting its overriding aim, to develop a new understanding of employability and use this in order to influence curriculum developments.

## 7 The Dialogic Construction of Employability Narratives

### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter will present a synthesis and reflection on the findings and analysis highlighted in Chapters Four, Five and Six. The previous three chapters have provided an insight into the hospitality graduate and focused primarily on the key findings from this research, with each chapter answering a research question as identified in Section 2.5.3. Graduate backgrounds, the motivation to participate in HE and, more specifically, undertake a hospitality degree were discussed in Chapter Four, addressing Research Question One (*'Where do UK hospitality graduates come from?'*). The HE experience, derived from both the core hospitality curriculum and extra-curricular activities was then discussed in Chapter Five, before transitions beyond HE were explored in Chapter Six, thus addressing Research Questions Two (*'How do hospitality graduates narrate their career focus?'*) and Three (*'What have final year students and recent graduates done during their time in HE in order to enhance their employability?'*). Focus on Research Question Four, *'How do final year hospitality students and recent hospitality graduates construct narratives of employability, as understood in the social domain?'* has been embedded throughout these chapters, with each section drawing on the dialogic and social aspects of narratives as content was discussed.

Initially this chapter revisits the key arguments and discussions presented within this thesis, including the key findings noted previously. It comprises a discussion of results and the implications of these for key stakeholders including students, hospitality educators and HEIs, industry bodies and government. A new understanding of employability relating to hospitality graduates is thus developed. This new knowledge advances both understandings of employability within the *field* of HE generally and more specifically, within the academic discipline surrounding hospitality as a subject area. It will also inform the recommendations and conclusions presented in the final chapter (Chapter Eight).

## **7.2 Hospitality Graduates' Narratives of Employability**

The following section will discuss the construction of graduates' employability narratives.

Initially the content of narratives, in term of the HE experience and evidence supporting the acquisition of capital will be presented. Graduates' orientations to the labour market will then be considered before the broad, social nature of dialogue will be analysed. Much of this content has been touched upon within previous chapters however the aim here is to emphasise the new understanding that has been revealed through consideration of the findings, thus adding to the body of knowledge surrounding employability. The implications of each key finding will also be highlighted in order for recommendations to be made.

### **7.2.1 Hospitality as a Subject Area**

The importance of hospitality as a subject area impacted the narratives of employability elicited within this study. Both prior to undertaking a degree, and as a result of reflection on HE engagement, the significance of the subject area studied was evident. The following Table (Table 7:1) details key findings related to hospitality as a subject area. The implications of these findings for key stakeholders is also noted.

The findings demonstrate the way in which hospitality as a subject area influences narratives of employability in final year students and recent hospitality graduates. This understanding of individuals helps to support the aim of this thesis in terms of evaluating the way in which hospitality graduates' narrate employability. The links between hospitality as a vocational subject area and the broader competitive labour market are evident within the findings highlighted, supporting the perception of direct links made between employability, economic gains, and the completion of a degree, as identified previously in literature (Baum, Ma & Payea, 2010; Becker, 1964; Dearing, 1997; HEFCE, 2011; Leitch, 2006; PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2007; Purcell & Elias, 2004).

Key Findings	Significance in Relation to Narratives of Employability	Implications for Hospitality Education
<p>Hospitality is deemed by some students and graduates to be a somewhat 'sexy' discipline area and is perceived as an alternative to generic management programmes.</p>	<p>Despite often being situated in business schools' hospitality programmes offer a somewhat unique combination of subjects in order to create hospitality programmes (Brotherton &amp; Wood, 2008; Gursoy &amp; Swanger, 2005). Management content is however often core (Brotherton &amp; Wood, 2008; Jones, 2004a) resulting in similar transferable knowledge credentials in spite of the distinct differences between degrees.</p>	<p><b>Implications for Students;</b> there is potential disconnect between the expectations of hospitality employment and the lived realities (as hospitality employment is not always 'sexy'). The management focus of degrees does however provide a transferable knowledge base for trajectories into other industries, if this is the case.</p> <p><b>Implications for Industry;</b> narratives surrounding this 'sexy' image of the industry need to be managed in order to both encourage individuals into the hospitality industry, yet also highlight the lived realities of hospitality employment.</p> <p><b>Implications for Educators;</b> these narratives have positive benefits in terms of marketing programmes, particularly when a strong transferable management focus is included within the programme; maintaining this image may be beneficial for recruitment.</p>
<p>Experience of the industry has influenced subject choice.</p>	<p>Engagement with the hospitality industry is commonplace therefore prospective students and graduates have an understanding of the industry and the commitments associated with employment in hospitality prior to undertaking their studies and</p>	<p><b>Implications for Students;</b> this perceived knowledge is not always an accurate representation of full time employment within the industry and therefore desired trajectories may change.</p> <p><b>Implications for Industry;</b> positive engagement from working within the hospitality industry can stimulate demand for programmes and influence investment in education for the</p>

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subsequently pursuing their careers.

industry. However, when experience of the industry has been gained exclusively from a consumer perspective the realities of working in the industry may not be realised by prospective students.

**Implications for Educators;** students will have experience to draw on as their understanding of the hospitality industry develops through the course of their degrees. Positive experiences with hospitality may not be representative of the realities associated with careers upon graduation, therefore expectations need to be managed.

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There is a perception among some graduates that there is a limited demand, specifically, for hospitality graduates within the competitive labour market.

Hospitality graduates draw on engagement with the industry and current recruitment practices in order to reflexively consider the value of their degrees in terms of employment as they progress beyond HE. This reflection is key to the way in which narratives are constructed (Beck, Giddens & Lash, 1994; Giddens, 1994).

**Implications for Students;** the value of a degree may be questioned, graduates may be more likely to enter positions which do not require a degree leading to limited social mobility, underemployment, and eroding some of the benefits associated with having a degree.

**Implications for Industry;** graduates may be less willing to progress into the hospitality industry if they do not perceive their skills and knowledge to be valuable, or they perceive themselves to be underemployed.

**Implications for Educators;** the way in which recruiters advertise jobs and search for talent within the labour market needs to be relayed to graduates so that they are able to effectively package personal capital and construct narratives of employability in order to try and secure graduate jobs on completion of their degree.

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**Implications for Government;** narratives of the graduate *prima* surrounding HE may become difficult to maintain if graduates do not perceive there to be a demand for their skills.

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Competition within the labour market is aggressive.

The competitive nature of the labour market influences reflexivity and therefore the way in which narratives are shaped (Beck, Giddens & Lash, 1994; Giddens, 1994). Hospitality employers do not just seek hospitality graduates in order to fill graduate vacancies (Gibson & Hine, 2013; Hine, 2017)

**Implications for Students;** graduates must be able to compete with others, who may have studied a different subject area, in order to be able to secure employment upon completion of their degrees. They must therefore be able to effectively draw on personal capital in order to differentiate themselves.

**Implications for Industry;** there is an oversupply of graduates to the labour market meaning that industry can select candidates from a large pool of talent. However, maintaining a positive image of the industry, as an employer, is essential in order to maintain a demand for positions.

**Implications for Educators;** graduates need to be equipped for the competitive nature of the industry. They therefore need to be prepared effectively for their transition into the labour market if HEIs are to be able to capitalise on the success of their alumni.

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Hospitality degrees are often seen as an 'entry ticket' to employment.

While a number of graduates noted that a degree was an 'entry ticket' to employment they did not recognise the competitive nature of the labour market and the number of graduates that are underemployed, perceived themselves to be

**Implications for Students;** graduates may not recognise that they will require more than just a degree if they are to secure a position within the graduate labour market. The supposed 'entry ticket' into graduate employment could be deemed a myth.

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underemployed or unemployed post-graduation (Mason *et al.*, 2003; McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011; Moreau & Leathwood, 2006; Scurry & Blenkinsopp, 2011; Universities UK, 2010; Watt & Hargis, 2010).

**Implications for Industry;** the expectations that graduates have, on completion of their degrees, may differ from industry expectations therefore creating a gap in perceptions.

**Implications for Educators;** graduates need to be equipped for the competitive nature of the industry. They therefore need to be prepared effectively for their transition into the labour market if HEIs are to be able to capitalise on the success of their alumni.

**Implications for Government;** dominant discourses need to be modified in order to provide realistic expectations for graduates.

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***Table 7:1 Key Findings Relating to Hospitality as a Subject Area; significance within narratives of employability***

Table 7:1 highlights how the decision to study hospitality in HE shapes perceived trajectories upon completion of a degree. The management content of hospitality programmes is therefore a key draw in the decision to undertake studies within the subject area. This is deemed to be useful in terms of future trajectories within and beyond the industry, suggesting that prospective students are strategic in their decisions, based on the unknown trajectories that they recognise within the social domain (Giddens 1991; 1994). Having a degree in itself is also seen as an entry ticket into the graduate labour market. This finding has implications in terms of the expectations that graduates perceive in relation to their degrees. Being able to apply for graduate positions does not mean that as a graduate an individual has the social, cultural or personal capital, and associated currencies required in order to successfully progress into said position. This directly correlates with the findings regarding the competitive labour market and perceived demand for hospitality graduates, specifically. Thus being able to compete effectively within the broader labour market has implications for HEIs, hospitality



educators and students. The development of employability, in the most general of manners thus needs to be embedded into curriculum and the dominant narratives elicited by significant individuals within HEIs.

## 7.2.2 Narrative Content; the HE Experience and Employability

Development through the holistic HE experience is a core component of employability narratives. The activities that graduates have engaged with and way in which these are packaged into narratives of employability is essential in terms of their future trajectories (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004; Tomlinson, 2008). Chapter Five provided a comprehensive insight into the HE experience that was narrated by hospitality graduates. However, the links between these experiences and future employability were not made; this section therefore addresses this gap. The key findings from Chapter Five and their significance in relation to narratives of employability have therefore been highlighted in Table 7:2.

Key Findings	Significance in Relation to Narratives of Employability	Implications for Hospitality Education
Placements are viewed positively however the majority appear to be primarily operational in nature and therefore do not fully meet their key objectives.	Placements are often used as a core component of employability narratives and, as hard credentials support the development of work relevant skills and the acquisition of industry experience (Lester & Costley, 2010; Wilson, 2012). Having to complete projects while on placement offers opportunity for reflection, adding value to practical experience. However, the operational nature of many placements means that,	<p><b>Implications for Students;</b> higher level skills and positions of leadership are not being undertaken by students therefore limiting their development when on placement. Operational placements may also limit expectations of the industry and therefore impact transitions. Some students are also limiting their development by not undertaking placements.</p> <p><b>Implications for Industry;</b> placements offer opportunities to encourage transitions into the hospitality industry. However ‘bad’ placement experiences have the potential to negatively impact</p>

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consistent with previous research, many students do not engage with these (Aggett & Busby, 2011; Bullock et al., 2009; Nixon et al., 2006), they cannot therefore be relied upon as a means of developing experience and *ergo* employability.

transitions and therefore loss of knowledge from the industry.

**Implications for Educators;** marketing of placements needs to be realistic and representative of the tasks that students will be asked to undertake. Working with placement providers that can offer more than purely operational experiences needs to be prioritised.

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Industry engagement through live projects and consultancy based work are perceived positively.

The ability to work on live projects and apply industry specific knowledge to scenarios contributed to employability narratives. This form of PBL has been advocated by a number of authors (Hine, Gibson & Horner, 2015; Maher & Graves, 2007; Zwaal & Otting, 2015) and helps graduates to demonstrate skills development, knowledge and usefulness within future employment situations.

**Implications for Students;** these initiatives provide graduates with an interesting activity area to discuss when applying for jobs. The 'real life' implications and impact on businesses help provide tangible evidence in order to support skills development.

**Implications for Industry;** knowledge sharing and utilisation of student skills can provide benefits for businesses. Graduate recruitment opportunities and engagement with educators is also possible through these initiatives.

**Implications for Educators;** these initiatives should remain a core component of the hospitality curriculum in order to encourage engagement. Other opportunities to integrate 'live' projects and PBL into the curriculum should be considered.

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Management based subject knowledge is beneficial for graduates, and offers a

This transferable knowledge allows graduates to easily contextualise their learning in a range of different areas, not specific to the

**Implications for Students;** prospective students and graduates perceive their transferable management based knowledge as useful for both trajectories into and beyond the hospitality industry



<p>transferable knowledge base for prospective students and graduates.</p>	<p>hospitality industry. Due to the unknown trajectories of many graduates (Giddens, 1991; Richardson, 2010; Richardson &amp; Butler, 2012) this knowledge allows them to develop employability narratives both specific to management within the hospitality industry and beyond.</p>	<p>increasing the appeal and usefulness of a hospitality degree.</p> <p><b>Implications for Industry;</b> graduates perceive their skills and knowledge to be useful in a range of contexts and therefore are able to look for more favourable employment options meaning that they do not enter the hospitality industry upon completion of their degrees.</p> <p><b>Implications for Educators;</b> the rigorous management content of hospitality degrees should be maintained and developed.</p>
<p>Hospitality students undertake part-time work experience in order to support their lifestyles while they are studying.</p>	<p>Part-time work helps individuals to develop employment specific skills whilst studying. Work can however become a priority over study and therefore negatively impact engagement (Arum &amp; Roksa, 2011; Callender, 2008; Hall, 2010). Not all part-time work undertaken is specific to the hospitality industry and therefore does not directly contribute to the development of industry specific skills and employability.</p>	<p><b>Implications for Students;</b> students have to balance work, study and social time throughout their degree programmes. There is the possibility that they are able to gain valuable work experience through part-time employment however work may also negatively impact engagement with HE.</p> <p><b>Implications for Industry;</b> individuals who are somewhat committed to a career within the hospitality industry are looking for employment to fit in alongside their degree programmes. Therefore opportunities to recruit and develop talent, committed to a career within the industry exist.</p> <p><b>Implications for Educators;</b> some students may miss lectures or prioritise work over study. The value of part-time work experience should be recognised in the way that it can support learning, development and future employability.</p>

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**Implications for Government;** the ability for some students to financially support themselves throughout their time in HE is compromised despite loans available. Inequality in the benefits of HE will pertain while some students struggle to support themselves.

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Hospitality students do not generally engage with societies and university led extra-curricular activities as they do not recognise the value associated with these.

Balance is created between study, work and social commitments. However, additional educationally relevant activities are often neglected by hospitality students. This limits development associated with the holistic HE experience (Jackson, 2010; Roulin & Bangerter, 2011; Yorke & Knight, 2006) and leads to the development of employability narratives which focus primarily on degree credentials and experience, somewhat limiting graduates ability to compete effectively within the competitive labour market (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004; Tomlinson, 2008).

**Implications for Students;** opportunities for learning and development beyond the core hospitality curriculum are being missed. The ability for individuals to differentiate themselves within the competitive labour market may also be compromised.

**Implications for Industry;** hospitality graduates may not be as appealing in terms of recruitment as they are attempting to differentiate themselves based on educational credentials, and not wider engagement with HE.

**Implications for Educators;** DHLE data and league tables may be affected by graduates who are unable to effectively compete for jobs as a result of their inability to differentiate themselves. Opportunities for learning are being missed and resources are potentially being underutilised if students are not engaging with them.

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The holistic university experience is viewed positively.

Despite not all benefiting equally, in terms of the development of graduate credentials, resultant of participation in HE (Adnett & Slack, 2007; Atherton,

**Implications for Students;** the value of having a degree and having attended university is recognised by graduates. Recognition of the holistic development achieved

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2013; Baum, Ma & Payea, 2010; Furlong & Cartmel, 2005; Moreau & Leathwood, 2006; Purcell & Elias, 2004) the majority of graduates reflected positively on their experience of HE and the learning and development that they are able to narrate as a result of engagement. Identity as a 'graduate' and the positive associations correlated with this is therefore prevalent amongst hospitality graduates.

throughout the course of a UG degree is also apparent.

**Implications for Industry;** graduates value their degree credentials and the development achieved through engagement with HE in a way which may not be congruent with industry expectations. The desire for affirmation of a graduate identity and maintenance of this within industry is unclear.

**Implications for Educators;** encouraging the development and maintenance of graduate identity helps reinforce dominant narrative surrounding HE and therefore influences future demand for programmes.

**Implications for Government;** the positive development of graduate identities as a result of holistic development supports the narratives presented by government in terms of the benefits that can be realised through HE.

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***Table 7:2 Narrative Content; Key Findings and their Significance within Narratives of Employability***

The social conditions surrounding HE impact on the activities that individuals prioritise when studying. The requirement to work alongside studying and limited engagement with extra-curricular activities, highlight an embodied cultural capital prevalent amongst a large component of the student cohort. In addition institutional *habitus* and the influence of peers also do not appear to be encouraging participation (Greenbank, 2015) with these forms of extra activities, with many graduates narrating that their focus is somewhat instrumentally orientated towards gaining a 2:1 degree classification. As a result hospitality graduates' narratives of employability are often centred on the hard currencies associated with degree

credentials and experience within the industry, a finding consistent with the work of Greenbank (2015). Having a hospitality degree is deemed to be a point of academic differentiation when entering the labour market suggesting that individuals position themselves based on the premise that there is a strong relationship between education and jobs available within the hospitality marketplace. Employability is therefore narrated in line with dominant mainstream understandings (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004; Tholen, 2015); an individual project of development. As such limited acknowledgement is given to the Other, and the way in which individuals will position themselves and compete against other graduates with similar credentials. This lack of distinction from Others within the marketplace, and particularly the lack of distinction between hospitality graduates limits the ability of said graduates to successfully compete for jobs (Bowden & Doughney, 2012; Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004; Tomlinson, 2008).

Contemporary understandings of employability, such as the one advocated within this thesis, highlight the importance of identity, and are situated within a socio-cultural context. Structure and agency as understood within modern society (Bauman, 2000b; Beck, Giddens & Lash, 1994; Giddens, 1994) therefore provide a theoretical underpinning to the way in which agency can be exhibited as individuals strive to capitalise on societal developments and, at the least, maintain their position within the socio-cultural conditions that they exist. Engagement with HE has been advocated as a means of helping to support social mobility (Bourdieu, 1986; Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2011) and participation has been encouraged extensively (Department for Education and Skills, 2003). However, within the *field* of hospitality education and employment there appears to be a hysteresis of *habitus* (Burke, 2016) in that the *field* has evolved and as such the rules and resources required in order to secure employment have changed. Over time a gap has emerged, and continues to develop, between hospitality educators and industry; the evolving *habitus* of hospitality graduates has

not taken these structural constraints into consideration so that they may better manoeuvre themselves into a position of employment. Understanding of the HE *field*, for many hospitality graduates is derived from the dominant narratives within society, and those elicited by academics that they come into contact with (Burke, 2016), thus with the relatively high proportion of non-traditional students this means that employability and the importance of hard credentials appears to have been internalised.

The implications of this are that hospitality educators need to be better preparing graduates for the highly competitive nature of recruitment, and the war for talent. Advocating the benefits of a hospitality degree and the importance of experience are not enough for graduates to be able to successfully capitalise on their education and HE experience in terms of securing employment (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004; Greenbank, 2015; Tomlinson, 2008). Therefore holistic development, conceptions of self-identity, and personal capital need to be emphasised within the narratives presented by hospitality graduates when considering their HE experience. In order to achieve this graduates must be able to reflectively package and narrate differences in innate character and ability (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004) and sell their potential productivity within the workplace. In creating these life storied narratives, graduates will be better situated to compete within the labour market and differentiate themselves from other graduates within the marketplace, all of whom share similar academic credentials.

### **7.2.3 The Acquisition of Capital and Possession of 'New' *Habitus* in Hospitality Graduates**

Throughout this thesis the notion of social and cultural capital, put forward by Bourdieu (1986), and personal capital as noted by Brown, Hesketh and Williams (2004) has been discussed extensively. Within Chapter Two a sociological depiction of employability was presented, here employability was situated within the social domain. It was therefore defined as relational and dependant on the way in which individuals negotiate the competitive labour

market; structure, agency and self-identity were therefore given precedence over the more mainstream (skills, attributes and graduate *prima*) approaches to considering employability. Thus the acquisition, and development of social and cultural capital and the accrual of new values and dispositions through *habitus* were positioned as core to employability and the capacity to compete for jobs within the competitive labour market (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004). However, due to the nature of HE some graduates benefit more than others in terms of their development and ability to narrate and package personal capital throughout their time as a student (Adnett & Slack, 2007; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Furlong & Cartmel, 2005). Therefore, both the existing capital and *habitus* held by graduates upon entering HE, and some of the activities engaged with in order to help develop capital, were highlighted throughout Chapters Four and Five.

In terms of key findings there are a number of areas within this research which allude to the capital held by individuals. These have been presented in Table 7:3, and are directly derived from the concluding sections of previous findings chapters.

Key Findings	Demonstration of Capital	Implications for Hospitality Education
<p>HE attendance is often an embedded narrative, therefore it is 'expected' that students will progress into HE.</p>	<p>For the majority of students who complete A-Levels there is an expectation within societal norms that they will attend university (City &amp; Guilds, 2015; Department for Education, 2016). The habitual values associated with dominant discourses surrounding HE have therefore been internalised throughout the population. However, class based inequalities still exist within this framework and some</p>	<p><b>Implications for Students;</b> participation with HE will remain the norm for many, resulting in an ever increasing number of graduates within the labour market. Differentiation based on HE credentials alone will make it increasingly challenging for graduates to secure employment. However, expectations of HE will evolve as greater numbers of second generation students enter the <i>field</i> and are able to draw on their familial experience in order to shape expectations and trajectories.</p>

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social groups are still underrepresented within the HE environment (Ball *et al.*, 2002; Burke, 2016; Reay, David & Ball, 2005; Reay *et al.*, 2001; UCAS, 2017a). This scenario was evident within the sample of research participants that contributed to this study.

**Implications for Industry;** the graduate labour market will continue to be a source of talent, however the definition of a graduate job will also continue to evolve. The expectations between graduates and industry in terms of what a graduate job 'looks like' will inevitably evolve with the ever increasing number of graduates within the marketplace.

**Implications for Educators;** demand for hospitality programmes will be maintained so long as these dominant narratives pertain. However, work will be required in order to market hospitality as a viable subject area to support graduate trajectories into the labour market. Educators must also recognise that not all hospitality graduates will want to enter the hospitality industry on completion of their degrees.

**Implications for Professional Bodies;** recognition of the contribution that hospitality graduates can make to the industry needs to be maintained, engagement with students may help encourage trajectories into the industry, however it must be recognised that not all hospitality graduates will progress into the hospitality industry.

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Prospective students are often contingent in their choice of HEI and rely on sources of information gained beyond their

Having a limited social network and restricted access to individuals that have attended HE and can offer support and advice regarding choices and the HE experience, more generally, demonstrates that, consistent with literature on non-traditional students (Slack *et al.*, 2014), a high

**Implications for Students;** the structural limitations placed on students may negatively impact their choices and therefore limit their potential development.

**Implications for Educators;** it is important that prospective students engage with HEIs in order to establish fit with institutional *habitus*. Without student 'ambassadors', who can talk to

social network in order to establish alignments within institutional <i>habitus</i> .	proportion of hospitality graduates do not enter HE with social capital that can assist them in making informed choices about their futures. They are therefore relying heavily on dominant discourses surrounding HE in order to shape their progression into university and develop their subsequent expectations of the HE experience.	prospective students during the recruitment processes, enrolment numbers may be jeopardised. League table rankings and employability data are also integral to choice for some prospective students.  <b>Implications for Government;</b> while structural inequalities pertain within society there will be disparities in the type of institution selected by different groups of students. The benefits of HE will therefore be mediated by HEI choice.
Socio-cultural factors influence decision making when students are looking to enter HE	The propensity to remain in specific locations and therefore limit choice of HEI combined with the way information sources used in order to select HEIs demonstrate how structural influences constrain decisions (Briggs, 2006; Furlong & Cartmel, 2005; Mehboob, Muhammad Shah & Bhutto, 2012; Moogan & Baron, 2003; Ruhanen & McLennan, 2010).	<b>Implications for Students;</b> individuals will benefit in different ways from their choice of HEI and subsequent engagement with HE.  <b>Implications for Educators;</b> HEIs need to be aware of prospective students' backgrounds and address the needs of individuals from non-traditional backgrounds.  <b>Implications for Government;</b> despite widening participation initiatives inequalities will pertain within the HE environment based on locational factors associated with engagement.
Hospitality students do not generally engage with societies and university led extra-curricular activities as they do not recognise the value	Dominant discourses surrounding human capital theory and the value of a degree (Becker, 1964; Dearing, 1997; Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2011; Department for Education and Skills, 2003; Leitch, 2006) appear to have been internalised by students. This means that the majority do not	<b>Implications for Students;</b> opportunities for learning and development beyond the core hospitality curriculum are being missed. The ability for individuals to differentiate themselves within the competitive labour market may also be compromised.  <b>Implications for Industry;</b> hospitality graduates may not be as appealing in terms of recruitment as they are

associated with these.	understand the broader implications of HE and engagement beyond the core curriculum. As extended social network, with prior experience of the HE environment have not been utilised in order to help focus engagement this demonstrates how limited social and cultural capital essentially stunt holistic development through HE.	attempting to differentiate themselves based on educational credentials, and not broader engagement with HE.  <b>Implications for Educators;</b> DLHE data and league tables may be affected by graduates who are unable to effectively compete for jobs as a result of their inability to differentiate themselves. Opportunities for learning are being missed and resources are potentially being underutilised if students are not engaging.
A number of graduates did not successfully negotiate the <i>field</i> of HE and were unable to effectively narrate personal capital.	When narrating employability graduates were unable to effectively package the combination of self plus hard and soft credentials effectively. This suggests that they have not effectively developed capital throughout their time as students. Thus contrary to the reflexivity thesis (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Beck, Giddens & Lash, 1994) some graduates were better positioned than others in order to navigate the labour market based on their prior understandings. In line with previous work this is not effective means of marketing oneself within the current labour market (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004; Greenbank, 2015; Tomlinson, 2008).	<b>Implications for Students;</b> the ability to secure a position within the graduate labour market will be limited if personal capital is not effectively incorporated into narratives of employability.  <b>Implications for Industry;</b> sources of talent may be overlooked as a result of graduates' inability to effectively construct narratives of employability.  <b>Implications for Educators;</b> graduates need to be prepared for the competitive labour market and supported in their construction of effective narratives of employability.  <b>Implications for Government;</b> graduates who are unable to affirm their graduate identity may reflect on their degrees in a negative light, contradicting narratives elicited by government and thus eroding their effectiveness in maintaining demand for HE.

**Table 7:3 Identification of Capital within Key Findings**

Drawing on these findings it is evident that the habitual dispositions of individuals have influenced students' choice of HEI and subsequent engagement with HE. The societal expectation to participate in HE has, to a certain extent, become a structural constraint on individuals as they progress beyond A-Levels or other FE courses. As a result, for some, the decision to complete a hospitality degree is driven by expectations and societal norms as against a longstanding desire to pursue a career in hospitality. Factors such as limiting geographical movement, and entering a certain type of institution (Reay *et al.*, 2001) when undertaking studies demonstrates a form of embodied cultural capital (Christie, 2007) which can limit development and impact on the benefits that some students can expect as a result of their participation in HE (Adnett & Slack, 2007; Atherton, 2013; Baum, Ma & Payea, 2010; Furlong & Cartmel, 2005; Moreau & Leathwood, 2006; Purcell & Elias, 2004).

The recognition that hospitality degrees are not always a student's 'first choice' in terms of subject area should therefore also be a key concern for educators. This has implications for curriculum planners and those delivering hospitality programmes. Hospitality degrees must provide a broad curriculum, which is transferable in nature in order to continue attracting individuals who may be somewhat unsure of their future trajectories. At the same time the development of employable graduates, who are capable of progressing into the hospitality industry must also be taken into consideration, thus the development of industry specific skills and experience needs to remain a component of degrees, as noted previously (Alexander, 2007a; Alexander, Lynch & Murray, 2009; Connolly & McGing, 2006). Within the *field* of hospitality education it is apparent that the underlying purpose of hospitality in HE is not merely concerned with the vocational development of individuals looking to progress into the hospitality industry (Airey & Tribe, 2000; Barrows & Johan, 2008). The study of *hospitality*, as advocated by some authors (Lashley, Lynch & Morrison, 2007a; Lashley & Morrison, 2000; Morrison & O'Mahony, 2003; Tribe, 2002) is also not entirely appropriate in its focus, meaning

that a combined approach, with flexibility for individuals to choose the extent to which they engage with vocational and academic disciplines, dependant on their trajectory is therefore suggested. This would take into consideration the realities surrounding hospitality education as a subject choice for individuals and the impetus to complete a degree, in general. It could also be argued that different models of hospitality education could benefit students. Thus greater differentiation between programmes of study and their orientation to the development of employability could benefit different groups of students.

Throughout their time as students the graduates that participated in this research did not, generally, engage with university led extra-curricular activities. Those who did participate in additional pursuits, often did so in order to directly help support employability. The impetus on developing hard credentials and the tangible currencies associated with additional qualifications, or holding a position of leadership within a society were therefore used in order to support employability when extra-curricular activities were undertaken. This correlates with previous findings surrounding non-traditional students (Arum & Roksa, 2011; Stuart *et al.*, 2008; Thomas & Jones, 2007), as a high proportion of those who participated in this study could be classified in this manner. A very limited number of individuals, studying hospitality programmes participated in extra-curricular activities purely for enjoyments' sake or in relation to development of self beyond employability focused initiatives. The development of self beyond a career focus, which is often related to engagement with extra-curricular activities (Jackson, 2010; Roulin & Bangerter, 2011; Yorke & Knight, 2006), was somewhat limited amongst those that participated in this study. The acquisition of personal capital was therefore compromised, limiting the benefits that graduates could expect from participation in HE as they had not successfully negotiated the *field* (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) in order to embody a new *habitus* associated with 'graduateness'.

In contrast to this lack of engagement with extra-curricular activities a high proportion of hospitality graduates had participated in part time work whilst they were studying. There was often a fine balance between this work, academic engagement and other social commitments. The narratives within hospitality education surrounding the importance of work experience and practical skills development (Arcodia & Barker, 2003; Beaven & Wright, 2006; Connolly & McGing, 2006; Harkison, Poulston & Kim, 2011; Mason, Williams & Cranmer, 2009; People 1st, 2013b; People 1st, 2013a; Raybould & Wilkins, 2005) have therefore clearly been internalised by some, while others engaged with this work purely for financial reasons. However, the negative implications of prioritising work over engagement with HE has not been realised (Callender, 2008; Hall, 2010). Thus opportunities to develop employability in a holistic manner have been sacrificed by students for the development of job specific skills and being able to financially support their education (Furlong & Cartmel, 2005). This, again has implications in terms of the development of personal capital, particularly if individuals do not effectively reflect on their experiential hard currencies in order to develop narratives of employability (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004).

It is also interesting to note that not all hospitality employers specifically look to recruit hospitality graduates within the war for talent (Gibson & Hine, 2013; Hine, 2017) thus the importance of personal capital and the ability to compete within a highly diverse and competitive labour market is increasingly important if graduates are to secure 'graduate level' employment. This scenario creates somewhat of a dichotomy for hospitality educators and the hospitality industry. The divide between academic research into hospitality employment and the realities of recruitment onto graduate schemes within the hospitality and associated industries highlights a requirement for future research. The way in which employability is discussed as a component of hospitality degree programmes also needs greater consideration, as hospitality graduates often do not recognise the importance of soft skills and personal



capital within their narratives of employability. This point links specifically to the last of the findings presented in Table 7:3, related to the way in which individuals negotiate the *field* of hospitality education and HE. Dominant discourses from HEIs, government and HE teaching staff therefore need to be modified in such a way that they do not focus on the dominant interpretations of employability, linked to human capital theory (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961) and skills development (Dearing, 1997; Leitch, 2006; Yorke & Knight, 2006). The competitive nature of the labour market and way in which skills, attributes and conceptions of self also need to be included (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004; Tholen, 2015) so that individuals are better prepared to progress into the labour market. Encouragement, and time to engage with initiatives beyond the core university based curriculum, such as those put forward by Jackson (2010), need to be considered so that long terms trust issues with governmental discourses do not arise as a result of the lived experiences of employability.

#### **7.2.4 Narrative Orientations to the Labour Market**

The way in which graduates approached the labour market upon completion of their degrees varied considerably. Chapter Six specifically addressed transitions beyond undergraduate HE and the way that value was narrated as a result of having completed a HE qualification.

Positional competition, which has already been discussed within this chapter was also noted within Chapter Six. However, in order to effectively address Research Question Two '*How do hospitality graduates narrate their career focus?*', greater consideration needs to be given to graduates' narratives and the way that these incorporate agentive action in relation to the labour market. Orientations to the labour market are therefore an important consideration within narratives. Tomlinson (2007) noted that not all graduates want to enter scenarios where they are competing for jobs, instead opting to undertake lower entry positions. It is also apparent that not all hospitality graduates will look to pursue a career within the hospitality industry (Richardson, 2008; 2009; 2010) thus they will approach the labour market in a slightly different manner to those individuals that are directly capitalising on the

vocational nature of their degrees. The following section details narrative typologies in relation to the labour market and career focus.

The work of Tomlinson (2007) will be used as a basis to discuss orientations to the labour market and narrative typologies. This work is heavily influenced by the sociological theories developed by Merton (1968). As a theory this work has been used within the *field* of hospitality education previously (Huang, Turner & Chen, 2014), however an adapted model has been developed in order to take into consideration the discipline specific nature of employability in hospitality graduates and the way that this impacts upon narratives. While each story told by a graduate is individual and unique, the categorisation of these narratives into a typology helps to highlight the dialogic resources available for telling, and expectations for hearing, different genres of story (Frank, 2010). The social understanding surrounding different trajectories and way in which specific threads, conventional tropes, and genre specific cues dominate narratives can thus be identified.

It is important to note in line with the *unfinalizability* of persons (Bakhtin, 1984) that it is narratives and not individuals that have been categorised. This approach to socio-narratology and dialogue was advocated by Frank (2010) as a means of addressing the fluidity and changeable nature of narrative. Thus, it could be said that narratives are transformational, and not static (Adams, 2007; Hall, 2000) as individuals will continue to reflect on their situational experience, throughout their transitions beyond HE, and position themselves accordingly (Giddens, 1984; 1990; 1991). Figure 7:1 details the narratives identified in relation to the hospitality industry and labour market in general.

Within Figure 7:1 narrative orientations are presented against two axes. This provides a visual representation of different narrative typologies and highlights the key differentiating factors amongst the stories presented, in terms of vocational orientations towards the labour market. The vertical axis represents orientations to the hospitality employment marketplace. The



**Figure 7:1 Hospitality Graduates' Orientations to the Labour Market**

propensity to enter the hospitality industry upon completion of studies is therefore considered here. Transcending this axis horizontally is the graduate's narrated engagement with the graduate labour market. Thus the inclination to apply for jobs explicitly marketed as 'graduate jobs' (or requiring a degree within the entry requirements) is specifically noted here.

Replacing Tomlinson's (2007) 'careerist' orientation (an active orientation towards the labour market) within the matrix is the 'hospitality career professional narrative'. The narratives presented here were from individuals that were proactively engaging with the search for graduate jobs within the hospitality industry. They were generally applying, or had secured positions on graduate schemes which entail developmental training and an expectation of rapid development into management based positions within the hospitality industry. These individuals often embodied the notion of 'graduateness' and this was a core component of their current identity. They valued their degree credentials and the benefits that they can

bring in terms of future employment. A significant number of hospitality graduates fell into this category in terms of their narrative orientation. However, as noted by Holmes (2001) a graduate identity is not always confirmed by significant Others, leading individuals to question their ability to secure a graduate position within the competitive labour market. As a result, a number of participants within this study opted not to exclusively apply for jobs within the graduate labour market. Instead they looked for hospitality positions which matched their existing experience within the industry, and thus are referred to as 'hospitality employee narratives'. These individuals were often active in their approach to the labour market however they were frequently looking at more entry level positions. For a number of these graduates their holistic narratives still incorporated career and career development as a component of their life stories (Giddens, 1991) however the more traditional interpretations of 'working your way up' within an organisation were also narrated. This suggests that in contrast to the reflexivity thesis (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Beck, Giddens & Lash, 1994) some graduates were anticipating the reproduction of family trajectories as they progress through their careers

Another group of graduates were less willing to 'play the game' associated with graduate recruitment, and participate in the aggressive tactical manoeuvres associated with the war for talent. Self-imposed cultural restrictions were evident as some individuals positioned their narratives in relation to Others. For several of these individuals other life priorities impacted their orientation to the labour market, for example wanting to go travelling, or moving 'home' on completion of their studies. This approach to narrating employability emphasised the longer term implications of career and the limitations that the current generation of graduates perceive of the jobs market, in terms of offering fulfilment as they progress into the future (Barron *et al.*, 2007; Leask, Fyall & Barron, 2011; Martin, 2005; Maxwell, Ogden & Broadbridge, 2010; Morton, 2002; Richardson, 2010; Sheahan, 2005). By approaching career trajectories in

this manner there are implications for HEI's and DHLE data returns in particular, which impacts league table rankings (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2011). The reputation of programmes may also be compromised if hospitality graduates are deemed only suitable for entry into operational positions.

A relatively small proportion of graduates that participated in this study were not considering entering the hospitality industry upon completion of their studies, which had an impact upon the way in which narratives were framed. These graduates all narrated careers in terms of the bottom quadrants of Figure 7:1. For some they can be referred to as 'lost talent'; individuals that were actively engaging with the graduate labour market, or who had successfully secured graduate level jobs, albeit not in the hospitality industry. Their orientation and avoidance of the hospitality industry highlights how, for some the industry does not offer a desired career trajectory (Richardson, 2008; 2009; 2010). Their narratives therefore emphasised the transferable nature of skills and broad management learning to a greater extent than those looking specifically to enter the hospitality industry. These individuals were successfully able to capitalise on their graduate credentials and orientate themselves within the graduate labour market.

The final group of individuals narrated 'withdrawn' orientations to the labour market. These individuals were primarily not considering entering the labour market upon completion of their UG degrees, a very small number of individuals' narratives could be categorised in this manner. Further study often dominated their narratives, however travelling and 'taking some time out' were also noted. In some instances, these narratives demonstrated an indifference towards the labour market, with other priorities taking precedence. For one graduate in particular a somewhat *laissez faire* approach to the labour market was noted as they intended to draw on social networks in order to, eventually, secure a position upon completion of their degree. However, particularly when additional study was mentioned narratives anticipated a

more career focused trajectory, once individuals took the decision to enter the labour market. Thus this element of the model encapsulates a broad spectrum of graduates with highly divergent narratives of employability.

This analysis of graduates' narrative orientations to the labour market helps to contextualise the way in which HE experience is narrated and narratives are constructed. The life projects presented (Giddens, 1991) and significance of Others within the development of graduate identity (Holmes, 2001) highlight differences amongst the individuals that participated in this study, and their peers; the socio-cultural context associated with employability is therefore directly related to this.

## **7.2.5 The Dialogic Construction of Narratives**

### ***Multivoiced Dialogue***

Throughout Chapters Four, Five and Six elements of dialogism were highlighted within analysis. The use of what Bakhtin (1981) refers to as *polyphony* and *heteroglossia*, or multivoiced dialogue has therefore been identified through the identification of rhetoric features and classification of Others voices and i-positions within narratives. The work of Aveling, Gillespie and Cornish (2015) was used in order to systematically identify and consider the interactions between these voices and therefore inform the dialogic construction of employability. The socially constructed nature of employability, as positioned in Chapter Two, supported this approach. Dialogic analysis also allowed an interpretation of the individual's sense of self to be illuminated. In line with the work of Frank (2010) on narratology and Giddens (1991) narrative identity theory, individuals used stories in order to portray a sense of who they are and why they have made certain decisions. Shared understandings of these stories and the recognisable choices and agentic behaviour exhibited has led to a holistic understanding of who hospitality graduates are.

Within the narratives elicited a number of different voices were identified within dialogue. These were presented explicitly through the identification of specific and general Others. Echoes of social language were also present; these were identified through knowledge of the *field* and through the thematic approaches to data analysis which identified reoccurring patterns within the language use of hospitality graduates that participated in this study. The relationships between different voices was then considered in order for comments to be made regarding the evaluative overtones present within dialogue (Aveling, Gillespie & Cornish, 2015).

The voice of academics (hospitality educators) appeared to be prevalent in the way that employability was constructed by participants in this research, these were accompanied by the voice of the university (generically). Reference was made both indirectly and explicitly, through named Others, to lecturers in particular. Thus these voices represent *ventriloquation* whereby a speaker uses a social language without owning it (Wertsch, 1991), and the representation of inner-Others (Aveling, Gillespie & Cornish, 2015). In terms of interaction these voices were used in order to support decisions made and rationalise agentive action, they were therefore privileged (Wertsch, 1991) within dialogue, highlighting the importance of these individuals and their voices in the social construction of employability.

The voice of labour market employers was also given precedence within the construction of employability. Through reflexivity (Beck, 1994; Beck, Giddens & Lash, 1994; Giddens, 1984; Giddens, 1991; Lash, 1994; Meštrović, 1998), as a component of western society, graduates drew on their experiences of engaging with employers in order to help frame employability. There were, at times, 'dialogical knots' (Aveling, Gillespie & Cornish, 2015) within discourse. These areas of conflict and tension often created a parody (Sullivan, 2012) in that graduates disagreed with the social understanding of Others words. As a result i-positions did not share

the same perspective as these Others. From these contradictions the identification of a perceived gap between hospitality graduates and employers has been noted.

Throughout the interviews with graduates a number of significant Others were mentioned. This included peers, friends and family. The extent to which Others featured in dialogue was often linked to social capital. For example, the two individuals that had attended private school, consistent with prior research, had access to great social capital. This meant that they were able to draw on the voice of family friends and acquaintances in framing their employability and reflexively considering how they are going to enter the labour market by capitalising on social networks, as against gaining employment from applying for advertised positions. The variety of voices present in graduates' dialogue thus demonstrates the various means by which employability can be socially constructed.

### ***Influence of the Researcher; reflexivity and positionality***

The relationship between various voices and the research participants' presentation of self, through multi-voiced dialogue, is a core component of dialogic narrative analysis as a methodology. However, the influence of the researcher and their positionality is also a key consideration. Thus, the interaction between research participants and investigator has been touched upon in terms of the context of these interactions and their significance in the 'i-for-the –Other' development of social identity throughout Chapters Four, Five and Six. However the reflexive process associated with data collection, analysis and development of the research diary will now be reflected upon.

Riessman (2008, p.139) suggested that researchers carry 'their identities with them like tortoise shells' when they enter the research setting, thus it is important to explicitly note the reflexive processes that influenced the production and interpretation of narrative data. This reflexive interrogation helps to differentiate dialogic analysis from other forms of narrative approaches, and the way in which the authors experience is positioned for the reader is



integral to both dialogic narrative analysis (Sullivan 2012) and constructivist or constructionist approaches to research (Lincoln *et al*, 2013). The capacity to 'hear' stories, as noted by Frank (2012 p.43), is also an important area to reflect upon. Judgement regarding what to include, and write, is not unaccountably intuitive, yet values and influences from the self will impact upon the capacity to 'hear' important stories from within the multiple transcripts collated.

Within the research process the cultural commonality between researcher and research participants, and approachability of the researcher, appeared to influence dialogue. A number of the participants asked about the researcher's career trajectory and decision to undertake a PhD, having left industry related employment. Thus, the personal characteristics of the researcher (white, relatively young (30), female, middle class, British, with experience of hospitality education (BA (Hons) Hospitality Management, MSc Hospitality Management and PhD Tourism and Hospitality) and hospitality employment (12 years' experience prior to leaving the industry) and participants (primarily white, young (21-25), female, British or European, with experience of hospitality education and hospitality employment) may have helped to facilitate conversations and therefore the depth of information gleaned within interviews. Questions from participants (particularly those from a similar cultural background to the researcher) also suggested that relationships were developed within the interviews, and conversation was not wholly dominated by the researcher as is sometimes the case in this form of data collection (Bryman, 2012). This reduced the distance between the researchers' position and the Other (participant). In line with the work of Bakhtin (1981) it was evident that socio-ideological languages (belonging to professions and generations, for example) could therefore be understood between researcher and participants as the shared backgrounds and limited distance facilitated comprehension.

The previously noted version of self, as a former hospitality graduate sat alongside the current identity of the researcher, as a hospitality educator and teaching assistant within the *field*.



Each element of the researchers' identity impacted the study. Within the research process it was apparent that in terms of addressivity, HEIs were often referred to, which was interpreted through the implication that the researcher would be able to influence curriculum development and decisions made by HEIs with regards to hospitality education. This suggests that the influence of the researcher's position (an employee at a HEI teaching hospitality management), and the fact that a number of the research participants asked about this in the recruitment process may have impacted on the research process. It was also clear that shared knowledge was assumed within some of the interviews, where some sort of relationship had developed with the participants prior to undertaking the research. In some cases this was because there has been extensive email contact prior to the interview. In other instances this relationship was evident as participants studied at the same institution, which the researcher taught at. This meant that some elements of transcripts may not be understood by an external audience, or that further clarification would be required in order to fully understand a section of dialogue. Notes were made on transcripts to identify these areas and where they have been utilised within analysis additional information has been provided in order to ensure that the holistic narrative is relayed. For example, in the analysis of Excerpt 5.12, Mikkel and Daney's transcripts were both referred to in order to provide a transparent analysis of WBL initiatives where assumed knowledge was evident as they had both addressed the researcher as a familiar academic and lecturer within sections of dialogue.

The researchers' prior experience and current position also impacted upon the way in which narratives were analysed, and the emphasis given to excerpts that have been presented in preceding chapters. Within the research diary parallels were noted between these personal experiences and the research participants, as individuals. In many cases the background information and prior experience narrated by participants resonated. Like many others the researcher had struggled with elements of school life, as a result had not attended university

at eighteen, instead opting to travel and work. Employment sought during this time was within the hospitality industry as this was a familiar industry that had provided employment, enjoyment and advancement opportunities since the age of fourteen. The selection of narratives from Kari (Excerpt 4.2) and Daney (Excerpt 4.4), who both had prior experience within the industry, and started university slightly older than many of their peers', could therefore be seen to demonstrate the influence of personal experience in the approach to analysis. A different author may not have connected with, and valued these narratives in the same manner. It's also interesting to note that both positive and negative elements of hospitality based employment resonated with the researcher. Having been employed in the industry (operational and management based posts) and having subsequently left the industry (due to the pressures of antisocial working hours and family commitments) both the positive and negative depictions of hospitality employment presented by participants were also familiar. Thus the inner turmoil exhibited by some participants, regarding the way that they considered the industry and adaption of their degree content, skills and personal capital to support employment outside of the industry was somewhat familiar. Similarly the positive experiences of hospitality employment, particularly in terms of the social relationships that develop alongside employment, were also highly recognisable. Having experienced both dimensions of hospitality employment it was felt that objectivity could be found in both perspectives, and they were therefore equally represented within analysis as a result of balanced dialogue within interviews.

In contrast to this personal experience it was also noted that many students did not have prior involvement in the hospitality industry before undertaking their degrees. As an academic this is something which has always intrigued the researcher. The polarity between teaching those with extensive experience and those who have, in some cases, never been employed, on reflexive consideration, has also influenced the direction of the research and way in which

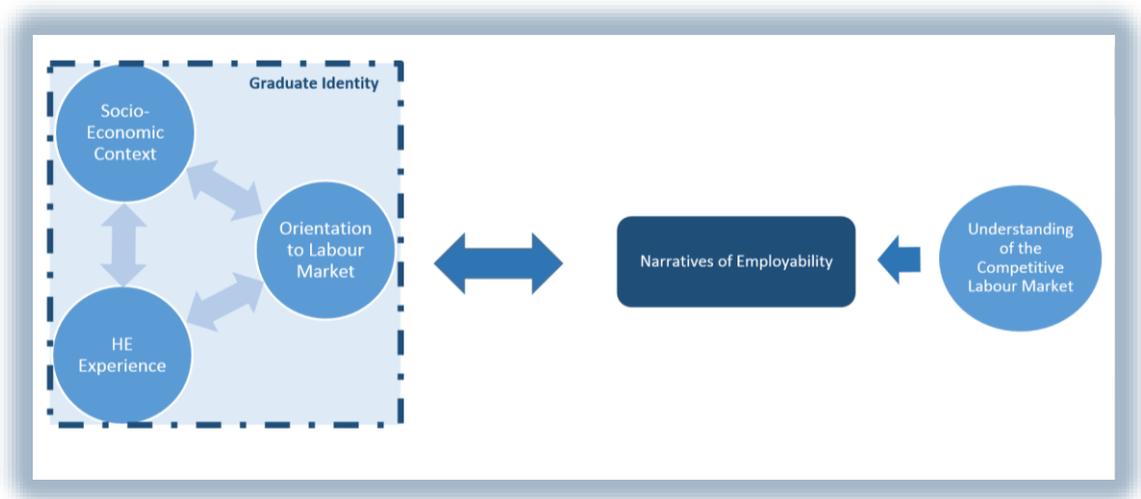
WBL initiatives were critiqued. The importance ascribed to vocational training as a component of the hospitality curriculum, and challenges associated with developing initiatives has been central to the researcher's employment (Hine, Gibson & Horner, 2015) thus the emphasis given to Chapter Five, and in particular, the focus on vocational elements of the hospitality curriculum can clearly be attributed to positionality; a personal and vested interest in the discipline area. However, despite this specific interest in WBL the belief that all students should undertake a placement is not upheld by the researcher (particularly as an operational based placement was actively avoided by the researcher, due to extensive experience prior to completing a degree). Therefore while the merits of WBL and placements were discussed somewhat extensively in Chapter Two the realities of these benefits were questioned, again contributing to the focus of Chapter Five, as this was explored in detail.

In reflecting on the context of interviews and background of the researcher, different versions of self are highlighted. These 'selves', or in a dialogical sense 'voices' are evident throughout this research. However, in explicitly reflecting on each aspect of the research process the reader is enlightened as to the dimensions that have informed writing, and the dialogic nature of the stories told by participants is highlighted.

### **7.2.6 Hospitality Graduates' Narratives of Employability**

This chapter has considered the way in which narratives of employability are constructed by hospitality graduates as understood in the social domain. The dialogic resources drawn upon and content of these narratives has been discussed and analysed. Drawing on the conceptual model presented in Chapter Two (Figure 2:2 The Development of Narratives of Employability) a framework for considering the core dimensions of employability narratives was developed.

While this model was useful in order to help frame this study a simplified version has been developed in order to provide applicability to other disciplines.



**Figure 7:2 The Construction of Employability Narratives**

Figure 7:2 The Construction of Employability Narratives, has therefore been developed in order to provide a visual representation of the relationships between various key considerations within this study. Feeding into graduates' narratives of employability are the three core elements of this chapter; the socio-cultural context; HE experience and orientation to the labour market. Each of these areas impacts upon each other and are directly related to graduates' sense of self and projections of identity. Socio-cultural contexts and the structural constraints impeding individuals in their agentic behaviour influences engagement with activities associated with HE and the broad HE curriculum. These social conditions also influence orientations to the labour market, and the propensity to apply for a graduate job upon transitions beyond HE. Orientations to the labour market was discussed extensively in Chapter 7.2.3 and incorporates both orientations to industry specific employment and the graduate labour market more generally. The HE experience and activities engaged with are both influenced by existing social and cultural capital, and in turn impact on the acquisition of

new capital and the possession of *habitus*. The HE experience also impacts orientations to the labour market in that reflection of experience and self-identity shape progression routes.

Finally the competitive labour market is noted as having a bearing upon narratives of employability. The way in which this is perceived upon completion of a degree and an individual's ability to compete within the dynamic war for talent thus shape narratives. While this competition has not been specifically discussed within this thesis it is an important consideration and an area for future research impacting employability within the *field* of HE and graduate trajectories. The dialogic construction of narratives of employability is a dynamic environment, embedded in social relations.

### **7.3 Concluding Comments**

This chapter has provided a synthesis of the findings and analysis presented in previous chapters. It also demonstrated a new method of understanding hospitality graduates' employability, which has not previously been considered. Key findings and their implications for stakeholders groups such as students, hospitality educators and HEI's, industry bodies and government have been highlighted. The way in which this knowledge can be used in order to develop hospitality curriculum and inform research will now be considered in Chapter Eight. Recommendations will also be made with regards to the research process and areas for development.

## 8 Conclusions

### 8.1 Introduction

This final chapter revisits the key arguments and discussions presented within this thesis. It comprises a discussion of results and conclusions detailing how the research questions posed have been answered, thus developing a new understanding of employability relating to hospitality graduates. The key findings presented in Chapter Seven will be used in order to demonstrate how new knowledge has been derived as a result of this study. The practical applicability of this knowledge within the *field* of hospitality education, and within the HE environment more generally, will be noted in order to highlight a deeper understanding of employability than that which has been uncovered previously. Theory can therefore be expounded in order to inform future research and curriculum developments. Reflections on the methodological approach adopted will also be included in this chapter as a means of highlighting the way in which these considerations may also inform future research practice. Based on the conclusions drawn within this research, recommendations will be made in order to inform a range of stakeholders, in relation to hospitality education. The final section of the thesis will detail some of the studies limitations, and will make recommendations for future research into the *field* of employability.

### 8.2 Contribution to Knowledge

This thesis has drawn on the work of multiple authors who have situated employability within, what has been referred to as, the social domain (Burke, 2016; Holmes, 2001; Tholen, 2015; Tomlinson, 2010). It therefore draws heavily on sociological theory in order to develop understanding in a move away from dominant discourses surrounding the skills and attributes based approach to understanding employability (Dearing, 1997; Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2009; Leitch, 2006; Yorke & Knight, 2006), and the graduate *prima* that is often associated with engagement in HE (Baum, Ma & Payea, 2010; PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2007; Purcell & Elias, 2004). This alternative conception of employability takes into

consideration the socio-cultural and economic context surrounding the individual hospitality graduate. Prior research, underpinned by similar theory has attempted to provide somewhat generalizable results. Studies have therefore considered employability in graduates that have studied a range of subjects (Burke, 2016; Tholen, 2013; Tomlinson, 2007; 2008), although, samples have predominantly been constructed of individuals attending pre-92 HEI's (Tholen, 2013; Tomlinson, 2007; 2008), and cannot therefore be seen as representative of the broader student population. The use of hospitality as a case study is particularly interesting due to the vocational nature of associated degree programmes. The subject is also taught at a range of HEI's totalling 118 in number, and including both pre and post-92 HEI's (UCAS, 2017b). It therefore offers an insight into a diverse range of graduates who often make choices as to which HEI they will attend based on socio-cultural factors (Ball *et al.*, 2002; Ball, Reay & David, 2002; Crozier *et al.*, 2008; Reay, David & Ball, 2005; Reay *et al.*, 2001).

Drawing on structure, agency and identity within a dialogical context is an approach to considering employability, which has not previously been explored. This study therefore provides both discipline specific and methodological contributions to broader understandings of the subject area. Dialogic narrative analysis has not been used within the *field* of employability research previously. By adopting this methodological approach this study offers a unique insight into the way in which employability is narrated. The *polyphonic* and *heteroglossic* elements of multivoiced narratives highlight the social dimensions of language (Bakhtin, 1981; Frank, 2005; Holquist, 1990) and how, as individuals, graduates draw on the voice of Others, and broad societal echoes, in order to reflexively develop a presentation of self. Shared understandings of these broad voices and the social situation within which they are reproduced contribute to the analysis of findings. The depth of insight gleaned through this approach to the research process offers an interpretation which could not be developed

through a purely thematic based analysis, which would have replicated previous studies, such as those conducted by Tholen (2013) and Tomlinson (2007; 2008).

In line with the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of this thesis, and drawing on the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966) it was argued that knowledge is gleaned in social situations. Thus a shared understanding of social phenomenon contributes to the development of knowledge, understanding and meaningful reality (Riessman, 2008). The use of interviews in order to elicit narratives therefore provided a means of interpreting employability through the data collection and subsequent analysis process.

In terms of theoretical contributions this piece of work has developed a new method of understanding employability related to hospitality graduates. As a result, the model presented in Chapter Seven (Figure 7:2) demonstrates how the core elements of a hospitality graduates' sense of self interact, in order to construct narratives of employability. The importance of individuals' social and cultural capital, and underlying *habitus* as components of their background have therefore been highlighted as core to the development of employability narratives and future trajectories. The identification of societal discourses, referenced as 'echoes' in dialogue, emphasises the significance of socially constructed 'norms' within this construction of narratives. This finding addresses the first research aim of this thesis, in terms of evaluating the way hospitality graduates narrate employability.

In addressing the second research aim (*contribute to and develop further knowledge of the way in which hospitality students engage with HE and prepare themselves for progressing beyond HE*) the in-depth insight into individuals' experiences of HE also provides a new understanding of the way in which these contribute to employability and trajectories beyond HE. A number of individuals had not effectively negotiated the *field* of HE, or engaged with a range of activities that help to develop employment related currencies. Therefore the development of personal capital was limited, resulting in hospitality graduates often not fully

embodying a new *habitus* associated with 'graduateness'. In line with this, graduates' ability to position themselves effectively within the competitive labour market was also limited. This finding contradicts the work of Tholen (2013) and Tomlinson (2008) who both suggested that UK graduates had a good understanding of the positional competition associated with employability, and as a result actively adopted strategies in order to enhance this. This research therefore contributes to the growing body of literature on employability in both general and discipline specific terms. Its continuity in the challenge towards mainstream ideologies and contribution to the body of knowledge in this area, means the socio-cultural context of employability is, and will continue, to receive attention. This in turn will help understandings move away from the meritocracy which dominates understanding of educational systems at present.

From the insights gleaned through this research practical recommendations for stakeholders and curriculum development have been made in the next section. These recommendations have the student at the heart of their foundations and as such provide a contemporary approach to curriculum development which takes into consideration some of the lived realities associated with studying hospitality today. This currency, within the highly dynamic and evolving HE environment is essential if educational provisions are to remain current and continue attracting candidates. These recommendations also address the final research aim of this thesis (*to inform future curriculum developments and the way in which hospitality students are prepared for their transition beyond UG hospitality education and thus influence future developments within the hospitality industry*).

### **8.3 Recommendations for Key Stakeholders**

The preceding section has highlighted the key findings resultant of this study. Implications for stakeholders have also been noted throughout Chapter Seven. These implications inform recommendations, which can in turn, influence future developments within the *field* of



hospitality education. These recommendations address the primary aim of this thesis in terms of informing future curriculum developments and in the way in which hospitality students are prepared for their transition beyond UG hospitality education. They are based exclusively on the new knowledge presented in previous chapters.

### 8.3.1 Recommendations for Undergraduate Hospitality Education

Based on the premise that the purpose of HE is, to many, concerned with labour market returns as a result of learning and development, the findings of this research highlights a number of areas where the employability of hospitality graduates' could be improved in order to support employment. Areas relating to development which may not be directly linked to immediate employment and employability have also been included as these are also integral to the fundamental values of HE, learning and knowledge generation. Throughout the findings, discussion and analysis chapters a number of key considerations have been noted, thus this section will draw on these areas in order to make recommendations for hospitality educators in order to help inform hospitality curriculum development. In undertaking initiatives related to these recommendations hospitality may better prepare graduates for their transition into the workplace and hospitality related employment. These recommendations are presented in Table 8:1.

Key Recommendations for Hospitality Educators and HEI's	Rationale
<p><b>It is imperative that the delivery and development of WBL as a component of hospitality education is reconsidered and extended, with a focus on activities beyond operational duties.</b></p> <p>This may be achieved through a more flexible approach to WBL integration within modules.</p>	<p>The development of employment specific skills and learning as a component of HE (Bullock <i>et al.</i>, 2009; Jones, Green &amp; Higson, 2017; Thompson, 2017; Wilson, 2012), and specifically in relation to the vocational nature of hospitality education (Alexander, 2007a; Alexander, Lynch &amp; Murray, 2009; Gibson &amp; Busby, 2009; QAA, 2016; Solnet, Robinson &amp; Cooper, 2007; Walmsley, Thomas &amp; Jameson, 2011) is supported by WBL. However traditional approaches to WBL in hospitality education are not always appropriate (Alexander, 2007b; Hine,</p>

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Utilising part-time employment and short term placements as credit bearing activities could help encourage participation and reflection on current practice as a form of learning. Management shadowing and practical industry engagement beyond F&B operations would also be beneficial in helping to encourage engagement, particularly for those students that do not want to enter F&B upon graduation. This must however be supported by hospitality professionals and businesses committed to the development of hospitality students and graduates and not those businesses who may be looking for students to fill operational vacancies which do not support career development.

Gibson & Horner, 2015; Roberts, 2011). This study has suggested that graduates' opinions of WBL initiatives, particularly training restaurants, are often diverse, with many students disengaging from the WBL process, thus limiting their effectiveness. Within the sample a number of graduates also opted not to complete placements, or undertook purely operational roles, again undermining the effectiveness of this form of WBL. However, a high proportion of graduates undertake part-time work alongside their programmes. Opportunities to capitalise on the learning associated with this could therefore be gleaned. Credit bearing WBL modules could therefore utilise existing employment and short term (i.e. summer) employment in order to help develop graduates. This approach would also help to address the balance that many graduates struggle with in terms of time management when balancing work and study allowing individuals more time to explore other interests and self-development opportunities beyond the core curriculum. In developing a more flexible approach to WBL as a component of hospitality education the diversity of the student population will be taken into consideration, ensuring job specific development and reflection on this action in order to help enhance employability.

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**Only work with businesses that demonstrate and prioritise commitment to the development of hospitality students and graduates.**

In order to support development and graduate transitions into quality employment, hospitality academics should work with businesses and utilise case studies from organisations that can offer appropriately levelled positions for graduates. This will reduce negative experiences of employment (Barron, 2008; Barron *et al.*, 2007; Harkison, Poulston & Kim, 2011; Maxwell & Broadbridge, 2016; Maxwell, Ogden & Broadbridge, 2010; Poulston, 2008a; Poulston, 2008b; Teng, 2008) and perceptions of being underutilised, over-educated, over-skilled, or overqualified for the position within which graduates are employed within (McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011). For example, utilising the upmarket hotel sector as a primary exemplar of practice (Doherty *et al.*, 2001) should be avoided if these organisations do not support graduate development.

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**International experience within the hospitality industry should not be prioritised over the quality of experience within the industry.** This applies to WBL and placement experience in particular. In line with the previous recommendation operational placements and WBL should be scrutinised and avoided.

For many students an international placement experience is core. The international nature of experience is valuable for learning and development in terms of cultural and social capital development (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004). However the negative aspects of hospitality, and in particular operational experience should not be overlooked as the positive aspects of placements do not always outweigh the negative. This can lead to individuals not wanting to pursue a career within the industry as a result of their experience (Richardson 2008) despite having developed social and cultural capital which has been effectively crafted into a somewhat positive narrative surrounding placements.

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**Recognition and encouragement to engage with extra-curricular activities is essential and there is a requirement for this to be integrated into HEI and departmental discourses in order to help stimulate holistic development of graduates; particularly those from non-traditional backgrounds who do not have prior family experience of HE.** Initiatives that encourage engagement with additional activities beyond the core hospitality curriculum should be implemented and encouraged by faculty. The benefits of activities and development not directly related to employment needs to be highlighted and students supported in their ability to transfer this experience into employability based narratives.

Amongst the graduates that participated in this study a minority engaged with institutionally endorsed extra-curricular activities. These activities were not prioritised as, in line with the work of Greenbank (2015) the value of educationally relevant activities was not deemed as important in comparison to the hard currencies of having a degree and industry experience, by the majority of graduates that participated in this study. By encouraging engagement with additional activities that have the potential to contribute to the holistic development and employability the long terms employment prospects of hospitality graduates will be improved. This adheres to the premise put forward by Jackson (2010) who suggests that 'life' needs to be incorporated into the university curriculum. Within the sample dominant narratives associated with the drinking culture surrounding HE (Lewis *et al.*, 2011; Porter & Pryor, 2007; Singleton & Wolfson, 2009) deterred some from engaging with SU based activities. Thus, work also needs to be done in order to ensure that societies and clubs are inclusive towards those that do not want to engage with this aspect of the HE experience.

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**Ensure liberal approaches to hospitality education are**

It is important for HEIs and educators to recognise the benefits of liberal approaches to curriculum development,

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**incorporated into the core curriculum, as these are vitally important to the holistic development of hospitality graduates and their future employability.**

and balance these with vocational values (Dredge *et al* 2016; Lashley, 2015; Lashley, Lynch & Morrison, 2007a; Morrison & O'Mahony, 2003). This supports the development of graduates capable of critical thinking and having a positive impact on future developments within the hospitality industry and society (Fullagar & Wilson, 2012; Lugosi, Lynch & Morrison, 2009; Wilson *et al*, 2012).

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**Greater support for hospitality graduates in managing their transitions into employment is critical.** Providing students and graduates with additional help and support in terms of how they package personal capital and construct narratives of employability through timetabled sessions would encourage engagement. Incorporating discussion as to the roles and responsibilities that may be expected from a graduate job (even if not advertised as such) would also help support the maintenance of graduate identity within the competitive labour market.

Throughout their time as students hospitality graduates receive a great deal of information regarding employability. For those that have completed placements strong links with industry helped ensure that students were able to secure these experiences as a component of their programmes. However, this level of support was not always offered within the final year of study meaning that some graduates had not considered their employment trajectories until their impending transitions out of HE. HEIs continuing engagement with industry to support graduate transitions would have positive implications for DHLE data and therefore university reputation and brand building (Chapleo, 2007; Chapleo, Carrillo Durán & Castillo Díaz, 2011; Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2011). This support also needs to include a focus, which transcends the skills and attributes discourses that dominate employability literature (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004; Dearing, 1997; Leitch, 2006; Tholen, 2015; Yorke & Knight, 2006). Thus, ensuring that hospitality graduates are better prepared for highly competitive graduate labour market.

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**Mediate the narratives relayed to students and graduates regarding the value of HE.** The fact that there is not a linear link between education and employment should be highlighted and emphasised to students, particularly those from non-traditional backgrounds.

Graduates do not benefit equally from the completion of a degree (Adnett & Slack, 2007; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Furlong & Cartmel, 2005; Tomlinson 2007). While raising aspirations is an important component of HE, overhyping the value of a degree should be avoided. Thus, by mediating narratives HEIs and educators will reduce the misconception that a degree alone, is sufficient within the graduate market. This understanding will help graduates to develop holistically and therefore compete more effectively within the graduate labour market.

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**Recognise that some students have progressed in to HE as this is an embedded narrative and not because they have a genuine love for hospitality as a subject or a desire to enter the hospitality industry.**

Progression into HE has become ‘the norm’ (Ball, Reay & David, 2002) with almost 50% of school leavers applying for HE places (UCAS 2017a); the *doxic* conception of HE progression being ‘what people like us do’ (Bourdieu, 1990, p.64-65) has therefore permeated society. This means that a number of hospitality studnets have not had expereince of the industry. This must be accounted for within teaching and it is imperative that HEIs and educators recognise that not all graduates will want to enter the industry. Curriculums should take this into consideration and offer pathways through degrees that do not force studnets enter the industry and potentially enhance negative concptions of the workplace and hospitality employment.

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**Ensure broad career advice is available and focuses on opportunities beyond the hospitality industry.**

Not all hospitality graduates will progress into the hospitality industry (Barron *et al.*, 2007; King, McKercher & Waryszak, 2003; Raybould & Wilkins, 2005; Richardson, 2008; 2009; Richardson & Butler, 2012). Therefore, career advice and support should be offered to assist hospitality graduates in packaging narratives of employability in a manner that will assist them beyond the hospitality industry. Thus, the emphasis of transferable skills and capital, and consequently highlighting adaptability to the graduate labour market should be taught.

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**Ensure students are not coached through degree programmes.** HEIs and educators should safeguard against students taking an instrumental approach to learning in order to support the development of employability and learning.

Students often take an instrumental approach to education (Boden & Nedeva, 2010; Naidoo, 2003; Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005; Williams, 2013) and as a result do not fully develop employment related competencies and capital. Ensuring that students are not coached by educators and actively engage with their education will enhance learning (Barnett, 2005; Biggs, 1999; Bloom, 1972; Dall’Alba & Barnacle, 2007; Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004; Kuh *et al.*, 2007; Trowler, 2010; ). Educators must therefore adapt teaching and assesment methods to encourage engagement and should not adopt directive coaching methods of development in order to exclusively help studnets to pass assessments.

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**Increase marketing and brand building of HE hospitality programmes to help foster relationships with the hospitality industry.**

Encouraging engagement with the hospitality industry would support the development of curriculum and implementation of positive WBL experiences. Part-time employment with 'good' employers would also help maintain students' interest within the industry. Greater communication with industry would also mediate difference in industry / graduate employment expectations.

Much of the literature surrounding employability and hospitality graduates states that there is a divide between what industry wants and the skills and experience narrated by graduates (Brownell, 2008; Cheung, Law & He, 2010; Harkison, Poulston & Kim, 2011; Millar, Mao & Moreo, 2010; 2013a; People 1st, 2016; Raybould & Wilkins, 2006; Sisson & Adams, 2013; Spowart, 2011; Testa & Sipe, 2012). This divide was also perceived by some of the graduates that participated in this research. Chapter Two noted how it was not feasible to develop hospitality HE programmes to address the explicit needs of a certain sector of the hospitality industry. However, brand building and information for hospitality employers regarding the skills and knowledge held explicitly by hospitality graduates, and the way in which this may be beneficial to businesses could impact graduate trajectories. This form of knowledge sharing with industry will positively impact working conditions and encourage individuals to remain within the industry, utilising their vocationally specific knowledge (Barron *et al.*, 2007; King, Mckercher & Waryszak, 2003; Raybould & Wilkins, 2005; Richardson, 2008; 2009; Richardson & Butler, 2012), filling skills shortages and contributing to further development in the way that career trajectories are managed within the industry.

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**Development of the degree apprentice and degree level standards specific to the hospitality industry.**

Adopting different strategies in the delivery and development of hospitality curriculum, where WBL is core to programmes would provide an accessible model of HE.

The degree apprenticeship model appears to offer a solution in terms of developing vocationally relevant skills and experience through WBL as participants' on this programme would be in employment (Skills Funding Agency, 2015; Universities UK, 2016). The development of block delivery and flexible hospitality HE courses, often associated with this form of programme would support academic and vocational learning. At the time of writing limited work has been done to develop these programmes, thus missing opportunities to develop hospitality HE and increase participation amongst those that anticipate completing HE programmes (City & Guilds, 2015). Attraction of candidates who may not normally complete a traditional degree programme would also increase participation in hospitality education and therefore help address skills shortages and long-term career commitment within the industry.

*Table 8:1 Recommendations for Hospitality Educators*

### 8.3.2 Recommendations for the Hospitality Industry

In line with the above recommendations for HEIs and faculty a number of recommendations can also be made for the hospitality industry. Due to the vocational nature of hospitality degrees, engagement with industry is essential for curriculum to remain current and relevant. The recommendations presented in Table 8:2 therefore address this requirement for communication between education and industry enabling the quality relationship between HE and the hospitality industry to further develop.

Key Recommendations for the Hospitality Industry	Rationale
<p><b>Increase engagement with educational providers to help mediate graduate expectation.</b> Create narratives that can inspire yet mediate hospitality graduates expectations of trajectories into the hospitality industry. Direct communication between students and industry could also help reinforce messages surrounding the personal capital narratives that need to be presented in order to secure graduate jobs. This will encourage graduates to enter the hospitality industry thus addressing skills shortages and long-term commitment to graduate careers within the industry.</p>	<p>The divide between hospitality graduates and industry, in terms of perceived employment expectations was noted both in this study and previously (Harkison, Poulston &amp; Kim, 2011; Raybould &amp; Wilkins, 2006). The narratives of employability presented by graduates highlighted skills and experience within their core, in line with the work of Greenbank (2015). Engagement and communication between industry and educators would help hospitality graduates expand their narratives and package human capital more effectively, and in line with the way that employers actually recruit individuals. The extended prevalence of these narratives within graduates' social domain would also support their internalisation and adoption within dialogue. This would result in increased numbers of hospitality graduates competing for the most sought after jobs and maintaining their desire to progress into professional hospitality management careers. Graduates would therefore be utilising their skills and knowledge of hospitality in order to positively impact development of the</p>

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industry and achievement of individual company goals.

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**Ascribe greater value to students on WBL placements and in part-time employment.**

Students should not be limited to operational posts, instead they should be offered development and progression opportunities.

While the majority of positions within the hospitality industry are often classified as operational (People 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013), the skills and knowledge held by students and graduates should differentiate them within the competitive labour market. As such the hospitality industry should ensure that individuals are not merely employed in operational posts so as to encourage continued professional development and industry retention (Barron *et al.*, 2007; King, McKercher & Waryszak, 2003; Raybould & Wilkins, 2005; Richardson, 2008; 2009; Richardson & Butler, 2012). In the long term this will help to address management based skills shortages within the industry (People 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013; 2016) and create increased demand for positions within the hospitality industry.

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**Create a greater number of developmental posts (placements / graduate schemes) in order to encourage progression within the industry.** This should include highlighting clear career paths from hospitality HE, into the hospitality industry.

The visualisation of clear career trajectories, and development opportunities is an important consideration for graduates (Josiam *et al.*, 2010; Leask *et al.*, 2011; Martic, 2005; Maxwell & Broadbridge, 2016; Maxwell *et al.*, 2010; Sheahan, 2005) and therefore needs to be incorporated into HR planning within the industry. The creation of developmental posts, supplemented with positive and valuable industry engagement means that graduates will be more inclined to remain within the industry. Thus, industry specific skills and knowledge will be retained in order to support business development.

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**Reconsider the value that hospitality graduates and students could bring to the industry.** Understanding the content and nature of a hospitality degree and the

Entering dialogue with educational providers as to the content delivered in hospitality programmes could help encourage greater links and understanding between the two

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potential that this has for the industry, as against dwelling on practical skills gaps.

parties. In developing a greater understanding of the content of hospitality degrees employment and development opportunities can be created in order to enhance industry retention of graduates (Barron *et al.*, 2007; King, McKercher & Waryszak, 2003; Raybould & Wilkins, 2005; Richardson, 2008; 2009; Richardson & Butler, 2012) and provide meaningful careers for individuals. Thus, further retaining skilled graduates within the industry. This move to increase understanding and co-operation will also progress dialogues between education and industry which have often focused on practical skills gaps (Cheung, Law & He, 2010; Harkison, Poulston & Kim, 2011; Nolan *et al.*, 2010). This vocational dimension is an area of HE which is often questioned in terms of its rigor and appropriateness at UG level (Alexander, 2007b; Hine, Gibson & Horner, 2015; Roberts, 2011).

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**Take steps to enhance the image of the hospitality industry and associated working conditions.** Efforts made should attract individuals to the industry and reduce the perception that hospitality may be a form of downward social mobility for some graduates. The negative aspects of hospitality employment and culture within hospitality organisations should be addressed and supported by HR and Line Managers.

The working conditions surrounding hospitality employment lead many graduates to undertake other careers (Barron *et al.*, 2007; King, McKercher & Waryszak, 2003; Raybould & Wilkins, 2005; Richardson, 2008; 2009; Richardson & Butler, 2012). The negative perceptions of the industry which pertain in society also lead some to consider employment as unfavourable, and a form of downward social mobility. Changing working conditions and shift pattern surrounding the negative perceptions of organisational culture (Barron, 2008; Barron *et al.*, 2007; Harkison, Poulston & Kim, 2011; Maxwell & Broadbridge, 2016; Maxwell, Ogden & Broadbridge, 2010; Poulston, 2008a; Poulston, 2008b; Teng, 2008) will make hospitality employment more appealing. Thus, skills developed on degrees will be retained by the industry and organisations

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will be able to attract the ‘best’ graduates (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2003) within the ‘war for talent’.

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**Recognise the characteristics of the current generation of graduates and develop roles and contracts which are appealing to these individuals.** This will help to reshape narratives surrounding the nature of hospitality employment.

Encouraging graduates to enter the hospitality industry and providing favourable working conditions is essential in order to support development within the industry. The current generation of graduates are fundamentally different from their predecessors (Malone, 2007; Sheahan, 2005) and working patterns and management styles should reflect this ‘new workforce’ in order to create a sustainable future for the industry in terms of skill retention.

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**Develop employer branding initiatives and become an employer of choice with hospitality students and graduates.** Developing part-time employment opportunities, WBL experiences, placements and graduate posts, which support and develop hospitality students and graduates, by providing positive experiences, helps support industry retention.

Developing a positive employer brand image is essential if businesses are to attract talent (Akram, Cascio & Paauwe, 2014; Hine, 2017; Kristin & Surinder, 2004; Mandhanya & Shah, 2010). By working with educational providers to develop part-time employment opportunities, WBL experiences, placements and graduate jobs which support and develop hospitality students / graduates, a higher proportion will remain within the industry. This will reduce the number of ‘lost talent’ narratives within hospitality graduates orientations to the labour market, which are often resultant of negative experiences (Richardson, 2010; Richardson & Butler, 2012).

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**Work with educational providers in order to develop bespoke qualifications.** In order to increase the relevance of hospitality qualifications larger employers should work with hospitality educators to develop bespoke courses that benefit both individuals and industry. The potential for degree apprenticeships are recognised here.

Bespoke qualifications could close the gap between industry and education. Development of apprenticeship based courses which utilise industry employment could revolutionise the development of programmes, appealing to a broad range of individuals who have become engendered into the trajectory towards HE (Brown, Hesketh & Williams, 2004; Tomlinson, 2013). This would increase the number of

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hospitality graduates able to fill management based positions within the industry and address skills shortages often cited by employers (Cheung, Law & He, 2010; Harkison, Poulston & Kim, 2011; Nolan *et al.*, 2010) due to the requirement for a job within the qualification structure.

**Table 8:2 Recommendations for the Hospitality Industry**

### 8.3.3 Recommendations for Other Stakeholders

In addition to the primary stakeholders (hospitality educators and the hospitality industry), a number of further recommendations are also made. These apply to other stakeholders within the *field*, namely industry bodies and government. As key bodies which can influence the development of curriculum and dominant narratives within the *field* of hospitality education these stakeholders could have an instrumental impact on the future of hospitality education. Within Table 8:3 recommendations have been made for industry bodies (i.e. The Institute of Hospitality, Springboard, and People 1<sup>st</sup>, all of who have a vested interest in the development of hospitality education as a means of supporting the hospitality industry). The government (ministers sitting in the cabinet) have also been addressed due to their influence on HE in general.

Key Recommendations for Industry Bodies	Rationale
<p><b>Work together with industry and HEIs in order to create a cohesive narrative surrounding the value of hospitality in HE.</b> Highlighting the value that hospitality graduates can bring to the industry and the way in which hospitality employers recruit individuals, particularly graduates through publications and embedded narratives.</p>	<p>In acting as a mediator within the relationship between hospitality educators and the hospitality industry professional bodies have the opportunity to support the development of narratives beneficial to recruitment and retention of key talent within the hospitality industry. By developing a cohesive approach to narratives surrounding industry employment. The reoccurring prevalence of these narratives within the social domain is more likely to be noticed and therefore</p>

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internalised as a habitual understanding (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990), leading to increased industry retention of hospitality graduates.

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**Encourage hospitality businesses to utilise the skills and knowledge of hospitality students and graduates.** Businesses should also be discouraged from using hospitality students in purely operational posts.

Advocating developmental positions (both connected to and independent of relationships with HEIs) and quality placement experience (as against operational experience) will help ensure development and encourage individuals to pursue a career within the industry. This will reduce the number of negative experiences of hospitality employment which have previously lead to individuals choosing not to pursue a career within the industry (Barron *et al.*, 2007; King, McKercher & Waryszak, 2003; Raybould & Wilkins, 2005; Richardson, 2008; 2009; Richardson & Butler, 2012).

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**Support development and change to working practices and organisational culture within the hospitality industry.** This should include sharing best practice and supporting research into new working practices aimed at creating a sustainable industry and attracting talent.

The hospitality industry is often associated with negative working conditions which do not appeal to the current generation of students and graduates (Barron, 2008; Barron *et al.*, 2007; Harkison, Poulston & Kim, 2011; Maxwell & Broadbridge, 2016; Maxwell, Ogden & Broadbridge, 2010; Poulston, 2008a; Poulston, 2008b; Teng, 2008). Supporting the industry in deveoping new working practices, and advocating the positive aspects of hospitality based employment will help attract the best graduates into vacant positions and encourage the development of careers within the industry in order to benefit future practice.

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## Key Recommendations for Government

## Rationale

**Continue to develop initiatives to drive participation in HE.** Ongoing support for the development of degree apprenticeships and

By diversifying the HE offering so as to encourage participation the demand for hospitality education will potentially

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other ideas which may help revolutionise the delivery of hospitality in HE	increase. The knowledge base of those entering and employed within the industry also has the potential to increase, thus resulting in greater efficiency gains within the industry and greater professionalism.
<b>Modify narratives surrounding employability to take into consideration the competitive labour market and avoid overselling the value of a degree.</b>	By providing a more accurate depiction of the graduate labour market and returns that individuals are able to gain as a result of their HE qualifications aspirations and expectations will be mediated. Thus, graduates will have a more realistic expectation of employment on completion of their studies reducing the disparity between employers and graduates career expectations (Cheung, Law & He, 2010; Harkison, Poulston & Kim, 2011; Nolan <i>et al.</i> , 2010) and therefore reducing the number of graduates leaving the industry due to unexpected negative experiences (Richardson, 2010; Richardson & Butler, 2012).

**Table 8:3 Recommendation for Other Stakeholders**

## 8.4 Limitations of this Study

This study has provided an insight into the way in which hospitality graduates narrate employability. The purpose of this study was to develop a new understanding of hospitality graduates and therefore the number of participants was deliberately restricted so that a depth of understanding within the research population could be focused upon. The findings can therefore be considered as situated ‘truths’ (Riessman, 2008). A larger sample would have contributed to a greater variety in narratives, which would have expanded the study, and its findings. However, it would not have been possible to analyse and comment on all of the potential differences amongst students in order to be fully representative of the whole population. The sample drawn upon was, however, representative of the general population. It therefore was predominantly made up of female graduates, under 25 years old, who

originated aged from the UK, in line with the findings of Walmsley (2011), relating to the hospitality student.

As a result of this, only limited attention was given to age, gender, ethnicity and socio-economic groupings within this study. No attempt was made to specifically include or exclude multiple participants based on this information, and due to the limited scope of this research, no attempt has been made to generalise or draw conclusions based on these factors. The only time that they have been mentioned is when individuals from specific socio-economic groupings have exhibited tendencies which prior research has identified as being common amount that group of individuals. The research methodology could therefore be seen as limited in its ability to include individuals from all of the different demographic delineations and groups.

Due to the predominantly self-selecting nature of the sampling technique adopted (Bryman, 2012) it could also be argued that only those graduates who wanted to discuss employability were included within the sample. This could influence the responses and may have resulted in some degree of bias within the discussion. However, given the variety in student views that were narrated within the findings, it does not appear that this was a major constraint. There were also a number of graduates that were approached through personal contacts, these individuals did not present significantly different views from the rest of the sample, suggesting, again, that the recruitment process did not significantly limit findings.

Linked to this the researchers' identity, as a female research student and hospitality academic may have influenced responses. Having completed a hospitality degree and subsequently pursued a career beyond the hospitality industry the researcher could be seen to empathise with certain narratives. This career trajectory would also have undoubtedly contributed to the lens through which narratives were interpreted. Other researchers may have elicited different responses and different key areas of discussion may have arisen within interviews, and thus

within the data. This was reflected upon within the research diary throughout the data collection and analysis process, so as to try and mediate any overt biases which may have arisen (Patton, 2002). However, despite this it does not suggest that the research is not valuable, however it does refute truth claims which may be apparent within the research contributions noted.

In terms of methodological considerations the only research method adopted was the in-depth semi-structured interview. Argument could be made for methodological triangulation (Bryman, 2012), in order to overcome the weaknesses associated with the single method approach. Similarly consideration of the educational and industry perspectives surrounding employability in hospitality graduates could also have been included in order to gain a holistic picture of the way in which employability is narrated. This approach would have taken into account additional stakeholders and recommendations made could have been more specific to these parties. However, despite this weakness a considerable amount of depth was included in each interview and a somewhat thorough discussion provided based on the students perspective. There is also evidence that the student perspective of employability needed greater attention (Tymon, 2013) and interviews are deemed a strong method in achieving the required depth to support this (Bryman, 2012; Patton, 2002).

## 8.5 Future Research

The theoretical underpinning of this research, based on a dialogic approach to understanding language, within social situations (Aveling, Gillespie & Cornish, 2015; Bakhtin, 1981; Frank, 2010; Hermans, 2001; Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007; Holquist, 1990; Sullivan, 2012), and drawing on the work of Bourdieu on the development of social and cultural capital, and acquisitions of a new *habitus* as students negotiate the *field* of HE (Bourdieu, 1977; 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) has provided a new understanding of employability. The analytical approach takes into consideration structure and agency, the positional competition relating to

employment within the labour market, and the interactional nature of trajectories. It therefore act as an exemplar as to how employability could be further researched. Similar studies, based on this socio-cultural perspective could further explore employability within this context, thus supporting the development of theory beyond mainstream conceptions of the subject area. This study therefore provides an agenda for a new approach to research within the field of graduate trajectories, employability and engagement with HE.

In addition to this new agenda for research the scope of this study could also be extended. As noted previously, time and financial resources impacted upon the reach of this study. Future research could expand the study in order to broaden the number of participants, this could in turn lead to a more thematic approach to data analysis in order to establish a greater number of patterns within the data (Bryman, 2012; Czarniawska, 2004; Riessman, 2008). As against looking specifically for variety amongst research participants and their narratives, this focus would allow for generalisations to be made in order to better inform policy makers and hospitality educators, whose role it is to assist students in their development of graduate employability. A longitudinal approach would also be interesting in order to establish how employability narratives change and develop throughout the transition process; this may also include the changing nature of employability as students' progress through HE or on completion of their studies. The way employability narratives reflectively develop having transitioned beyond HE would also be interesting to consider within future research. Similarly the propensity to remain within the hospitality industry could be included in a more longitudinal study, this would help establish the way in which industry specific employability narratives develop over time and how they evolve in light of advancing trajectories.

There is also the potential to include other stakeholders within research on the construction of graduates' narratives of employability. The industry perspective in particular, would be beneficial to consider. This is because of the significance that individuals representing the

industry (recruiting managers) have in terms of granting employment opportunities and affirming graduate identity for individuals (Holmes, 2001). Development of this perspective would also mitigate researcher bias in the analysis of graduates' narratives as the recruiting managers would support this analysis within the research process.

## **8.6 Research Reflections**

This thesis has taken four and a half years to complete. It has been accomplished alongside a teaching contract, and therefore the balance between academic commitments and research obligations has had to be carefully managed. This has, without a doubt, been challenging. Commitment to the process, and perseverance, have resulted in a study almost unrecognisable to the original research conception. This does however mean that a truly original, and somewhat useful analysis has resulted. The practical applicability of these findings to curriculum development, and supporting improvements in graduate employability have been a driving force in attempts to complete this thesis. Plans are already underway to integrate 'recommendations' into the hospitality programmes at Plymouth University and, through forthcoming publications, it is hoped that other institutions will also consider how findings could improve hospitality education throughout the country.

This study has also spurred an interest, not only in research relating to employability, but also recruitment practices within the hospitality industry. The way in which socio-cultural conditions 'play-out' within the interaction between recruiting managers and potential employees is a key area of future research to pursue. The development of careers within the hospitality industry, and socio-cultural reasons surrounding individuals wanting to leave the industry is also another area that particularly appeals, in terms of future research work.



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# 10 Appendices

## Appendix 1 Interview Schedule

### **Background**

To start, could you please tell me a bit about your background? Home, Parents, schooling etc?

- Age
- (Gender)
- Home
- Parental experience of university
- Family
- Route to university from school
- Did you have to work hard?

### **Motivation**

Why did you decide to go to university to study hospitality?

- Underlying motivation
- Family support
- Friends decisions as an influence
- Subject choice
- University choice
- Previous experience

Why do you think this was the 'right' choice for you?

Has this continued to motivate you?

Has university life been as you expected it to be?

How do you feel about your educational achievements? (Value of degree, value of institution)

- Average grades

Do you feel apprehensive about leaving university/ starting your career?

### **Future Aspirations**

What do you want to do once you finish university?

- Type of work (initial and long term)
- Location / living arrangements
- Other Commitments

Do you feel this is achievable?

Do you envisage anything impacting on your ability to achieve this?

How important is career to you?

- Approach to career
- Specific elements

### **Education / Engagement**

While you have been at university what have you done to make the most out of your time as a student and ensure that you will ultimately be successful in your goals?

- Industry contacts
- WBL
- Jobs
- Extra curricula activities
- Taught sessions
- Time management
- Relationships with peers
- Relationships with staff
- Emotions (& enjoyment) fitting in'
- Other commitments (negative impacts)
- Finances
- Balance; work /life

In hindsight could you have done more? Is there anything you wish you had done?

Is there anything else that you would have liked the university to have done or provided in order to help enhance your employability?



Has anything prohibited you being successful?  
How have you financially supported yourself?  
How has your time at university changed you?

### ***Education / Employability***

Which aspects of university have helped you to prepare for employment?

- Programme specific
- Training restaurants / practical experience
- Placements (core/optional)
- Extra curricula activities
- Living arrangements

Moving forward do you feel prepared for employment?

- Competition relative to others
- Personal differentiation
- Confidence

What skills or attributes do you possess which will help you to get ahead others when applying for jobs?

Is there anything else that the university could have done in order to help you to develop your employability?

Do you think that competition in the labour market is fair? Equality

Is there a demand specifically for hospitality graduates? (and graduates in general)

Did you expect it to be like this?

Do you have any other thoughts on employability or the labour market?

## Appendix 2 Ethics Approval

### RESEARCH WITH PLYMOUTH UNIVERSITY

Catherine Hine  
PGR Student/DTA  
Faculty of Business

Ref: FoB/UPC/FREC/FREC1415.32/clc  
Date: 15 April, 2015

Dear Catherine

**Ethical Approval Application No: FREC1415.32**  
**Title: The construction of graduate employability: An analysis of UK hospitality students**

The Faculty Research Ethics Committee has considered the revised ethical approval form and is now fully satisfied that the project complies with Plymouth University's ethical standards for research involving human participants.

Approval is for the duration of the project. However, please resubmit your application to the committee if the information provided in the form alters or is likely to alter significantly.

We would like to wish you good luck with your research project.

Yours sincerely

*(Sent as email attachment)*

Dr James Benhin  
Chair  
Faculty Research Ethics Committee  
Faculty of Business

Faculty of Business  
University of Plymouth  
Drake Circus  
Plymouth  
Devon PL4 8AA United Kingdom

T +44 (0) 1752 585540  
F +44 (0) 1752 585715  
W [www.plymouth.ac.uk](http://www.plymouth.ac.uk)



## Appendix 3 Participant Information and Informed Consent

# RESEARCH WITH PLYMOUTH UNIVERSITY

### Information & Consent Sheet for Interviewees

You are being invited to take part in this research study because you are in the final year of studying a hospitality programme at a UK based higher education institution. Before you agree to participate it is important that you understand what this study will involve; please take the time to read the following information.

#### *Project Title*

The Construction of graduate employability; an analysis of UK hospitality students

#### What is this project about?

The aim of this research is to develop a new understanding of the way in which you (hospitality students studying in the UK) construct your employability. I would like to understand the extent to which you feel prepared to enter the graduate labour market and the way in which your time in higher education has facilitated this.

#### How will the data be collected and used?

If you agree to participate in this study I will organise an interview with you. Depending on your location this will be in person, on the telephone or via skype. The interview will last no longer than 1 hour and I will record it in order to keep a record of what you say. During the interview I will ask you a number of questions about your time in higher education, and your plans for the future. I will also ask you to provide some background information about yourself and the choices that you have made with regards to your studies and employability.

Once the interview is complete I will transcribe it for analysis. The transcriptions will be kept securely in accordance with Plymouth Universities regulations; you may request to see or listen to these at any time. The data will be confidential and any publications produced as a result of the study will protect your identity. I will not store your name alongside any data. The findings of the study will be disseminated through my PhD, peer reviewed journal articles and presentations at conferences.

**Will I be remunerated for my time?**

Once we have completed an interview I will send you a £20 Amazon Voucher as remuneration for your time and as a thank you for your help and participation in this study. Where possible this will be sent electronically.

**What if you want to withdraw from the study?**

Participation in interviews is voluntary; and you have the right to withdraw from the study without prejudice. However, due to the anonymisation of data, for the purposes of data analysis, you will only be able to withdraw from the study up to one month after the interview data which is when I will start analysing your coded data.

**Who is the researcher?**

This research is being conducted by Cat Hine a PhD research student and Doctoral Teaching Assistant at Plymouth University. The study is being funded by the School of Tourism and Hospitality, ethical approval has been granted by the Faculty of Business Research Ethics Committee and I am being supervised by Dr Philip Gibson. If you have any questions about the research please do not hesitate to contact me at; [catherine.hine@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:catherine.hine@plymouth.ac.uk) or on; 01752 585577.

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**Permission**

I have read and understand the information above and the conditions of this project. I have read and understand what you want me to do for this study, and my right to withdraw. I hereby voluntarily agree to participate in this project. I may withdraw my consent at any time during this phase of the project and before or during the data collection processes without penalty.

**Name of Participant:**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

## Appendix 4 'i-positions'

i-as-accepted  
i-as-achievements  
i-as-advantaged  
i-as-apprehensive/nervous  
i-as-aspirational  
i-as-career focused  
i-as-career in hospitality  
i-as-challenged  
i-as-committed (to degree)  
i-as-committed (to hospitality industry)  
i-as-compromising (/sacrificing)  
i-as-confident  
i-as-connected  
i-as-continuing education  
i-as-decision maker  
i-as-defeatist  
i-as-different  
i-as-disadvantaged (limited)  
i-as-driven (committed / unspecific)  
i-as-easy (degree)  
i-as-emotional  
i-as-employable  
i-as-employee  
i-as-enjoying university  
i-as-entrepreneur  
i-as-excited  
i-as-expat  
i-as-experienced  
i-as-family  
i-as-flexible  
i-as-following expectations  
i-as-free again  
i-as-gap in knowledge  
i-as-graduate  
i-as-happy  
i-as-hospitality employee  
i-as-hospitality graduate  
i-as-independent  
i-as-inexperienced  
i-as-influenced by others  
i-as-job applicant  
i-as-learning  
i-as-living in familiar location  
i-as-love for hospitality  
i-as-management focus (degree)  
i-as-manager  
i-as-missing out  
i-as-money driven  
i-as-non hospitality career  
i-as-older (mature)  
i-as-parent  
i-as-partner (relationship)  
i-as-passionate  
i-as-paying for degree  
i-as-positions  
i-as-pre-uni student  
i-as-prepared  
i-as-prioritising  
i-as-progressing (moving on/transitioning)  
i-as-qualified  
i-as-regret  
i-as-rounded individual  
i-as-scared/worried  
i-as-skilled/knowledgeable  
i-as-social  
i-as-society member  
i-as-struggling  
i-as-student  
i-as-supported  
i-as-thankful  
i-as-transformed  
i-as-travelling  
i-as-uncommitted  
i-as-unhappy  
i-as-unprepared  
i-as-unsuccessful  
i-as-unsupported  
i-as-unsure of decisions  
i-as-unsure of future  
i-as-unsure of requirements  
i-as-valuing education  
i-as-value questioning  
i-as-voice (student uni voice  
representative)  
i-as-volunteer  
i-as-young



## Appendix 5 Referenced 'Others' as Identified

Other-academic support (general)  
Other-career service  
Other-customer  
Other-employer  
Other-European hotel school  
Other-family  
Other-friends  
Other-government  
Other-hospitality industry  
Other-hospitality students (the cohort)  
Other-industry (non-hospitality) (general)  
Other-interviewer  
Other-labour market employers  
Other-lecturer  
Other-medical professional  
Other-motivator / significant influencer  
Other-other institution (HEI)  
Other-potential employer  
Other-school  
Other-skills recognition  
Other-student  
Other-unidentified  
Other-university (university attended)



## Appendix 6 Referenced 'Echoes' as Identified

Echo-career importance  
Echo-career then family trajectory  
Echo-commonality of HE participation  
Echo-connections (importance)  
Echo-CV differentiation narrative  
Echo-development through university  
Echo-governmental discourse / graduate prima  
Echo-importance of experience  
Echo-importance of good grades  
Echo-importance of self-characteristics  
Echo-industry perspective of graduates  
Echo-inequality in workplace  
Echo-institution university narratives  
Echo-network (social)  
Echo-preparation for the 'real world'  
Echo-ranking of HEIs  
Echo-requirement for degree  
Echo-saturated labour market  
Echo-structure of HE  
Echo-student culture  
Echo-university as hard work  
Echo-value of hospitality  
Echo-value of university  
Echo-work life balance

## **Appendix 7 'Addressivity' as Identified**

Addressivity- family

Addressivity- industry

Addressivity- sceptical other

Addressivity- university

Addressivity- students