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Abstract

Widening participation policy in the United Kingdom seeks to improve access to higher education for non-traditional students including students from low-income backgrounds. However, widening participation policy fails to address participation for low-income students across their student lifecycle; it only focuses on improving access to higher education. My study seeks to address this shortfall by exploring the experiences of students from low-income backgrounds at an elite university in order to demonstrate the difficulties students experience in participating in university life. Using the Bourdieusian concepts of field, habitus and cultural capital for analysis, the study examines whether these students feel like a 'fish out of water' in the unique culture of an elite university. The thesis begins by examining students' experiences of the entire student lifecycle, beginning with the admissions process and following with their initial experiences of the elite university culture. It also analyses the long-standing coping strategies employed by these students in order to 'fit in' to the elite university culture and thus feel like a 'fish in water' in this particular field of practice. The thesis concludes by arguing that students displayed signs of dialectal confrontation on first interaction with the elite university culture. However, once students became more accustomed to the elite university culture, students felt like a 'fish in water'. A majority of students modified their habitus once at the elite university in order to 'fit in', operating a cleft habitus that allowed them to operate multiple identities depending on their field of situation.

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Acknowledgements

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Chapter One: Introduction

In 2014/15, the United Kingdom had a total of 1,133,680 students enrolled on an undergraduate programme who had originated from the UK (HESA, n.d). These students are considered to be largely from wealthier socioeconomic backgrounds (Chowdry et al, 2010; DfBIS, 2016; DfBIS, 2014; Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2014). Students from low-income backgrounds thus form a minority of these applications. Using the governmental marker of free school meals (Gov.uk, 2016a), a commonly-used (but not unquestioned) method for identifying students from low-income backgrounds (Hobbs and Vignoles, 2007), 22% of individuals who were eligible for free school meals at age 15 in 2009/10 participated in higher education aged 19 in 2013/14 in comparison to 39% of students not on free school meals in the same time span (DfE, 2016, p.1). This figure has risen since 2005/6 in which only 13% of students on free school meals participated in Higher Education in comparison to 33% of students not on free school meals (Chowdry et al, 2010). Despite this rise in participation among this specific group of students, the percentage gap in participation in higher education between free school meal students and non-free school meals students has only reduced by 2% between 2005/6 to 2013/14 (DfE, 2016).

The statistics above demonstrate a disparity between students from deprived backgrounds attending higher education in comparison to those from wealthier backgrounds. Historically, Higher Education has also been dominated by students from independent and public schools (Hoare & Johnson, 2011; Kettley, 2007). In 2013/14, 85% of students from independent schools had progressed into higher education in comparison to 62% of state school students (DfE, 2016, p.9).

Successive government policies have sought to "better reflect the rich diversity of the general population in England" (DfBIS, 2014, p.7). Best known as 'widening participation', these policies seek to create:

> "a system which delivers equality of opportunity and fairness and in which a person's age, ethnicity, gender, disability and/or social background present no barriers to them accessing and succeeding in higher education and beyond" (DfBIS, 2014, p.7).

Widening participation is not a new expression or movement to reach governmental policy. Over the past 50 years, higher education has been targeted by policies that aim to widen the participation of non-traditional students in higher education institutions. Physically, institutions have been changed or created through policy for widening participation purposes. The Robbins Report in 1963 challenged notions that higher education should be available to a select few. In response to this challenge, the report advocated the creation of brand new universities, the 'plateglass universities', purpose-built for non-traditional backgrounds to access alongside a further expansion of college places. Here, the meaning of widening participation policy was through expansion of higher education providers. Similarly, this meaning was embodied in the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act whereby 35 polytechnics were granted university status in order to achieve a "unified" mass higher education (David et al, 2008, p.6); higher education institutions should be accessible to all.

In addition to changes to how institutions defined their key values in their provision, the financial landscape of HE has changed as a result of widening participation policy in the last 50 years. In 1997, the New Labour Government introduced top up payments to tuition fees, whereby students would be expected to pay £1,000 per year for their studies (Burke, 2012). Means-tested repayments were also introduced at this time in which students would pay back their debts post-university at a rate dependent on their income. Furthermore, students were asked for a "fee contribution" towards up to a quarter of their tuition fees which were also means tested (Connor & Dewson, 2001, p.11). In the 2004 Higher Education Act the New Labour government further introduced variable fees for HE institutions, whereby institutions could choose the amount they charged undergraduate students (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, 2003). They also founded the Office for Fair Access, an independent body that would regulate and approve the changes to tuition fees (OFFA, 2015a). The financial landscape of higher education also changed in 2012 whereby institutions were able to charge up to £9,000 per annum by the Coalition government lifting the cap on tuition fees (Gov.uk, 2010). However, this increase in fees

was balanced by the Coalition doubling the monetary input of New Labour into widening participation policy at £735 million (Social Mobility & Child Poverty Commission, 2014), in addition to increasing the maintenance grants available for students (BBC News, 2011) and introducing the Education (Student Loans) (Repayment) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2012 to raise the repayment figure for loans to £21,000 (DfBIS, 2012a, p.5). More recently, the means-tested maintenance grants have been abolished, with only tuition fee and maintenance loans available for students to fund their studies (Gov.uk, 2016b).

The meaning of widening participation has continuously shifted since The Robbins Report in the mid-20th Century. Around a decade ago, The Russell Group, a leading group of research-intensive universities boasting high-quality teaching, sought to make their institutions more accessible for non-traditional students by providing a bursary for students from low-income backgrounds (Russell Group, 2007); widening participation was embodied through financial access. At the same time the 1994 group, a group of smaller research-intensive universities with an aim to promote "excellence in research and teaching" (1994 Group, 2007), had a different approach to widening participation. Instead of focusing on financial accessibility like the Russell Group, the 1994 group committed to working with non-traditional students and their alternative diploma qualifications to ensure they would be "welcomed onto degree courses at the very best universities" (1994 group, 2007, p.37). Although providing different access initiatives, both the Russell Group and 1994 group were united in their response to the 2004 Higher Education Act introduction of variable and higher fees as previously acknowledged (Chowdry et al, 2010). Despite improving participation in these universities, these amendments did not affect those universities already established in the field, particularly the elite universities this thesis is concerned with; widening participation became associated with the newer, more accessible universities. Furthermore, the disbandment of the 1994 group in 2013 (Baker, 2013) further emphasised the position of the Russell Group universities as highly selective leaders in research quality in the UK.

Alongside financial and physical changes to the higher education landscape, governmental policy extended to policy drivers in order to encourage take up of widening participation initiatives. In 2004, New Labour introduced the national scheme 'AimHigher' which sought to raise awareness of higher education and thus the aspirations of students from non-traditional backgrounds (Attwood, 2010). This later disbanded in 2010, replaced by the National Scholarship Programme following Coalition reforms (Gov.uk, 2015). The National Scholarship programme offered an additional cash bursary to students from a household income of £25,000 and under through their institution of study (HEFCE, 2015) in order to alleviate financial strain. This has also since disbanded with the last recipients entering in the 2014/15 academic year.

1.1. Widening participation in elite institutions

In my thesis I am concerned with widening participation and the impact of these policies in a specific kind of university: the elite university. The elite university shall be defined in chapter three but for the purposes of this chapter, it is sufficient to note that elite universities are often highly selective in nature possessing a drive to produce high-quality research and thus deliver a high standard of teaching to its students [see chapter three].

Increasingly, there has been a focus from the UK government to widen the participation of students from low-income backgrounds in particular institutions in Higher Education, namely those elite universities who are highly selective in their admissions. 64% of students from independent schools in 2013/14 entered selective universities compared to 23% of state school students (DfE, 2016). Examining the polar opposites of the socioeconomic scale, "only 3% of disadvantaged 18 year olds enter highly selective universities, compared to 21% of young people from the most advantaged backgrounds" (DfBIS, 2015, p.37). As a result, a student from a privileged background are 8.5 times more likely than their less privileged peers to attend a selective university in contemporary society (Maddocks, Elliot Major and Torgerson, 2015).

The vast majority of universities in the United Kingdom, including the elite universities, currently charge the premium £9,000 tuition fees for the academic year 2015/16 (Grove, 2014). As I complete this thesis, this cap on tuition fees has been lifted whereby universities are able to charge upwards of £9,000 for the academic year 2017/18 (DfBIS, 2016). Through charging this premium fee, the institutions must state in their access agreement how they will widen participation for students from disadvantaged backgrounds (OFFA, 2015b). As stated above, majority of universities charge at least the £9,000 tuition fee. This leads to question the focus on alleviating finance as a barrier to access for students. For instance, for the academic year 2015/16 a total of 532,300 students entered UK Higher Education, the highest number of admissions on record (UCAS, 2015). A heavy focus on finance in widening participation policy, therefore, is inappropriate considering that finance does not appear to have directly impacted the number of students entering higher education in the present day.

Third sector organisations and charities have also addressed widening participation, particularly for students from low-income backgrounds to elite universities. The national charity Sutton Trust aims to "improve social mobility through education" (The Sutton Trust, n.d). As well as commissioning academic research in this area, they have over 200 programmes across a number of UK institutions that share the common goal to get students from low-income and disadvantaged backgrounds into higher education (The Sutton Trust, n.d). External evaluations of The Sutton Trust programme report that students are more likely to apply and thus attend these highly selective universities after attending the scheme's summer schools (Hoare and Mann, 2011; The Sutton Trust, 2008).

1.2. The success of widening participation

In the 2004 Higher Education Act, Tony Blair and New Labour pledged to widen participation amongst students from disadvantaged backgrounds in order for 50% of young people to access Higher Education by 2010 (Blair, 2001). In 2010/11, 47% of young people participated in higher education, a percentage shortfall of 3% (DfBIS, 2012b). Recent targets seek to "double

the percentage of people from disadvantaged backgrounds entering higher education by 2020, compared to 2009" (DfBIS, 2015, p.13). Not only have the statistics not improved for Russell Group universities in their state-school applicant statistics in 10 years (Social Mobility & Child Poverty Commission, 2014, p.xxvii), it is thought that "by 2020 the most advantaged will still be twice as likely to enter university as disadvantaged students" (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2014, p.v).

Despite the increase in tuition fees, The State of the Nation report stated that "the new fee regime is not having the negative impact on participation of disadvantaged young people that was initially predicted" (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2014, p.xxvii). Early data collection also agrees with this statement, with students from disadvantaged backgrounds said to be 40% more likely to enter more selective Higher Education institutions compared to 2012 (DfBIS, 2015, p.36).

However, the proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds entering higher education is still small. In 2015, 18.5% of 18 year old students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds entered higher education (UCAS, 2015). Considering this small proportion of students, it is no surprise that attempts to improve this figure has become increasingly politically important in the twenty first century. In 2015, this has been demonstrated by a recent Green Paper suggesting an emphasis on further increasing the number of students from low-income backgrounds in higher education, with a governmental target of 27.2% of students in higher education to be from low-income backgrounds by 2020 (DfBIS, 2015, p.36), a figure lower than the original 2009 published statistic.

1.3. Defining the research field

I argue that there is a shortfall between policy concerning Widening Participation and the further student experience of students from low-income backgrounds, made particularly apparent in the case of the elite university.

The link between student experience and widening participation policy is arguably consequential; widening participation policy recruiting students into

University enables one's student experience. Experience, then, can be regarded as "the currency of widening participation" (Whaley, 2000, p.132); experience can be used as a way of determining widening participation's effectiveness. Governmental policy has acknowledged the relationship between widening participation policy and student experience. In the 2014 Department of Business, Innovation and Skills outlining the '*National strategy for access and student success in higher education'*, it states that widening participation needs to be concerned with "a student's entire lifecycle" (DfBIS, 2014, p.9). However, this was detailed as "preparing for and entering higher education, graduating successfully, and progressing to employment or postgraduate study" (DfBIS, 2014, p.9). Here, DfBIS (2014) targets ignore a student's time at university as a potential consideration factor in improving widening participation rates in higher education.

The value of addressing student experience in widening participation policy has become increasingly prominent in the literature. As argued by Crozier et al (2008a):

> "getting students in and leaving them to it does not work for those who have no prior experience of university. Higher education not only needs to address the widening of access to university but it needs to get to grips with what goes on inside the hallowed grounds" (p.176).

Crozier et al (2008a) above highlight a weakness in this relationship. Widening participation policy is only addressing the initial admissions access into higher education. As a result, it fails to address access to the university *experience* for those targeted by widening participation policy throughout their entire time of study.

Despite the low numbers of students from disadvantaged backgrounds in highly selective universities, there are still a small number of students from this particular socioeconomic group in elite universities (House of Commons Public Accounts Committee, 2009); students from low income backgrounds attend elite universities albeit as a minority population. It is with this in mind that I can provide the justification for my research. If for the purposes of this thesis I acknowledge but accept the barriers to higher education, specifically elite universities, my attention can be drawn instead to look at the more complex and under-researched topic of how low-income students as a

minority in these institutions navigate their way through higher education. This thesis will look particularly at one university of elite status which will be introduced in chapter three.

To conclude, this chapter has examined widening participation policy for higher education in the modern day specifically focusing on the policies that affect students from low-income backgrounds. It has recognised the governmental widening participation policies that have sought to improve disparity between socioeconomic status and access to elite universities. Nonetheless, there is a shortfall in these policies. These policies indeed address barriers to entry for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, but fail to address the need to continue conversations of access once students enter higher education. Therefore, widening participation should not just focus on improving access on point of entry for students, but seek to improve their participation in university life across the entirety of their student lifecycle.

1.4. Thesis overview

The thesis will be split into ten further chapters. In chapters two and three I will define the key concepts operationalised throughout the thesis in order to explain the experiences of students from low-income backgrounds. Specifically, chapter two will outline the concepts of *field*, *habitus* and *cultural capital* and justify their use in the context of the research. Chapter three shall define the concepts of *low-income student* and *elite university,* providing contextual information regarding the university used within the study: Linnet University.

In chapter four I will review a selection of the relevant literature regarding this thesis' context. I will begin by analysing the experiences of students in the admissions process to elite universities. I will then define and analyse the elite university culture and low-income students' experiences of navigating this field of practice. Following this, I will assess the strategies employed by low-income students to feel like a 'fish in water' in this unfamiliar field.

Chapter five describes the methodology used within the research. I will first discuss the research design of the study and the quality of the research this particular design yields. I will then highlight the sampling frame of the research and describe the method used in order to obtain robust data. I will conclude by outlining the ethical guidelines followed in the research and the procedure of data analysis undertaken in order to gather my data.

Chapters six to ten form the discussion chapters of this thesis. These will be outlined individually in order to sufficiently examine the entirety of low-income students' lifecycle at Linnet University. In chapter six I discuss the experiences of these students in applying and initially entering Linnet. I will explore the barriers to access students faced on applying to the university, followed by an evaluation by these students of the material they used to inform their decision. I will conclude this chapter by discussing the reasons the low-income students' gave for attending Linnet.

In chapter seven I will outline five key characteristics of the Linnet University culture as stated by the students within the study. The characteristics provided by these students will be compared to those highlighted in chapter four in order to argue that the culture of Linnet University is unique. In chapter eight I will thus discuss the impact of this unique culture on the experiences of students from low-income backgrounds. Specifically, whether students feel like a 'fish out of water' in this unique university field. This will be addressed in two parts: students' experiences of academia at Linnet, and students' social experiences in the institution.

Chapter nine will discuss the experiences of low-income students specifically regarding their interactions with their peers at Linnet. I will first define the 'stereotypical Linnet student' and whether students in the research affiliated themselves with these individuals. I will then discuss whether students found people like themselves within the university.

Chapter ten concludes the discussion by analysing the low-income students' coping strategies to feel like a 'fish in water' in the unique Linnet field. I will discuss three theories of habitus adaption undertaken by students: full habitus adaption, rejection of habitus alteration and slight habitus

modification. In addition to strategies employed by the student, I will also highlight strategies employed by Linnet University in order to acculturate students into its unique culture and thus feel like a 'fish in water' in this field.

In chapter eleven, I shall present my conclusions of this thesis. After reviewing each discussion chapter and addressing the key findings in response to my research questions, I shall conclude by outlining the key implications from the research for future policy surrounding widening participation in higher education.

Chapter Two: Operationalising Bourdieu.

Determining and understanding causes of social action and relationships within society can be divided into two main sociological paradigms of thought: structure, and agency. For structural sociologists, emphasis is on understanding the structured relationships within society and their impact on an individual, whereas those concerned with agency explain social phenomenon through individual interactions and relationships (Fulcher and Scott, 2003). Bourdieu, in contrast to this, argued that society should be understood in terms of both structural and individual influence in which "agents do not act in a vacuum, but rather in concrete social situations governed by a set of objective social relations" (Johnson, 1993, p.6). Structure and agency are thus equally important in understanding society. In this chapter, I shall provide a critical account of the Bourdieusian concepts of *field*, *habitus* and *cultural capital*. These key concepts will then be operationalised within the thesis in order to understand the experiences of low-income students in an elite university.

2.1. Field, and habitus

According to Bourdieu (1993), a society consists of multiple *fields* defined as "a separate social universe having its own laws functioning independent of those of politics and the economy" (p.162). Each field has its own set of rules and logic which enable the field to be structured in a coherent manner to individuals who operate within this space (Bourdieu, 2002a; English and Bolton, 2016). These boundaries of rules and logic thus "condition the ways the field is perceived, grasped and understood" (Swingewood, 2000, p.214); they enable the field for interaction with the individuals existing in this social space. Educational institutions are one such field with their own specific set of rules and logic (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; McLennan, 2011). For instance, an educational institution may require students to wear a uniform, follow teacher instruction, or walk on a particular side of the corridor. Outside of the educational institution, individuals are not expected to follow these rules; educational institutions require their students to follow a particular set of rules.

Bourdieu drew on the concept of *habitus*, a concept that combines and demonstrates the collective impact of structure and agency. Defined as "durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures" (Bourdieu, 2002a, p.53), the habitus consists of a set of dispositions that frame how actors make decisions whilst acting simultaneously in accordance within the structuring nature of the field (Bilton et al, 2002; Reay, David and Ball, 2005; Wacquant, 1992). These dispositions are "embodied" within all actions and thus performed by individuals (Adams, 2006; Reay, 2004; Reay, David and Ball, 2005). To illustrate, Bourdieu (1977) describes the embodiment of habitus as follows:

> "a way of walking, a tilt of the head, facial expressions, ways of sitting and of using implements, always associated with a tone of voice, a style of speech, and (how could it be otherwise?) a certain subjective experience" (p.87).

These examples demonstrate how habitus is integral to agent interaction with the world. Both the field and agencies' role in the construction of habitus will be unpacked in this chapter in order to provide a theoretical framework that can be operationalised within the research.

The relationship of habitus and field is significant in that habitus is "constantly affected by [social contexts] in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.133): the field has a direct impact on the habitus. For example, the state uses education as a vehicle for "systematic production, reproduction, distribution, and change of forms of consciousness through discourse" (Bernstein, 1986, p.230) in order to enforce and reproduce societal ideals within the individual. Field and habitus are thus considered to "function fully only in relation to one another" (Wacquant, 1992, p.19); field and habitus are inalienable.

The structuring nature of the field predisposes the habitus in its operation. Rather, exposure to the social logic and rules of the field informs the agent and enables successful navigation to a particular social space (Bathmaker, 2015; Bennett, 2010; Sweetman, 2003). By influencing one's behaviour and field position, the individual develops a "clear affinity between their dispositional conduct and their position within the field" (Sweetman, 2003, p.533). This affinity between habitus and field thus positions an individual as

"'at home' in the field it inhabits" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.128). Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) suggest that this is a likely scenario, making an individual feel like a "fish in water" (p.127). This concept is core to the research context and will be unpacked further in chapter four when discussing the unique culture of the elite university.

So far, this section has discussed habitus as pre-disposed by external structures. However, habitus is not solely governed by structural influences. Therefore, this chapter will seek to outline the role of agency within the concept of habitus. In other words, it will seek to understand how habitus enables agency (Adams, 2006; Johnson, 1993; Swingewood, 2000).

The agency of the individual is apparent in the influence of the field as "the dispositions of habitus serve to predispose actors to choose behaviour which appears to them more likely to achieve a desired outcome" (Hillier and Rooksby, 2002, p.5). Individuals, therefore, still have an element of choice in their behaviour.

However, operation of agency within their habitus is not always a conscious decision for an individual (Adams, 2006; Bourdieu, 2002a; English and Bolton, 2016; Jenkins, 1992). Rather, the habitus takes into account learned experiences, of which it is the product of, alongside the social influence of the field in order to make an informed action or decision. However, this process is argued to be conducted with "spontaneity without consciousness or will" (Bourdieu, 2002a, p.56); it is an unplanned, unconscious operation conducted by the individual.

Despite Bourdieu's (2002a) insistence of the habitus operating unconsciously, he also suggests that the habitus process is partially conscious to the agent when it is re-fashioned from "new experiences, education or training" (2002b, p.29); the agent is aware in a time of change of their habitus in operation, contradicting Bourdieu's theoretical framework.

This constant interaction between agent and field equates to a reproduction of the structure and its characteristics (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). As previously highlighted, fields such as education have particular rules and a social logic that agents are expected to follow. As a result, "those agents

occupying dominant positions will necessarily adopt defensive and conservative 'conservation strategies' to preserve their status" (Swingewood, 2000, p.213); they will endeavour to reproduce the current structure in order to maintain their position within the field.

Understanding this characteristic of the field can prove problematic when questioning the state of habitus when this characteristic is compromised. For instance, it is acknowledged that agents do not always follow the social rules of the field. To illustrate using the previous example, students are unlikely to always follow teacher instruction or wear uniform correctly (Hillier and Rooksby, 2002). This contradicts the integral composition of habitus in the suggestion that the field always structures and influences agent decision. However, it has been acknowledged that this contradiction does not necessarily undermine the development of this concept. An individual arguably uses the understanding of the social rules of the field to inform their rule-breaking actions (Johnson, 1993; Robbins, 1991); they use the rules as a set of ideals to reject.

Primarily it is argued that habitus, through the reproduction of structure, serves to reinforce and reproduce one's social status (Adams, 2006; Sweetman, 2003). This is further advanced by individuals who wish to maintain their status. Educational institutions, Bourdieu (1986) argues, are a field in which status is reinforced, managing and replicating social disparity (Byrom, 2009; Johnson, 1993; Lane, 2000; Sullivan, 2007). Nonetheless, Bourdieu (1993) also suggests that these serve to "offset (or at least partially) the initial disadvantage of those who do not receive from their family circle the encouragement to undertake cultural activities" (p.233). Here, Bourdieu suggests that educational institutions are a key vehicle in providing students with cultural opportunities not offered by their family. For instance, a school can offer the facilities for extra-curricular activities such as music and sport not available to students in their family unit. Therefore, educational institutions are crucial in also overcoming, in addition to maintaining, disadvantage.

The concept of habitus is not only applicable to individuals: it can also be

applied to an institution. Institutions, such as a school or university, are governed by a habitus which sub-consciously informs the practice of, and legitimises, its code of conduct (Thomas, 2002). Although the *institutional habitus* can adapt and change like individual habituses, this is not conducted with as much fluidity as an individual's allows due to "their collective nature" (Reay, David and Ball, 2005, p.36).

Ultimately, habitus should be understood as a conceptual schema operated by an individual influenced by the field in which it is situated and influencing the actions of an individual. The next section is concerned with the concept of *cultural capital*, first providing an understanding of capital and its wider relation to the field. It will then outline the key characteristics of cultural capital to include its constitution and modes of transmission.

2.2. Cultural capital

The economic meaning of capital, in that it is a currency that individuals appropriate in order to achieve profits, is used by Bourdieu (1986) to also refer to that which is presented in an "immaterial form" (p.242). Capital is considered to manifest in three clear forms: "economic", "social" and "cultural" (Bourdieu, 1986, p.243). It is these latter forms, social and cultural capital, that are considered as taking an 'immaterial' form, with social capital referring to "social obligations…which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the forms of a title of nobility" (Bourdieu, 1986, p.243).

In order to successfully navigate through a specific field, an agent uses capital to manoeuvre their position (Bennett, 2010; Hillier and Rooksby, 2002; McLennan, 2011; Swingewood, 2000): capital is used as currency by agents in order to advance their field position. The acquisition of capital is regarded as competitive, whereby the field becomes "a space of conflict and competition" (Wacquant, 1992, p.17) in which agents compete for positions within the field.

To illustrate using the field of education, the core role of the institution is its provision of academic study for individuals. Cultural capital is closely linked

with this role as it is considered "institutionalized in the forms of educational qualifications" (Bourdieu, 1986, p.243); one gains cultural capital from the completion of academic courses that provide tangible grades and qualifications. As a result, "academic success is directly dependent on cultural capital" (Bourdieu, 1973, p.96); there is a positive correlation between academic attainment, as demonstrated by the possession of qualifications, and cultural capital. Therefore, cultural capital immobilises individuals in the field of education through academic qualifications (English and Bolton, 2016), thus enabling individuals in possession of these to advance their position within the field. This thesis will therefore use *cultural capital* as the third key concept to operationalise within the research.

Cultural capital can take three forms: in the "embodied state", the "objectified state" and the "institutionalised state" (Bourdieu, 1986, p.243). In the 'embodied state', cultural capital is apparent through habitual tendencies whereas in the 'objectified state' it is gained through interactions with "cultural goods" (Bourdieu, 1986, p.243). Additionally, in an 'institutionalised state' cultural capital is suggested in the form of institutional qualifications as previously discussed in relation to the education system. Collectively, these forms contribute to the possession of cultural capital which can refer to a "knowledge of or competence with 'highbrow' aesthetic culture" (Lareau and Weininger, 2003, p.568) and "the ability to understand and use 'educated' language" (Sullivan, 2001, p.893).

However, there has been discussion regarding what constitutes cultural capital, and criticisms of those interpretations that fail to acknowledge certain characteristics. For instance, Lareau and Weininger (2003) argue that there has been a failure to acknowledge technical skills in discussions of cultural capital. For instance, parents teaching children how to interact with "institutional agents" (Lareau and Weininger, 2003, p.593), is considered to benefit individuals; technical skills provide cultural capital. Furthermore, Reay, David and Ball (2005) suggest that in addition to the emphasis placed on educational achievement and high-brow activity, discussions concerning cultural capital should take into consideration "levels of confidence, certainty,

and entitlement" within individuals (p.20). Hillier and Rooksby's (2002) definition of cultural capital is, arguably, more inclusive:

> "cultural capital refers to knowledge and skills which actors acquire either through formally examined or through less formal means of education. Cultural capital often relates to prestige and status and includes resources such as articulateness, persuasiveness, aesthetic preferences and cultural awareness" (p.8).

In their definition of cultural capital, Hillier and Rooksby (2002) refer to both technical skills and mannerisms as conducive to retention of culture capital, criticising previous definitions that failed to acknowledge these. As a result, this will be the working definition of cultural capital used within this thesis.

Transmission of cultural capital is through inheritance whereby it is reproduced over time and transmitted through generations (Bourdieu, 1973; Lareau and Weininger, 2003). Transmission is not always an active process whereby "parents deliberately teach their children" and assist in their school work (Sullivan, 2007, para. 4.4). Rather, cultural capital is often administered through "passive transmission" in social contexts (Sullivan, 2007, para. 4.5). For instance, a child may pick up a particular way of speaking deemed to demonstrate possession of cultural capital simply through parent conversations. This highlights the inevitability of exclusivity cultural capital fosters, whereby once a generation has acquired a certain amount of cultural capital, transmission to their children and future generations follows. As a result, it can be deducted that a certain habitus can produce a certain kind, or amount of, cultural capital (Reay, 2004).

It is important to recognize however, that vehicles of transmission, such as cultural activities or qualifications, can yield differing amounts of cultural capital. For instance, as highlighted by Sullivan (2007), "highly exclusive cultural activities communicate status more effectively than less exclusive cultural activities, and public cultural consumption communicates status more effectively than private cultural consumption" (para. 2.2). Such activities are considered particularly valuable when they are accepted into the dominant culture and rewarded and legitimized by a field of practice (Bourdieu, 1973).

To exemplify in the context of education, cultural capital is not only gained through academic qualifications. It is also considered to reward a broader cultural aptitude learnt outside the education system that produces cultural capital (Sullivan, 2007). For instance, students able to use "formal" language are rewarded within the education system for a skill initially learnt within the family unit (Sullivan, 2007, para. 3.5). Through this system, educational institutions become an instrument of symbolic violence (Robbins, 1991), imposing and legitimising their dominant values in the field of practice.

2.2.1. The problematic use of 'cultural capital' within education research

Despite the acceptance of particular forms of cultural capital as having an exchange value that has been legitimised within different education systems, the use of this concept does not always note the presence, and thus value of, different forms of cultural capital outside education systems. For the purposes of this thesis, I am concerned with a very specific type of cultural capital: the cultural capital possessed by students on entry into the university primarily moulded by the familial habitus and previous schooling. It is these specific kinds of cultural capital that I will analyse to help understand the extent to which these allow the students to navigate the external elite university culture.

Cultural capital is employed in, and transmitted, through a variety of social and cultural contexts in addition to the education system. When discussing the cultural capital of students in the context of education, therefore, it becomes important to distinguish the valorisation of cultural capital within the education system in comparison to other forms of cultural capital that are of value in other contexts. For instance, cultural capital can be procured through gaining academic qualifications (Bourdieu, 1973). This is undoubtedly valued in the education system with majority of learning measured by an end grade or qualification. However, this is not always shared across social contexts. For instance in France, Bottrell and Haddon's (2012) study of working class young people's interactions with their neighbourhoods, being clever or gaining educational qualifications was not considered to enable students to navigate the social sphere of their

neighbourhood sufficiently. Instead, the young people valued the relationships they formed with their peers and other members of the community in order to succeed in this social field. Rather, knowing the field of practice and how to interact with their peers in this setting is considered a much worthier attribute. This is not to say, however, that knowing the field of practice always yields more cultural capital than the possession of certain qualifications, but that in this particular field of 'the street' it has a higher exchange value as a result of its social context.

2.3. An interconnected theory

Bourdieu ultimately sought to provide an interconnected theory encompassing the relationship between his concepts of field, habitus and cultural capital in order to demonstrate how they "interact in ways that maintain and reproduce certain norms and values" (Patiniotis and Holdsworth, 2005, p.84); they maintain and legitimise the social structure within society. I have already explored the relationship between habitus and field, highlighting that habitus is influenced by the field it is situated in. Furthermore, I have argued that in order to successfully navigate the field, capital is used by individuals as currency to improve and sustain their position. Cultural capital is one such mode of currency and is particularly transmitted and acquired through the field of education. Bourdieu (2010) tied his three concepts together as follows:

"[(habitus) (capital)] + field = practice." (p.95).

In other words, the culmination of one's habitus and the capital they possess, and how these interact with a particular field, results in an individual's particular behaviour.

Bourdieu's theory of practice is generally applauded in his incorporation of both "individual reason-based action and …social determination" (Hillier and Rooksby, 2002, p.5). Bourdieu sees his work as original (Jenkins, 1992) and this is generally accepted by his critics. In particular, the theoretical construction of habitus has been applauded in combining structure and agency (Adams, 2006; Sweetman, 2003), successfully "bridge-

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building…across the explanatory gap" between these polar strands of thought (Jenkins, 1992, p.74).

Despite such positive reviews, Bourdieu and his concepts are not without criticism as I have already indicated. A key criticism of his concept of habitus is that it is deterministic in nature (Jenkins, 1992; Lane, 2000; Reay, 2004; Robbins, 1991). The decision-making of the individual, as outlined by Bourdieusian thought, is pre-empted through the influence of habitus, field and previous collective history (Bourdieu, 2002b; Jenkins, 1992). As previously discussed, the theory of habitus does not account for individual action that is contrary to the rules of the field in which it is situated; habitus disregards the possibility of the autonomous individual. Therefore, the notion that one can consciously pursue an individual goal is not acknowledged within Bourdieu's concepts (Jenkins, 1992; Lane, 2000). Furthermore, critics argue that the deterministic nature of habitus facilitates a reproduction of social history (Jenkins, 2002), as any agency the individual possesses is overwhelmed by the reproduction of past experiences of society. In short, the habitus model determines, rather than pre-disposes, individual actions in accordance with the governing structure.

In response to the above criticism, Bourdieu (2002b) states that "the habitus is not a fate, not a destiny" (p.29); one's habitus does not have a determined end. The impact of the field on the individual is recognised (Bathmaker, 2015), although critics of the relationship between field and habitus fail to account for the agency displayed by individuals in decision-making; individuals are immobilised with choice to modify their habitus dispositions accordingly (Swingewood, 2000). For instance, research suggests that habitus can, and does, allow for the individual to challenge their social standing and transcend their position (Oliver and Kettley, 2010; Reay, David and Ball, 2005). This secondary research thus refutes these criticisms of habitus and further justifies its use within this thesis.

2.4. Studying field, habitus and cultural capital in Higher Education

So far, this chapter has sought to provide an in depth understanding of Bourdieu's theoretical concepts of field, habitus and cultural capital. I now move on to operationalise these key terms into the wider context of this thesis, namely evaluating their use to study the field of higher education, so that these can be further applied to the specific context of low-income students' experiences in an elite university throughout the thesis.

Higher education is frequently referred to as a field within Bourdieusian and associated literature (Bourdieu, 1973; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Sullivan, 2002; Thomas, 2002). Bourdieu (1973) argued the merit of studying higher education as a field due to its value in understanding "class relations" and power dynamics of society (p.72). Links can be further made between the field and the elite university as Bourdieu not only discussed them in relation to his theoretical concepts, but also of his personal experience from attending an elite French institution in '*The state nobility: elite schools in the field of power*' (Bourdieu, 1996). As highlighted by Jenkins (1992), comparisons between French higher education and English higher education institutions are troublesome considering that they are situated in vastly different social fields. However, Bourdieu (1973) legitimises the study of the field of higher education in his earlier quote. Therefore, this further justifies my research into this particular field using a Bourdieusian conceptual framework.

2.4.1. Habitus and the elite university

Within this thesis I shall apply the concept of habitus in order to explain and understand the experiences of students from low-income backgrounds at an elite university. Habitus has already been used and adapted for this purpose within the literature (Abrahams and Ingram, 2013; Holton, 2015; Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009a; Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009b; Thomas, 2002). I acknowledge that interpretations of habitus can differ between researchers, and although I will recognise and evaluate certain uses of the concept in relation to the literature, I will focus mostly on developing my own

theoretical stance. For instance, Holton (2015) when researching student transition into higher education suggests that a student's habitus consists of multiple habituses dependent on the field in which one's habitus is operating. However, I argue that this is an inappropriate adaption of the concept. Instead, I shall argue within the literature review that habitus should not be understood as operating successfully within a singular field. Rather, habitus is multi-faceted enabling an individual to operate as a 'fish in water' in multiple fields. Conceptualised as the 'cleft habitus' (Abrahams and Ingram, 2013), this adaption is more aligned with my theoretical stance and shall be employed later within this thesis with further explanation of this concept.

My research is also concerned with the impact of the institutional habitus on low-income student experience, specifically in terms of the elite university. It was stated previously in this chapter that the institutional habitus lacked the fluidity that individual habitus' possess. However, the institutional habitus is capable of adaption. The institutional habitus, although with limited fluidity in its state of being, is "mobilised differentially for different groups of students" (Reay, David and Ball, 2001, para. 5.2). For instance, students applying to elite universities were considered to receive more input from the school into their application from an institution (Oliver and Kettley, 2010), and thus increase their chances of gaining more cultural capital, than their peers. This problematizes the application of this concept to understanding and theorising the relationship as a whole between multiple students and an institution. Therefore, in order to resolve this issue within my study, I will refer to the overall institutional culture of the elite university in order to theorise its impact on the students within my study.

By applying the concept of institutional habitus to the context of UK higher education, I can formulate "at least a partial account of some of the origins of the differences between institutional cultures" (Ashwin, 2012, p.106). Considering the previously stated argument that educational institutions reproduce disadvantage, studying the institutional habitus of the elite university can enlighten the researcher in identifying and remedying such problems.

<u>2.4.2. The place of cultural capital in the elite university</u>

So far, the role of habitus has been explored specifically in relation to the field of higher education. This section will continue with understanding this particular field in order to further understand and explore the relationship between higher education and cultural capital, including how it is administered and the implications for individuals.

Access to cultural capital is considered complex when taking into consideration how it is rewarded within the system. Contemporary society, and the education system within it, is built on the neoliberal principle that success is based upon merit (Young, 2001; Young, 1958). By being provided and rewarded by educational qualifications, cultural capital is therefore "theoretically offered to everyone" (Bourdieu, 1973, p.73), in which responsibility to succeed and achieve cultural capital lies with the individual. Failure is thus a shortfall attributed to only the individual.

The institution of higher education reflects the meritocratic principles of the education system. Traditional students of higher education are considered to possess more cultural capital than non-traditional students (Aries and Seider, 2005; Bathmaker, Ingram and Waller, 2013; Crozier and Reay, 2011), and lower rates of cultural capital suggest lower educational attainment rates for non-traditional students including students from low-income backgrounds. Failure to acquire cultural capital and achieve lower educational attainment is thus attributed to the low-income student alone according to meritocratic principles. However, this thesis is built on the premise that there are students from low-income backgrounds within the elite university; non-traditional students can access and achieve enough cultural capital to access elite higher education. Explanations of this shortfall suggest that the presence of students from low-income backgrounds in the elite university however is to simply maintain the illusion of a meritocratic society (Sullivan, 2001), thus creating an "appearance of legitimacy" to wider society (Bourdieu, 1973, p.82). Sullivan (2001) and Bourdieu (1973) here demonstrate the ambiguity that surrounds this topic and the importance of this research in unpicking

these contradictory Bourdieusian theories of the low-income student's experience in the field of the elite university.

It has been highlighted that a primary role of higher education institutions is to maintain the meritocratic society. In addition, elite universities are considered to encourage cultural capital acquisition within their students. This is encouraged through the "cultural participation" they facilitate for students (Sullivan, 2007, para. 2.1). As argued by Bradley et al (2013), "the mobilisation of cultural and social capitals…is a crucial part of what university life can offer" (p.6); the different culture and lifestyle of higher education provides the low-income student with a platform for acquisition of cultural capital. Later, this thesis will demonstrate how the elite university places emphasis on students undertaking extra-curricular activities.

2.5. Moving forwards with Bourdieu

In this chapter, I have provided a thorough explanation and analysis of the three Bourdieusian concepts of *field*, *habitus* and *cultural capital*. Field refers to a social space governed by a particular set of rules and logic that agents within the field are expected to follow. Agent interaction within the field is predominantly governed by one's habitus; a conceptual schema that predisposes agent's decisions in addition to the structuring influence of the field. Institutions also operate a habitus, although these are considered less pliable in nature. On questioning the state of habitus when agents do not follow the rules of a particular field, it is argued that the habitus still governs thought in some way; in order to reject the rules, the rules must be known. Criticisms of the deterministic nature of habitus were also noted, however, the demonstration of agent's choice in response to this refuted these claims. Capital, including cultural capital, is used by individuals to advance their position within the field. Cultural capital, yielded from partaking in cultural activities or mannerisms, is transmitted to individuals predominantly through the family habitus, although the field of education is considered to hold major influence in rewarding students with cultural capital through educational qualifications. Each concept was operationalised in the field of education in order to increase tangibility in theory explanations and were later applied to

the field of higher education in order to demonstrate from the beginning the relevance to my research.

In the next chapter, I shall unpack the concepts of 'low-income student' and 'elite university' for their application within this thesis. The concept of the 'low-income student' will be defined in order to highlight the individual characteristics of students within the study. This is beneficial as it indicates their field of operation and the habitus possessed. By defining the 'elite university', I will highlight the characteristics of the institution, and outline the institutional culture it operates.

Chapter Three: Defining the field

The previous chapter has provided an in-depth understanding of the Bourdieusian concepts of *field*, *habitus* and *cultural capital* and demonstrated their relevance in understanding student experience in higher education. However, this thesis also refers to the 'low-income student' and the 'elite university'. In order to provide clarity for what can often be regarded as complex and problematic terms, this chapter will focus on unpacking first the concept of 'low-income student', and then the 'elite university'. The definition of 'elite university' shall also provide a description of the University studied in this thesis: Linnet University. To conclude, this chapter will present the two research questions that govern my study and therefore what I hope to understand as a result of this research.

3.1. Defining the 'low-income' student

Often in academic literature, low-income students can appear to fall under the umbrella term of a non-traditional student. Thus, in order to unpack the concept of a non-traditional student and therefore understand the makeup of a student from a low-income background, it is imperative to provide meaning to the term 'traditional' student in relation to higher education. According to Trowler's definition (2015), the 'traditional student' is as follows:

> "native British, mostly white from broadly Christian traditions, fully able-bodied, middle or upper class, heterosexual young people whose parents attended higher education, directly transitioning from public or 'decent' state schools, with the requisite numbers and grades of Highers and A-levels, and without dependents or family responsibilities, studying full time, forming a gendered distribution among the disciplines" (p.299).

This definition describes a very specific kind of student and infers an equally specific picture of the 'other' non-traditional student. In my thesis, the students studied will be young and studying full-time which initially points towards the more traditional student image and disregards non-traditional students such as mature students. However, the students in this study will differ from their 'traditional' peers in that they will be from low-income backgrounds, the phrase 'from low-income backgrounds' used

interchangeably with the term 'low-income', throughout the research. The definition of such for the purposes of my research will be defined in chapter five through the research criteria for participants.

As denoted by Trowler's (2015) definition, the typical student is considered to be white (Ball, Davies, David and Reay, 2002; Boliver, 2015; Reay, David and Ball, 2005). This is an interesting observation and has been discussed regularly by academics alongside socioeconomic status as a cause for concern in widening participation. However, this thesis will focus predominantly on the issues of socioeconomic status and higher education as the breadth of the topic of race and higher education is too vast to be adequately addressed in this thesis.

Understanding low-income students as a group of individuals with a collective experience is justified within the Bourdieusian framework of this thesis. Bourdieu (2002a) states that agents under the influence of similar social conditions conduct a habitus with a similar set of characteristics (Bourdieu, 2002a). To contextualise, this would imply that students from low-income backgrounds possessing similar traits operate a similar habitus. Therefore, this enables this thesis to refer to the collective group of low-income students in order to discuss habitus adaption in their university experience.

It is important to acknowledge that such a term as 'the low-income student' can pose a problem in research. For instance, the term could be regarded as insensitive due to its connotations of "social divisions" (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p.439). There are, however, equal problems with using the label 'working class' to identify research participants. The term, although often used in research, can prove difficult to define or assume that it not need definition. For instance, in Ingram's (2011) Bourdieusian study exploring the impact of educational success on working class boys' habituses, the term 'working class' is discussed at length in relation to the individual's background yet Ingram (2011) does not actually take the time to unpack what she means by this turn of phrase.

My thesis uses the term 'low-income' rather than the term 'working class' to describe the research participants primarily because of the ease in being able to unpack and quantify the term 'low-income' student as a student who comes from a household with a specific income threshold in order to distinguish the boundaries of the term, and therefore to operationalize the research. I acknowledge that much of the relevant literature uses the term 'working class' in research in this field (Abrahams and Ingram, 2013; Archer and Hutchings, 2000; Bradley and Ingram, 2012; Crozier and Reay, 2011; Crozier et al, 2008a; Granfield, 1991; Hutchings and Archer, 2001; Ingram, 2011; Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009a; Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009b; Roberts and Evans, 2012; Willis, 1977). However, although some of the definitions of class that are established in the literature may refer in part to household income, this is not always the case. For instance, the definition has been previously used to refer to those whose parents' occupation involves manual or industrial labour (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d.) which in the present day does not take into account the fragmented labour market of the present day. Moreover, new graduates from university are settling for lower salaries than previous recent graduates in the same or comparable positions (Allen, 2015). Not all graduates take up so-called 'graduate-level' employment, sometimes through choice and sometimes through necessity. If income was a critical factor in class assignation, this would suggest that new graduates are of a lower class in comparison to those with higher salaries. However, obtaining a university education is generally considered to advance one's class position in part as a result of the educational qualification it provides (Bourdieu, 1973; Bourdieu, 1986). Determining one's class is multi-dimensional considering cultural factors such as parental (Vryonides, 2007) and school influence (Sullivan, 2007). This sometimes paradoxical relationship between income and class thus demonstrates the complexities of intertwining these two terms.

3.2. Constructing the elite university

The 'elite' university is a concept that is often alluded to but very rarely explicitly explained or defined. Therefore, it is imperative for the purposes of

this thesis to define such a concept in order to operationalize it both in terms of the relevant academic literature and within my own study.

In this thesis, the term 'elite university' will foremost refer to pre-1992, research-intensive institutions. In defining a university as 'elite', the quality of an institutions' research output is considered a key feature (Palfreyman and Tapper, 2009). The 'Russell Group' of universities in the United Kingdom is a group of universities with a commonality of high quality research. As discussed in chapter one, the Russell Group was rivalled in research quality by the 1994 group. However, the disbandment of the 1994 group in 2013 resulted in the Russell Group arguably monopolising the elite higher education market in the UK, producing "two-thirds of the world-leading research" from UK institutions (Russel Group, n.d). In terms of the 2017 league tables with research quality as a marker for excellence, Russell Group Universities populate at least half of the top ten in The Times and Sunday Times University Guide 2016 (Bothwell, 2015), the Complete University Guide (n.d) and The Guardian (2016) university league table. As a result of this agreed elite standing of Russell Group universities, this thesis will use membership in the Russell Group as a clear indicator of elite university status.

The above highlights that the term 'elite university' can refer to multiple institutions. However, 'elite universities' are not a homogeneous group of institutions; they differ between themselves. For instance, in Bradley et al's (2013) study, a participant rejected one elite university in favour of another because of the feeling that they wouldn't "fit in" (p.4), thus highlighting differences between different elite institutions. Therefore, within this thesis future references to elite universities will be made with careful consideration to the validity of their relevance to my specific institution of study.

In addition to characteristics of the university as a whole, the elite university can be defined in relation to its student cohort. In addition to research quality, league tables can also consider the previous academic success of its students using average entry tariff as a measure (The Guardian, 2016). This, combined with the academic talent of incoming students, therefore suggests

it is appropriate to define the elite university as "academically elite" (Palfreyman and Tapper, 2009, p.204). Furthermore, it is suggested that although all academically strong candidates, elite universities have a disproportionate intake of students from advantaged and privileged backgrounds (Palfreyman and Tapper, 2009).

The above has sought to distinguish what is constituted as an elite university within this research and the relevant literature consulted. This chapter will next provide a description of the elite university studied in this particular research.

3.2.1. Linnet University

The research is concerned with student experience of one particular university, referred to as Linnet University within this thesis. Linnet University is a medium-sized university in the North of England with 13,108 undergraduate students in attendance in the 2015/16 academic year (Linnet University, 2016a). The university has two campuses, Linnet City Campus in Linnet City, and Fraser Campus located around 25 miles away in Russet Town. This thesis will study student experience specifically at Linnet City Campus which will be further outlined in chapter five, although it should be noted that statistics from Linnet University will use data across campuses. Undergraduate fees for UK/EU students are £9,000 per annum (Linnet University, n.d[a]) which requires an access agreement in accordance with OFFA regulations (OFFA, 2015b). This shall also be discussed in chapter five, highlighting the provision for low-income students. Based on the tariff system as determined by UCAS (UCAS, n.d), the average tariff score of incoming full-time undergraduate students is 512.5 (Linnet University, 2016b). Within six months of graduating, 88% of students found full-time employment or further study with the average starting salary £23,000 according to the 2013/14 DLHE Destination of Leavers survey (Linnet University, n.d[b]).

A particular defining characteristic of the university is that it operates a collegiate system; the university consists of colleges in which each student is a member of one throughout the duration of their degree. In the UK this

system is implemented by only seven universities which all vary in terms of the responsibilities and the facilities the colleges provide (All About Careers, n.d). University is arguably an experience unique to each student (Leese, 2010), and such is even more apparent when considering that student experience in a particular college within the collegiate system may differ from one to another. However, it is appropriate to argue that colleges are more similar than they are different. For instance, as found on the University website, each Linnet college offers extra-curricular activities, leadership opportunities and a particularly extensive welfare system (Linnet University, n.d[c]). As a result, I will attempt to generalise to an extent across Linnet, but will pay attention to the impact context can have on one's experience. Furthermore, within the literature I will mostly refer to collegiate elite universities in order to ensure the validity of the relevant literature to the context in question.

3.3. Research questions

So far this chapter has defined the key terms of low-income student and elite university for the purposes of this study, alongside providing contextual information of Linnet University. From these definitions, I shall now outline the two research questions below that govern my study in order to demonstrate the focus of the research.

My first research question is *"Do low-income students feel like a 'fish out of water' in their university experience?"* In this question, this study looks to understand whether participants feel 'comfortable' in the elite university. For instance, whether one feels at ease in social occasions and in interacting with fellow students. This question relates to the Bourdieusian concept of feeling like a "fish in water" in a particular social setting (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.127), and a discussion as to whether this is the case for low-income students in the elite university.

The second research question asks "*How do these students attempt to feel like a 'fish in water'?"* Specifically this question refers to, if feeling like a 'fish out of water', how the participant reacts to this in order to feel more

comfortable in this setting. For instance, changes to one's accent, dress or language will be explored. If participants do not display signs of feeling like a 'fish out of water', the question still stands; it allows for individuals to discuss any adaption techniques used by the low-income student to this setting. Furthermore, this question addresses whether any attempts to feel like a 'fish in water' is done consciously or unconsciously through the nature of asking participants to articulate any changes they may, or may not, have made.

This chapter has sought to provide an explanation of the terms 'low-income student' and 'elite university' in order to pin down these troublesome concepts before applying such to the context of this thesis. It then provided contextual data for the elite university studied within my research: Linnet University. The chapter concluded with the two research questions that govern my study in order to provide an understanding of my aims for the research.

The next chapter will review and analyse the recent literature surrounding the context of this thesis. I will first review the experiences of low-income students amidst the admissions process to elite universities. I will then define key characteristics of elite universities that contribute to a unique culture low-income students are faced with when situated in the elite university field. I will then discuss strategies employed by the low-income students as highlighted in the literature in order to feel like a 'fish in water' in this setting.

Chapter Four: Literature Review

4.1. Admissions

Admission into Higher Education in the UK is often characterised by a standardized UCAS application, requiring students to apply to a University and articulate their suitability for entry. In order to be successful, students are expected to take heed of the rules of the admissions process (Bathmaker, 2015); the admissions process is a field in which prospective students are expected to navigate in order to gain entry into higher education. This requirement thus justifies the review of literature concerning this initial student experience in entering Higher Education. First, academic literature concerning notable barriers to access faced by low-income students will be examined. Secondly, the materials they use in order to inform their decision will be discussed, followed by highlighting the reasons for their ultimate choice. Where possible, specific references will be made to elite universities due to this thesis' concern with this specific type of university.

In order to understand student experience, it is important that the admissions process is considered. As stated by the 1994 group in their 2007 policy report *'Enhancing the Student Experience'*:

> "A student's experience of university does not begin at the moment they step onto campus at the beginning of October, and it does not end when they are shaking the hand of the Vice-Chancellor at graduation. The early relationship between student and university is important during the applications and admissions process, in preparing students for university life, and to initiate their engagement with and attitudes towards their university in the best way possible" (p.16)

The report demonstrates a dialogue between the university and the student from the early stages of the application process. As a result, this demonstrates not only the impact the admissions process can have on student experience in HE, but also justifies my study of the admissions process within the context of student experience and this thesis.

Studies investigating the relationship between students from low-income backgrounds and their characteristically low participation in higher education

is prolific (Ball, Davies, David and Reay, 2002; Chowdry et al; 2010; Connor et al, 1999; Connor and Dewson, 2001; Forsyth and Furlong, 2000; Gov.uk, 2016c; Lynch and O'Riordan, 1998), with most seeking to understand this trend in relation to admissions experience (Hoare and Johnston, 2011; Reay, David and Ball, 2005; Zimdars, Sullivan and Heath, 2009). Considering the breadth and age of some of the academic literature, this thesis will generally focus on literature from the last decade. The validity of the literature from the last three years will be particularly acknowledged considering that my study is operating in a particularly new epoch of financial barriers to access, as contextualised and described in chapter one.

4.1.1. Barriers to access

In accessing higher education, and specifically elite higher education, the low-income student faces barriers at the point of access (Bowl, 2001; Gov.uk, 2016c; Lynch and O'Riordan, 1998). This section shall focus specifically on the barriers of a lack of school guidance, a lack of 'hot' knowledge and the financial cost of university in order to understand the experiences of the low-income student when navigating the admissions process.

An initial barrier that the low-income student faces is their current educational institution and the help it offers them in navigating admissions to Higher Education (Oliver and Kettley, 2010; Reay, David and Ball, 2005; Thomas, 2002). It has been argued that often the school is unhelpful to the low-income student, with examples such as negative teacher opinions of the student entering HE (Oliver and Kettley, 2010; Reay, David and Ball, 2005) and a lack of "early career guidance" into future occupations and further study (Bradley et al, 2013, p.2). However, more recent studies have suggested that this is not always the case. Some state schools were found to focus heavily on the admissions process of higher education, orchestrating such as open evenings and events targeting students applying to elite universities in order to raise their students' aspirations (Donnelly, 2014; Oliver and Kettley, 2010); it is not the case that school is a barrier to all low-

income students.

One of the most discussed barriers to higher education for students from low-income families is a lack of knowledge about higher education and its entry process (Lynch and O'Riordan, 1998; Reay, David and Ball, 2005). Specifically, this has been due to poor careers guidance from school (Bradley et al, 2013; Forsyth and Furlong, 2000; Reay, David and Ball, 2005), and a lack of friends or family members who have experienced Higher Education who could advise and provide localised information (Archer, Leathwood and Hutchings, 2002; Crozier and Reay, 2011; Hutchings, 2003; Reay, 1998), often termed as 'hot' knowledge within the literature (Oliver and Kettley, 2010, p.748; Reay, David and Ball, 2005). To use Bourdieusian terms, this lack of empirical information at their disposal means that the low-income student's "familial habitus" lacks the dispositions 'hot' knowledge enables (Reay, David and Ball, 2005, p.67). The low-income student is thus disadvantaged, expected to navigate the admissions process with a lack of informed knowledge.

In addition to the impact on a low-income student's habitus in the admissions process, it is argued that the possession of cultural capital is crucial for students to sufficiently access higher education (Oliver and Kettley, 2010; Zimdars, Sullivan and Heath, 2009). For instance, in Zimdars, Sullivan and Heath's (2009) research, possession of "cultural knowledge" (p.659) was found to benefit the students in their application to an elite university. Considering that cultural knowledge can arguably refer to the concept of 'hot' knowledge discussed within this thesis, this further demonstrates how lacking this cultural capital held by their wealthier counterparts (Bradley and Ingram, 2012; Leese, 2010) puts the low-income student at a distinct disadvantage at the point of admissions.

The above highlights the disadvantage a lack of 'hot' knowledge inflicts for the low-income student. It has been recognised by government policy that action is required to compensate for this void in low-income students' understanding of HE and the admissions process. For instance, in the *National strategy for access and student success in higher education*, it is

argued that "prospective students need individualised advice and guidance if they are to make informed and appropriate choices" (DfBIS, 2014, p.10); low-income students should receive extra assistance from schools in the admissions process. This suggestion has been suggested previously by academics (Connor and Dewson, 2001; Dinsdale, 2002), and although the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2014) report suggests improvement, its implementation is unclear. Furthermore, the suggestion of choices being 'appropriate' begs the reader to question what the government may deem as an 'appropriate' choice for the low-income student, particularly as this is unclear within the report.

Perhaps one of the most documented barriers to higher education for low-income students is the financial cost of attending university. As noted in the Introduction, the financial barrier to HE has arguably been most prominent since 1997 with the introduction of tuition fees by the New Labour government. This naturally has had an impact on those students from low-income backgrounds who are most at risk of being unable to afford these fees (Connor and Dewson, 2001; Forsyth and Furlong, 2000). Of specific relevance to this thesis is the tuition fee changes in 2012 to up to £9,000 per year (Gov.uk, 2010) and the abolishment of maintenance grants as of September 2016 to be replaced with further loans (BBC News, 2015). The above literature pre-dates the change in academic fees and government aid towards financing university for low-income students, thus questioning the relevance of the academic literature surrounding this topic to my research. Furthermore, considering that my thesis is concerned with the experiences of students already attending higher education, a discussion into the impact on student finance lies outside of the scope of the research. Therefore, a stronger emphasis will be on the financial issues low-income students face once in residence at the elite university.

From reviewing the above literature, it is arguable that low-income students face barriers in accessing university and its admissions process specific to their demographic group. The next section will focus on the admissions process itself and the materials the low-income student uses to inform their decision.

4.1.2. Informing choice

The admissions process is arguably characterised by choice considering that students are expected to narrow their choices of institutions from the possible 160 universities and colleges in the country (Education UK, n.d) to a maximum of five when applying through UCAS (UCAS, 2016). This decision-making process is useful for academic researchers to study to understand further student experience of the admissions process, particularly the experiences of low-income students in this setting. I will first analyse the materials available to low-income students to inform their choice of institution. I shall also consider their interactions with this information, specifically those university-produced.

One of the most common methods of advertisement to prospective students for a university is through the university prospectus. Produced by the university and often free to access, the prospectus is considered a primary source of information for the low-income student to inform their higher education choice (Reay, David and Ball, 2005). However, the prospectus has been criticised by students for the "insufficient detail" of specific courses and future job opportunities (Hutchings, 2003, p.106); prospectuses are not always considered the most informative in low-income student's choice. Furthermore, the idea of accessibility rests on the notion that these students are aware of their availability (Maslin, 2015).

Another common factor in student experience of the admissions process is the availability of university open days. A day in which prospective applicants can tour the university, this particular vehicle for information has been strongly debated both in its merits and accessibility for the low-income student. Research by Hutchings (2003) found that students spoke of positive experiences of open days, commenting on the ability of being able to "feel the atmosphere" (p.117) through empirical experience of the facilities and speaking to current students. However, open days require travel in order to visit the institution and are therefore inaccessible for those students unable to afford the travel costs; the open day becomes an additional admissions barrier to the low-income student. However, Linnet University in their access

agreement states that they provide a travel bursary for students wishing to attend pre-application and post-application open days (OFFA, 2016a) in receipt of the 16-19 bursary. Considering that this bursary is given in part to students from low-income backgrounds (Gov.uk, 2016d), it appears that in the specific case of Linnet travel costs to open days are not a relevant concern for this thesis. Furthermore, although Hutchings (2003) research is more than a decade old, it is arguable that the research is still applicable to the context of this thesis, thus justifying its use.

It is also important to note that university-produced information, such as the prospectuses and open days as discussed, produce information that is "not neutral" (Hutchings, 2003, p.98); the information provided is naturally biased towards the university. As a result, the low-income student has arguably limited autonomic thought in choosing universities due to a reliance on this biased material.

4.1.3. Reasons for choice

Having considered the kinds of information available to students when applying to university, I shall now discuss research relating to 'choice'- the reasons given by students for choosing to study at particular institutions. This reasoning is considered to be composed of numerous factors (Forsyth and Furlong, 2000; Whitehead, Raffan and Deaney, 2006). Therefore, this section will discuss the impact finance can have on student choice, in addition to wanting to be in the 'right' place with people like themselves and how this can be explained using Bourdieusian thought with specific reference to elite universities.

Considering the barrier finance can present to the low-income student in access to higher education explored earlier, it is unsurprising that finance has considerable weighting in low-income students' reasoning in choosing an institution of study (Beckett, 2002; Connor et al, 1999; Forsyth and Furlong, 2000; Whitehead, Raffan and Deaney, 2006). Deciding financial factors found within the literature included being able to live at home and attend a local university (Reay, Davies, David and Ball, 2001; Forsyth and Furlong,

2000), the likelihood of earning money through a part time job (Reay, David and Ball, 2005) and the financial support provided by the institution (Davies, Mangan and Hughes, 2009; Forsyth and Furlong, 2000). This latter theme of financial support available to the low-income student is answered in higher education policy. As highlighted in the Introduction, for those universities charging between £6,000 and £9,000, an access agreement in accordance with external body OFFA is required (OFFA, 2016b) to enable students from low income backgrounds to access these particular institutions, first implemented for the 2012/13 academic cohort. The literature consulted above predates the introduction of the access agreement. Therefore, in chapter six I will discuss the impact of Linnet University's access agreement on student choice of institution.

Although finance is influential in low-income students' choice of institution, it is not necessarily a solely determining factor (CFE Research, 2015a). Therefore, it is appropriate to understand other reasons for choice of institution. One particularly prominent theme within the literature was the desire by low-income students to feel comfortable in their surroundings (Oliver and Kettley, 2010; Reay, David and Ball, 2005) and that they were in 'the right place' (CFE Research, 2015a; Connor and Dewson, 2001; Reay, David and Ball, 2005). The feeling of having a particular place within an institution, or indeed society, is theorised by Bourdieu (2010) as sensing "one's relationship to the social world and to one's proper place in it" (p.476). As a result, "young people build up a construction of 'what people like us do'" (Hutchings, 2003, p.111).

To analyse the above from a Bourdieusian perspective, how choices can present themselves as 'right' for the low-income student can be related to the amount of cultural capital one possesses. For instance, Oliver and Kettley (2010) found that choice of institution can often relate to "the amounts and quality of relevant 'cultural capital' possessed by individuals" (p.738). Specifically, certain choices may appear "obvious" to the low-income student as a result of these "embedded perceptions and expectations" from cultural capital (Ball, Davies, David and Reay, 2002, p.58); cultural capital is

influential in one's choice of HE institution.

4.1.3.1. Choosing the elite university

Ultimately, this thesis is concerned specifically with low-income students' experiences of an elite university. Therefore, it is appropriate to explore for the remainder of this section the low-income student's experiences of, and their reasoning for, picking the elite university.

Perhaps one of the most cited reasons in the literature for low-income students choosing elite universities was the prestige associated with them (Bradley and Ingram, 2012; Whitehead, Raffan and Deaney, 2006); students chose these universities because of their social status within the HE hierarchy. For instance, as suggested in chapter three when defining the elite university, elite universities are often defined by their academic success, a quality considered attractive to students (Baker and Brown, 2007).

In reality, the low-income student is considered unlikely to choose, and thus attend, the elite university. Using a Bourdieusian perspective, Archer (2003) found that low-income students felt elite universities "are 'not for the likes of us'" (p.17) of which Archer (2003) contributes to the elite university's "institutional habitus that alienates 'other' … students" (p.17). Archer's (2003) use of institutional habitus in this context to imply that the institution has an impact on its students is a concept most interesting in the context of the admissions experience and will be interesting to see if this is mirrored within my research.

The above literature arguably fails to acknowledge those students who do not search specifically for universities 'for them'. In Reay, Davies, David and Ball's (2001) study, low-income students aimed "for a university place that outstrips the collective expectations of 'people like us'" (p.866); they wanted to remove themselves from their supposed 'place'. Therefore, despite the literature suggesting that low-income students prioritise going to an institution that they feel comfortable in, it appears that for those students that pick elite universities this is not necessarily a factor in their decision, nor a 'risk' that they are willing to take. This presumption of the literature makes for an

interesting conceptual foundation ahead of exploration into empirical evidence of the low-income student's experience of applying to the elite university of this study.

This chapter has sought to understand the experiences of students from low-income backgrounds applying to specifically elite universities. It first explored the initial barriers to accessing the admissions process low-income students' face. These included a lack of guidance from their previous educational institution, a lack of 'hot' knowledge at their disposal and initial financial disadvantage. Particularly lacking 'hot' knowledge disadvantaged the low-income student as it reduced the cultural capital they possessed in comparison to their wealthier counterparts. It then uncovered the type of information low-income students used to inform their decisions, specifically prospectuses and open days, although there were criticisms of accessibility of both of these mediums. Finally, it sought to understand final reasons for students' choice of institutions and the decision to attend an elite university. Although acknowledging that choice can involve a multitude of factors, financial implications and the need to 'feel' like it was the place for them were prominent themes within the literature.

After reviewing extensively the experiences of admissions for the low-income student, I am ultimately concerned with the experiences of the low-income student once in attendance at the elite university. Therefore, the next section will analyse the different culture of the elite university, specifically highlighting key characteristics and the interactions low-income students have with this.

'Are you mad or what? This ain't Harry Potter' (Roberts and Evans, 2012, p.78).

4.2. Different Culture

The elite university is considered to hint to a culture that is regarded as very different from other less prestigious universities (Baker and Brown, 2007; Hutchings, 2003; Whaley, 2000). The term culture, despite its use being almost commonplace in everyday language, is difficult to define. This ambiguity is further heightened when the concept is entangled with the term 'elite university'; a concept that equally possesses an air of ambiguity. Using culture to refer to "codes of manners, dress, language, rituals, norms of behaviour and systems of belief" (Jary and Jary, 2006), the concept of the 'elite university culture' within this thesis will be operationalised to examine practices, ideas and beliefs undertaken in this setting specifically by low-income students. The relationship between low-income students and the elite university culture has been discussed within academic literature, with suggestions of incompatibility. As a result, the low-income students are argued to be "cultural outsiders" in the field of elite universities (Granfield, 1991, p.336). This section will explore the concept of low-income students as out of place and therefore a 'fish out of water' in the elite university. Furthermore, I will define characteristics of an elite university culture that distinguishes itself from less prestigious universities. First exploring the concepts of tradition and architecture as a characteristic of the elite university culture, other characteristics that will be explored include the specific type of student attracted to the university, the insular 'bubble' it creates, the extra-curricular activity that is particularly emphasised and the intensity of academic study. The wider impact of this different culture on the low-income student will be assessed, such as its ability to transfer cultural capital and its destabilizing nature on the habitus of the low-income student. I shall conclude that the elite university does possess a unique culture which can destabilize the habitus of the low-income student when faced with this unfamiliar field.

4.2.1. Tradition and architecture

Often the pioneers of higher education with the first university established as early as the 12th Century (University of Oxford, 2015), elite universities and their buildings often follow suit in their historical aesthetics, a constant reminder of their entrenched historic backgrounds. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the architecture and tradition has seemingly become an elite university characteristic within the literature, both with non-students (Archer, Leathwood and Hutchings, 2002; Hutchings and Archer, 2001; Roberts and Evans, 2012), and current students in Higher Education (Baker and Brown, 2007; Macrae and Maguire, 2002). Prestigious universities are often associated with aesthetically pleasing features, such as grassy areas and historic buildings of grandeur (Archer, Leathwood and Hutchings, 2002; Baker and Brown, 2007) made up of nineteenth century brickwork that can only be found in these older universities. Baker and Brown (2007) argue however, that it is not just the architecture that is characteristic of an elite university, but "the romance of tradition" it evokes for the student (p.382), creating "an exotic, fictionalised or other-worldly feel" (Baker and Brown, 2007, p.387).

Baker and Brown (2007) highlight above that it is not simply the architecture that is valued, but the culture it represents within its hallowed grounds: the systems of belief it signals. Further to the pull of tradition, they argue that architecture is "powerfully intertwined with notions of academic quality and higher learning … drawn on with remarkable alacrity, as if they were an entirely natural way to understand learning" (Baker and Brown, 2007, p.388). This demonstrates not only the implications attached to the characteristics of the elite university, but that these notions are accepted by the institution and rarely questioned by its students.

However, it is appropriate to argue that not all elite university applicants fall capture to the 'romance' of tradition as alluded to by Baker and Brown (2007), nor will the architecture always be regarded as a characteristic of an elite university. The older institutions may romanticise their students with towering spires and old brick, but for those universities built in the 19th and

20th century, this may not be the case. It is appropriate to recognise that elite universities can take multiple forms; they are not always upheld by traditions and old brickwork. As a result, this undermines the argument that tradition is always integral to the elite culture. Furthermore, old and stately architecture has been found to repel some students (Ball, Davies, David and Reay, 2002; Hutchings and Archer, 2001) with students from Ball, Davies, David and Reay's (2002) study finding the elite university as "too traditional, too old fashioned" (Ball, Davies, David and Reay, 2002, p.68).

Nonetheless, reviewing more recent academic literature and finding a distinct lack of literature concerning low-income students voicing this opinion, the relevance of this criticism towards the 'romance' of tradition in the modern day is questionable due to a lack of evidence. However, considering that Linnet is indefinitely a traditional elite university, it is appropriate to still consider the relationship between tradition and the elite university in this thesis.

4.2.2. Fellow students

In addition to the traditional architecture, the students found within the elite university walls are also considered to be a characteristic of the place. Rather, there are arguably common characteristics across the students that attend the elite university as stated by the low-income students in attendance at these institutions. As highlighted in chapter three, a common characteristic of the traditional Higher Education student is that they are "middle or upper class" (Trowler, 2015, p.299); they are from a relatively wealthy background. Within the elite university, this perception is reiterated by the academic literature; the wealthier students are considered to be the dominant members of elite higher education. The low-income students who come into contact with these dominant members were often described as "posh" (Ball, Davies, David and Reay, 2002; Bradley, 2012; Bradley et al, 2013), with students in Bradley et al (2013) study highlighting further characteristics such as "snobby', rich and privileged" (p.12). Briefly highlighted in this example by Bradley et al (2013), these characteristics were used as a negative attribute (Ball, Davies, David and Reay, 2002) and thus hint to feelings of displeasure

by the low-income student towards their fellow students. As to whether this will be mirrored in this study shall be further explored in the Discussion.

Further to their domination of the elite university, the wealthier students are regarded to be favoured in comparison to their lower-income counterparts by this type of institution (Archer and Leathwood, 2003; Thomas, 2002). This is considered to be through its everyday practices, such as "the language of instruction, the assumed knowledge and the prioritizing of style over contents" (Thomas, 2002, p.433); the wealthier students are prioritised in the way academic courses are delivered. This has a direct impact on the institutional habitus possessed by the elite university, as:

> "although one culture (or habitus) is not intrinsically superior to another, the power enjoyed by the dominant classes enables them to impose their own framework of meaning on the school as if it was the only legitimate culture" (Bilton et al, 2002, p.284).

Here, Bilton et al (2002) highlight two ramifications from the dominant group's effect on the elite university. Firstly, that the dominant group's habitus is assumed by the institution to become ingrained within the institutional culture. Secondly, that the institutional culture is presented as unchallengeable to its attendees by its legitimation of culture. In terms of my context, this latter ramification in particular demonstrates that by the elite university culture being unchallenged, the culture remains steadfast within society.

Mixing with this dominant group of students can often prove difficult for the low-income student. For instance, interacting with these students was found to be a "culture shock" (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009b, p.1111) to the low-income student with reports on these interactions as having an impact on how they viewed themselves; they felt "poorer" after being in contact with these students (Forsyth and Furlong, 2000, p.36). As a result, students often found it hard to mix with this different group of people (Bradley, 2012; Lynch and O'Riordan, 1998; Macrae and Maguire, 2002).

From a Bourdieusian perspective, the challenge highlighted above can be explained as:

"people who belong to the same social group and who thus occupy the same position in social space tend to share the same tastes across all forms of symbolic practice" (Bennett, 2010, p.xix).

Bennett (2010) above demonstrates how tastes reflect the cultural capital of the group. According to Crozier and Reay (2011), cultural capital is "part of the University's structure and is embodied in the wider student clientele" (p.147); it is embedded within this dominant culture and all those who actively engage with it. However, as mentioned above, cultural capital is found in the 'wider student clientele'. Considering that in the elite university this refers to the dominant wealthy group of students with the low-income students the minority, this suggests that the lack of similar tastes (and cultural capital) is why these students in particular struggle when interacting with their fellow students. Whether this is a valid argument in the context of my thesis shall be explored further within my research.

4.2.3. The 'bubble'

For many students, the culture of the elite university is not just different, but insular; it is a 'bubble'. The idea of the elite university as a 'bubble' keeping its students in a tight-knit community with little penetration from the outside world has been documented by such as Reay, Crozier and Clayton (2009b) whose participants spoke at length of the elite university bubble as "not reality" (p.1111). Although limited in exploration of the concept within academic literature, the 'bubble' has been discussed in terms of Linnet University. Humphries (2013) suggests that students rarely visit home due to the high proportion of students deriving from the south of England. This, coupled with the lack of knowledge in current affairs and the lack of students working part-time jobs creates an atmosphere at Linnet that has little penetration from a world outside of the university and its way of life. This contributes towards what Granfield (1991) describes as the "intense" lifestyle of the elite university (p.337); an all-encompassing cultural 'bubble' which gives the low-income student little opportunity to escape.

Such intensity as being all-encompassed by the elite university is complicated further by the notion that this culture is not always considered compatible with the low-income student. Aries and Seider (2005) provide

interesting insight into this area as their students often expressed the idea that the culture they experienced in their university was vastly different to that of the one they had experienced previously at school.

I recognise that Aries and Seider's (2005) research is based on American higher education which has an extremely different landscape to that of the UK. However, the study is useful to my thesis in demonstrating the disparity experienced by low-income students between their previous education institution and their new prestigious HE setting. Furthermore, prolific and respected researchers within this particular field, such as Reay, Crozier and Clayton (2009a, 2009b), also use Aries and Seider's (2005) research within their review of literature to consult against their own research. Considering this alongside the similar findings in British studies demonstrating the "conflicts" between previous experiences of culture and "the organisational culture of schools as social institutions" (Lynch and O'Riordan, 1998, p.452), this justifies my references to American literature on the topic in hand.

Lynch and O'Riordan (1998) touch on the conflict that can occur when a student's past experiences, forming an integral part of their habitus, come into contact with an institution grounded with different habitus traits. For Thomas (2002), it is regarded that students that do not hold the same "values, language and knowledge" as the institution are indirectly penalised (p.431); they are unable to 'fit in' to the elite university culture. This is not to say, however, that there is no attempt to 'fit in' by the low-income student; a concept that shall be further explored in the 'Coping Strategies' section of this literature review.

This chapter has so far suggested that the elite university harvests a particular kind of culture that is most certainly distinguishable as a characteristic trait. However, this viewpoint has been criticised for ignoring the similarities between elite universities and other HE institutions. For instance, it is considered the "traditional student experience" to live in halls in first year of university (Holton, 2015, p.12) with around one in five students of all years in higher education residing in university-owned halls of residence (HESA, 2015). However, this is considered particularly true of elite collegiate

universities whereby students tend to live in college accommodation for their first year of study (Tight, 2011). Tight (2011) argues that, unlike other higher education institutions, the elite universities still operate on twentieth century ideals that suggest that living in a collegiate atmosphere creates the perfect conditions to foster academic learning "in a residential community" (p.110). Considering that in the present day it is a requirement at Linnet for all first years to live in college accommodation and remain a member of their college throughout their undergraduate degree (Linnet University, n.d[d]), this demonstrates that an elite university such as Linnet maintains an extent of uniqueness, such as the collegiate system, over other higher education institutions.

Although the literature generally suggests that the elite university harvests a different culture to most other higher education institutions, it is contested as to whether this always equates to a negative experience for the low-income student. In Humphries (2013) explanation of the elite university 'bubble', he argues that the insular nature is helpful in offering students support and enabling them to create firm friendships through the close-knit community. This view is also supported in the literature by Baker and Brown (2007) who found that although students were aware "of social and cultural divides" (p.384), this wasn't always discussed negatively. For instance, one particular student expressed their feelings as follows:

> "started to dawn on me coming from a strong working class area … the accents … you think 'who are these types, do they actually exist?' … you've just got to have a sense of humour and laugh … you can spot them a mile off" (Baker and Brown, 2007, p.384).

It appears here that rather than reject the new culture, the student accepts and embraces it, termed by Baker and Brown (2007) as the "neutralisation of the perceived gulf" (p.384). The premise of accepting and embracing a new culture will be discussed in terms of habitus adaption of the low-income student in the study. In the discussion, I will examine whether the low-income student at Linnet embraces the institutional culture as referred to by Baker and Brown (2007), and the impact this has on the student.

4.2.4. Extra-curricular activity

The elite university is not misplaced in its emphasis on extra-curricular activities. Rather, research suggests that undertaking these additional activities can benefit students. For instance, undertaking an extra-curricular activity has been found to better one's social skills between peers (Bradley et al, 2013; CFE Research, 2015b). Further to these social benefits are the future career benefits undertaking an extra-curricular activity provides through contributing to one's "CV building" (Bradley and Ingram, 2012, p.62). In Bourdieusian terms, extra-curricular activity provides students with cultural capital which "can have a positive effect on both educational attainment and career outcomes" (The Sutton Trust, 2014). For instance, by acquiring cultural capital through extra-curricular activity, it is regarded as currency exchangeable for "access to careers" (Bradley et al, 2013, p.6); the cultural capital acquired is used as a currency for access to future employment prospects. Considering these benefits, and the fact that such as those related to careers are at their most valuable post-university and therefore long after the ease of opportunity to get involved in these activities (Bradley et al, 2013), it is unsurprising that the elite university have an increased emphasis on the importance of extracurricular activities.

4.2.5. Academic

In defining the field, I highlighted the research-intensive nature of the elite university. This implies that the standard of academic research and teaching is high. Students are thus academically successful in their previous education in order to gain a place to study at this high standard of academia. In majority of the academic literature, students from low-income families are linked with low rates of educational achievement (Crozier and Reay, 2011; Terenzini et al, 1996; Willis, 1977) attributed by Bourdieu (1973) to a lack of cultural capital; low-income students have a greater likelihood of underperforming academically. However, students in attendance of elite universities are expected to be of a high academic level in order to enrol (Hoare and Johnston, 2011; Maslin, 2015; Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009b); they must reach the academic standards set by the university on

condition of their offer. This therefore contradicts the link between the low-income student and academic underachievement, opening a new field of exploration in terms of the relationship between socioeconomic groupings and educational attainment that will be further explored in this thesis.

This is not to say, however, that students from low-income backgrounds do not struggle with academic work. Issues that have been documented regarding the low-income student and their academic work within the elite university include struggles with the expectations of self-study (Christie, Tett, Cree and McCune, 2014; Leese, 2010) and experiencing "self-doubt" in their academic ability (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009b, p.1112). It is arguable, however, that these struggles are open to be experienced by all students entering HE; these are not specific to the low-income student.

Despite a wealth of literature suggesting a relationship between cultural differences and academic attainment for the disadvantaged student, this was not accepted by all. Rather, in the last decade research suggests that not all students from low-income backgrounds face problems in their academic work as a result of a 'culture clash'. Crozier et al (2008a) argued that students studying at an elite university found that "the university represented a haven of learning; a place to display their intellectual selves without being ridiculed as odd" (p.174). Such observations thus demonstrate clearly that in this case, the academic challenge was a positive aspect revelled by the low-income student.

4.2.6. The wider impact on habitus: 'fish out of water'

So far, this chapter has sought to highlight some characteristics of the elite university that form its unique culture. However, I am also concerned with the impact of this culture on the low-income student in attendance. This section will first, however, explore the Bourdieusian concept of 'fish out of water' and its applicability to this context, before attempting to understand the process Bourdieu (2002b, p.31) describes as "dialectal confrontation" which the low-income student experiences on interaction with this new culture, later developed by Ingram (2011) as the experience of a 'habitus tug'.

So far, I have highlighted that the low-income student is faced with a particularly unique, and therefore unfamiliar, culture at the elite university. In Bourdieusian terms, this suggests that the elite university operates a different field to the low-income student's original field. For those familiar with a field of a particular institution such as the institution, it can be delineated as thus:

> "And when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it is like a 'fish in water': it does not feel the weight of the water, and it takes the world about itself for granted" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.127).

Rather, those "students whose originary field is in a similar position are likely to feel more at ease within the university" (Abrahams and Ingram, 2013, para. 2.2); they are able to navigate themselves successfully through the elite university field and its culture. However, the students from low-income backgrounds are "dealing with a very unfamiliar field" (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009b, p.1110). Therefore, they are experiencing the elite university field and the culture entrenched in such as a 'fish out of water'. With this concept in mind, the remainder of this section will analyse in greater depth the role of the habitus within the concept of 'fish out of water' with specific reference to this thesis' context.

The Bourdieusian concept of 'fish out of water' has habitus at its heart. Addressed as "dialectal confrontation", Bourdieu (2002b) argues that a conflict of habitus occurs when one's "dispositions encounter conditions (including fields) different from those in which they were constructed and assembled" (p.31). Through being positioned in a field different to that where it was created, in addition to having to interact with habitus' different from their own, one experiences a "destabilized habitus" (Bourdieu, 2000, p.160). Bourdieu's (2000) work has been used by such as Ingram (2011) in order to sufficiently demonstrate the destabilized habitus' impact in the field of education. Ingram (2011), echoing Bourdieusian thought, recognises that "the habitus is destabilized as it is caught in a tug between two conflicting social fields" as a result of this 'dialectal confrontation' (p.290). The impact dialectal confrontation has on the individual is mixed in opinion. Bourdieu (2000) argues that this process automatically "generates suffering" (p.160); dialectal confrontation is a negative experience for an individual. However,

Ingram (2011) found that dialectal confrontation did not always result in a negative experience for the student. Instead, the uncertainty of operating their habitus in an unfamiliar field whilst navigating their way through an institutional habitus different to their own was simply accepted by students as commonplace (Ingram, 2011). This thesis will examine whether dialectal confrontation is a negative experience for the low-income student in the elite university, or whether it is more appropriate to argue that experience of this process is commonplace.

Ingram (2011) raises an interesting argument that there has been a fetishism surrounding habitus adaption by the low-income student. However, Ingram's (2011) concept of habitus tug can be criticised in its lack of development. For instance, Ingram (2011) states that as a result of the habitus 'tug' between the habitus of home and the habitus of their educational institution, one "is not 'a fish in water' in either field" (p.290). However, Ingram (2011) later concludes that "one disposition may outweigh the other in terms of being the dominant disposition, and the balance is able to change over time and from one context to the next." (p.293). Although demonstrating the flexibility of habitus in this statement, Ingram (2011) contradicts her previous analysis stating that the student is unable to transition wholly into either field successfully. As a result, this highlights an ambiguity Ingram (2011) has yet to resolve in her work. However, Ingram (2011) does provide interesting insight into the concept of the 'destabilized habitus' that can be explored within my research; seeking to understand the experiences of the low-income student in navigating their habitus in a conflicting field. With this in mind, this concept of the 'destabilized habitus' will be further explored in the next section. Specifically, it will concentrate on the wider impact the destabilized habitus has on the low-income student and their university experience. In the next section, this will extend to focus on coping mechanisms used by students in order to feel like a "fish in water" in this unfamiliar field (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.127). Ultimately this thesis will seek to demonstrate that, contrary to the more traditional Bourdieusian view of the low-income student as a 'fish out of water' in the elite university, the low-income student is able to adapt their habitus into a 'cleft habitus' in

which the student compartmentalizes their life and operates their habitus depending on the field in which it is operating.

To conclude, this section has defined the different culture of the elite university and the impact this can have on students from low-income backgrounds. Characteristics of the elite university culture include the architecture and the tradition this exudes, the wealthier students the university generally attracts, and the 'bubble' the university wraps its students in in order for them to fully acculturate into the university. Examining the wider impact this different culture can have on the low-income student, it is argued that the habitus is 'destabilized' by coming into contact with a field and habitus dissimilar to their previous experiences. Through this section establishing that there is indefinitely a unique culture attached to the elite university, this thesis shall next attempt to understand how the 'destabilized habitus' of the low-income student operates in the elite university and the coping mechanisms they put into place in order to do so.

4.3. Coping Strategies

As concluded in the previous section, low-income students operate a destabilized habitus whereby they experience a conflict of dispositions between themselves and the unfamiliar field of the elite university. As a result, there has been an increase in literature suggesting that these students are expected by elite institutions to employ coping strategies in order to successfully navigate their way through university life (Bradley and Ingram, 2012; Crozier et al, 2008b; Ingram, 2011; Patiniotis and Holdsworth, 2005). This concept of students adopting 'coping strategies' can be theorised through Bourdieu's (1999) work where he argues that "at the risk of feeling themselves *out of place*, individuals who move into a new space must fulfil the conditions that that space tacitly requires of its occupants" (p.128). Using this Bourdieusian thought as a theoretical foundation for analysis, this section will seek to explore how the low-income student copes when faced with a new culture, specifically in relation to their habitus.

For Bourdieu (2000), one adapts their habitus when faced with an unfamiliar field through "degrees of integration" (p.160). This thesis will demonstrate that these steps of integration are apparent in the low-income students' attempts to 'fit in' to the elite university. I will first argue that the low-income student fully submerses themselves in their new lifestyle. Using the example of language, this will demonstrate that the low-income student undergoes a full habitus adaption in order to match that of the elite institution. I will then compare this theory with the criticism that the low-income student's habitus is only slightly modified to fit the elite university, using the example of friendships. I will further argue that this adaption is dealt by the student reflexively. I will then explore the suggestion that for some low-income students, any adaption is rejected in favour of maintaining their own original habitus. In addition to the focus on the low-income student and their attempts to 'fit in', the role of the elite university is also explored. Specifically, their assistance in acculturating the students into their culture and other external barriers faced by the low-income student. Ultimately, I argue that rather than imposing acceptance or rejection, the low-income student employs a 'cleft

habitus' (Bourdieu, 1999) in which they compartmentalise home and university life in operating a habitus that navigates these two lifestyles simultaneously.

4.3.1. Full habitus adaption

Faced with the prospect of a unique university culture, it is argued that rather than becoming "alienated" (Baker and Brown, 2007, p.382) the low-income student attempts to 'fit in' to this foreign culture (Abrahams and Ingram, 2013; Holton, 2015; Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009b; Ryan, 2000). When discussing the low-income student 'fitting in' to the elite university culture, it is accurate to suggest that this is based on the "assumption that it is the working-class individual who must adapt and change, in order to fit into, and participate in, the (unchanged) HE institutional culture and wider system" (Archer and Leathwood, 2003, p.176). Furthermore, "submerging oneself in the university 'experience' and adopting a 'student identity' is perceived as the norm" (Abrahams and Ingram, 2013, para. 1.2); full habitus adaption by the low-income student is expected in order to 'fit in'. With this in mind, the remainder of the section will outline the three stages of habitus adaption outlined by existing literature to low-income students when residing in an elite university. I shall conclude with my predictions of the technique employed by the low-income student at Linnet.

One habitus adaption technique discussed in the context of my research is the concept that the low-income student fully adapts their habitus in alignment with the institution's through full immersion into this new culture by 'mimicking' their wealthier counterparts. As demonstrated when outlining this thesis' key concepts, a defining characteristic of habitus is that it is subjective to its social context (Hillier and Rooksby, 2002; Swingewood, 2000; Wacquant, 1992) and this is recognised by academics in the context of my thesis (Abrahams and Ingram, 2013; Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009b; Reay, David and Ball, 2005). The low-income student's ability to fully adapt their habitus in order to suit the necessary field means that the low-income students are regarded:

> "to successfully move across two very different fields, combining strong connections and loyalties to family and home friends with what are seen to be classically middle-class academic dispositions" (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009b, p.1105).

Reay, Crozier and Clayton (2009b) here suggest two key ideas. Firstly, that the low-income student by adapting their habitus is able to easily apply themselves to their new context and field of the elite university. Secondly, by adapting themselves fully, the low-income student exudes a familiarity with dispositions often employed by those wealthier than themselves. As a result, full adaption enables the low-income student to develop "an impressive array of internal resources, and display a self-reliant independence" (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009b, p.1107); full adaption benefits the low-income student.

4.3.1.1. Language

The use of language as a coping mechanism for higher education has been discussed at length within academia (Addison and Mountford, 2015; Aries and Seider, 2005; Christie et al, 2008; Granfield, 1991; Leese, 2010; Stuart, 2000). Language is regarded as a currency within higher education which, when exchanged, can enable the possessor to navigate higher education successfully in both academic and social settings. The importance of language has been further noted for its use as a cultural capital signifier; possessing cultural capital in terms of the 'right' language can allow students to 'get on' in HE (Aries and Seider, 2005). Addison and Mountford (2015, para. 5.5) found that low-income students adapted their language to suit the elite university by altering their accent to one they deemed "more acceptable". With this in mind, this thesis will explore whether language is an example of the low-income student's habitus adaption at Linnet University: whether the low-income student will change their language to fit with that of the institution.

The above has outlined the suggestion that the low-income student, in order to feel like a 'fish in water' in the elite university, fully adapts their habitus to match that of the institution. However, Granfield (1991) suggests that this is not always an easy transition for the low-income student. Instead, some students are unable to fully submerse themselves into their new environment

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nor sever ties with their old background (Granfield, 1991); they are unable to transcend to their new habitus nor discard their old habitus. Although Granfield's (1991) study was set in a higher education landscape vastly different to today, he raises an important concept; the low-income student stuck in 'limbo', unable to fully integrate into the elite university culture but also unable to return to their old lifestyle. With Granfield's (1991) criticism in mind, I will continue to explore further theories as to how the low-income student 'fits in' to the elite university, next exploring the concept of the low-income student's habitus as altered, but also capable of retaining some of its original features.

4.3.2. Something old, something new: the modified habitus

As alluded to in the previous section, an additional defining characteristic of habitus is the fluidity with which the habitus can adapt to its surroundings (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992); it can change and adapt to suit the necessary field. As a result, this characteristic allows the modification of the habitus in order "to permit the creation of new forms of institutional and self experience" (Baker and Brown, 2007, p.388). However, rather than the full adaption as suggested above, this fluidity is argued to enable "a degree of accommodation where the habitus accepts the legitimacy of the new field's structure and is structured by it, enabling a modification in the habitus" (Ingram, 2011, p.290); a slight, but not complete, modification of the habitus to suit the social context. This section will use the example of friendships to demonstrate that the low-income student undergoes a slight modification of their habitus once in attendance at the elite university. This example is particularly useful for exploration due to the expanse and availability of the literature on this area in the context of this thesis. This section will then conclude suggesting that the slight adaption to the low-income student's habitus can be theorised as operating a 'reflexive habitus' in this specific setting.

4.3.2.1. Friendships

An example in which the low-income student modifies their habitus in order to 'fit in' to the elite institution is through the friendships they make. Low-income students are found to form meaningful friendships with fellow students from similar backgrounds to themselves because of the similarities between them it presumes (Bathmaker, Ingram and Waller, 2013; Bradley, 2012) and therefore the compatibility this suggests as a result (Wilcox, Winn and Fyvie-Gauld, 2005).

In Bourdieusian terms, the above suggests that students modify their habitus in order to cope with the transition into, and during their time at, the elite university through such as actively befriending students similar to themselves. However, modifying the habitus naturally requires an element of adaption, a process often regarded as problematic within the literature (Abrahams and Ingram, 2013; Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009a; Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009b). For instance, Granfield (1991) found that this demographic group had an emotional reaction to even a slight adaption of their habitus, displaying feelings of "guilt" towards their old friends for leaving them behind (p.344). Furthermore, not all low-income students found it easy to form friendships regardless of background, finding it difficult to find students that could "relate" to themselves (Bradley and Ingram, 2012, p.64) and in securing friendships with people from similar interests (Trowler, 2015).

4.3.2.2. The reflexive habitus

Above argues that the low-income student undergoes a slight adaption to their habitus when navigating the elite university, enabled by the fluid nature of their habitus. Increasingly, however, this characteristic has been expanded within the literature to suggest that the habitus does not simply allow for fluidity, but has the capacity to be 'reflexive' it its operation; the individual has increased autonomy in their interactions with other agents and the structures around them (Mouzelis, 2007; Sweetman, 2003).

This modification of the concept of habitus is not without criticism, particularly from Bourdieu himself. For Bourdieu, the reflexive habitus is appropriate only when discussing the state of the habitus in a moment of crisis whereby

the individual has to disregard their habitual dispositions in favour of a more reflexive and rational approach (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). However, Bourdieu is criticised for ignoring that the change an individual experiences through "the game's constantly unfolding interactive situation" requires the habitus to be reflexive (Mouzelis, 2007, para. 2.7); it is needed in order for the habitus to have the flexibility to adapt. Furthermore, it is argued that "processes of refashioning – whether emancipatory or otherwise – may be second nature rather than difficult to achieve" (Sweetman, 2003, p.537). Sweetman (2003) here suggests that adaption is not only capable for those operating in a field different to their own, but that previous notions concerning the reflexive habitus have been fetishized; adaption is not a complicated process. To contextualise to my thesis, based on Sweetman's (2003) concept of the reflexive habitus this would suggest that the low-income student is able to adapt to their surroundings with ease due to the capabilities of their 'reflexive habitus'. It is this application that will be explored within my research, addressing whether this is a valid claim to make in this context.

4.3.3. Rejection of habitus adaption

Thus far, I have argued that the low-income student adapts their habitus to an extent once in the elite university, either completely or slightly. However, there is an existence of literature that suggests that habitus adaption is not always welcome by low-income students that attend the elite university; some students reject the concept of habitus adaption.

It is suggested that the low-income student purposively avoids the elite university culture in order to retain features of their own original habitus (Abrahams and Ingram, 2013; Archer, Leathwood and Hutchings, 2002; Granfield, 1991). As found by Reay, Crozier and Clayton (2009b), the low-income students' habituses retained "key valued aspects of working-class self" (p.1111), exemplified by such as having family and friends from home visit; the students were attempting to maintain links with their home and habitus. The disparity between the institution's habitus, and the unchanged habitus of the low-income student, does not automatically disadvantage the

student. Instead, it is suggested that "the sense of alienation at elite institutions… is not inevitably debilitating or demotivating for non-traditional students" (Baker and Brown, 2007, p.388); the culture of the elite university does not automatically imply that the student must adapt their habitus in order to 'fit in'. Baker and Brown (2007) imply here that there has been fetishism surrounding this subject. Rather, contrary to previous opinion, low-income students are not made to feel like 'fish out of water' in the elite university.

Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that coping strategies are not just employed by the low-income student in order to ease the transition and experience of the elite university. Higher education institutions can be argued to have mechanisms in place in order to help low-income students feel like a 'fish in water' in their institution. Therefore, it is important to also examine the coping strategies employed by the elite university to encourage the low-income student to adapt to their habitus. Furthermore, the following section will explore other external barriers originating from the university that can impact on the low-income student's experience in addition to their habitus as these are arguably as influential to student experience.

4.3.4. The university influence

So far, this literature review has discussed low-income students' adaption to their higher education institution. As highlighted by Archer and Leathwood (2003), this rests on the premise that the student must 'fit in' to the institution and its culture with very little accommodation from the institution itself; the low-income student is expected to fit into the institution in order to feel like a 'fish in water'. This view of the institution as rigid and immutable has come against scrutiny within the literature in the past with calls for change to assist in transition for low-income students' experience (Christie et al, 2008; Leese, 2010; Thomas, 2002; Wilcox, Winn and Fyvie-Gauld, 2005). Such disregard for action, is regarded to imply:

> "benign neutrality on the part of the wider educational system in creating this institution and a benevolence on the part of the tertiary institutions that are willing to accommodate these learners as exceptional cases" (Ryan, 2000, p.47).

However, despite this entrenched view within the literature, it can be argued that universities, even elite universities, employ strategies in order to assist the low-income student in their transition and overall student experience. To illustrate such an argument, I will use the example of university residence to argue that this is used by the institution to help acculturate students into the elite university culture.

One characteristic particular to the elite university, although apparent to some degree in other HEIs, is the expectation of students to reside in their institutional accommodation at least for the first year (Rothblatt, 2006). Its merits for students include the close proximity to social areas (Holton, 2015) and the cultural capital received as a result of living away from home (Patiniotis and Holdsworth, 2005). As suggested by Tight (2011) in the previous chapter exploring the elite university culture, residence particularly in collegiate universities enables the students to be surrounded by a learned community. This results in an immersive atmosphere for the student from living and working in the same social sphere (Rothblatt, 2006). From a Bourdieusian perspective, it can be suggested that these "accommodation spaces may act as 'fields' through which certain dispositions are learned and mobilised elsewhere" (Holton, 2015, p.6); living in university residence provides a platform for acculturating students.

Research specifically concerning university residence in the elite university provides a similar argument. Crozier et al (2008a) found in their study of an elite, collegiate university that "the university's College system creates the conditions for strong identification and commitment to both College and university" (p.173). Considering that Linnet is similarly a collegiate university, this is an interesting observation valid to my context as to whether the collegiate atmosphere is discussed by my respondents as part of the "institutional socialisation" process (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009a, p.7). Additionally, the elite university is also considered to aid student friendships. For instance, Thomas (2002) suggests that "living arrangements help students to identify common ground with peers (i.e. those with a similar habitus)" (p.436). Therefore, not only does the elite university by demanding residency in their halls or colleges assist in acculturating their students into

their culture, it also encourages meaningful friendships between students in order to provide them with a positive student experience.

Despite these reports of positive effects from the university assisting in the acculturation process of their students, it is important to acknowledge that there is still the possibility of a negative effect on low-income students from this process. As found by Crozier et al (2008a), too much acculturation into the collegiate 'bubble' and the students can feel "overwhelmed and intimidated" (p.173). With the university concerned in Crozier et al's (2008a) study bearing similarities to Linnet University, this is a thought-provoking observation for my study.

4.3.4.1. External barriers

In addition to the university attempts to adapt the low-income student's habitus, further barriers are highlighted within the literature that impact the low-income student whilst navigating the elite university field.

Within the literature, research exploring low-income students' interaction with the elite university regularly cites access as problematic when attempting involvement in extra-curricular activities (Bradley and Ingram, 2012; Bradley et al, 2013; Crozier et al, 2008a; Macrae and Maguire, 2002). This is due to multiple factors, including a lack of time (Bradley and Ingram, 2012; Crozier et al, 2008a; Macrae and Maguire, 2002) and the costs involved (Bradley and Ingram, 2012; Bradley et al, 2013) which limits the type of activities the low-income student could do (Bradley and Ingram, 2012). To illustrate with an example, in Ingram, Abrahams and Beedell's (2012) research students were willing to partake in extra-curricular activities, such as snow sports, but were unable to because of the expense it required. As a result, the extra-curricular activities highlight not only how access to these can prove problematic and debilitating for the low-income student, but that there is limited opportunity for the low-income student to employ a strategy in order to overcome such a barrier as a lack of time or a lack of funds if these are simply not available. This therefore demonstrates that irrespective of habitus adaption, there can be external barriers to the low-income student's experience of the elite university that can be difficult to overcome. Returning

to the concept of habitus, the next section looks to theorise that it is most appropriate to argue that the low-income student employs a 'cleft habitus' when in the elite university in order to navigate their time at this institution successfully.

4.3.5. Reaching a conclusion: the cleft habitus

After reviewing the literature surrounding the impact on the low-income student's habitus from being situated in the elite university and the adaption techniques employed as a result, it is ambiguous as to how the low-income student adapts to the elite university culture to feel like a 'fish in water' in this setting. Highlighted in the literature is the multiple interpretations of habitus adaption employed by the low-income student but with much conflicting opinion as to their validity. As a result, this thesis turns to the Bourdieusian concept of the 'cleft habitus', particularly Abrahams and Ingram's (2013) definition, for the conceptual framework to base this thesis upon.

I have argued that the low-income student undergoes 'dialectal confrontation' when their habitus encounters a field different to the one in which theirs was created (Bourdieu, 2002b). In response to this, Bourdieu (2002b) further argues that the habitus:

> "operates as a structuring structure able to selectively perceive and to transform the objective structure according to its own structure while, at the same time, being re-structured, transformed in its makeup by the pressure of the objective structure" (p.31).

Here, Bourdieu (2002b) expands the concept of habitus in such a way that appears to not yet have been accounted for in the previous theories of habitus adaption. Building on the flexibility as emphasised in discussions of the 'reflexive habitus', Bourdieu argues above that the habitus in dialectal confrontation is able to operate when being influenced by an unfamiliar field whilst operating a habitus grounded in the older field of operation. This suggests that the previous theories of habitus adaption are perhaps too simple to use to sufficiently understand the complex nature of habitus adaption. With this in mind, I will turn to the concept of the *cleft habitus* in order to sufficiently explain the low-income student's experience of habitus

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adaption in the elite university.

Neither the idea that the low-income student fully adapts their habitus, modifies slightly or outwardly rejects adaption explains the low-income student's ability to shift between two different fields. However, increasingly there has been a shift towards a modified theory of habitus as a way of sufficiently explaining these experiences. The concept of 'cleft habitus' was first introduced by Bourdieu (1999) as:

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

Although this touches on aspects of habitus previously noted, particularly emphasising habitus as "subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.133), it is this specific idea of 'a double perception of self' in this quote that becomes the concept. In other words, Bourdieu (1999) highlights that one can operate their habitus and manipulate such to suit the multiple identities they may operate in their life.

Championed particularly by Abrahams and Ingram (2013, para. 5.1), they argue that the 'cleft habitus', or "chameleon habitus", is the most appropriate conceptual apparatus to understand and explain low-income students' experience at elite universities because of the way it demonstrates how adaption is conscious; the student is aware that they are changing. To be precise, it is the concept that the low-income student compartmentalizes their selves that they operate, such as at university and at home, and employs such in the correct context (Aries and Seider, 2005; Ball, Davies, David and Reay, 2002). This has been demonstrated in numerous contexts in multiple studies, from the low-income student altering their speech to fit their surroundings (Abrahams and Ingram, 2013; Aries and Seider, 2005), to the possession of different dress styles depending on whether they were at university or home "in order to facilitate fitting in in both localities" (Holdsworth, 2009, p.1861). Importantly, this is argued to be as a result of both conscious and unconscious thought (Abrahams and Ingram, 2013); the

low-income student is often consciously aware of their alterations to their self in order to 'fit in' at the elite university. In the case of this thesis, the cleft habitus will consist of the low-income student's 'home' and 'university' habitus.

However, the 'cleft habitus' is suggested to pose problems both for the low-income student employing it but also for researchers of the subject alike. Firstly, operating a 'cleft habitus' is regarded to be problematic for the low-income student in terms of keeping ties with both home and university simultaneously (Lee and Kramer, 2013). The continuous tug between two pulls on the low-income student's habitus can result in a constant battle for one to be "the dominant disposition" (Ingram, 2011, p.293). As a result, one "is not 'a fish in water' in either field" (Ingram, 2011, p.290). In terms of problems for the researcher, despite being conscious of their actions, this does not automatically imply students will be able to successfully articulate how they operate these changes on their habitus (Lee and Kramer, 2013).

Despite these criticisms of the use of cleft habitus for analytic research, after reviewing the literature extensively these criticisms are arguably outweighed by its relatability to this context. Therefore, the cleft habitus remains in my explanation of how low-income students navigate this particular field.

4.3.6. Concluding thoughts

In this chapter I have sought to document the coping strategies employed by the low-income student in order to 'fit in' to the elite university. Some argue that the low-income student undergoes a full habitus transformation in order to fit in, whereas other literature suggests it is more apt to argue the low-income student undergoes a slight modification of the habitus in order to 'fit in'. Both theories, however, demonstrate that habitus adaption can prove problematic for the student. This section has also highlighted institutional strategies employed by the elite university as a way of assisting students in adapting to their way of life in addition to the barriers that are difficult for the low-income student to overcome. Ultimately, the cleft habitus provides perhaps the most transferable and valid theory to use in my study. Therefore, this thesis will build on the work of Abrahams and Ingram (2013) to suggest

that the low-income student adopts a cleft habitus whilst in attendance at the elite university in order to feel like a 'fish in water'.

The next chapter will provide a thorough account of the methodology used within my research. It will provide justifications for the research design and assessment of its quality, alongside details of sampling, the method used, the appropriate ethical methods taken and how the data was analysed.

Chapter Five: Methodology

This research seeks to understand the experiences of students from low-income backgrounds at an elite university. Specifically, it seeks to understand these experiences through a Bourdieusian lens of analysis as described in chapter two. The research in this study looks to inform knowledge to "improve practice" in Higher Education (Tight, 2012, p.196); the research is conducted for a practical end goal.

In chapter one, I outlined my research questions and how the research sought to answer these. This chapter shall outline my methodological approach to research in order to demonstrate its robustness.

5.1. Research design

Qualitative research allows for a greater understanding into behaviour of people than quantitative research because of its ability to produce data considered meaningful by the participant (Alasuutari, 1995; Burton, 2000; Robson, 2011; Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2013; Silverman, 2011). Specifically, it seeks "to establish an empathetic understanding…conveying to the reader what experience itself would convey" (Stake, 1995, p.39). Therefore, undertaking a qualitative approach to answering my research questions was appropriate because it captures "educational reality as participants experience it" (Check and Schutt, 2012, p.189); qualitative research facilitates respondents in conveying meaningful data to the researcher at the point of occurrence.

My research constituted a single case study. A case study as defined by Schreiber and Asner-Self is "a systematic collection of information about a person, group, or community; social setting; or event in order to gain insight into its functioning" (2011, p.12). This enables researchers "to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" (Yin, 2009, p.4), eliciting an in-depth understanding of the subject area (Johnson and Christensen, 2008). Specifically, my research used a "single-case design" which studies a singular case or phenomenon (Cohen, Mainon and Morrison, 2011, p.291).

In this research, theory guides the research design. Described as "theoretical propositions" (Yin, 2009, p.36), a theory is used to propose what will occur in the research, and these are often at the heart of case study research. This study was thus guided by a conceptual framework influencing its research design and conduct. This was a particularly appropriate approach for this research considering that Bourdieu himself believed that research should be "theory-laden" (Swingewood, 2000, p.212); research should use theory to predict the outcome of a particular phenomenon.

In my study, I wished to understand the specific case of low-income students' experiences of an elite university because of personal affiliations with both the university and low-income status. Thus, this study was governed by "an intrinsic interest" (Stake, 1995, p.3); I have a personal interest in the research. This is a particularly appropriate method to use in this context as single cases are "used to determine whether a theory's propositions are correct or whether some alternative set of explanations might be more relevant" (Yin, 2009, p.47). A case study "has clear boundaries or limiters" in order to maintain focus of intent within the research study (Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2013, p.151). The boundaries within this study were thus the criteria participants must fit in order to take part in the study discussed later in this chapter.

5.1.1. Research quality

In examining the research quality of the study, I will first examine the reliability of the research: whether the study can be replicated and reproduce the same results (Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2013). The reliability of qualitative research is criticised in the literature (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011; Silverman, 2011), namely in its nature in facilitating multiple interpretations of data (Stake, 2010). However, I took several steps to establish reliability within the research. For instance, I conducted a pilot interview in order to limit "the possibility of uncertainty" (Silverman, 2011, p.365). Secondly, the questionnaire once made live on Bristol Online Survey did not alter which meant all students answered the same questions. Furthermore, each semi-structured interview featured set questions, although

these allowed for expansion and amendments depending on participant response. Therefore, it is arguable that the study does maintain a suitable standard of reliability.

The use of qualitative research raises concerns over its generalisability considering that by definition is to research a specific group of people or phenomenon (Robson, 2011); the nature of qualitative research does not lend itself to generalisability (Gobo, 2008). These concerns are also mirrored regarding case studies' lack of generalisability in that it too is concerned with the specific (Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2013). However, to discuss a case study's generalisability in this context ignores the generalisability of the study to the population it is focused on. Therefore, it is argued that it is more appropriate to discuss "analytic generalization" (Yin, 2009, p.15) whereby the theory governing the research is used to assess the generalisability of one's research.

As noted by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), the use of case studies in research gives the researcher the opportunity to follow leads which, despite needing further understanding and questioning, provides further data for research. However, following leads is considered to threaten the representativeness of the study; when leads are followed for a minority of participants, this means that the study is inconsistent in method. Criticisms of representativeness in case study research is not new, nor have such criticisms stopped the use of case studies in researching phenomenon. In answer to critics, it is stated that that the primary focus of case studies is to understand a particular case and phenomenon (Yin, 2009). Thus, being able to replicate exactly the study is not a major concern for the case study researcher.

The validity of a study is crucial in order for the research to demonstrate a trueness to "social reality" (Matthews and Ross, 2010, p.480). Within case study research, it is important to achieve a high level of validity in order for the research to sufficiently understand "the research participant's viewpoints, thoughts, feelings, intentions, and experiences" (Johnson and Christensen, 2008, p.277). As noted by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), this is only

sufficiently achieved through "the researcher sharing their frame of reference" (p.15); the researcher should possess an element of insider knowledge in order to provide validity to the research. However, whether a high level of interpretive validity is necessary for all research is debatable. In disciplines such as Anthropology where ethnography is a key aspect of the study, the interviewer often conducts research in considerably different social spaces to the researcher. Studies such as these thus demonstrate that the possession of insider knowledge is not always possible in research. Within my research, I can be considered an insider in the field of my study as I am a recent graduate from Linnet University, personally fitting the criteria set for recruiting participants. However, I could also be considered an outsider to the research field due to my postgraduate status; I am no longer navigating the field of undergraduate student experience. Although Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013) argue that it is rare for the researcher to be both an insider and outsider within their research, I argue that the insider/outsider distinction is too crass a distinction unable to explain complexities surrounding the researcher and their relationship to their research. It is instead more appropriate to suggest that I am an insider with outsider elements; I am navigating a different field to my respondents but with empirical 'insider' experience of the context being studied. From being able to understand the context of the field without explicit involvement in the field, this contributes positively to the validity of the research; it increases the likelihood of the data being true to the phenomena of study.

5.2. Sampling

Participants were targeted using purposive sampling as participants were required to possess "specific characteristics" (Schreiber and Asner-Self, 2011, p.85). In order to create an appropriate sampling frame, participants were recruited through criterion sampling whereby participants were expected to fulfil specific criteria in order to take part in the study (Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2013). The criteria were as follows:

- Undergraduate student studying at Linnet City Campus, Linnet University

- 18 years old or over

- In receipt of the Linnet Grant [described below]

- First in immediate family to enter higher education.

In chapter three, it was noted that Linnet University functioned over two campuses, Linnet City Campus and Fraser Campus in Russet Town. Majority of undergraduate students study in Linnet City (Linnet University, 2016a) due to the small number of courses offered at Fraser Campus for undergraduate students. Therefore, this thesis' focus on Linnet City Campus student experience yields a higher validity in understanding undergraduate student experience at Linnet University and thus ensures a robustness to the research.

The Linnet Grant is a financial bursary provided for students from low-income backgrounds through the University's access agreement (OFFA, 2016a). By using the Linnet Grant as a stipulation within the criteria, this provided a sensitive way to recruit students from low-income backgrounds. For the 2015/16 academic year, the Linnet Grant was awarded to those with a household income of under £25,000, amounting £2,000 per year of study (Scholarships and Student Funding Office, 2015). However, the Linnet Grant has changed the conditions of its terms in the four years that the participants span across. For instance, for those students beginning their studies in 2012/13 or 2013/14, the Linnet Grant was accessible in a two-tier pricing bracket. Students with a household income of between £25,000 and £42,600 were entitled to £1,000 per annum for the duration of their degree, and students with a household income of under £25,000 entitled to £3,000 (Scholarships and Student Funding Office, 2015). Although this provides a slight discrepancy within the conditions of which each student may have been entitled to the Linnet Grant, using this as a criteria stipulation helped establish the quality of the research and kept it robust.

The use of purposive samples in research are also met with criticism. Purposive samples by nature choose a specific group of participants for research. However, this is considered to compromise the generalisability of the research from studying a specific population (Johnson and Christensen,

2008; Schreiber and Asner-Self, 2011). Nonetheless, this type of sampling is necessary to recruit participants for a case study's aim to "explore the particular group under study" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p.161). Therefore, purposive sampling seems unavoidable in the case of my research, and would appear at first look to reinforce the claim that case studies' are unable to produce overly generalisable data due to their specific research nature. In order to minimise the risk of an ungeneralisable study, I acknowledge through Gobo's (2008) idiographic sampling theory that the "observation unit" is different to the "sampling unit" within my study (Gobo, 2008, p.203); participants of this study cannot possibly reflect all students that fall into my criteria. However, qualitative research such as mine provides an "essence" of what a phenomenon is like (Alasuutari, 1995, p.150). Therefore, it remains appropriate to argue that the study is valid enough to be generalisable, referring to the previous definition of validity.

In order to advertise for participants and the criteria required for participants to fit, I had to acquire permission from staff members of the University holding particular positions of responsibility; the study required permission from 'gatekeepers' (Burton, 2000; Cresswell, 2012). This involved a "negotiation process" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p.83) whereby gatekeepers had to approve the research in order for access to the chosen sample group. In this study, the main gatekeeper was the Head of College Research who required the research proposal and ethics approval [Appendix A] in order to give the permission required to contact colleges regarding the study. After this permission was granted, with the condition of contacting a select few colleges, each College Principal or equivalent had to be contacted in order to give permission for their college to take part. Once these gatekeepers had been negotiated, I contacted Junior Common Room Presidents or their equivalent in order to request advertisement of the study in weekly newsletters or social media such as Facebook. In addition to college advertisement, the study was advertised on Facebook groups without gatekeepers, such as society Facebook groups and my own Facebook account. A date was set for recruitment for the study to cease in order to have enough time to sufficiently analyse the data. Although this process did

not limit my sample in that all college principals contacted approved the study, the process was lengthened due to delay of email correspondence between myself, staff members and student contacts.

The initial target sample size for the study was 20 participants from a mixture of colleges, departments and year groups in order to compare findings (Matthews and Ross, 2010). In terms of appropriateness of the sample size, it is argued that there is no "clear-cut answer" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p.144) for sample size; it is dependent on the context of the study (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011; Opie, 2004). 18 students initially showed interest in participating in the study. Naturally, not all participants followed through with the study (Gobo, 2008). In total, 11 students completed both the questionnaire and interview, with a further 2 students completing the questionnaire only.

5.3. Method

I used the methods of questionnaire and semi-structured interview in order to research the experiences of students from low-income backgrounds at an elite university. This section shall first explain and justify the use of these methods within the study, before outlining the procedure undertaken for data collection.

5.3.1. Questionnaire

I used a questionnaire to gather initial information of students' experiences of the elite university. The benefits of using questionnaires in this setting has been widely discussed, including their reliability at gathering information (Opie, 2004), their cost-effectiveness in "collecting data in a structured and manageable form" (Wilkinson and Birmingham, 2003, p.7) and their ability to "gather data from large numbers of people or cases" (Matthews and Ross, 2010, p.217).

The questionnaire contained a mixture of open and closed questions. Closed questions, which restrict the answers participants can answer, allow easy comparison between respondents (Cohen, Mainon and Morrison, 2011). In

this questionnaire they were in the form of open questions, rating scales and multiple choice questions. Questions regarding demographic details were at the end of the questionnaire with an explanation as to why they were included, such as a contact email for a follow up questionnaire, as suggested by Matthews and Ross (2010).

The focused nature of questionnaire can result in restricted or biased answers (Matthews and Ross, 2010). For instance, in rating scales participants are statistically most likely to pick a middle answer and avoid the two extremities of opinion (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). However, this was remedied in the interview, whereby questions asked the participant to explain further some of their answers to the closed questions. The questionnaire also featured open-ended questions which "allow the respondent to answer questions in their own way" (Matthews and Ross, 2010, p.478). Open-ended questions are considered appropriate when researching particularly sensitive topics because it allows respondents to answer as they see fit (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). However, these pose more of a difficulty when comparing data between respondents for analysis (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011).

The questionnaire was web-based using the internet package Bristol Online Survey. Using an online questionnaire can encourage a higher response rate than paper questionnaires by being more "attractive" to fill out (Check and Schutt, 2012, p.176), in addition to their ease to use and administer for the researcher (Tight, 2012). Web-based questionnaires have an increased risk of participants misinterpreting the questionnaire where the researcher is not present (Robson, 2011). However, by the participant completing the questionnaire away from the researcher, the data is regarded more "honest" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p.404), and since clarification is still an option for participants, this resolves the above criticism.

5.3.2. Interview

I used follow-up interviews once participants completed the questionnaire. It is argued that the interview is "a construction site of knowledge" (Kvale, 2007, p.21). Described as "guided conversations" in case study research

(Yin, 2009, p.106), interviews provide "a careful questioning and listening approach with the purpose of obtaining thoroughly tested knowledge" (Kvale, 2007, p.7). Specifically, the interview was conducted from an emotionalist perspective which focuses on "eliciting authentic accounts of subjective experience" (Silverman, 2011, p.174). Despite criticisms of this perspective suggesting that the interview does not "tell us directly about people's 'experiences'" (Silverman, 2011, p.168), it is suggested however that it demonstrates "indirect 'representations' of those experiences" (Silverman, 2011, p.168); it still provides insight into a particular phenomenon.

Specifically, I used semi-structured interviews which have "the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena" (Kvale, 2007, p.8). Semi-structured interviews allow participants to expand their answers outside of the strict questioning (Wilkinson and Birmingham, 2003), although this relies on the interviewers' ability to ensure that the interview doesn't stray from the topic in hand (Robson, 2011). Other reliance on the researcher includes the need for good listening skills in order to clarify answers given and follow-up answers (Burton, 2000; Savid-Baden and Howell Major, 2013) and the ability to establish a good rapport with participants (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011; Johnson and Christensen, 2008).

5.3.3. Procedure

Participants were required to self-select in order to participate in the study. Initial contact was made through the advertisement of the study detailing the criteria. If interested, respondents emailed the contact email address stating their interest and eligibility in the study. Participants received an email with an electronic copy of the participant information sheet [Appendix B] and the declaration of informed consent [Appendix C]. Participants were expected to read both documents and return a signed online copy of the declaration of informed consent for the questionnaire.

On receipt of the consent form, an email containing the link and password to the questionnaire was sent to the participant to complete. Participants were informed in the participant information sheet that they were able to contact

myself for clarification on questions and had free will to leave questions unanswered. Once the questionnaire was completed, an email was sent to the participant inviting them to interview [Appendix D]. Participants were given the option of meeting places and times. At interview, the questions from the questionnaire were used to ask participants to expand and explain their answers with their questionnaire provided as a prompt.

5.4. Ethics

The study complies with the guidelines as published by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011). As the study involved human participation, participants were required to give "active consent" (Johnson and Christensen, 2008, p.114) for both the questionnaire and interview. This is to enable the participant to have the right to "self-determination" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p.77); the participant can make an informed decision concerning their participation in the study before choosing to take part. Participants had the right to withdraw their consent at any point during the study (Cresswell, 2012; Check and Schutt, 2012) which is specified in the participant information sheet. For instance, participants were able to leave the questionnaire unfinished, or ask for the interview to be stopped.

The likelihood of physical harm to participants in this study is rare because the nature of the study does not require physical activity. However, the labelling of students as 'low-income' could provide ethical concern because of the potential stigmatisation participants may feel (Dean and Hastings, 2000; Kellett, 2009). In order to minimise this potential harm, discretion with the use of this term was paramount. The information letter and consent form was only handled by the researcher and participants. Factoring in these risks demonstrates that participation in this study was unlikely to have physical or mental implications to participants. However, in the likelihood that harm and/or distress was to occur, the study would have ceased immediately. Furthermore, students were interviewed in a quiet, pre-agreed meeting place in order for students to feel comfortable in their surroundings (Savin-Baden

and Howell Major, 2013). No further potential ethical issues arose during the research.

Participants were made aware in the participant information sheet that their details would be kept confidential (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). The data was stored on the researcher's personal computer and was password-protected. Participants were guaranteed anonymity without any connection being made between themselves and the study in accordance with BERA (2011) guidelines. This is done by the assignment of pseudonyms; participants were asked if they wanted to pick their own or were happy to be assigned a pseudonym either at the end of the interview or in a follow up email post-interview. The University, colleges and any other identifiable places discussed by participants within the study were also assigned a pseudonym. To reinforce anonymity, only the faculty of the subject studied will be revealed of participants in the Discussion. Details of the interview participants of the study can be found in Appendix E.

The questionnaire and email correspondence between participants before and after the study was conducted via the internet. The ethical concerns of conducting research online has been highlighted by Silverman (2011) specifically regarding its implications towards confidentiality; there can be uncertainty as to what is public or private information on the internet. In order to minimise this concern, participants were asked to send an electronic copy of their declaration of consent form in emails that are only accessible by the participant and the researcher.

5.5. Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted in two parts: analysis of the questionnaire, and of the interviews. Although initially conducted separately, analysis of the interview data was used to accompany initial data responses from the questionnaire. The data from the questionnaire "can be coded and represented as numbers" (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 1996, p.193). However, analysis of the questionnaire required minimal researcher input as the Bristol Online Survey aggregates and codes the data automatically, thus presenting it ready for analysis. The "descriptive statistics" (Cresswell, 2012,

p.182) that were presented as a result of this data provided useful statistical evidence to demonstrate the overall trend or opinion of the participants. However, the questionnaire was mainly used as a prompt for the gathering of a more substantial body of data from the interviews. Therefore, the remainder of this section will discuss specifically data analysis from the interviews.

Interviews were recorded to be transcribed at a later date. During the interview, the interviewer made notes alongside the recording of the interview to minimise the risk of losing the recordings and thus the data. Each interview was transcribed by the interviewer, with the recording listened to again post-transcription in order to systematically check that the transcription was true of the interview. The recordings were transcribed "verbatim" (Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2013, p.419), however, as this term encompasses a wide range of interpretations in transcribing (Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2013), this particular study recorded pauses, laughter and other verbal space fillers but not voice inflections.

The data analysis process began with the act of coding. Taken to refer to the assignment of a "label that captures the meaning of each data segment" (Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2013, p.421), coding involves the researcher interpreting the data (Saldana, 2009; Schreiber and Asner-Self, 2011; Stake, 2010) through the process of assigning labels to data. Coding can also be referred to as the 'categorisation' of literature (Kvale, 2007; Schreiber and Asner-Self, 2011) whereby "the meaning of long interview statements is reduced to a few simple categories" (Kvale, 2007, p.105); speech is categorised under specific codes. Coding of the literature was completed in two parts. Initial pre-coding took place during the transcribing of the raw data where phrases and text of interest were highlighted, known as "holistic coding" (Saldana, 2009, p.118). The initial codes can be found in Appendix F. However, the majority of the coding process took place manually once all transcribing had taken place.

I undertook a "thematic analysis" of the data (Matthews and Ross, 2010, p.372; Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2013, p.439) whereby as the

researcher I re-familiarised myself with the data in order to identify themes or links within the data. Coding requires the researcher to be intuitive this process to be successful (Merriam, 1998; Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2013). Once initial themes were established, these were applied to the remainder of the data and constantly revised until the themes applied to the whole dataset, thus highlighting the "cyclical" nature of coding (Saldana, 2009, p.8). A revision of coding also took place in the process of writing the discussion of results in order to ensure the robustness of the data presented.

This chapter has sought to explain the methodology used within the research. As a result, it has demonstrated both the appropriateness of the methods for this particular research, but also the robustness of the methods employed. The next chapter shall provide the results and discussion of the research. These are presented together as I consider it the best way to present the research. The research will be presented in accordance with the timeline of student experience. Chapters six to nine will seek to answer the first research question *Do low income students feel like a 'fish out of water' in their university experience?* I shall first analyse the experiences of students in admission to Linnet. I shall then discuss students' definitions of Linnet's unique culture, before analysing students' experiences with this culture and whether they feel like a 'fish in water' in this context. Whether students feel like a 'fish in water' shall also be explored in terms of the low-income student's relationship and interaction with their peers at Linnet. Chapter ten will analyse the coping strategies the students employed to navigate through the Linnet University culture, thus seeking to answer the second research question: *How do these students attempt to feel like a 'fish in water'?* This thesis will then address the answers provided to these research questions and the future implications to research these answers suggest.

Chapter Six: Pre-Linnet

In this chapter, I will analyse students' experiences of navigating the admissions process in order to gain access to an elite university. In chapter two, I suggested that Linnet University possesses the characteristics to be theorised as a Bourdieusian field in my research. Therefore, Bourdieusian theory will be applied throughout the following chapters to understand low-income students' experiences of Linnet University. Three main areas for discussion within the research of the admissions experience will be discussed; the struggle to access Linnet, students' initial impressions of the university and students' initial experiences. First, I will explore the participant's experiences of barriers to access, particularly their previous educational institution and the effectiveness of the access agreement in alleviating finance as a barrier in accessing Linnet University. I will then discuss the sources of information used by students to inform their choice. This will involve an evaluation of published material concerning Linnet in comparison to students' experiences of the university from an open day. Attention will also be paid to the struggles faced by students in accessing the material and the initial impressions they give of the university. Finally, this section will outline the given reasons for attending Linnet University, strongly emphasising the influence of students' initial experiences of the university in informing their decision. This will be illustrated using extracts from the interview data (a sample of complete transcripts from the interviews can be found in Appendix G).

6.1. First theme: Barriers to access

Participants in the study experienced barriers in accessing Linnet University. One barrier, making admission to Linnet problematic for a small number of students, was students' previous schooling. For Cameron, members of staff within the school had a direct impact on his university application.

> "my head of sixth form refused to predict me the grades I needed to actually do straight history which was fun." – Cameron (third year, social sciences and health, Nudderby).

Cameron was not predicted the grades required for his desired programme and was offered an alternative course by the institution. Felicity's experiences, on the other hand, highlight the theme of unhelpfulness prominent in the literature in which a lack of guidance forced Felicity to conduct her own research into higher education and the application process.

> "my school's careers service wasn't great so I just went on the university and sort of looked all up myself and just made my own decision really." – Felicity (first year, science, Enderby). Felicity is academically a first year student on a Level 1 programme but has attended Linnet University for two years after changing courses after her first year.

Felicity's comment also highlights her lack of 'hot' knowledge characterised within the literature review as commonplace for low-income students otherwise imparted by family or friends (Oliver and Kettley, 2010; Reay, David and Ball, 2005).

Charging premium tuition fees requires Linnet University to produce an access agreement, highlighted previously in chapter one. Within the access agreement, the University aims to prevent finance being a potential barrier in accessing the university for low-income students. The Linnet Grant was introduced in 2012 in conjunction with the National Scholarships Programme in order to compliment the rise in tuition fees (OFFA, 2012). Where mentioned, the grant was spoke of positively. For instance, Felicity was not eligible for the grant in her first year and details below the financial struggle she faced in comparison to the following year when receiving the grant.

> "I had to work all summer full-time to be able to afford to come here, and I just saw my money disappearing into like rent and I was like-, and college fees and everything was just scary, um I had to dip into my savings a lot. It's not as bad this year though because my student loan's increased and I've also got my bursary so this year's definitely been easier and also my rent's less" – Felicity.

Felicity above thus demonstrates how the grant was central in alleviating her struggle to financially accessing the university experience.

Nonetheless, the use of a grant in overcoming finance as a barrier to access is not always considered the most effective method. The extent to which financial support impacts on student attainment or retention at university is unclear, and other research is inconclusive on this point (Harrison and Hatt, 2012; Nursaw Associates, 2015; Whitehead, Raffin and Deaney, 2006). For

those reports that suggest student retention is improved from receiving a bursary (Hatt, Hannan and Baxter, 2005; Hatt, Hannan, Baxter and Harrison, 2005), it is argued that these students undergo "post-hoc rationalisation" (Nursaw Associates, 2015, p.4) whereby students only after receiving the grant believe it has had an impact on their university experience. In addition to claims of ineffectiveness, the Linnet Grant has been reduced in subsequent years since its introduction. Students eligible for the Linnet Grant in 2015/16 are receiving considerably less money to overcome financial strain than their counterparts in 2012/13, leading to question the institution's belief in improving finance as a barrier for access.

The Linnet Grant is not the only mode of financial support offered by Linnet University in order to alleviate finance as a barrier to access. The Linnet University Access Scheme is a programme for students in year 12 whereby successful applicants attend the University on three occasions across the academic year (including two residential visits) to complete academic work in their chosen department. Students who successfully complete the scheme and enrol into the university are not only guaranteed a reduced grade offer on application to the university, but are given a stipend of £5,500 per annum for the duration of their degree (OFFA, 2016a). Recipients are, however, unable to receive both the access scheme grant and the Linnet grant. Students in receipt of the access scheme grant commented on the financial benefits the grant provided.

> "[student] housing is extremely expensive, and [college] accommodation's really expensive as well. I think I'd have struggled with it if I hadn't got the grant from the access scheme to be honest." – Katie (third year, social sciences and health, Rowland).

> "so for me like coming to Linnet University was mainly through um doing those Summer Schools and knowing that I had the financial support to be here. Uh, seeing as it cost so much to live in college and y'know, stuff like that." – Lily (second year, arts and humanities, Enderby).

Katie and Lily highlight above the integral nature of the grant to their university experience. Simply put, the grant enabled them to attend Linnet. Therefore, in the case of this study, the previous criticism of grants as uninfluential in student choice appear inaccurate in the case of this university.

So far, this chapter has suggested that students from low-income backgrounds experience barriers in accessing Linnet University in the form of previous schooling and financial strain. Linnet, in a bid to reduce barriers to accessing their university, have stated their commitment to improving and maintaining access to their institution within their access agreement in two parts. Firstly, this is through encouraging students "with merit and potential from under-represented groups" to apply, particularly those who may not otherwise apply to this university (OFFA, 2016a, p.1). The Linnet University Access Scheme, for example, targets "students from state schools, Low Participation Neighbourhoods, and ACORN category 4 and 5 postcodes in a region that has the lowest HE participation rate in England" (OFFA, 2016a) in a bid to increase applications from this particular demographic group to Linnet. Secondly, in encouraging students from these backgrounds, great care is also taken to ensure that students accepted into the University have the "academic achievement and future potential" that satisfies University requirements (OFFA, 2016a, p.1).

The access agreement highlights the institutional habitus (Thomas, 2002; Reay, David and Ball, 2005) at work in Linnet University. The access agreement's first aim is to recruit students from disadvantaged backgrounds and thus widen access. However, the second aim, to ensure that those recruited are academically compatible with the University, hints to a drive for the recruitment of a specific kind of student: a student deemed to possess the 'right' kind of academic potential and attainment. In other words, Linnet aim to recruit students they consider a right 'fit' for their institution. Archer (2003) observed in her study that an elite universities' institutional habitus "alienates 'other'…students" (p.17) from applying to university. This is also apparent in Linnet University whose access agreement, as demonstrated above, arguably alienates those students who do not fulfil the specific academic criteria to gain entry to the university, irrespective of background. This thus demonstrates how the institutional habitus can also become a barrier in access for low-income students in gaining entry to an elite university.

6.2. Second theme: Informing choice

Participants used a total of 7 different sources of information to inform their decision in applying to Linnet University, highlighted in Figure 1.1. The University website was the most popular medium used by 10 out of 13 students. The University Prospectus was used by 9 students and the Open Days were third most popular with 7 people attending. This section will first review student opinion of paper-based information, prospectuses and external guides, detailing the initial impressions of the university for the students. It shall then examine the initial experiences of Linnet University for students through the medium of open days.
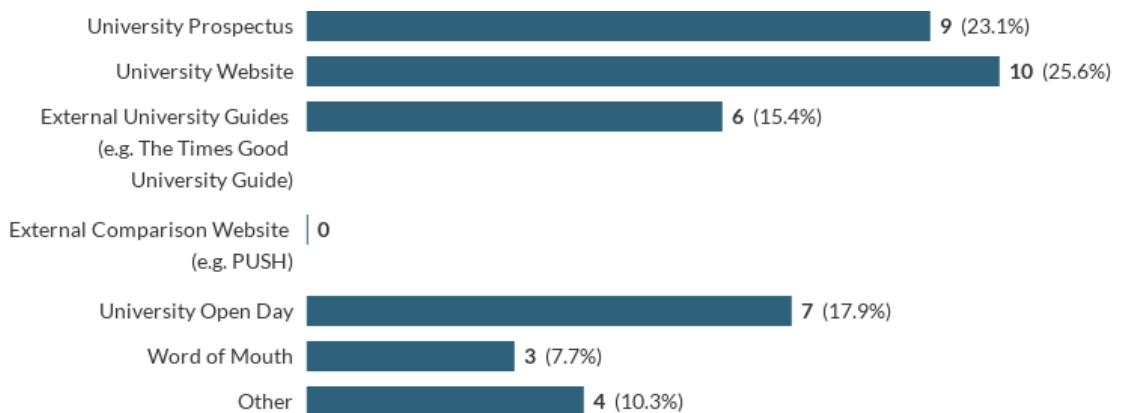
Figure 1.1. Survey Question 3: "What source(s) of information did you use to inform your decision? (Tick all that apply)".

6.2.1. Prospectus and external guides

Although the University prospectus was the second most popular source of information, student opinion was mixed in using prospectuses to inform their decision of University. Ellie was the only student to state that the prospectus gave her the most information regarding this university [Figure 1.2]. Her reasons included the conciseness of the material, and the ability to compare across prospectuses of different universities.

> "everything's like concise and you can-, everything's included in there so you can go back and like compare them as well" – Ellie (fourth year, social sciences and health, Rowland).

On the other hand, a struggle to access this material was highlighted in discussion of prospectus use. Felicity, who is from outside the Linnet region, was unable to access a wide range of prospectuses when she was at her school as the school only offered prospectuses of universities from the locality. This inability to access prospectuses demonstrates new findings as Felicity is aware of their availability but yet unable to physically access this material.
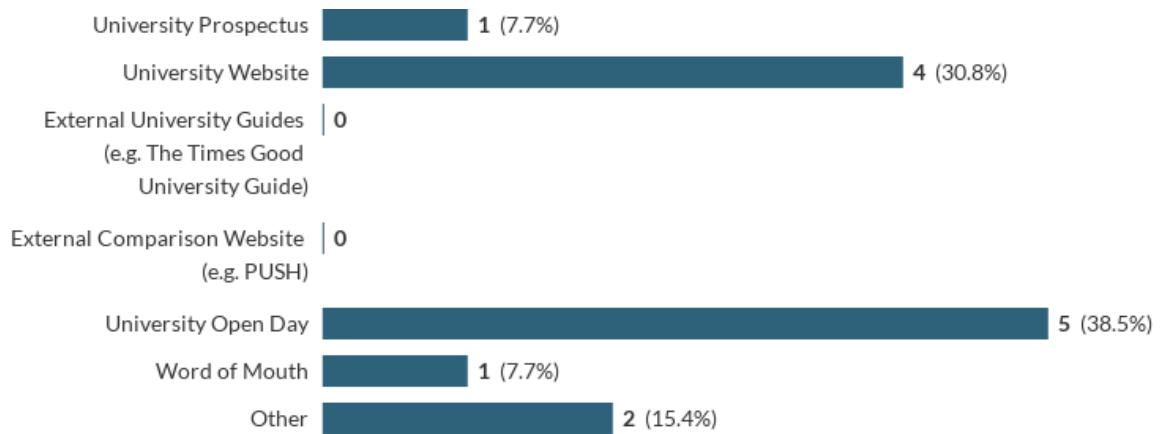
Figure 1.2. Survey Question 3b. "Out of those ticked above, which of these did you feel gave you the most information regarding this university?"

In addition, students criticised prospectuses' authenticity, articulated by Katie below:

> "I think the prospectuses as well, they just sort of give like the perfect side of the university, like all the pictures are sunny, everyone's really pretty and like, do you know what I mean? Things like that. [laughter]." – Katie.

Here, Katie demonstrates an awareness of the doctored image the prospectus sends to prospective students which failed to be recognised within the relevant literature. In comparison, Katie considered external guides more "accurate" due to the externality of the publisher reducing bias towards a particular institution. External guides, however, were not considered the preferable medium of information. Isobel (fourth year, sciences, Rowland) argued that external guides still held an element of bias and Felicity thought that their comparisons between Universities were often opinion-based.

<u>6.2.2. Open days</u>

Prospective students of Linnet University are able to attend two types of open days. The first is for prospective applicants to the University used as an alternative method to provide information for students choosing universities. In addition to pre-application open days, students holding offers for Linnet University are invited to attend an overnight open day in which students take part in "a range of interactive activities to provide a memorable flavour of academic and social student life" (Linnet University, 2016c, p.3). Out of the seven students who had attended an open day, one had attended only the pre-application open day, two had attended only the post-application open day, and four did not specify.

Overall, open days were considered the most informative source of information as shown in Figure 1.2. This is particularly clear in the comments below whereby students compared the merits of attending an open day to other mediums of information.

> "I thought like the open day at least I was the one there, I was the one who saw what was going on, whereas word of mouth that's somebody else's experience of it" – Isobel.

> "I kind of felt like I had to go to all the universities I was applying to to find out what the actual atmosphere was when I got there." – Danielle (fourth year, sciences, Rowland).

> "it's easier to perceive how things really are when you're there rather than in a picture." – Joanna (first year, arts and humanities, Rowland).

Isobel in comparing the merits of open days to word of mouth hints to the previous suggestion of bias in other mediums of information. However, considering that an open day rests on their own interpretation of the information gathered, Isobel suggests this reduces potential external bias. Danielle and Joanna also placed value on empirical experiences providing information about universities. Overall, students valued the open day in being able to experience the university for themselves (see also Hutchings, 2003). Additionally, students praised the open days for the opportunity it facilitated in meeting members of the university community such as academic members of staff concerning the course and the student representatives in discussing general university life.
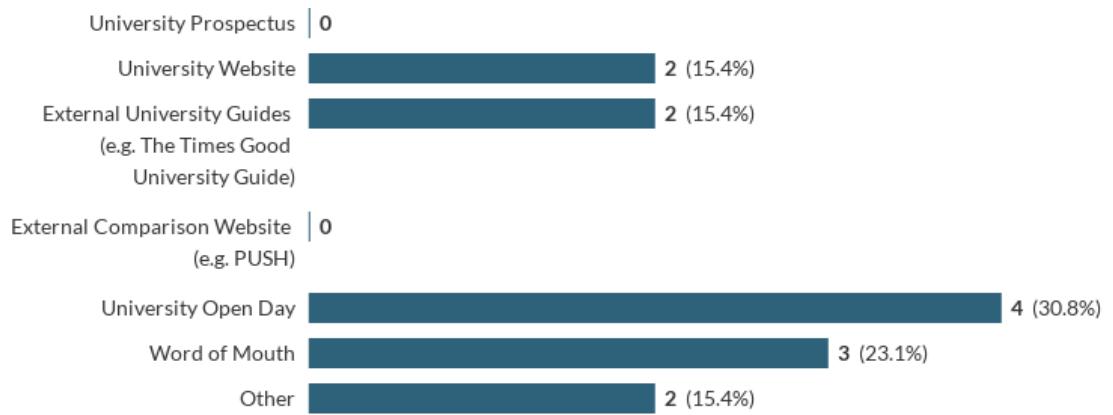
Figure 1.3. Survey Question 3c. "Out of those ticked above, which of these do you feel gave you the most accurate information about what this University is like?"

The open day was also considered the most accurate medium used to inform decisions by students (Figure 1.3). When these students were asked why they considered the open day to provide the most accurate information about university life, this was often discussed in relation to the post-application open day. Although Isobel suggested that there was still an element of inaccuracy in that "[the open day] just pushed obviously all the positive things", students regarded the open day as providing accurate information about Linnet, exemplified in Alice and Cameron's comments below.

> "particularly staying overnight in the college, erm, and the activities they put on were really good to give you a sense of university life" – Alice (third year, social sciences and health, Yarson).

> "they all kind of combine on the open day to kind of make you think like I'm not just going to be able to have a good degree and study, I'm also going to have the balance of having a nice social life and getting to know different people" – Cameron.

Both students suggest in these comments that the combined social and academic experience offered in this experience successfully replicates the Linnet lifestyle for prospective students. Both Alice and Cameron are third year students. Therefore, considering that their discussions of open days are occurring when they are reaching the end of their university experience, their open day memories are arguably intertwined with an element of hindsight. Thus, by comparing open days to the complete lifespan of their university experience, this would suggest that these students consider Linnet open days to possess a valid representation of university life.

So far, I have discussed the barriers faced by participants in accessing Linnet University, and the materials used to inform participant decision in choosing this particular university. The next section will thus examine the reasoning behind participant choice of Linnet University.

6.3. Third theme: Reasons for choice

Academic reputation is one of the most important characteristics influencing students' decisions to attend Linnet. As acknowledged in chapter three, Linnet University is part of the Russell Group which prides itself on having 17 of its 24 members in the Top 100 Universities of the World (Russell Group, 2016). When asked what attracted participants to attend Linnet University, 'academic reputation of the course' proved the most popular choice shown in Figure 1.4.
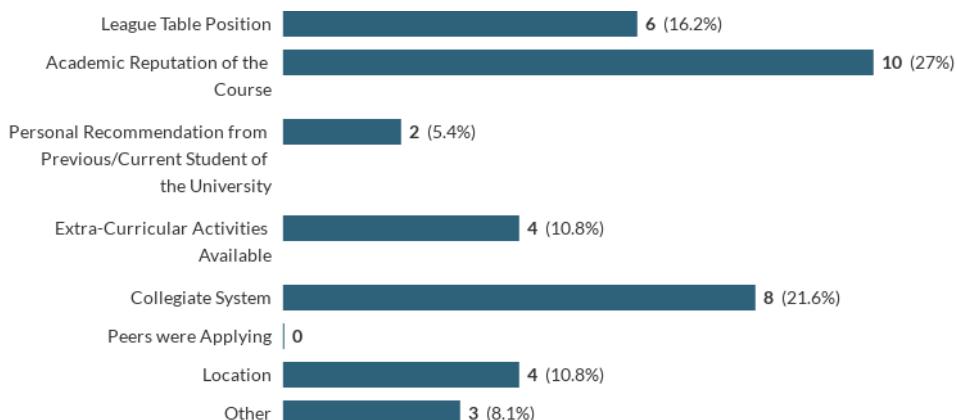
Figure 1.4. Survey Question 4. "What attracted you to attend this university?" (Tick all that apply).

When invited to expand at interview, students across a range of disciplines expressed choosing Linnet because of its academic standing.

"it was pretty important to me that I was gonna find somewhere that was quite academic. I want to actually pursue that, I'm gonna do a PhD, I wanna go and um, attempt to get into an academic career and I enjoy physics. I wanted somewhere where I knew I was gonna get the best education in that." - Danielle.

"well my course isn't really um provided at many universities, um and Linnet was the top one for it. Um, or at least out of the ones I looked at and uh got offers for. Uh so yeah that was kind of the main-, main reason for going for it." – Grace (third year, sciences, Rowland).

"History is the top-, like Linnet's the top in the country for doing History, um coz I had the choice to go down to London, or um Edinburgh as well for my um like degree, but I'd rather go somewhere that is the best, even if it's hard work." – Lily.

The prominence of academic standing in student decision also featured in Isobel's choice in that the ranking of the academic reputation of the course was the deciding factor between Linnet and another university; academic status was the most important reason for her attendance at Linnet University. This reasoning combined with the statements above thus allow conclusion that academic reputation featured highly in student reasoning in choosing Linnet University to study.

League Table Position		3 (23.1%)
Academic Reputation of the Course		3 (23.1%)
Personal Recommendation from Previous/Current Student of the University		0
Extra-Curricular Activities Available		0
Collegiate System		5 (38.5%)
Peers were Applying		0
Location		1 (7.7%)
Other		1 (7.7%)
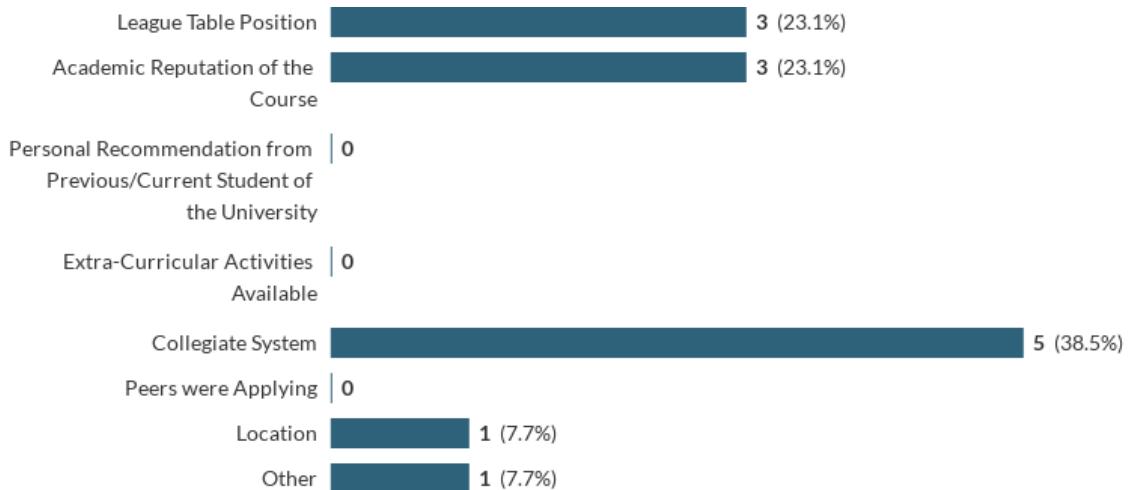
Figure 1.5. Survey Question 4b. "Out of those ticked above, which was the most important factor in your decision?"

The collegiate system was another key factor for participants in attending Linnet University. The collegiate system was the most popular response with five students choosing the collegiate system as the most important factor in their decision to attend Linnet University, highlighted in Figure 1.5. Joanna's comment particularly demonstrates below as to why this was behind her reasoning in choosing Linnet.

> "I think just the thing about the community there, coz there are a lot of things-, I mean the course is really, really good and the university's really good, but um in terms of making a decision in-, between the two-, the places I was thinking about going, er it was more the whole idea of getting to get involved in that sort of college environment that pushed me towards Linnet". – Joanna.

The collegiate system and the academic reputation of Linnet University appeared considerably influential in students' decisions to attend the elite university. This was not acknowledged within the relevant literature, questioning whether these factors would be as much of a consideration to students attending other elite universities.

Three of the students in the study took part in the Linnet access scheme, detailed previously in this chapter. These students considered the scheme extremely influential in their decision to choose, and further attend, Linnet University. Particularly, this was due to the experience of University life it enabled for attendees. For instance, Katie valued the real-life experience the access scheme gave her in attending and studying at the university.

> "I feel like it was probably the most informative because I actually came to the university itself during the time, and um I guess, yeah, so yeah it let me come to the university, we had talks about the university, we had tours about the university, like it was very informative like, not in the same way of like just looking at pictures, like we actually saw it in real life." – Katie.

As a result, Katie demonstrates the importance of her initial experience of the University through the access scheme in her decision to attend Linnet. Lily also stressed the influence of the access scheme in becoming a full-time student at the University.

> "so for me like coming to Linnet University was mainly through um doing those Summer Schools and knowing that I had the financial support to be here. Uh, seeing as it cost so much to live in college and y'know, stuff like that." – Lily.

Lily and Katie's initial experience of Linnet through the access scheme, coupled with the financial grant the scheme offers, demonstrates how attendance on an access scheme pre-university can be an integral reason for choice. More broadly, it has also reinforced that students' value experiencing the university in person to inform their decision, stated previously in relation to open days.

Another given reason for choice by students was their 'feeling' towards the university. Students discussed how part of their reasoning in attending Linnet was based on whether it felt the 'right' place for them.

> "whether it felt right was probably my main…my main focus" – Ellie.

> "I wanted to see like is it the right uni for me?" – Isobel.

> "the feeling of the university is what really kind of created um my application and it really was kind of talking to other people who are already here, going to the open days. Um, that kind of, made me feel like this was the right place for me." – Cameron.

In both the review of the literature and within my research, how this feeling was reached is unclear. Basing reasoning on a 'feeling' is difficult to outwardly articulate. Each of the students above used the open days to

inform their reasoning for it feeling right, however, only Cameron provides an example of how he made this judgement.

The comments above demonstrate parallels within the literature whereby students want to feel like where they choose is the 'right' place for themselves (Bourdieu, 2010; CFE Research, 2015a; Reay, David and Ball, 2005). However, Archer's (2003) concluding statement that low-income students do not see elite universities as the 'right' place from them and are thus dissuaded from applying to elite universities is not relevant to the study considering that all students chose to attend Linnet. Furthermore, the literature placed great emphasis on students' requirement to feel comfortable in their surroundings (Oliver and Kettley, 2010; Reay, David and Ball, 2005). Although the students above stress this to extent, this does not appear a majority concern, thus suggesting that this type of reasoning has been overemphasised within the literature.

6.4. Conclusions

In this chapter I have discussed students' experiences of applying to Linnet University. First, I discussed the struggles students found in accessing Linnet University. Some struggles were manifested through poor guidance or a lack of help from their educational institution in the application process. Financial strain for students in accessing Linnet University was also discussed, and the finances offered as a result of the access scheme was seen to alleviate some students' struggle to access the university. The habitus of the institution was also acknowledged as a potential barrier to access. Secondly, in reviewing the materials students used to inform their choice of institution, the use of prospectuses led some students to question the validity of the information provided. Open days were considered to yield the most accurate information concerning university life because students were able to experience the university first-hand. Lastly, I sought to understand common themes in the reasoning students gave in choosing Linnet University. Characteristics of the university such as the academic reputation of the course and the collegiate system proved strong factors in student choice but were absent from my literature review. In particular, the Linnet Access

Scheme for those who had participated proved influential in their reasoning, again highlighting the financial support it provided. Some students also placed emphasis on emotion-based reasoning, specifically whether Linnet University 'felt right' for them. However, this was not as prominent a reason as the literature review would suggest.

The next chapter will define the characteristics of the elite university in the study: Linnet University. I will argue that prominent characteristics of Linnet discussed by students were parallel to characteristics highlighted in the relevant literature, such as the university's traditional underpinnings and emphasis on academia. Similarly, students discuss how extra-curricular activities were integral to the university, although for different reasons to those suggested by Bradley et al (2013). In addition to those suggested in the literature, the collegiate system operated by Linnet University was considered by students to contribute to Linnet's unique culture. I will argue that these characteristics contribute to the 'Linnet bubble' offering a unique experience to those students encased within it.

"I think Linnet is a bit different to other universities" - Felicity

Chapter Seven: The unique culture of Linnet University

In this chapter, I will examine the unique culture of Linnet University as recognised by students in this study. I will first draw parallels with characteristics of elite universities acknowledged by the literature review: tradition, high academic standards and an emphasis on participation in extra-curricular activities. I shall then suggest that the collegiate system operated by Linnet University is a characteristic of its unique culture which has not been previously acknowledged by academic research. Secondary themes of 'opportunity' and 'busyness' were discussed by students in reference to specific characteristics of the Linnet culture. I shall conclude by arguing that the characteristics discussed in this chapter culminate in the Linnet 'bubble' which encases students in a culture unique to Linnet University.

7.1. First characteristic: Tradition

In parallel with the literature review, tradition was acknowledged by some students as characteristic of Linnet University with three students using the word 'traditional' to describe the university [Appendix H]. However, the reasoning for this description varied between participants. All three students described traditions the university adopted with examples given including formal dinners, gowns and the universities' matriculation ceremony which formally welcomes new students at the beginning of their first year. However, two students in particular referred to the architecture of the university, specifically the cathedral and its surrounding buildings. Therefore, I will explore architecture as an element of tradition in this section and thus argue that this is a characteristic of Linnet University and the culture it employs.

Although possessing a history from as early as the middle ages, Linnet University in its current form was founded in the nineteenth century (Linnet University, n.d[e]). The aesthetics of the university thus convey its history. Alongside the cobbled streets common in historic cities, Linnet City features a cathedral and castle, both linked to the University. In the case of Linnet,

therefore, the links made within the literature between the elite university and traditional architecture (Archer, Leathwood and Hutchings, 2002; Baker and Brown, 2007) are fitting. This link was particularly articulated by one student who used the word 'picturesque' to describe the university.

> "it's just, y'know, the castle, the cathedral, y'know you walk along by the river and just y'know, the skyline and stuff I mean, you get on the train and you're coming into Linnet, the first thing you see is the cathedral, y'know, it stands out very much…like a lot of the other architecture round here is magnificent" – Lily.

Lily's response demonstrates how the architecture of Linnet City has become synonymous with the university itself, echoing Baker and Brown's (2007, p.382) argument that the architecture of an elite university romanticises students with implied notions of tradition and an "other-worldly feel". However, it is unclear as to whether this was apparent in my study. Lily's comment discussing the architecture of Linnet is undoubtedly full of admiration, unlike Ball, Davies, David and Reay's (2002) research suggesting students are repelled by historic architecture. However, students did not link the architecture of Linnet to any other aspect of the university as suggested by Baker and Brown (2007). Despite the extensive research into architecture as a key characteristic of an elite university, only three students in my study considered the tradition and architecture a characteristic of Linnet, thus rendering this characteristic fairly insignificant in my research.

7.2. Second characteristic: Academic

'Academic' was the most frequent word used to describe Linnet University by just over half of the students interviewed [Appendix H]. The reasoning students provided followed two clear themes. Firstly, students regarded Linnet as a 'top' academic university.

> "it's like a top uni" – Beth (second year, arts and humanities, Rowland).
>
> it's "a world-renowned university" – Lily.

Isobel refers to Linnet's "high-level research" in her explanation as to why she described Linnet as 'academic', although whether the research at Linnet also influenced Beth and Lily's statements above is unclear.

> "I get the impression that [the research experience of Linnet] sets you apart academically on your CV and things like that just being here." – Isobel.

Interestingly, Isobel suggests that the academic prestige of Linnet benefits the students in attendance at the institution. In Bourdieusian terms, Isobel's comment suggests that the academic prestige supplies the low-income student with cultural capital which benefits the student.

Secondly, two students described the university culture as academic because of the academic drive within the students of Linnet.

> "the students are very motivated to learn, they're motivated to go to lectures, they're motivated to go to seminars, er, of course there's exceptions where aren't, but I think generally kind of there is a push to actually succeed academically" – Cameron.

> "everyone's constantly studying" – Lily.

Cameron and Lily attribute the University as 'academic' because of the academic mind-set of the students. By stating the academic tendencies of the students as a characteristic of the University, Cameron and Lily thus suggest that defining a characteristic of the Linnet culture is not limited to the tendencies of the institution culture as a whole; the group of students within an institution can represent the institution. This argument was raised previously within the literature review, suggesting that the students within elite universities were a characteristic of the institution themselves. However, I consider this to need greater exploration, and therefore exploration into the students who attend Linnet University and my participants' interactions with these students will be explored in chapter nine.

7.3. Third characteristic: Extra-curricular activities

Extra-curricular activities were previously established within the literature review as a prominent characteristic of the elite university. Similarly, extra-curricular activities were discussed by students in the study as a key feature of the Linnet culture.

For some students, extra-curricular activities were considered integral to the culture in that they are embedded within the Linnet culture: extra-curricular activities are embodied within the university and its students. For instance, Lily in describing the university as 'sports-orientated' [Appendix H] justified her statement as thus:

"because [students who play sports are] just everywhere, like you walk through town and you either see some type of college stash for a sports society or someone wondering around in their Linnet Team stuff, and especially the rowers, you know, or even if like-, like even not just when they're playing sports, like just in their drinking habits and everything" – Lily.

Lily in her response demonstrates how she considers sporting activities as entrenched within the lives of those who partake in them. Specifically, she outlines how students embody the extra-curricular activities across their university experience, including their social tendencies outside of the sport. Similarly outlined when discussing the prominence of academia in the Linnet culture, it can be implied that extra-curricular activities are a characteristic not only of Linnet, but also of the students who affiliate themselves with the institution.

It is worth acknowledging that in the literature review, I highlighted how extra-curricular activities were considered characteristic of the elite university because they provided students with cultural capital which, in turn, benefited their future career paths (Bradley et al, 2013). Interestingly, however, this was not mentioned by students within my study.

Contrarily, the theme of opportunity was prominent within students' discussions of Linnet University and extra-curricular activities. Students spoke positively of the breadth of activities available to get involved with.

"you can't complain about university that offers so much, that offers so many societies, so much opportunities, so many sports" – Cameron.

"Um, I don't think that that is the case in a lot of other universities, whereas y-, you can think of a society in Linnet, it probably exists" – Danielle

"because there's so much to get involved with it's not just sort of rewarding academically also um, y'know extra-curricular stuff." – Felicity

Additionally, students praised the new opportunities the university enabled. Formal dinners in college [college formals], whereby students are expected to wear smart dress and/or academic gown, were a new experience for all students in the study [Figure 2.1]. This result is unsurprising considering that

this activity is only accessible to those students attending a collegiate university.
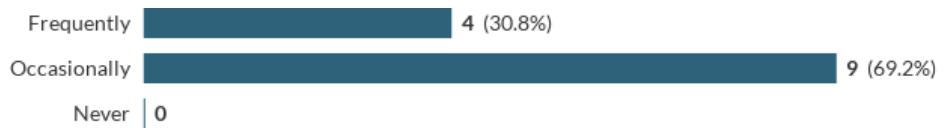
Figure 2.1. Survey Question 10.1. For each of the extra-curricular activities listed below, please circle how often you attend (both at college and university level). College formals.

Figure 2.2. Survey Question 10.1. For each of the extra-curricular activities listed below, please circle how often you attend (both at college and university level). Rowing.

Although rowing was only undertaken by two of the thirteen students surveyed [Figure 2.2], both students had taken up the sport for the first time since coming to Linnet. Ellie's reasoning for participation in rowing is detailed below.

> Ellie: "I think I just wanted to do rowing coz it was something different and quite like…the thing to do at Linnet, I guess.
>
> Interviewer: Yeah. Um, why do you say it's the 'thing to do at Linnet'? What makes you say that?
>
> Ellie: [chuckle] um I don't know. I just think there's like a-, well obviously a team for every college, and it's quite a big thing in the college too, er…I just think when you think of Linnet maybe you think of rowing? So-
>
> Interviewer: -yeah-
>
> Ellie:-and I'd never like get a chance to do it really anywhere else."

Ellie's use of the phrase 'the thing to do at Linnet' signifies how she recognises the popularity of the sport within the institution. For Ellie, this popularity entitles rowing as a characteristic of Linnet itself, thus reinforcing the argument that extra-curricular activities can be characteristic of elite universities particularly in the case of Linnet.

In addition to the theme of opportunity, the theme of 'busyness' is apparent in students' descriptions of Linnet University and the extra-curricular activities it offers. Two students described the university as 'busy' and a further three used the similar adjective 'active' [Appendix H]. The phrase 'there is always

something to do' at Linnet reoccurred in multiple interviews, depicted in the comments below.

> "there's always something to do here, do you what I mean, I mean if you wanna go out or go do something you always can, there's always something happening." – Felicity.

> "there's always loads going on. You get emails all the time about all these things and it's like you have to decide which ones you want to do rather than, y'know, having your evenings. If you wanted to do something different every evening you really could." – Joanna.

> "If you really wanted to you could be busy literally 24/7" – Cameron.

> "there's always something going on in town or with a society, or someone at college." – Grace

The theme of 'busyness' also extended to students' awareness of up-keeping their extra-curricular activities alongside other aspects of university life. The comments below demonstrate how, in addition to participation in extra-curricular activities, students were aware of needing to maintain their academic workload.

> "there's always a society to do, there's always uni work to do, there's always an event going on." – Alice

> "It's good just something to do that's not your degree just to take time out. Like when there's afternoon sport just take time out to do something that isn't academic. Coz I feel like you can't just do academic stuff all the time." – Beth.

> "I think I'd go mad if I didn't have my societies [chuckle]" – Danielle.

> "I'm trying to fit everything in, er 24 hours doesn't always happen…just trying to find a bit of a balance between er all of the different things going on." – Grace

The comments demonstrate students' experiences in balancing their academic work alongside participation in extra-curricular activities. Such as Grace's comment also demonstrates the difficulties some students experienced in managing both academic and social aspects of the university culture; the busyness of Linnet was sometimes considered a negative attribute of the university.

7.4. Fourth characteristic: Collegiate system

The previous chapter demonstrated the importance of the collegiate system in students' decision to attend Linnet University, a factor not previously acknowledged within the literature. Similarly, the collegiate system was considered by students in the study to be characteristic of the culture of

Linnet, with three students using the word 'collegiate' to describe the university [Appendix H]. A key aspect of the collegiate system that students attributed to the unique culture of Linnet was the community atmosphere it created. Words used to describe the university included 'community' and 'close-knit', and were often attributed to the college system [Appendix H].

> "I guess with the collegiate system you can like know everyone and it's really easy to make friends. And like there's always somebody to help you out if you need it and stuff. It's nice." - Ellie

> "the college you are from, it feels like home and it's easy to get to know people and especially as like, a first year of university sort of thing it's a great setting, you know." - Lily

Additionally, students considered the support offered by their college community as a unique characteristic of Linnet University.

> "I feel like because, you get like the support of having-, of being at college, there's so much like support in place, welfare and your mentor, like there's so many places that can help you if you have any question about anything there's so much there" – Beth.

> "it's just the university itself, whether it be through counselling, disabilities office, college office, the academic faculties etc, they are really accommodating and understanding and they're willing to sit down and listen to you a lot which you know, when you come to an elite university you don't always expect because there is quite a high standard." – Lily.

Lily's comment in particular demonstrates how the support offered by Linnet, through the college and the wider university community, sets the university apart from even other elite universities; the support through the collegiate system forms part of the unique culture of Linnet University.

The theme of opportunity was also apparent in students' descriptions of the collegiate system. Cameron particularly emphasised the link between the collegiate system and opportunity.

> "I think with the college system there is an unbelievable amount of different opportunities. I think the [student volunteering organisation], uh, in Linnet is absolutely fantastic, er I think it provides so many different opportunities and provides experiences which you don't get at other universities. Um, and I think that's a big part of me, is my extra-curricular is [student volunteering organisation], whereas I think the colleges, although obviously [some other universities] have them as well, um, it's a way to get involved in sport, get involved in playing all that stuff, and different societies against an almost wide range of people. Um, so having these opportunities just makes the whole university feel a bit more linked and closer I think." – Cameron.

Cameron thus demonstrates how the college system enables students to partake in a wide range of societies, something he implies would be more difficult without this system in place.

7.5. Conclusions: The Linnet 'bubble'

The characteristics of Linnet University discussed by students include both those that were found within the literature, the tradition and extra-curricular activities of the elite university, in addition to the more unique characteristics particular to Linnet and a select group of elite universities, such as the collegiate system. These characteristics thus culminate into what can be argued as a culture unique to Linnet University. Students referred to this unique culture as a 'bubble', arguably a characteristic in its own right of the university. This was described by one student as follows:

> "I think people are, as soon as they come to Linnet they become so immersed in Linnet lifestyle, um, that they forget that there's an outside world" – Alice.

Alice's comment suggests that the students at Linnet become separated from the "outside world" through immersion into the culture of the university. This echoes the previously acknowledged research of Reay, Crozier and Clayton (2009b) whereby students considered the elite university and its culture as "not reality" (p.1111); the elite university is separate from the outside world. Alice's comment also reinforces Humphries' (2013) discussion of Linnet University as possessing a 'bubble'-like culture previously discussed in the literature review.

To conclude, this chapter has discussed a set of characteristics articulated by students in this study that combine to form the unique culture of Linnet University. Most of the characteristics outlined by students in regards to Linnet were also considered within the literature to be to be features of elite universities. In particular, the traditional and academic elements of the elite university were mirrored in students' descriptions of Linnet. Extra-curricular activities were also emphasised by students as an integral part of the university, however, this was because of the opportunities and new experiences they presented to students as opposed to the cultural capital they might provide students post-university previously suggested in the

literature. The collegiate structure of Linnet University was considered by a number of students as integral to the unique culture of the institution despite not being considered a characteristic of elite universities within the literature. Considering that Linnet is one of few universities in the United Kingdom that operates with this structure, this arguably furthers the uniqueness of the university. As a result, I argue that Linnet operates a unique culture resulting in the 'Linnet bubble', whereby students are encapsulated in an exclusive community which, in the words of Cameron, offers "a completely unique experience" to all.

The next chapter will explore the low-income students' navigation of the unique culture of Linnet University. I will explore students' experiences of the academic and social culture, and address whether it is appropriate to argue that students undergo a process of "dialectal confrontation" (Bourdieu, 2002b, p.31). As a result, I will argue that students feel like a 'fish out of water' on initial experience with this different field, but that students feel more like a "fish in water" on further reflection (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.127).

Chapter Eight: Dialectal confrontation and the low-income student: The case of Linnet University

In the previous chapter, I distinguished characteristics of Linnet University that contribute to its unique culture. This chapter will analyse students' experiences and interactions with the unique culture of Linnet and thus answer the first research question *Do low income students feel like a 'fish out of water' in their university experience?* Specifically, I will explore whether students experience "dialectal confrontation" from attending Linnet (Bourdieu, 2002b, p.31). This will first be assessed in terms of students' academic experiences, discussing the changes of teaching methods and emphasis on self-study. In discussions of their experiences of the social lifestyle of Linnet, I will examine students' interactions with the expense of the university and the unfamiliar social activities. Students' experiences will be discussed throughout in relation to the Bourdieusian concept of 'fish out of water': whether the low-income students' habitus is aligned with the culture of the elite university and thus a "fish in water" in this field (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.127). I argue that this occurs when students are accustomed to the Linnet culture.

Students are considered to be dealing with an "unfamiliar field" (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009b, p.1110) when encountering the institutional culture of Linnet encapsulated by Alice below.

> "It's very, it's very different. It…yeah. Um I think a lot of people would say that about university, um, on the whole but I think, I do think Linnet is different in a way. Um, I think, like…um, without trying to sound like a smartarse [chuckle], um deracination is quite interesting from um, working-class students coming to university, um because, it is-, it's an entirely different experience to what you've had beforehand." – Alice.

Alice's experiences are considered commonplace for low-income students at elite universities when operating an alternative field (Abrahams and Ingram, 2013; Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009b). However, in this statement Alice suggests that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are alienated from the university culture as a result of this. This chapter shall thus examine the appropriateness of this statement to describe low-income students' interactions with Linnet.

8.1. Academic experiences

"I remember when I first came to uni [the academic teaching methods] was a bit of a culture shock, erm, just because it was such a contrast to what I'd had before." – Alice.

In discussing academic experiences, I refer to students' interactions and experiences with academic study at Linnet. A common difference noted by students was the different teaching methods the university used in comparison to their previous institution. All 13 students agreed that the academic teaching methods were different to those used in their previous educational institution [Figure 3.1].

Response	Count
Strongly Agree	8 (61.5%)
Agree	5 (38.5%)
Neither agree nor disagree	0
Disagree	0
Strongly Disagree	0

Figure 3.1. Survey Question 7.1. "The academic teaching methods are different to my previous educational institution".

This was particularly discussed in terms of the number of people per academic session whereby students contrasted the lectures at Linnet which accommodated hundreds of people with the small classroom of students in their previous academic studies. This change was generally spoken of negatively by students, with Grace and Lily below finding studying in larger groups lacking the personal interaction with academic staff they valued in their previous schooling.

> "it's quite impersonal with the lectures, er, being the size that they are" - Grace

> "I had a very close relationship with my teachers, and I could count on them a lot more, in the sense of a bit like one-on one tuition, and like y'know, small groups meant that you could spend more time talking about things. Even seminars here like they're small, but they're still about, y'know, 9 people minimum, whereas my classes at sixth form were only 4." – Lily.

In addition to the difference in teaching methods, students also discussed the increase in academic workload in comparison to their experiences at their previous state school sixth form or college. Students considered there to be a continuous stream of academic work to complete, alongside increases in difficulty.

> "Keeping on top of uni work, there is like, you can never say 'I've finished', that is one thing you can never say that, there is always work to be done and always stuff to do." – Beth.

> "well given that it's-, it's Linnet, um it's pretty high up there with things, the work's very hard, and er there's quite a lot of it so it's been a bit of a jump from school to doing the sort of degree-level stuff here." – Grace.

Grace describes the change in workload as a 'jump' from her previous educational institution, an analogy that can be used to a considerable and difficult change. However, I acknowledge that the 'jump' between A-Levels (or equivalent) and university education is experienced by students (Ballinger, 2002) arguably irrespective of background, thus rendering Grace's experiences as commonplace for the new university student.

A key difference between the academic culture of Linnet and previous experiences of education was the self-study required in the university. 12 out of 13 students stated that self-study was different at Linnet in comparison to their previous educational institution [Figure 3.2].
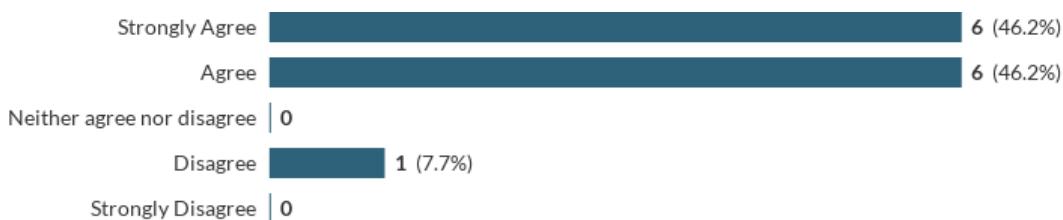
Figure 3.2. Survey Question 9.1. "Self-study at university is different to self-study at my previous educational institution".

Multiple students spoke of being 'spoon-fed' information at their previous educational institution in which they learnt information specifically for examinations. In contrast, students spoke of an expectation at Linnet to gather information themselves; they were required to become independent learners formulating their own arguments and ideas. Descriptions of this shift between teaching styles are highlighted in the student comments below.

> "I guess self-study in high school and sixth form is more-, like although we did get essays, I don't think they were as er-, like you didn't have to come up with your own thoughts as much, it was more just about remembering things." – Ellie.

> "even though A-level is a lot of self-study, it's still a bit spoon-fed, whereas when you get here it's completely, y'know, different, … there's no real like stepping point" – Lily.

Not all students considered self-study as different to their previous educational institution. Danielle stated that she was "self-driven", and thus

undertook independent learning of her own accord at her previous educational establishment: self-study was an experienced teaching method for Danielle. However, she did state that independent learning was conducted differently at Linnet, although not specifying how this was so. I can argue, therefore, that despite her initial response, Danielle's interview suggests independent learning at Linnet was different to her previous institution, thus suggesting that self-study at Linnet was different to all students' previous educational institutions within the study. Overall, self-study was considered to be the primary form of academic work in students' academic lives. Self-study was thus considered crucial by students for their academic success, and therefore integral to their academic lifestyles at Linnet.

I have so far demonstrated that the academic culture at Linnet requires students to adopt new techniques of self-study. From a Bourdieusian perspective, this can be explained as a process of "dialectical confrontation" (Bourdieu, 2002b, p.31) as students experience conditions different to their prior field (that is, their prior educational institution).

However, whether students are thus a 'fish out of water' in the academic culture of Linnet should take into account students' feelings within the process of dialectal confrontation. I theorised in the literature review that students are 'fish out of water' if the process of dialectal confrontation is considered a negative experience and/or difficult to overcome for an individual. However, if students' descriptions of this change are positive or navigated with ease, it can be argued that these students are a 'fish in water' in the academic culture of Linnet irrespective of dialectal confrontation. Students' emotions towards the different academic culture of Linnet shall thus be explored below, concluding with whether it is appropriate to suggest that these students feel like a 'fish out of water' in their academic experiences of university.

A number of students spoke specifically of the shock in experiencing a new style of learning, established previously in this chapter. Ellie and Katie below describe their experiences of this change.

> "coming here was a bit of a struggle to just be like, having to kind of think about it myself and create my own arguments rather than just remembering loads of facts in order to get a good grade." – Ellie.

> "think just yeah in relation to sort of like the self-study and things like that it's just its, it's been a new sort of work ethic for me, I've had to like adapt to a new worth ethic so that's been challenging in a sense that um until the age of 18 I was like pretty much spoon-fed education so I think its er…I think it was challenging in that respect." – Katie.

Both comments display a dislike for self-study, with words such as 'struggle' and 'challenging' characterising their experiences above. Bourdieu's (2000) suggestion that dialectal confrontation "generates suffering" (p.160) thus appears to be an accurate description of the student experiences above.

Not all students, however, disliked these changes. A number of students spoke positively of their experiences of academia at Linnet.

> "Um, I enjoy y'know, the seminars, I like how it's a lively debate, rather than when you're in a classroom even though you discuss things, the teacher would always be starting you off and usually still lecturing you during it in a sense. Whereas now that I'm at university, the seminars most of the time are actually student-based when we're talking about stuff." – Lily.

> "I felt like when I got to university kind of, you almost challenged to provide your own views and to challenge-, er and to even disagree with your er lecturers and tutors" – Cameron.

These positive experiences of academia at Linnet also extended to include self-study. Katie and Beth detail the benefits to their academic work from completing self-study.

> "you're more of an active learner and I think that just makes you more interested in the subject and like want to do well in it." – Katie.

> "here is better because you have that free reign of what to read and what not to read and what to do as your extra. Yeah, there's more freedom to like take it in the direction you wanna take it kind of thing here" - Beth

For Katie, self-study enhanced her enjoyment of the subject, whereas Beth enjoyed how it widened her academic knowledge. A small number of students also explicitly stated at interview that they preferred self-study in comparison to the styles of teaching that they previously experienced. This is not to suggest, however, that students when expressing their positive experiences did not acknowledge the change in culture they experienced and thus the shock from this. Students still acknowledged the problems they had faced when acclimatising to the different academic lifestyle of the

university even when speaking positively of their academic experiences at Linnet.

> "I guess [the university academic teaching methods] was a bit uncomfortable coming but now I'm used to it so I like it?" – Ellie

> "Initially I was scared but I actually really like it, I kind of just like working it out for myself I find I actually learn it better and I just sort of like writing it out" – Felicity.

> "[self-study] can be difficult at times, certainly with more the motivation side of things and saying you better do this, but um, it's also-, it's not too bad, I don't dislike it." – Joanna.

All three students above discuss the shock on interaction with this new academic culture whilst maintaining a positive opinion of this teaching method. In fact, Ellie and Felicity state that they like the new academic teaching methods at Linnet. Majority of students within the study said they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they were comfortable with self-study at university [Figure 3.3], thus suggesting that students were overall positive about self-study at Linnet.
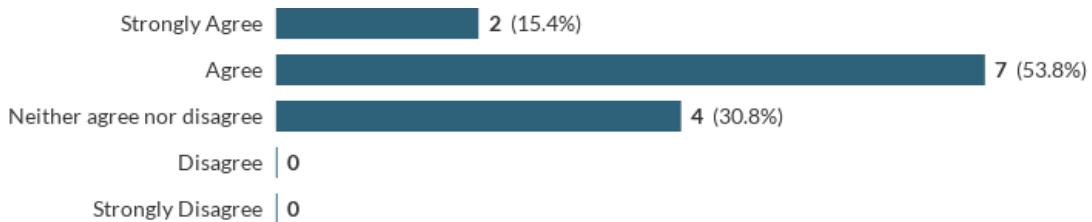
Figure 3.3. Survey Question 9.2. "I feel comfortable with self-study at university."

Overall, majority of the students spoke of their enjoyment of academia at Linnet. Beth demonstrates below that, in spite of any complaints she had regarding her academic work, her enjoyment of academia at Linnet overruled this.

> "as much as I complain about how much work I have to do, I love it really" – Beth.

Arguably, Beth's experience directly contradicts Bourdieu's (2000) suggestion that undergoing dialectal confrontation always has a negative impact on individuals. Instead, Ingram's (2011) suggestion that this culture shock is accepted and commonplace for students is arguably a more appropriate theoretical application to this context.

Specifically, how students normalise changing their habitus will be explored in Chapter ten analysing the coping strategies articulated by students to

navigate the Linnet culture. However, it is clear that students are using an element of hindsight in their reasoning; they are able to be retrospective in their assessment of their academic experiences at Linnet. Although there are criticisms to the validity of retrospective data in research because of the potential for inaccurate responses from individuals (Russell Bernard, Killworth, Kronenfeld and Sailer, 1984), students' comparisons between their earlier and later experiences of academia are useful in providing an account of their whole university experience. This is highlighted in the students' comments below who demonstrate how time in the institution had helped them acculturate into the Linnet academic culture.

> "I guess I'm just used to [self-study] now." - Ellie.

> "I think um obviously being in third year I think it would have been quite different if you'd asked me this in first year, just because I think I've had time to adapt to those methods and I've learnt to manage my time better and actually read and things like that, something that I wasn't prepared for maybe in first year but am now." - Katie

> "I am very much used to [self-study] now. It's one of those things where it's like, I'm an arts student, I've got to do something to fill my hours with [chuckle]." – Alice.

Katie and Alice in particular suggest that their experiences of self-study at Linnet in their first year differed to their current year of study, and that their opinions of self-study would have differed between these years. Both students in these statements thus articulate how time in the university has helped them become accustomed to the academic culture of Linnet.

In addressing the first research question in respect to academic experiences of Linnet, the answer appears dependent on the stage of an individual's university lifecycle. The students interviewed suggested that initially, they struggled in their experiences of 'dialectal confrontation' and therefore displayed signs of feeling like a 'fish out of water'. However, once accustomed to the differences in their academic studies, students were positive of the change and arguably more of a 'fish in water' as a result of this.

8.2. Social experiences

Having provided an account of students' experiences of academia at Linnet, I now move on to explore social activities and social life. I argue that low-

income students experience dialectal confrontation within the social field of Linnet, particularly when encountering activities unique to the institution. I will also argue that dialectal confrontation is still apparent in students' experiences of Linnet when faced with familiar activities also situated in their previous field.

A theme prominent in my research was the shock of the expense of the social sphere of University. A total of five students used the word 'expensive' to describe the elite university and/or their university experience so far [Appendix H and I]. In the literature review, I highlighted students' concerns with financing higher education before attending an institution. Students in the study also described the university as expensive, with Felicity, Danielle and Rebecca highlighting tuition fees and accommodation at Linnet. However, students also spoke of the expense of the university in terms of the social activities offered.

> "there's so many hidden costs that you wouldn't have expected from this university" – Isobel.

> "not necessarily Rowland but I know like other college formals can be expensive, and other things, the things that like you would wanna participate in like, it could be-, it could be excluding, like if I'd went to somewhere like Enderby for instance I know their summer balls and things like that can be really, really pricey." – Katie

Isobel details how she found the university possessed 'hidden costs' which included social activities at Linnet. For instance, Isobel states that membership to a particular music society costed fifty pounds per annum which was "a lot more than [Isobel] expected". Katie provides a comparison between the colleges and the cost of formals, in which she was aware of colleges such as Enderby that hosted expensive events.

A key theme discussed in the study by students was the type of activities on offer. As highlighted when discussing the unique culture of Linnet in chapter seven, college formals were a new experience for all students in the study. Students therefore had few preconceptions of formal dining.

> "no idea what a formal was, assumed it was kind of dressing up in black tie, and kind of just sitting down with the most boring meal with no laughter and stuff." – Cameron.

> "I didn't really know what occurred in a formal" – Katie.

Ellie articulates below her experiences of this social activity, particularly the culture shock she faced on her initial interaction with formal dining.

> Ellie: "my first one was really daunting, but now like I love them so [chuckle].
>
> Interviewer: Why was the first one daunting?
>
> Ellie: Um, I think it was just a lot different, like-, like the whole gown and it was so formal, and I've never really been to anything like that and…even stuff like, I'd never eaten duck until I came to Linnet, and like random-, it was just kind of different to what I was used to. Um…-
>
> Interviewer: -yep-
>
> Ellie: -I also didn't really like wine either but [laughter] yeah."

Whilst Ellie came to enjoy formal dinners, other students found them to be uncomfortable experiences.

> "Well I just went to begin with because everybody did, [formals] seemed like the done thing to do and something you should experience so I thought 'okay, I'll give this a go'. Um, I didn't enjoy [formals] at all at first, like…I don't know, I found the etiquette really uncomfortable and I felt judged because I don't hold my knife and fork properly, and it was just a bit awkward." – Isobel

Isobel above uses the adjectives 'awkward' and 'uncomfortable' to describe her formal experiences; Isobel rejects the university social culture. This was also prominent in Cameron's experiences of social activities at Linnet, in which he too discusses how he felt uncomfortable in certain social situations.

> "I feel like in certain social situations, brunch clubs, sports, sport socials and such, there's kind of an etiquette which you need to adhere to which is something I n-, I can't get involved in, I don't feel part of… It's not something I feel comfortable, part of, the certain jokes people make, the certain references and different customs and it's all stuff I feel like I'm not comfortable doing this, this isn't something I really believe in. And I find it difficult to really get involved and just ends up me thinking I can't be bothered, I'll go home, and I feel like that happens way t-, way more often than it should at a university like this" – Cameron

Cameron displays an outward rejection of a variety of social activities at the university. This is because the dispositions within the field of the elite university are vastly different to his previously acquired dispositions and experiences.

Even when faced with the promise of the familiar, students still undergo a process of dialectal confrontation in the social sphere of Linnet. Using the example of extra-curricular activities, Isobel illustrates her experiences of one particular sporting activity.

> "some of the activities that I enjoyed doing at home, I hate doing here, because of the way um…well I think horse-riding's the best one to use, because I'm a 'happy hacker', and I just like going out, y'know having fun with the horse, and they're all very competitive, it's always like 'oh you've got to be about the competition, you've got to whip them, you've got to…' and all that sort of thing. And then I'm just like, well 'not for me'." – Isobel

Horse riding was an extra-curricular activity Isobel had experienced and enjoyed partaking in before attending Linnet. However, Isobel found this activity less enjoyable once at Linnet. Even on encountering an activity which possessed similar characteristics to one she had experienced in her previous field, Isobel experienced dialectal confrontation because of the difference in values of the group; the student group had different aims for their society than Isobel was accustomed to. Therefore, although conditions between fields was similar in terms of the existence of a certain sport, this did not equate to the same enjoyment and thus positive experience for Isobel.

8.3. Fish out of water? The case of Linnet

Interestingly, students exhibited signs of dialectal confrontation in discussing the Linnet University culture as a whole. Isobel highlights how a culmination of elements of the Linnet culture contributed to her feeling like a 'fish out of water'.

> "Yeah, my first year particularly, just hated it here, absolutely hated it. My flatmates were horrible, the course was horrible, I felt so much like a 'fish out of water', um kind of-, I don't know, that stereotypical country girl goes to the city kind of thing, it was just a bit-, everything was so overwhelming." – Isobel.

Isobel later expressed how her experiences of the university improved particularly on changing her academic programme, suggesting that the academic culture of Linnet was particularly influential in her experiences of dialectal confrontation.

However, Isobel's negative reaction to the Linnet culture is not representative of the study. Statistically, over half of students surveyed stated that they belonged at Linnet [Figure 3.4]; they felt like a 'fish in water' at the university.
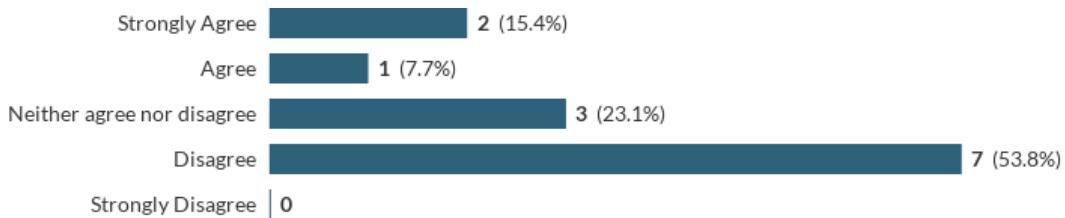
Figure 3.4. Survey Question 13.6. 'I feel like I don't belong here at this university'.

Despite the difficulties experienced from dialectal confrontation on initial interaction with the Linnet culture, multiple students spoke of feeling like a 'fish in water' in this setting the longer they resided in the elite university field.

"There's like multiple challenging aspects. Not to say that they're negative, but they are a challenge" – Beth.

"I think everyone when they come-, go to university has a little bit of anxiety as to whether they deserve to be there kind of thing, erm, so I think that's quite, quite natural, and I've kind of grown in to it." – Alice.

Beth and Alice exemplify this reasoning, acknowledging that despite initially struggling with the university culture, this did not have a lasting, negative impact on their university experience. Alice's comment is particularly interesting as it suggests that initially feeling like a 'fish out of water' is inevitable on first interaction with the Linnet culture. As students in the study were across several year groups, it is difficult to generalise this reasoning across my study. However, this would be an interesting argument to pursue in further research.
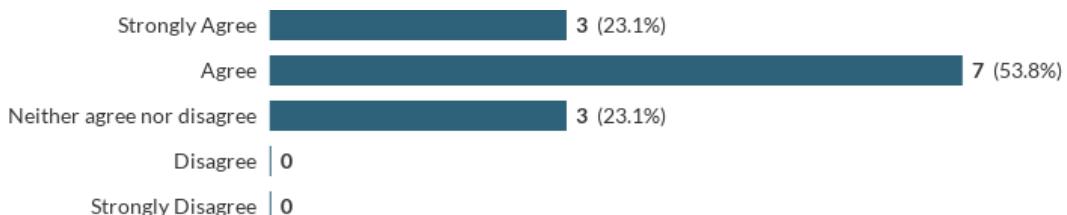
Figure 3.5. Survey Question 13.7. 'I have enjoyed my time at this university so far'.

Overall, majority of students enjoyed their university experience at Linnet [Figure 3.5], encapsulated by the students' comments below.

"I've had a great time. I mean, it's been hectic, at points stressful, um and completely bizarre, um but I wouldn't want to be anywhere else" – Alice.

"the whole every aspect of university experience has been enjoyable" – Beth.

"So I just feel like I've learnt a lot, I've met a lot of people that I definitely wouldn't have met before, um I've had like loads of different exp-, new experiences that I wouldn't have had before" – Katie.

However, as shown in Figure 3.5, student opinion was not unanimous. Three students stated 'neither agree nor disagree' to this statement, suggesting mixed feelings as to whether they had enjoyed their university experience at Linnet. Isobel states her reasoning for his response below. From undergoing the process of dialectal confrontation, Isobel demonstrates how she had mixed opinions towards her university experience.

> "Um…just that I really think it's a very dangerous premise when people say like, that university is the best years of your life and that the expectations that you come with to university and that you expect, like, 'it'll be kind of like school but all bigger', it just doesn't…it doesn't live up to the reputation in some ways and the expectation, but then it's other things that you find are a lot better than you'd expect." – Isobel.

This chapter has discussed the culture shock of academia and social activities for students at Linnet. It first established that the academic culture of Linnet, in its academic teaching methods and emphasis on self-study, is different to students' previous academic experiences. As a result, students' habituses underwent a process of 'dialectal confrontation'. However, to suggest students are thus a 'fish out of water' in this setting must take into account students' feelings towards this change to their habitus. Although the academic culture of Linnet was a shock to students, this was not always a negative experience. Students mostly spoke positively of both academic work as a whole and self-study, particularly when nearing the end of their university experience. Therefore, in answer to the first research question, I argue that students initially found the academic culture at Linnet a 'culture shock' and therefore felt like a 'fish out of water' in this setting. However, students were more positive of the change later in their university timeline and thus a 'fish in water' in this field. Similarly, in examining students' navigation of the social culture of Linnet, students displayed strong signs of dialectal confrontation in terms of the type of social activities on offer at the university and the expense of the university. It appeared, however, that more students displayed signs of feeling like a 'fish out of water'; students had a negative experience of these new surroundings.

The next chapter will pay further attention to the action taken by students in order to overcome these feelings of dialectal confrontation, specifically the types of coping strategies employed by students in this study. These

strategies will be framed by a Bourdieusian conceptual framework. I shall first argue that students undergo a process of habitus alteration, discussed in relation to changes to their speech and language, accent, and dress. In contrast, I will examine students that rejected habitus alteration in favour of maintaining their original habitus. In addition to examining students' strategies to feel like a 'fish in water' in the Linnet culture, I will also examine the strategies employed by Linnet University as an institution to acculturate its students into the institutional culture. I will argue that students modified their habitus in part in order to fit with the institution as argued by Ingram (2011). Specifically, I will argue that students operate a 'cleft habitus' whereby the low-income students are able to present multiple identities depending on the field of practice.

Chapter Nine: People like me

> "*I remember the first day I got here we had an icebreaker at college, and I was talking to some girls and I told them where I lived and where I went to school and they immediately stopped talking to me. It's not a joke. Um, yeah but then I walked off, found some other people and there was no problem at all.*" – Felicity

In the previous chapter, I discussed the process of 'dialectal confrontation' faced by students from low-income backgrounds when attending Linnet University and whether this equated to students feeling like a 'fish out of water' in these surroundings. In this chapter I will explore a sub-set of these students' experiences, specifically their interactions with the students in attendance at Linnet. Firstly, I will analyse students' definitions of the 'stereotypical Linnet student' and whether they possess the characteristics previously suggested in chapter seven discussing the unique culture of the elite university. Secondly, on interaction with these students vastly different to themselves, I will explore students' themes of finding 'no-one like me' at Linnet, and the implications this has on their university experience. I will conclude with the opposing argument that majority of students found 'people like me' at Linnet University.

9.1. The stereotype of the Linnet student

In chapter four, I foregrounded one particular element of the culture of an elite university: the idea that such universities were attended by particular 'types' of student. Importantly, these students were considered by the low-income student as different to themselves, an opinion demonstrated in the study.

> "People here are very different" – Felicity.

> "I've met people that I probably would have never met if I'd hadn't come here to university." – Katie.

> "it's so interesting to kind of compare how- okay, you're all at one university and in theory you're all meant to be the same but when you actually look at people it's so different" – Cameron.

A characteristic of these differences discussed in both the literature review and the research was the wealthy backgrounds of the students the low-income students came into contact with. Isobel and Ellie, on interaction with

these wealthy students, faced a "culture shock" (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009b, p.1111) from interaction with people different from themselves.

> "I was absolutely shocked when I came, just how…few working-class people there were. Like by comparison, or certainly that there seemed to be, and it was just-, well my first-, yeah. First kind of people I met one of them their dad was a co-owner of Allerton Football Club, the other their parents had retired so early because they were absolutely loaded and I just thought, 'am I the token poor kid here?'" – Isobel.

> "Like you have some people that have been to like Eton and when I came, two of my flatmates had come from boarding school, and I didn't even think like that was a thing, until I came here. So I guess educational background's quite important, -and probably just in terms of like wealth. Like you hear people saying they've got like swimming pools in their back garden and yeah, in their houses, and stuff like that so-, or they've like lived abroad or like grown up in Dubai and stuff so [chuckle], just crazy things." – Ellie.

Furthermore, Isobel's comment on feeling like the 'token poor kid' echoes Forsyth and Furlong's (2000) research suggesting that these interactions made the student feel "poorer" on interaction with their wealthier peers (p.36).

Monetary wealth was not the only attribute of Linnet students discussed in the study. Participants spoke of cultural differences between themselves and their Linnet peers as highlighted by Ellie below.

> "not that everyone that comes here, but like the majority of people that come here are very different to-, well I come from [Northern town] so the people in [Northern Town] and kind of have different values and different backgrounds." – Ellie.

Bennett (2010) suggests that individuals operating in the same field are often likely to share the same 'taste'. Arguably, this is embodied by Ellie in her suggestion that the stereotypical Linnet student holds different values to her peers in her home town. Thus, Ellie implies that the stereotypical student at Linnet possesses a particular taste which is different to her previous habitual experiences.

These differences culminate into what is considered by the low-income student as the stereotypical Linnet student. Specifically, a large number of participants described the stereotypical student as from a wealthy background, privately educated and possessing Southern accents.

> Beth: "I feel like I'm sometimes judged for being not a stereotypical Linnet student…I don't know, I feel like people can like like ac-, I do tone my accent down here. But I feel like that's to help people understand, but like they still know I'm northern. And like I do still get the piss taken out of me for being Northern and like not a stereotypical Linnet student.
>
> Interviewer: Okay. So what do you think is the stereotypical Linnet student?
>
> Beth: Not me. [chuckle]. I think it's the opposite. I don't know, I feel like, Southern…not posh but I feel like well-off and well-educated. And then, yeah I feel like that's what people expect, and then if you don't fit in that, it's a bit like 'well, she doesn't fit, she's not-, doesn't fit that'."

Beth separates herself entirely from any association with the 'stereotypical Linnet student' by considering herself the 'opposite' of these students. It was suggested in chapter four that the low-income students are the minority in the elite university, with the wealthy students the dominant group in the institution. This distribution is also displayed in Beth's comments whereby she refers to students in the dominant group as 'well off'. When not fitting the criteria for the dominant group, Beth implies that it is thus difficult to 'fit' into the institution.

9.2. No-one like me

> *"I don't feel like people like me get into places like this." – Cameron*

Not being the stereotypical Linnet student was considered to be a disadvantage by the low-income students in the study. Cameron was one particular student who discussed feeling like there was no-one like himself at Linnet due to a number of reasons. Below, Cameron discusses how lacking a certain background impacted his participation in certain extra-curricular activities.

> "I feel like even kind of within traditional sport teams, if you're not a certain type of person you're not included, you are excluded. Um and I think a big part of that does come in um from your background if you're not from a traditional background who has all these different traditions of brunch, um er drinking games and stuff like that which people from my kind of background have never even thought of before. You say we used to be excluded and not have the courage to go forward and say 'I dunno what I'm doing' and I feel like, part of the experience is quite exclusive." – Cameron.

Furthermore, Cameron discussed how the difference between his background and university experiences was not replicated in the stereotypical Linnet students' experiences.

> "Yeah, I suppose it's kind of based on, um, both my background and the way kind of I act now. Like I don't feel like anyone at university is as involved as I am in opening things up to other people. Um, it's k-, it's very, very difficult to kind of really say why it's kind of, I don't feel a lot of people volunteer as much as I do, I don't think people feel as vulnerable as I do. I don't think people have had it as tough as I do. And like, it's all stuff that kind of on its own you'd say 'I'm sure someone does feel like this, someone does feel like this' but it's kind of, when it comes all together, I don't feel like anyone's had that kind of-, the same kind [of experience] as me" – Cameron.

Cameron in this statement exhibits distinct expressions of 'fish out of water' in two key aspects. Firstly, he considers his original field of operation as vastly different to those experienced by his peers. Secondly, and more prominently, Cameron operationalises his habitus in ways in which he considers as different to his peers. As a result, Cameron felt that there was no-one like himself at the university; he is a 'fish out of water' at Linnet. Feeling excluded because of background in comparison with the stereotypical Linnet student was also recognised by Alice, although this was not from personal experiences.

> "if you encounter people that are very different from you or people that are particularly um snobby or whatever, um, if you come from a working-class background I can see how that would be off-putting and how you would feel that there is no one like you at uni" – Alice.

Feeling like a member of a minority group within the institution was also considered to reinforce the relationship between cultural capital acquisition and position in the elite university field. Katie below describes an altercation in which her membership of the university was questioned by a fellow student because of her accent.

> "when we were in a queue to go into um Wetherspoons one night, and [a student] asked us if we were students because of our accents, and he actually asked to see our student card, like another student. Um, which obviously made us feel quite uncomfortable." - Katie

Katie's position in the elite university field is questioned because her accent differs to that possessed by the stereotypical Linnet student. Cultural capital is considered to be "embodied in the wider student clientele" (Crozier and Reay, 2011, p.147) and thus the characteristics of those who form this group. Katie, from not being a member of the dominant group in the elite university, thus possess an accent not rich in cultural capital. As a result, this led to a challenge of her position in the elite university.

However, for some students, finding that they were in the minority at Linnet did not always equate to negative feelings towards the stereotypical student. Instead, students discussed the university as a positive means to meeting people possessing entirely different characteristics to themselves. Furthermore, interaction with students unlike themselves did not always equate to students feeling like a 'fish out water'. Lily discusses below how she had made friends with individuals possessing characteristics of the stereotypical Linnet student despite her 'minority' status in the institution.

> "there are people that are from, y'know, the same backgrounds as those who are quite, y'know, elitist in a sense, that I'm brilliant friends with because they're actually really down to earth and totally understanding and they couldn't care less about the fact that I'm from, y'know, the edge of Scotland, y'know." – Lily.

Similarly, Felicity below describes her peers as different to herself. As discussed in the previous chapter, this difference was often considered to be a culture shock to the low-income student which led Felicity in particular to question whether she would feel like a 'fish in water' in this setting.

> "I found that people are very different-, not in a bad way or anything, just very different like sort of, um, just even the way they talk, something what they talk about, it was a bit difficult to get used to, Um, yeah it's-, it wasn't s-, it wasn't bad it just was a bit scary to sort of think 'ooh god am I going to fit in properly?' but I found, y'know, people like me and also people who, y'know, it just wasn't a problem mostly." – Felicity

Felicity in the above statement, however, suggests that she was able to find people where background and values were irrelevant to their friendship.

9.3. People like me

Despite exploration of the theme above that students found no-one like themselves at Linnet, majority of students answered disagree to the statement *"I feel like there is no-one like me at university"* [Figure 4.1].
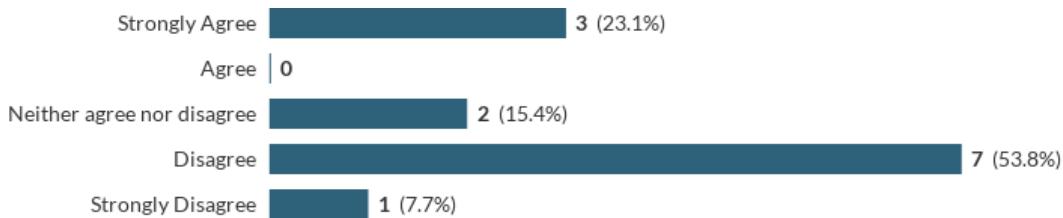

Figure 4.1. Survey Question 13.3. "I feel like there is no-one like me at university."

Reasoning behind this statement included having met people with a similar academic mind-set to themselves, and sharing a common interest in a certain social activity. The latter is highlighted below in Danielle and Grace's discussions.

> "I feel like I've actually found a really good set of fr-, friends here um that are like me, that are like-minded, that wanna get on with their work but also want to have fun to, that-, um drinking like is one like that some people said that when you go to university everyone'll just be drinking, I'm not a big drinker, um and me and my friends we're-, we don't drink so we're kind of like-minded in that as well." – Danielle.

> "Yeah, um like I say there's so many different people, um, there's always something you've got in common with most people, er, there might be some social groups where I wouldn't fit in but I would have no reason to be with them anyway coz like without a shared interest or shared friends and, yeah the most part." – Grace.

Despite previously highlighting that low-income students were in the minority at Linnet because of their background, this did not always imply that they were unable to find people like themselves at the institution.

> "Well, I think with living with two [laughter]-, two Northern housemates it's-, its made it quite easy. I dunno if-, I dunno how I've ended up that happening that sort of thing with it being such a diverse university but I think that when you find people who are like yourself you kind of just migrate towards them I guess and that's, that's definitely happened for me." – Katie.

> "I had it once in one of my seminars, where, um a girl told this-, everyone was kind of sharing their educational experiences and she kept coming back to what her educational experience was and she was basically telling us about how she went to this private prep school in Switzerland and, um, everything like that, and I was just there like oh my god, this is just completely different and she's talking about how she's been educated in Tokyo, the U.S., everywhere like that, and but thankfully I turned around and turned to the girl that was sitting next to me and we both had the same look on our face like 'what the hell is this', um, so I think we were quite fortunate in that we kind of found a commonality there?" – Alice.

However, finding students like themselves did not always alter their opinion of their position within the Linnet field. Felicity and Beth acknowledged that there were people like themselves at Linnet. However, they still considered themselves to be in the minority at the university.

> "I mean I think there are some people like me, but I think the majority are from a slightly different background education-wise and just sort of where they've grown up and stuff ... I just think um I may be slightly, not abnormal it's not the right word…a minority, rather than completely different to everybody else. But there are some people like me." – Felicity

> "I feel like there's less people like me than people not like me. But yeah, I-, like I'm not the only local northerner here so, yep." – Beth.

Felicity and Beth exhibit feelings of marginalisation which echoes previous discussions. However, as stated previously, majority of the students disagreed with Survey Question 13.3 [Figure 4.1]; students found that there were people like themselves at Linnet.

An interesting reoccurring theme in student responses to Survey Question 13.3 was that they 'were lucky' to have met people like themselves at Linnet.

> "I've been very fortunate I've only met lovely people in Linnet." – Alice.

> "so I've been quite lucky, er in the sense of y'know, a couple of people that I've found who I'm very, very close to." – Lily.

By using this phrase in their answers, Alice and Lily thus give the impression that they were not expecting to find people similar themselves at Linnet; they expected their peers to operate different habitus to themselves. However, comparing these perceptions against the responses to Figure 4.1, there appears a disparity between these students' perceptions of Linnet students and general opinion.

Overall, the theme that 'there must be someone like me' at Linnet populated students' responses in the study. Grace and Joanna's comments below demonstrate how students considered it inevitable to find people like themselves in an institution the size of Linnet.

> "I'm sure there is someone else, I mean I've certainly met a lot of people who have similar interests, or similar backgrounds so it's, such a wide range of people there's gotta be someone." – Grace.

> "Mm, well coz there's so many people here I feel like there's gonna be at least one person like me, and I've made friends with people who y'know are interested in similar stuff or maybe have similar backgrounds or whatever, so…" – Joanna

To conclude, this chapter has discussed the experiences of students from low-income backgrounds surrounding their interactions with their fellow students. I first defined what students deemed the 'stereotypical student' at Linnet. Students considered themselves as opposite to this group and thus in the minority at the institution. For some students, being part of the minority group resulted in a negative experience with their peers whereby they felt excluded from certain activities and were led to question their position in the institution as a result of a lack of cultural capital. However, majority of the students considered there to be people like themselves in the institution

because of the size of the institution and sharing common interests with their peers.

The next chapter will discuss the coping strategies employed by the low-income student at Linnet University in order to feel like a 'fish in water' in this field. I will first examine students' experiences of altering their habitus in order to 'fit in' at Linnet using the examples of speech, language and dress. I shall then analyse the experiences of students who rejected habitus change at Linnet, and if there were any negative repercussions surrounding this decision. In addition to examining students' coping strategies in the elite university field, I will also examine the strategies employed by the institution of Linnet itself in order to assist in the acculturation of its students. I conclude that the concept of 'cleft habitus', whereby students modify their habitus in part depending on their field of practice (Abrahams and Ingram, 2013), is the most appropriate theoretical application in explaining the strategies employed by the low-income student in this context.

Chapter Ten: Coping strategies

In the previous chapter, I discussed the experiences of low-income students in interacting with their peers at Linnet University. I demonstrated that although some students considered there to be a stereotypical student of the university, and that these tended to form the dominant group of the institution, students often found people like themselves within the institution.

This chapter will address the second research question of this study: *How do these students attempt to feel like a 'fish in water'?* This chapter will thus seek to explore the coping strategies employed by the low-income student in order to feel like a 'fish in water' in the elite university field. I shall first analyse the experiences of those students that alter their habitus in order to 'fit in', a trend emphasised within the literature (Abrahams and Ingram, 2013; Archer and Leathwood, 2003; Holton, 2015; Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009b). These will be exemplified using students' changes to their language, accent and dress. I shall then highlight the actions of those students who retain their original habitus on interaction with the elite university. In addition to students' adaption techniques, I shall acknowledge institution strategies to assist the acculturation of its students employed by Linnet. In conclusion, I shall argue that students were most likely to modify their habitus in part in order to 'fit in' to the elite university, using the concept of cleft habitus to illustrate these findings.

10.1. Habitus alteration

10.1.1. Language and accent

From the 13 students surveyed, 12 students stated agree or strongly agree to the statement "My speech and language has changed since coming to University" [Figure 5.1]. This was discussed by students in relation to both language and accent alteration.
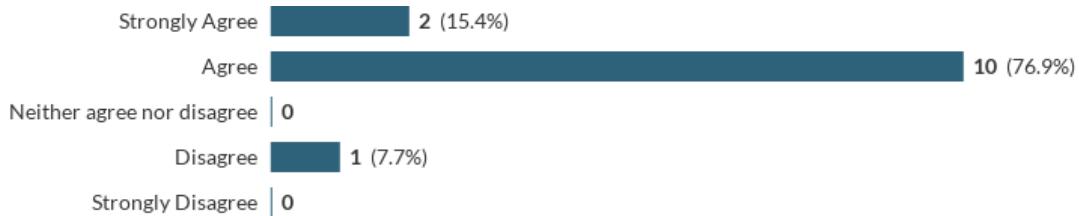
Figure 5.1. Survey Question 13.1. "My speech and language has changed since coming to university."

Changing language was a key theme in students' discussions. One theme discussed was the eradication of 'slang' terms from their everyday language at Linnet that were previously used at home. When asked to provide examples, these varied among students. Beth and Lily's examples demonstrate how students stopped using slang terms, thus altering their habitus, specifically because peers failed to understand their meaning.

> Interviewer: Can I have an example of a couple of the words?-
>
> Beth: -"uh, 'I nowt divanowt'. [Interviewer pauses]. See! [chuckle]. This is why I tone it down.
>
> Interviewer: N-, what would that mean?
>
> Beth: Uh, 'nowt' is nothing. Owt 'anything', 'I divinar' I don't know."
>
> "I used to have a bit of a Scottish twang, um I used to say slang words from like where I'm from but I don't know because there's no point, no one understands what I'm on about. And like, I did at first but then I got bored of explaining what I meant half the time" – Lily

The phasing out of certain words or phrases was also discussed by students regarding changes to their language. Katie below demonstrates how she stopped using a certain phrase in the company of those who were unsure of its meaning. As a result, Katie expressed how this decreased her likelihood to use the phrase in interactions with others, which slowly erased the phrase from her everyday language.

> "I think, um, the one I remember from Fresher's is um I used to say 'do you want a brew?' like for a cup of tea, um, and I remember both of my flatmates from London looking at me like 'what?' So I kind of stopped saying that to them, and then it slowly just sort of fazed out of my language now and I don't really use it just because it sort of wasn't a habit anymore to say." – Katie

Katie, originally from the North of England, demonstrates how she is conscious of this change in her phrasing. Abrahams and Ingram (2013) argued that low-income students' adaption was the product of both conscious and unconscious thought. This concept will thus be explored

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further, using the student Cameron as a case study, in order to illustrate both conscious and unconscious change at work in the low-income students' habitus.

Cameron demonstrated both conscious and unconscious changes to his habitus in order to adapt to the elite university. In the statement below, Cameron demonstrates the unconscious changes he had made to his habitus.

> "I'm not swearing as much, I'm saying 'so' at the beginning of sentences, I'm not saying 'like' as much as I used to. Um, you're not calling people 'mate', that kind of thing. And stuff that you didn't even think about when you were in school which you always used to say and stuff that I don't think about now." – Cameron

However, Cameron is still operating with an element of consciousness when articulating unconscious changes to his speech; he is aware of changes to his speech that were unconsciously carried out at the time. Cameron also discussed the conscious changes he made to his use of language.

> "I think kind of the first part of what I was answering was very conscious, it's kind of, I feel like I have to change the way I speak and the way I enunciate words. I said [skɒn], I say [skəʊn], and that kind of thing to kind of 'fit in' and feel like you're being taken as seriously as the next person who's from Surrey who has that generic accent, the stereotypical I suppose BBC accent." – Cameron.

Cameron attributes these conscious changes to his language in order to 'fit in' at Linnet. Specifically, he believed changing the way he spoke made him more "credible" within the field of the elite university; he is aware of needing the 'right' language to 'get on' at Linnet. In chapter four, Aries and Seider (2005) linked needing 'the right language' with possession of culture capital in the elite university setting; using credible language demonstrated possession of cultural capital. Cameron is conscious that using the 'right' language could improve his cultural capital, and thus improve his position in the field of Linnet.

Students also discussed changing their accent whilst at Linnet. A number of students discussed 'toning down' their accent specifically so their peers could understand them.

> "I do tone my accent down here. But I feel like that's to help people understand, but like they still know I'm Northern" – Beth.

> "I think I've toned down my accent. Which I don't like to say I guess but I think I have just because in Fresher's Week I got a lot of 'what', 'eh', 'what you saying?' kind of thing, and um I lived with a few people who were from London first year, and if I said a few sort of like colloquialisms that they didn't understand I thought 'right I better not say that now just so they understand me'." – Katie

By changing her accent, Alice found that this had an impact on her interactions with others.

> "Um, one comment that I did get that I didn't particularly like was a friend of mine, I think she kind of just judged why I changed my voice, and that I didn't really notice I was changing it, because she said…it was something along the lines of 'oh you've gone down-, a couple of rungs down the class ladder' and I did not like that at all. And I-, I very much told her so that I did not like that because the assumption's basically that I sound-, that to sound more Northern would be to sound more working-class." – Alice.

I previously acknowledged in chapter two that students from low-income backgrounds are considered to possess smaller amounts of cultural capital than their wealthier peers (Aries and Seider, 2005; Bathmaker, Ingram and Waller, 2013; Crozier and Reay, 2011). This quote not only highlights this relationship alluded to by Alice's friend, but also interestingly links socioeconomic status to accent which could be explored in further research.

So far, this section has discussed the changes to students' habitus in relation to their speech and language. For Lily, habitus alteration in this context was considered inevitable on interaction with the elite university field.

> "it's one of those things I think, wherever you go, you know a change of accent means that yours will eventually change in some form…um, so I think that's just something that it doesn't matter what background you're from necessarily, it just happens." – Lily

In chapter four, I demonstrated that habitus is subjective to the dispositions of the field (Abrahams and Ingram, 2013; Hillier and Rooksby, 2002; Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009b). Lily arguably reinforces this argument, highlighting the inevitability of habitus adaption when changing the field of situation. Furthermore, by suggesting habitus adaption "just happens", Lily makes light of this adaption; habitus adaption happens with ease. The idea of habitus as reflexive was a contentious concept discussed in the literature review. However, Lily embodies the work of Sweetman (2003, p.537) suggesting habitus adaption is "second nature" (p.537) in this context.

10.1.2. Dress

In addition to changes to speech and language, 9 students stated they had changed their dress since coming to university [Figure 5.2]. When prompted to expand, responses included students dressing more smartly and wearing less makeup at university in comparison to home.
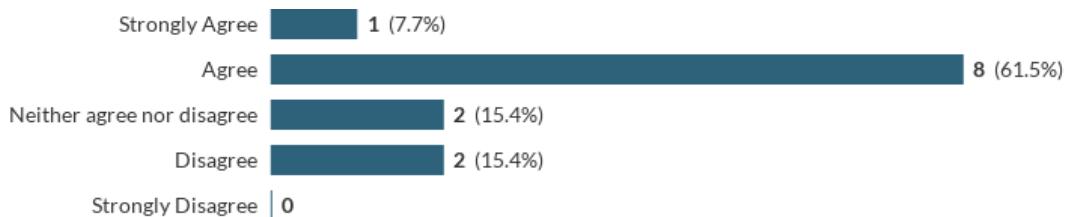
Figure 5.2. Survey Question 13.2. "I have changed the way I dress since coming to university."

The theme of needing to 'fit in' reoccurred in students' changing of dress. Katie and Isobel specifically spoke of altering the way they dressed in order to 'fit in' at the institution; students were required to alter their habitus in order to feel like a 'fish in water' in this elite institution.

> "when I came here, and I was putting a lot of make up on, I felt like people were like 'why she got so much make up on?' So I feel like, I mean today for example I've literally got like nothing so I feel like I've changed that in respect like, um…I would say kind of like to fit in which sounds terrible, but yeah sort of like, just sort of trying to like if you're walking around with a face full of make-up you're gonna probably stand out kind of things so it's kind of, I guess, blending in." – Katie.

> "Well I used to be a lot more like gothic to be honest, and I liked that but I felt that it just like completely-, I felt isolated enough already, so I tried to sort of change to fit in a bit more." – Isobel

Habitus alteration has been clear in the examples of language, accent and dress provided thus far by the students in the study. However, not all students altered their habitus in order to 'fit in' to Linnet. Felicity discussed changing her dress style since attending Linnet. However, for Felicity, this was because she preferred the dress embodied by her fellow students at Linnet University in comparison to her own.

> "Yeah it's definitely a different fashion here…I found here it's all sort of Chelsea boots and big coats. Y'know, stuff like that, so…I've not so much like tried to fit in, as quite liked what I saw and thought 'yeah I'm gonna start wearing that'." – Felicity.

Felicity exemplifies Abrahams and Ingram's (2013) conceptualisation of the cleft habitus in which individuals are consciously aware of their alterations to their habitus in the elite university field. However, in contrary to these

findings, Felicity outwardly rejected any notions of changing her dress style in order to 'fit in'; Felicity demonstrates autonomy in consciously choosing to adapt her habitus.

10.2. Rejection of habitus change

I have argued so far that students within the study altered their habitus on attendance at Linnet University. This was often driven by a desire to feel like a 'fish in water' at the institution. However, a small number of students demonstrated signs of rejecting alterations to their habitus; they operated their original habitus at the elite institution. Firstly, this was viewed in terms of students' accent. Although Figure 5.1 demonstrates how most students had changed their speech and language, Joanna disagreed with this statement.

> "I don't really feel very different in terms of that, I feel like I'm speaking the same." – Joanna

A number of other students discussed changes to their speech and language that bore similarities with their original habitus. Alice and Danielle spoke of maintaining elements of their Northern dialect.

> "know I think generally I've kind of told my friends down South more the kind of dialect I use. So they're used to hearing me say things like 'chuck' which is quite a more Northern thing" – Alice.

> "I actually feel like I've got more Northern since I've come to Linnet [chuckle]. So I'm technically from an area which is Northern and sort of in language would be seen as being quite northern so I've just got more so in coming up to Linnet [chuckle]." – Danielle

Danielle interestingly suggests that since residing at the university, she has "got more Northern"; Danielle's original Northern dialect has been further exaggerated. Isobel also discussed maintaining her regional accent, however, this was in order to separate herself from her peers from Southern counties who she described as "the Surrey Sea".

> "Again, um it's a weird combination of trying to fit in, versus trying to keep a regional identity, which…yeah it sounds a bit odd saying it, but I definitely sort of tried to make myself more mainstream coming to uni and things like, I've never liked going out, I just don't enjoy it, and I've tried to kind of make myself like it at first, because that's what everybody else was doing and I thought I wouldn't fit in if I didn't." – Isobel

The tension for Isobel concerning habitus adaption and 'fitting in' to an unfamiliar field is clear. Isobel, in endeavouring to become a 'fish in water' in

the elite university field, attempted to alter her habitus. However, this process was unsuccessful. As a result, Isobel maintained her original habitus whilst attempting to accumulate features of the region's identity she didn't already possess.

Regarding changes to dress once at Linnet, student opinion was not homogenous [Figure 5.2]: two students answered 'neither agree nor disagree' and further two 'disagree'.

> "I've not really felt the need to, I just wear what I want to wear as long as it's appropriate for the situation." – Grace

> "I just wear the same" – Joanna

In the comments above, students articulated how they did not change their dress style; they did not alter this part of their habitus. Instead, students outwardly rejected influence from the institutional culture towards their dress style in favour of retention of their original habitus dispositions.

10.3. Acculturation and Linnet University

Students at Linnet University are expected to live in colleges at least in their first year of study, immersing students into the university culture and providing an accessible platform for students to learn the dispositions of the university (Holton, 2015; Tight, 2011). The insistence of the university for first year students to live in university halls of residence was not a feature of students' conversations. Students instead spoke of the strategies employed by Linnet in order to acculturate them into the social culture of the university.

> "It's just, during Freshers week you have a formal, during the open day you have a formal, and you just get integrated into these ideas um, completely-, well almost naturally." – Cameron

Cameron states that through introduction to college formals in his first week of university, this eased his transition into Linnet; the institution acculturated him into the social dispositions of the new field. However, Cameron was conflicted as to whether this process of acculturation was a positive attribute of the university, suggesting that formal dinners were "almost forced upon you". Similarly, this feeling of unease was demonstrated by Lily in discussing formal balls at her college.

> "I get kind of uncomfortable coz it just seems a bit forced sometimes, like, and it's also you know one of those things you're expected to automatically be there and enjoy it, even if it's not your thing, and it's sort of like an unspoken, y'know, idea that everyone loves them even though that's not always the case." – Lily

Both Cameron and Lily talk of the forceful nature of university acculturation, in this instance of being forced to attend and enjoy a particular social event. Both comments thus demonstrate that students at Linnet undergo an "institutional socialisation" process (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009a, p.7) in order to alter their habitual dispositions.

10.4. Adapting to Linnet

> *"I found that I didn't so much have to change, as adapt quite a lot." – Felicity*

The chapter thus far has sought to demonstrate two opposing strands of Bourdieusian thought in explaining the coping strategies of students from low-income backgrounds in order to 'fit in' to Linnet University: habitus alteration, and rejection of habitus change. I suggest that students have altered at Linnet, but that this is through slight modification, not complete transformation, of their habitus (Ingram, 2011) in order to 'fit in' with the elite university.

As demonstrated in Figure 5.1, majority of students stated they had changed their speech and language since attending to Linnet. However, it is clear from the student interviews that this was through different degrees of alteration: not all students wholly revised their speech and language. Ingram (2011, p.290) argued that students undergo a "modification in the habitus" when residing in a new field which enables the individual to retain some of its original habitus features whilst adapting to the field. Lily embodies this concept below, stating that although her accent had changed from navigating the Linnet University field, she had retained her original accent and thus an element of her original habitus.

> "I've always had this sort of accent and um, way of speaking, but since coming to Linnet it's come a bit more…Linnetish" – Lily.

The theme of modification to one's habitus was also apparent in Alice's comments regarding changes to her speech and language. Particularly, Alice discussed how her habitus underwent a "degree of accommodation" (Ingram,

2011, p.290) whereby she 'mimicked' the language and accent of those around her: she accommodated the accent of her peers into her own habitus.

> "I think again that's something that's quite, quite fluid, um, so I come to university and I pick it up because I'm hearing Southern voices around me all the time, but then I go back home, I get told I sound posh, I pick up Northern voices back at home, and then I come back and then I get my friends from Sout-, down South saying 'Ooh, you sound very Northern' it's like, well of course I do it's where I'm from. Um, so I think its one of those things that it's, it's more mimicking voices around me but not a conscious mimicking? Um, like I think I've-, I think I notice that I sound more Northern when I'm talking to someone from Linnet or someone who's like from Newcastle and this kind of area. Um, that I do sound more Northern" – Alice.

Alice's accommodation echoes the literature suggesting that 'mimicking' their wealthy peers is a key adaption technique for the low-income student in order to feel like a 'fish in water' at the elite university (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009b). This is also a valid claim considering that in chapter nine I described how Linnet is a university that is dominated by students from wealthier backgrounds.

However, this modification of speech undertaken by Alice is also significant to the research because of the particular form of habitus adaption this demonstrates. In the literature review I argued that the 'cleft habitus', whereby an individual compartmentalizes their habitus in order to present the correct identity for a particular situation, was the most appropriate concept to operationalise and explain low-income students' experiences of an elite university. In the previous quote, Alice demonstrated how her speech and language altered depending on her locality. This change was particularly prominent when changing her field of operation: Alice described her voice as 'posh' when around students from Southern origins, and 'Northern' when at home. Alice thus articulates here how she operates "multiple identities" (Bourdieu, 1999, p.511) which function depending on her field of operation.

Strongly Agree	2 (15.4%)
Agree	7 (53.8%)
Neither agree nor disagree	4 (30.8%)
Disagree	0
Strongly Disagree	0
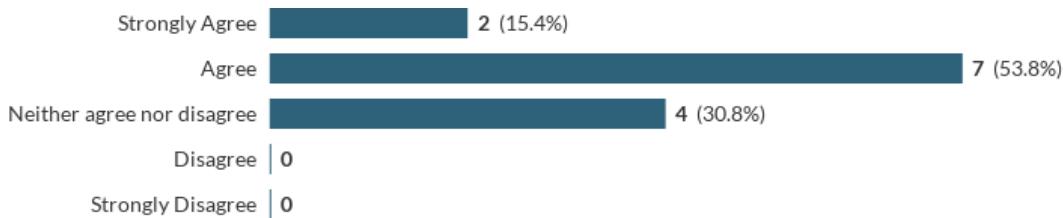
Figure 5.3. Survey Question 13.5. "I act different to when I am at university to when I am at home".

Out of the students surveyed, 9 out of 13 students stated agree or strongly agree to the statement "I act different to when I am at university to when I am at home" [Figure 5.3]. Thus, changing between the Linnet field and original home field for the low-income students within the study was arguably commonplace in their university experience. Ellie discusses below her answer of 'neither agree nor disagree' to this statement.

> "I know my friends back home and my friends here are completely different, so I'm guessing I probably kind of adapt to that, but that's probably more in terms of like, maybe conversation and-, I'm not sure if it's me like changing who I am or just, like, responding to them maybe. I don't know." – Ellie.

Like Alice, Ellie is arguably operating a cleft habitus. Ellie articulates adapting in order to have friends at home and at university despite possessing very different qualities to each other. Ellie's experiences with her friendship group echoes Holdsworth's (2009) findings that low-income students operate a cleft habitus "in order to facilitate fitting in in both localities" (p.1861). For Ellie, operating a cleft habitus thus enables her to feel like a 'fish in water' in both the Linnet and home field.

In developing the concept of the cleft habitus, Abrahams and Ingram (2013) argue that it is operated both consciously and unconsciously by the individual; students can be aware or unaware of their operation of this concept. Interestingly, both Alice and Ellie discuss the conscious changes they have made to their habitus; both are aware and thus able to articulate the changes they have made in order to 'fit in' to the university field. However, Ellie also demonstrates how she is unable to articulate her process of adaption in order to fit in with both sets of friends; this modification of her habitus is unconsciously operated. Ellie thus highlights the unconscious adaption her cleft habitus has enabled in being able to move like a 'fish in water' between two different fields.

10.5. Conclusions

This chapter has sought to highlight the coping strategies employed by the low-income student at an elite university, framed by the impact this has on their habitus. I first explored students' experiences of altering their habitus. Majority of students adapted their speech, language, and dress style in order to 'fit in' to the Linnet culture. In contrast, some students rejected habitus change once at the university through such as exaggerating characteristics of their original habitus which was not necessarily "debilitating" for the low-income student (Baker and Brown, 2007, p.388). In addition to the coping strategies employed by the students themselves, students highlighted the strategies employed by Linnet to acculturate the students into its culture. Particularly, students highlighted the encouragement to attend formal dinners and balls within the institution. However, these were not always welcome by the students.

I argued that the previous habitus adaption theories were not sufficient to explain the experiences of students from low-income backgrounds at the elite university. Operationalising my argument with the concept of the 'cleft habitus' (Abrahams and Ingram, 2013, para. 5.1), I demonstrated that students underwent a process of "modification" of their habitus (Ingram, 2011, p.290) whereby they were able to operate multiple identities depending on the field of practice. Using the examples of speech and friendships, this demonstrated that students were able to consciously operate their habitus to 'fit in' with their field of situation and thus feel like a 'fish in water' in each field.

Chapter Eleven: Conclusion

Chapter one demonstrated how widening participation over the years has shifted in meaning announcing different aims and objectives for policy. In this thesis, I have researched the experiences of low-income students at the elite Linnet University in order to highlight the need for widening participation policy to span, and impact on, the entirety of a student's higher education lifecycle. By using relevant literature to inform my research alongside Bourdieu's insightful concepts of *field*, *habitus* and *cultural capital*, I have demonstrated how low-income students experience, and thus navigate, Linnet's complex and unfamiliar social field. Navigation of this particular social space often proved challenging for the low-income student. Nonetheless, this was faced with a resilience and, in most cases, an adaption in order to 'fit in' and thus feel like a 'fish in water' in the elite university field. I shall address the discussion chapters below in order to answer my research questions.

Chapter six answered my first research question *Do low income students feel like a 'fish out of water' in their university experience?* This was answered in relation to the admissions process of Linnet. Students experienced barriers in accessing the university, such as a lack of 'hot knowledge' and the requirement of financial support. Furthermore, aids to navigation of this unfamiliar territory, such as prospectuses and open days, were sometimes difficult to access or were criticised regarding the validity of the information they presented. In choosing Linnet, students were influenced by multiple factors, from the academic reputation of a prospective course to an emphasis on emotion-based reasoning as to whether Linnet 'felt right' for a student; whether low-income students could feel like a 'fish in water' in the Linnet University field.

In chapter seven, I defined the culture of Linnet University. In order to answer my first research question, I first needed to define the conditions of the field of practice. Students considered Linnet University as traditional and academic which were recognised in the literature review. Extra-curricular activities were also considered a characteristic of the elite university field of

practice, although for the opportunity of new experiences these encouraged as opposed to the cultural capital they provided as previously suggested by the literature. The collegiate system of Linnet University, although not highlighted within the literature, was considered by students to provide a community atmosphere unique to the institution. These characteristics culminated in the 'Linnet bubble': a unique field of practice.

After defining the field of practice of Linnet University in chapter seven, chapter eight continued to answer the first research question *Do low income students feel like a 'fish out of water' in their university experience?* After analysing low-income students' experiences of the academic and social spheres of Linnet University, I concluded that, as a result of dialectal confrontation, students initially felt like a 'fish out of water' in the elite university field. Examples given included finding the emphasis on independent learning difficult, alongside becoming accustomed to the protocols of college formals. However, particularly older students spoke of feeling like a 'fish in water' when more accustomed and acculturated to the Linnet culture.

Following chapter eight, chapter nine concluded my answer to the first research question in relation to low-income students' interactions with their peers at Linnet. Students in the study acknowledged that there was a stereotypical student of Linnet University that formed the majority of students at the institution. Students considered themselves to be unlike the stereotypical student and thus were in the minority. For some students, being part of the minority group within this institution made them feel like a 'fish out of water' because of exclusion from certain social activities and lacking cultural capital in terms of speech and language. However, a majority of students studied discussed finding people like themselves at Linnet through similar social and academic interests which suggests that they feel like a 'fish in water' in their peer relationships at Linnet.

In chapter ten, I answered the second research question *How do these students attempt to feel like a 'fish in water'?* Chapter four suggested that there were three types of habitus adaption employed by the low-income

student in the elite university in order to feel like a 'fish in water'. All three types of habitus adaptions were displayed by students in the study. Multiple students in the study displayed complete habitus adaption; students completely altered their habitus to 'fit' with the institutional dispositions. This was demonstrated in the study whereby a majority of the students changed their speech and language once at Linnet in order to 'fit in' and thus feel like a 'fish in water' in the institution. In contrast, a small number of students in the study rejected any change to their habitus, a process not always debilitating for the low-income student. In addition to understanding how students attempted to feel like a 'fish in water' at Linnet, I also acknowledged the strategies employed by the institution to assist acculturation of students into its culture. This was discussed by students in terms of the social activities the university encouraged attendance at, although these were not always considered a positive strategy by students. I concluded that low-income students operate a 'cleft habitus', a slight modification of their habitus which enabled these individuals to operationalise multiple identities to suit their field of practice. Examples provided included students altering speech when at home and university, and having different groups of friends depending on the field of practice. Thus, operation of the cleft habitus enables the low-income student to feel like a 'fish in water' in the Linnet University field.

11.1. Implications for further research and reflections

In chapter one I argued that widening participation policy is concerned with improving access to higher education for students from disadvantaged and low-income backgrounds (DfBIS, 2015; Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2014). By only addressing access on point of entry to higher education, widening participation policy has thus failed to examine the problems these students face once at university (Crozier et al, 2008a). The student lifecycle and thus an individual's interaction with higher education only finishes at the end of their studies, yet the assistance with higher education for disadvantaged individuals aside from monetary help often ceases before their first day in an institution.

This study has demonstrated that students often feel like a 'fish out of water' in the elite university and thus have to modify their habitus in order to 'fit in' with the culture around them. Further study of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and their experiences of higher education across a larger sample of elite universities is thus needed in order to delineate whether this feeling of not belonging is experienced by students from this particular socioeconomic background on a larger scale. From this research, I therefore suggest that widening participation policy should be preoccupied less with widening access at point of entry, instead focusing on improving student experience for these individuals so that they too can feel like a 'fish in water' in the elite university field.

The research used troublesome terms which can prove tricky to operate successfully within research. In using the Bourdieusian concepts of field, habitus and cultural capital as instruments of analysis, I recognised that these can have limitations within educational research. I outlined that discussions of cultural capital in this thesis would only refer to cultural capital possessed by individuals on entry into the institution, primarily moulded by their familial habitus and previous schooling. However, I acknowledged that the exchange value of cultural capital can differ across different social fields.

Similarly, using the concept of 'low-income' student to define the target group can prove problematic when discussing research that refer to notions of class. Although the term 'working class' can be linked to low-income backgrounds, this is not always the case. For instance, in such as young graduates whose degree would suggest class ascension, this is often coupled with a small starting salary.

The study has proved enlightening as to the relevance of widening participation policy in the modern day. Particularly, it has demonstrated the lack of widening participation policy that improves access to student experience. Further research into this area of academia would benefit from a longitudinal design interviewing students about their experiences across the full term of their degree. My research demonstrated that students in the later stages of their university lifecycle often spoke of the initial problems they had

faced at university, but that this had improved over time. By conducting longitudinal research, this would provide a comprehensive examination of the student lifecycle including how students navigate these difficulties at the time they occurred.

Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics approval

Durham University
School of Education

Shaped by the past, creating the future

17 November 2015

Emma Maslin
MA Research

e.l.maslin@durham.ac.uk

Dear Emma

'Fish out of water?' A case study exploring low income students' experience of an elite university

I am pleased to inform you that your application for ethical approval for the above research has been approved by the School of Education Ethics Committee. May we take this opportunity to wish you good luck with your research.

Dr. P. Holmes
Chair of School of Education Ethics Committee

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet

Durham
University
School of Education

31st January 2016

Participant Information Sheet

Title: 'Experiences of [Linnet]' Survey

You are invited to take part in a research study exploring the experiences of low-income students at an elite university. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

The study is conducted by Miss Emma Maslin as part of her MA studies at Durham University. This research project is supervised by Dr Jonathan Tummons (jonathan.tummons@durham.ac.uk) from the School of Education at Durham University.

The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of students from low-income families at an elite university. Specifically, it will seek to understand the behaviors displayed by these types of students in order to 'fit in'.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to answer questionnaires in a questionnaire and attend an interview which will expand on answers provided by the questionnaire.

Your participation in this study will take approximately 60 minutes (15 minutes for answering the questionnaire and 45 minutes spent in interview).

You are free to decide whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences for you.

All responses you give or other data collected will be kept confidential. The records of this study will be kept secure and private. All files containing any information you give are password protected. In any research report that may be published, no information will be included that will make it possible to identify you individually. There will be no way to connect your name to your responses at any time during or after the study.

If you have any questions, requests or concerns regarding this research, please contact myself or my supervisor via email at e.l.maslin@durham.ac.uk or jonathan.tummons@durham.ac.uk.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the School of Education Ethics Sub-Committee at Durham University (date of approval: 17/11/15)

Miss Emma Louise Maslin

Appendix C: Declaration of Informed Consent

Durham University
School of Education

Declaration of Informed Consent

- I agree to participate in this study, the purpose of which is to explore the experiences of students from low-income families in an elite university.

- I have read the participant information sheet and understand the information provided.

- I have been informed that I may decline to answer any questions or withdraw from the study without penalty of any kind.

- I have been informed that data collection will involve the use of recording devices.

- I have been informed that all of my responses will be kept confidential and secure, and that I will not be identified in any report or other publication resulting from this research.

- I have been informed that the investigator will answer any questions regarding the study and its procedures. Miss Emma Maslin, School of Education, Durham University can be contacted via email: e.l.maslin@durham.ac.uk. Alternatively, the supervisor Dr Jonathan Tummons can be contacted via email: jonathan.tummons@durham.ac.uk.

- I will be provided with a copy of this form for my records.

Any concerns about this study should be addressed to the School of Education Ethics Sub-Committee, Durham University via email to ed.ethics@durham.ac.uk.

_____   _____

Date   Participant Name (please print)   Participant Signature

I certify that I have presented the above information to the participant and secured his or her consent.

_____

Date   Signature of Investigator

Leazes Road
Durham City, DH1 1TA

Telephone +44 (0)191 334 2000 Fax +44
(0)191 334 8311
www.durham.ac.uk
Durham University is the trading name of
the University of Durham

Appendix D: Email inviting students to interview

Dear NAME

Following on from the last email, thank you for filling in the questionnaire.

I would like to invite you to attend an interview following on from the answers you have provided in the questionnaire.

The interview will be conducted either in the [Linnet University] Library or at [Rowland] College. You are welcome to express a preference of interview location out of these two, however, please note that this may not be possible. The interview will take up to 45 minutes but please allow for 1 hour when giving me your availability to account for such as travelling to academic commitments.

I am available from the below times:

DATES HERE.

Please reply to this email with **the outstanding declaration of informed consent, and preference of 3 dates/times if willing to attend an interview.** If these are unsuitable please let me know so we can organise another time.

Many thanks

Emma Maslin

Appendix E: Table of interview participants

Name	Year group	Subject	College
Alice	Third year (Finalist)	Social sciences and health	Yarson
Beth	Second year	Arts and humanities	Rowland
Cameron	Third year (Finalist)	Social sciences and health	Nudderby
Danielle	Fourth year (Finalist)	Science	Rowland
Ellie	Fourth year (Finalist)	Social sciences and health	Rowland
Felicity	First year	Arts and humanities	Enderby
Grace	Third year (Finalist)	Science	Rowland
Lily	Second year	Arts and humanities	Enderby
Isobel	Fourth year (Finalist)	Science	Rowland
Joanna	First year	Arts and humanities	Rowland
Katie	Third year (Finalist)	Social sciences and health	Rowland

Appendix F: Initial coding for interview

Pre-Linnet

Initial impressions

Struggle to get to Linnet

Initial experience

Student experience

Culture shock (Academic/Social)

Unique culture

Busy

Opportunities

Coping strategies

Changing (conscious/unconscious)

Not changing (conscious/unconscious)

Adapting

You get used to it

People like me

Linnet students

No-one like me

There must be people like me

Appendix G: Sample of interview transcripts

Participant B – 16/02/16

I – Interviewer, B – Participant B (Beth)

I: Starting the recordings now. Okay, both are recording. Um, thank you for coming to this interview. Um, if you could-, this is your copy, it has in it the participant information sheet, the declaration of informed consent and your copy of your questionnaire. Um, if you could read through the participant information sheet and the declaration of informed consent, and then um sign both, that's your pen, and when you're happy with it, if you have any questions please let me know. And then if you are happy with it I'll ask you to sign these as well so that they're my copies.

B: Okay. [pause for reading and signing]. Yep.

I: Brilliant. [mumbling].

B: What's the date today?

I: 16th. [chuckle]. I had to think too.

B: [pause for signing]. There you go.

I: Brilliant. If you could just sign next to my signature on that one there, yeah, if you're happy with it and then do the same again for those two. That's great.

B: [pause for signing]. There you go.

I: Brilliant. Thank you very much. Okay. Um so you'll see also in the pack you've got um a copy of your questionnaire, so um on the back has your um details on, so can you please confirm that this is your questionnaire and that the details provided are correct.

B: Yep.

I: Brilliant. Um great so basically in this interview um I'm just going to be expanding on some of the answers you gave in the questionnaire. Um, so I'll make a start, so looking-, first page, looking um at question 3 generally, um, question 3 asked you what sources of information you used to inform your decision-

B:-mmhm-

I:-and um you said that out of those er bits of sources, you said that 'other' um gave you the most information regarding this university, 'other' being the [Linnet access scheme]. So could you first explain a little bit about what the [Linnet access scheme] is, and then why you felt out of that and the university website gave you the most information regarding this university please.

B: Uh, [Linnet access scheme], it's like the uni scheme to get local people who aren't likely to go to uni to get into local unis. And I heard about that from school, my form tutor like suggested I apply for it-

I:-mmhm-

B:-and then I got it, got a place and then-, yeah so I came, you do like a day at February, two days in Easter and then a week in the Summer-

I:-yep-

B:-and yeah coz it was like experiencing uni life, it was like 'a week in the life of a uni student'-

I:-yeah-

B: -so I feel like that's why it gave me most like info. And the uni website it just kind of has everything on it-

I:-yep-

B:-and it's easily accessible.

I: Um and so, yeah. So why do you feel like that out of the two that that-, the [Linnet access scheme] gave you the most? Have I just re-, have I just re-, thingied-

B: [chuckle]

I: you've just answered your question. That's fine ignore that. Um [chuckle], sorry, okay brilliant, thank you. So looking now at question 3c, you said that out of those ticked above-, um it said which of these do you feel gave you the most accurate information about what this university is like, um and you've put 'other' being the [Linnet access scheme], um, so why did you put that?

B: Uh more accurate rep-, because like the student ambassadors, they are students, they know what life is like at [Linnet]. So they try and portray that, and then I feel like that even in the suppor-, like they're working for the uni I feel like they'd be unbiased.

I: Okay.

B: Coz if there was negatives I feel like, like if I have a question and it might be a negative question, I feel like they would wanna tell me the truth-

I:-yep-

B:-whereas like the actual uni staff would be putting a positive spin on everything. The actual student ambassadors may be more likely to be unbiased.

I: Okay, fab. Um, okay so now looking at 4b, it said er-, so in 4, it's asked you what attracted you to attend this university and you put 'academic reputation of the course' and 'collegiate system'. So 4b then asked you out of those ticked above, um, what was the most important factor in your decision and you picked 'collegiate system', so why did you pick 'collegiate system'?

B: I feel like because, you get like the support of having-, of being at college, there's so much like support in place, welfare and your mentor, like there's so many places that can help you if you have any question about anything there's so much there, and I feel like it's nice to have like a smaller group of people like living with and just in college rather-, coz then you got like college friends and then course friends-

I:-yep-

B:-and then it's like nice different groups.

I: Fab. Okay, so if you turn the page, looking at question 7. So, um, 7.1 and 7.2 there was a statement and then it asked you whether you, um-, how you agree, disagree, etc-

B:-mmhm-

I:-so looking first at 7.1 it said "*The academic teaching methods are different to my previous educational institution*" and you put agree, so why did you put agree?

B: There's so much more emphasis on personal, independent learning which obviously is the key point of uni that-, yeah there's so much more then there was at A-Level.

I: Okay. Brilliant, thank you. And then looking at 7.2, so similar thing, so "*I feel comfortable with the university academic teaching methods*" and you put agree, so why did you put agree?

B: Yeah I feel like I get the guidance that I need to like write essays and commentaries and everything. And yeah, like I know what's expected of me, they know what-, like I know what they expect of me and I know what I expect like from staff, so I feel like it works both ways.

I: Um, has um, going on the [Linnet access scheme], has that helped you in any way with your academic-, do you feel like it benefited? No different? Um-

B:-I feel like it benefited because like we'd had to do like an assessed project on that-

I:-oh okay-

B: -so it was like in the style of uni so I kind of knew what to expect, how much work I'd have to put in, that kind of thing.

I: Brilliant, Um, looking at question 9, so similar thing to what we've just done, so "*Self-study at university is different to self-study at my previous educational institution*" and you put agree, so why did you put agree?

B: Coz here you aren't-, obviously you're not told what you have to do you just know you have to like extra reading, there's no 'you must read a, b, c, you must do a, b, c', it's up to you what you want to do. To be your extra and to be your out of class self-study.

I: Um, and again um 9.2 um "*I am comfortable with self-study at university*" and you put agree.

B: Yeah. I feel like, yeah, I feel like I've sussed out like, just how I know to choose what I read for like essays and stuff, what to read, when to read, that kind of thing. I know what's at-, I know what's expected of me, know what I need to do, so, quite happy to just sit down and do it.

I: Do you have a preference? So, um, you said self-study is more here like personal, independent learning, um do you have a preference with this academic teaching methods and this self-study here um in comparison to academic teaching methods and self-study at your previous educational institution? Do you-, what would you prefer if you could pick?

B: I dunno. I feel like A-Level it's quite good because you get more guidance of what to do-

I:-yeah-

B: -But then again here is better because you have that free reign of what to read and what not to read and what to do as your extra. Yeah, there's more freedom to like take it in the direction you wanna take it kind of thing here.

I: Mm. Brilliant. Um, question 10 now. So question 10 asked you-, there was a list of extra-curricular activities and it asked you how often you attended both at college and university level each one of these activities. So then question 10b then asked you that out of those that you'd ticked 'frequently' and 'occasionally'-, or 'occasionally', which of these activities had you taken part in for the first time since coming to university. So out of those that you'd ticked as 'frequently' and 'occasionally' um you said that 'college formals', 'leadership role in college and society' and 'going out to a nightclub' these were the first-, the, you'd taken part in these for the first time. So for each one of these, we'll go through each one in turn, um could you explain to me a little bit more maybe how you got started um, in doing these activities, your experiences of such, um and things like that. So we'll start with 'college formals'.

B: Uh, Fresher's week formal, the free one that you go to in Fresher's week was great. Coz that gives you like the insight like into what happens and obviously you-, and from there you choose whether you want to go to them or not. We weren't-, we didn't go to many in first year cause we never got on on time on the JCR website, could never log on on time, but yeah I, I love formals they're great. Yeah.

I: Is there one particular thing you like about them? Like, can you give me a couple of reasons why you like them.

B: It's nice to be with just college people, people that you don't often see. Especially like being in second year and living out, people that you don't often see it's nice to see them at formals. Uh the fact that it's reasonably cheap to get half a bottle of wine and a three course meal is an added bonus [chuckle] even if I do have to trek up to [Rowland] to have it, and then the ents after. Again, it's just seeing people that you don't often see.

I: Brilliant. Great stuff. So then uh next one, 'leadership role in college/society'? So first of all what leadership role do you have?

B: Erm, I'm president of Disney-

I:-mmhm-

B:-and I'm the welfare officer on the Cheer squad. And I was chilled frep for Freshers Week just gone.

I: And this is all at college level?

B: Yes! Just college yeah, I'm not good enough for uni level [chuckle].

I: Um, so er yeah, so how did you get started in these three things? We can do each one in turn. So firstly president of Disney.

B: Er Disney we went to that in our Freshers Week as a taster session. I loved it, like it's a fairly easy society to run to be fair. And then when it got round to like the AGM and that, there weren't many people going for it so-, and me and [fellow student] kind of decided to go for President and Vice-President and were successful in that.

I: Great stuff. So then Welfare for Cheer?

B: Uh I just decided that I was quite a mothery person, people tell me I'm quite mothery person, so I was like 'k, I'll go for it'-

I:-yeah-

B:-and then went to first aid training cause like it's nice to be part of that-

I:-yeah-

B:-so yeah.

I: Um, and then Chilled Frep.

B: Uh Chilled frep, that was-, we had to like hust in the JCR to do that. Coz, I wasn't-, I didn't not want to do it, but I wasn't too keen to start with, er but then I was persuaded by the other half of Chilled Frep, she was like '[Beth] I really want to do it, will you do it with me?' so I was like 'okay'. So I like hust in the JCR, and then obviously got voted in by college to do it.

I: So you said you were persuaded, um-

B:-yeah [chuckle]-

I:-did you enjoy it in the end? Coz persuaded-

B: -overall yes-

I: -kind of presumes that you wasn't keen and therefore wouldn't want to do it to begin with but-

B:-yeah. Overall we'll go with yes I enjoyed it.

I: Okay. Brilliant, um and then the last one 'going out to a nightclub'.

B: Uh, that went when-, cheer social in first year was the first one coz in Fresher's Week I was like oh no, I'm not going. I did all like the chilled stuff in our Fresher's Week-

I:-mmhm-

B:-and then my flat were big night out people and it scared me at first, I was like 'oh my god, all they're going to do is go out and drink and I don't'. and then I just kind of, it was a cheer social and then like all the girls were like oh like come, 'you don't have to drink come on cheer social' so I did and then it kind of spiralled from there [chuckle].

I: Brilliant, great stuff thank you. So looking at question 11 now, um that asked you to write down 5 words to describe um this university.

B: mmhm.

I: So the words you put down were 'fun, academic, welcoming, challenging and enjoyable'. So for each of these words, can you describe maybe how you came to picking these words to describe this university, Um…yeah. So, starting with 'fun'.

B: Uh, that's-, I'll go that's more the social side: clubs, societies, sports, all that kind of thing. It's good just something to do that's not your degree just to take time out. Like when there's afternoon sport just take time out to do something that isn't academic. Coz I feel like you can't just do academic stuff all the time.

I: Yeah.

B: Um, 'academic'. Yep, it is a uni and it's like a top uni, so I feel like that's expected from-, from like the stereotype that is [Linnet] Uni as I said. 'Welcoming' definitely, the college system and like when I moved in-, when I first arrived like everyone makes you so welcome, everyone one like, everyone just talks to you, it's such a nice like environment to be in. 'Challenging', yeah, work. Keeping on top of uni work, there is like, you can never say 'I've finished', that is one thing you can never say that, there is always work to be done and always stuff to do. And then 'enjoyable', just yeah, as much as I complain about how much work I have to do, I love it really and I feel like the whole aspect of all things uni is just enjoyable.

I: Great stuff. So out of those five words, could you maybe pick one that you think best describes this university.

B: Uh…'challenging'.

I: Okay, and why would you pick that one over the other four as best describing it?

B: I feel like 'challenging' coz the whole like if you're moving away from home and coming to uni, that aspect is as equally as challenging as keeping on top of like your studies and uni work. There's like multiple challenging aspects. Not to say that they're negative, but they are a challenge and it's like a step up from previous studies.

I: Yeah. Brilliant, thank you. So similar thing with question 12, so it asked you to write down 5 words to describe your university experience so far and you've put 'fun, stressful, enjoyable, sometimes uncomfortable and hard work'. So similar thing, so for each one of these can we go through them and explain kind of how you came to pick these words-

B:-mmhm-

I:-so start with 'fun'.

B: 'Fun'. Pretty much the same as the above question.

I: Mmhm

B: More yeah, the social side and the meeting people and all that.

I: Yep.

B: Er, 'stressful', yeah when you have so many deadlines and you just feel like you don't have time to do everything that needs doing before the deadline.

I: Um how do you-, so you said stressful and deadlines and stuff, how do you kind of try and get those deadlines and things like that? Is there-, have you got a technique? Have you got a way of trying to meet them or is it just-

B: -I try and start early, and I tell myself-, I'll give myself like two weeks per like essay or whatever, but I try and stick to it but it doesn't always pan out sticking to it coz other stuff crops up and you're like I need to do that first. And then it ends up being pushed away and then you're like 'oh my god I've got like a week to write this'. Before you know it you've only got a week-

I:-yeah-

B:-er, stressf-, 'enjoyable'. Yeah I feel like that's the same as the above, just the whole-, the whole every aspect of university experience has been enjoyable-

I:-yeah-

B:-even if I complain about it. [chuckle]. Er 'sometimes uncomfortable'. Yeah, I dunno, I dunno how to describe that one. Just like, I feel like I'm sometimes judged for being not a stereotypical [Linnet] student…I don't know, I feel like people can like like ac-, I do tone my accent down here. But I feel like that's to help people understand, but like they still know I'm northern. And like I do still get the piss taken out of me for being Northern and like not a stereotypical [Linnet] student.

I: Okay. So what do you think is the stereotypical [Linnet] student?

B: Not me. [chuckle]. I think it's the opposite. I don't know, I feel like, Southern…not posh but I feel like well-off and well-educated. And then, yeah I feel like that's what people expect, and then if you don't fit in that, it's a bit like 'well, she doesn't fit, she's not-, doesn't fit that'.

I: Okay. Um, and the last-

B:-oh! The last one-

I:-yeah-

B:-'hard work'. Uh, yeah you've gotta put the time in, you've gotta put the effort in and like it's up to you how much you do, and then how much or how little you do is gonna pay off-, is that pay off or will have disastrous consequences in the end.

I: What kind of da-, disastrous consequences do you think?

B: If you don't p-, if you don't put all the work in like if you-, you could fail a summative or-, and like second year my life counts right now, and I'm like 'oh my god, life counts'.

I: Okay. That's great, thank you. So, um, last kind of question. Um, so in question 13 there was a series of statements, um and similar thing to what we've done before in question 7 and 9, and it asked you to say like agree, disagree, like how-, what your opinion was, so um we'll go through again, we'll go through each one in turn and can you just explain why-, what your opinion on these things. So, the first one, 13.1, *'my speech and language has changed since coming to university'* and you put agree. I know we've just touched on this but if you could like, er, expand your answer a bit more that would be great.

B: I tone my accent down coz I feel like if I spoke how I would normally speak people wouldn't understand, coz I would use words that people would tell me aren't actually words but where I come from they're words.

I: So, just to unpack that slightly, um so what kind of words? Can I have an example of a couple of the words?-

B:-uh 'I nowt divanowt'. [Interviewer pauses]. See! [chuckle]. This is why I tone it down.

I: N-, what would that mean?

B: Uh, 'nowt' is nothing. Owt 'anything', 'I divinar' I don't know. I can't think what else I just said [chuckle].

I: No that's great. Um, you said something a second ago that I wanted to ask you one as well…maybe it will come back to me. That's annoying. Um…what did you say before that? Before the words?

B: Before the words? Um, I tone it down.

I: Yeah, it's something to do with that.

B: More to help people understand me rather than-, I feel like it's not to make me sound like everyone else-,

I:-oh! I know what it was, sorry.

B: [laughter].

I: Um, is this-, do you think, do you do it consciously or unconsciously? Like do you do it, do you purposively tone your accent down or is it just through reflective-

B: -I feel like it's more purposively do it. But then if I'm talking to other Nothern people, I would tone it down less/not tone it down. But just in general like speaking to staff and stuff, I tone it down coz I feel like if I say something, they might not catch what I've said or they might not understand it if I accidently use a word that's

technically not a word… but then I feel like they'll look at me and like 'what's she talking about?'

I: Okay, brilliant thank you. Um so 13.2 now, so *'I have changed the way I dress since coming to university'* and you put neither agree nor disagree.

B: Yeah, I feel like I'm more conscious of what I wear, but I haven't changed what I wear. I would still wear the same stuff, I just-, I feel like I probably put more attention to what I'm wearing depending on where I'm going/what I'm doing.

I: So could you maybe give me an example of that?

B: Uh…

I: We can come back to it if you want.

B: Yeah I feel like [inaudible]-

I: Yeah, we'll come back to that one. Um, 13.3 *'I feel like there is no one like me at this university'* and you've put neither agree nor disagree.

B: I feel like there's less people like me than people not like me. But yeah, I-, like I'm not the only local northerner here so, yep.

I: K, brilliant. Uh, 13.4 *'I feel uncomfortable in social situations whilst at university'* and you've put neither agree nor disagree.

B: Yeah, I feel like most of the time it's fine, but yeah, just the odd-, well it wasn't a really social situation but in last year's French grammar class there was two people and, like, they made it obvious that they thought that because I was Northern, and because I'm like from-, not from private school-

I:-yeah-

B:-they made it blatantly obvious that 'well we're better than you'-

I:-k-

B:-and there was like snide remarks and stuff and I'm just like 'no, I have no patience for this'. So it's not really a social situation but that was-, happened last year.

I: And how did you deal with that?

B: I just ignored it. Like I knew it was happening, but I was just like, did my best to just ignore it and be like 'yeah, I'm not stooping low enough to deal with this with you'-

I:-mmhm-

B:-So…

I: Um, over the page. 13.5 *'I act different at university to when I am at home'* and you've put agree so, um how come you've put agree?-

B:-yeah I feel like I'm more conscious because-, yeah, I feel like because I'm not the typical expected student I feel like-, not not like, not act to be like them but I feel like I have to be more aware. I feel like that's badly explained.

I: N, n, n, no. Um, could you think of an example for that one? Again, we can come back to it if…

B: Yeah I feel like we'll come back to that sort of-

I: -N, n, no that's fine. Um, 13.6, *'I feel like I don't belong here at this university'* and you've put disagree.

B: Disagree, yeah. I feel like I've been 99% of the time I've been welcomed and it's fine and I've met people-, met people that I found like accept me for who I am kind of thing and it's fine.

I: Brilliant. Um, and 13.7 *'I have enjoyed my time at this university so far'* and you've put agree.

B: Yeah, I have. I've enjoyed every aspect of it.

I: Great stuff. So just coming back to 13.3-

B:-aw I have to think now-

I:-[laughter] er coming back to 13.3 I think it was. Yeah, no sorry 13.2-

B:-oh yeah-

I:-about um *'I have changed the way I dress since coming to university'* um, and you said you were conscious of what you wore but you haven't changed, like it depends on the situation-

B:-yeah-

I:-more, so have you th-, maybe think about an example? Like a-, you're consciously aware.

B: Yeah I feel like I wouldn't go to a seminar in like trackie bottoms and a hoodie. I would always make sure I looked reasonably presentable. I would wear trackies in the house when it's only me and my housemates and it's fine, and they've seen me at my worst so all is well.

I: Um, great. And so again we also said was it 13.5?-

B:-yessssss-

I:-um about how you have to be more conscious here, and you have to be more aware. So kind of aware of what and can you think of an example for that?

B: I just, I dunno. Not being judged but I feel like because-, it's not I don't fit in but I don't know how else to describe it. Not-, without saying typical student, but I feel like it's bad I keep saying typical student-

I:-it's not bad, say what you want!

B: Uh, an example.

I: Don't worry if you can't think of anything.

B: I can't think of one right now.

I: That's fine.

B: Sorry!

I: No don't apologise it's fine! Um have you got anything else um you'd like to say regarding your experience so far? Anything you think we've missed or you want to chat about? Or-

B: No, I feel like we've covered it.

I: Brilliant, well um that's the end of the interview, thank you very much for coming-

B:-that's fine-

I:-and I'm just gonna turn these off now so I'll turn-.

I – Interviewer, E – Participant E (Ellie)

I: Starting recording-, starting recording okay, brilliant. Um so in your pack there, there is the participant information sheet and the declaration of informed consent which is the-, what I sent you in the email originally. But if you could read through both of them again, and then when you're happy with it sign-, sign next to my signature on the information sheet and then sign the informed consent form again. Um and then if you could also sign my copies of the two things as well that'll be great and I'll put them there.

[pause for reading and signing of forms].

E: is it the 23rd?-

I: -yeah-

E:-yeah. [pause]. Is that-

I: -yeah that's f-, yeah sorry, and just my copies as well if that's alright, thank you. [pause for signing copies]. Brilliant, thank you very much. Um, so you'll also see that in the-, sorry I'm just gonna to check the recording if it's working-, yep brilliant. So you'll also see that in your pack you've also got um a copy of your questionnaire. So on the back you'll know if it's your copy coz the back's got your details. So could you please confirm that this is your questionnaire and that the details provided are correct.

E: Yeah, that's fine.

I: Brilliant, thank you very much. So we'll have a start. So firstly,-sorry if you could keep the questionnaire out sorry so you can look through it, it's alright-, um if you could look at question 3, question 3 asked you what sources of information you used to inform your decision and you put 'university prospectus' and 'university open day'. So could you please um describe to me your experiences of the university open day.

E: Um, I think that they were really helpful but I think my focus was more on like whether I would enjoy it rather than the courses-, like not the courses, like the academic side of it-

I:-mmhm-

E: -um, and so the talks I tended to go to were on just like the university as a whole rather than any department ones.

I: Yep. So um it sounds like-, did you use it?-, so you used it more for other at-, not the academic aspects-

E:-yeah-

I:-so what kind of aspects did you use it? What kind of aspects-

E: -I guess like whether it felt right was probably my main…my main focus.

I: Yep. Great stuff, thank you. So question 3b then ask out of those ticked above which of these did you feel gave you the most information regarding this university and you said the university prospectus, so why did you say that?

E: Um just coz everything's like concise and you can-, everything's included in there so you can go back and like compare them as well.

I: Yep-

E:-I guess.

I: Brilliant, thank you. 3c, it asked out of those ticked above which of these do you feel gave you the most accurate information about what this university is like and you put university open day, so why was that?

E: Um because like in the prospectuses it's just pictures whereas you can-, it feels a lot different when you're there like, I looked at [Rutworth] which obviously looks really good in a prospectus but when I was there I just didn't really like, like it that much-

I:-yeah-

E:-I guess.

I: Yep. Um, great stuff thank you. So now looking at question 4 it asked you what attracted you to attend this university of which you put 'league table position' and 'collegiate system'. And then 4b asked you out of those ticked above, er please pick the most important factor in your decision and you said it was the collegiate system. So why was it the collegiate system?

E: Um, well obviously like I think it-, it attracts something coz it's like seemed like it had a lot better social life, and you could do more sports, and activities which I was quite interested in. Um, and I think it was maybe easier to adapt to then going to like a big city university, maybe, yeah.

I: Why would you say it was easier adapt to-, to adapt to then a big city?

E: Um…like I'm not sure it just seemed a bit more like comfier and like easier to make friends then just kind of being dumped in a city and I think that is kinda true coz my friends who have gone to city universities like aren't always involved in sports or clubs or anything, they just kind of do the academic, and then like social life which they've kind of created themselves.

I: Yep, great, thank you. Looking over the page now, um at question 7. Now question 7 asked you to tick an answer to-, looking at the statements that reflected your opinion the most. So looking first at statement 7.1, *'The academic teaching methods are different to my previous educational institution'*, and you put strongly agree, so why did you put strongly agree?

E: I think-, coz I think my education is focused on-, like was focused on just getting the grades, so I'm really good in exams, like I can remember everything they say which is I guess like state schools maybe focuses to get the A* to C so they just 'this

is what you need to remember for the exam', whereas here it's a lot like thinking for yourself and like analysing the stuff yourself which I think I'm not used to at all which I guess I am now but like, coming here was a bit of a struggle to just be like, having to kind of think about it myself and create my own arguments rather than just remembering loads of facts in order to get a good grade.

I: Yeah. [pause]. Brilliant, thank you very much. And then um statement 7.2, similar thing, '*I feel comfortable with the university academic teaching methods'* and you've put neither agree nor disagree so why did you put that?

E: Um…I don't actually really know coz I'm kind of neutral on it. Like, I guess it was a bit uncomfortable coming but now I'm used to it so I like it? No, that's fine.

I: Yep. [pause]. Brilliant, thank you. So looking now at question 9, um exactly the same thing in terms of um ticking the answer that reflected your opinion the most on each of the statements, so looking at 9.1, '*Self-study at university is different to self-study at my previous educational institution'* and you put strongly agree, so why did you put strongly agree?

E: Um probably the same as before, like I guess self-study in high school and sixth form is more-, like although we did get essays, I don't think they were as er-, like you didn't have to come up with your own thoughts as much, it was more just about remembering things.

I: Yeah. Great stuff thank you. And 9.2, '*I am comfortable with the self-study at university'* and you put agree…so why did you put agree?

E: Um, I guess I'm just used to it now. I'm in final year so [chuckle].

I: Great, thank you. Um looking at question 10 now, so question 10 asked for each of the extra-curricular activities listed below, to tick how often you attended them both at college and university level either frequently, occasionally or never. So then over the page looking at 10b, it asked that out of those ticked as frequently or occasionally, which of those had you taken part in for the first time since coming to university. So you said um that the ones you'd taken part in for the first time since coming to university were: 'college formals', 'law/pro-bono/debating societies', 'alcohol-centered society for example cocktail society' and 'rowing'. So what I'd like you to do for each of these um activities, is to go through each one and explain maybe how you started each activity, why you started each activity, whether you're still doing it now perhaps. Um, but If you've said frequently or occasionally so that would suggest that you're still doing it now, but that could be otherwise. So yeah, so that's what I'd like you to do if that's okay, so if we could start with 'college formals'?

E: Um, well you go in your first week to one don't you, the-, after matriculation.

I: Yeah.

E: And then I guess if my flatmates are going or friends are going then I would go along too so that's just how I would get into that. Um-

I:-what's your experiences of the college formals?

E: Uh my first one was really daunting, but now like I love them so [chuckle].

I: Why was the first one daunting?

E: Um, I think it was just a lot different, like-, like the whole gown and it was so formal, and I've never really been to anything like that and…even stuff like, I'd never eaten duck until I came to [Linnet], and like random-, it was just kind of different to what I was used to. Um…-

I:-yep-

E:-I also didn't really like wine either but [laughter] yeah.

I: Um, great, thank you. Um so the next one, er 'law/pro-bono/debating society'. So what do you at-, er I know that's quite a big range so what do you go to?

E: Um well I've been-, well I've not been often but it did say frequently right? Oh oc-

I: -frequently or occasionally, yeah-

E: -coz I go to the like the [Linnet debating society] debates, but I've only been to like a few. Erm , and that was just through a friend as well, like she was going and I think at the fair she signed up and said it was like a good thing to do, so…

I: Yep. Great, um, alcohol-centered society. Um what alcohol-centered society do you go to?

E: Um, well I guess just like mixed ones like we went to cocktail society and I've been to cider society but that's just like if friends are going and they'll be like 'oh come along' so-

I:-yep. And 'rowing'?

E: Um I think I just wanted to do rowing coz it was something different and quite like…the thing to do at [Linnet], I guess.

I: Yeah. Um, why do you say it's the 'thing to do at [Linnet]'? What makes you say that?

E: [chuckle] um I don't know. I just think there's like a-, well obviously a team for every college, and it's quite a big thing in the college too, er…I just think when you think of [Linnet] maybe you think of rowing? So-

I: -yeah-

E:-and I'd never like get a chance to do it really anywhere else.

I: Yep. Brilliant, thank you very much. Um great. So looking now at question 11, question 11 asked you to write down 5 words to describe this university and the words that you'd chose were 'successful, challenging, independent, middle-class and community'. So for each one of those words, would you be able to maybe explain how you came to picking that word, or thinking of that word to describe this university. So if we go first with 'successful'?

E: Um, just coz it's like a Russell Group university and it's obviously like one of the top ones, so…

I: Yep, and 'challenging'?

E: Um…like they don't just like give you grades easily, they make you kind of work for it. I guess that's kind of the same as it being successful, they have quite like a high standard to achieve like a 2:1 or a 1st.

I: Great. Um 'independent'.

E: I think that is like in terms of study, you-, well coz I do social sciences you do so much by yourself-

I:-yeah-

E:-so…

I: Um, great thank you. 'Middle-class'?

E: Um I just think the whole like-, not that everyone that comes here, but like the majority of people that come here are very different to-, well I come from [Northern town] so the people in [Northern town] and kind of have different values and different backgrounds.

I: Could you maybe give me an example um, or a couple of examples, um-, you say they're different so in what way? you say they have different values, maybe like one-, mayb-, yeah just a couple of examples to illustrate that a bit more.

E: Um, well I guess like education. Like you have some people that have been to like Eton and when I came, two of my flatmates had come from boarding school, and I didn't even think like that was a thing, until I came here. So I guess educational background's quite important-

I:-yeah-

E:-and probably just in terms of like wealth. Like you hear people saying they've got like swimming pools in their back garden and yeah, in their houses, and stuff like that so-, or they've like lived abroad or like grown up in Dubai and stuff so [chuckle], just crazy things.

I: Yep. Great, thank you. And the last one is 'community'.

E: I guess with the collegiate system you can like know everyone and it's really easy to make friends. And like there's always somebody to help you out if you need it and stuff. It's nice.

I: Brilliant, thank you. Um looking now at question 12, so similar thing to what we've just done, it asked you to write down 5 words to describe your university experience so far, so could you do what we've just done again, so the 5 words you put down was 'difficult, new experiences, challenging, enjoyable and friendship'. So starting with 'difficult', can you maybe explain how you came to um des-, use that word to describe your university experience so far.

E: Um, well I think I've probably put in more work, I guess you have to do that at university, but I'm like literally just kind of scraping at 2:1, so I think it is quite difficult, like I felt it's quite difficult to kind of maintain the grade that I want-

I:-yeah-

E: -um whereas some of my friends that are on-, like were on a similar grade to me back home that have gone to different universities are getting like really high 1sts and stuff, so I don't know if it is like-, I don't know if it is just me or like a different difficulty at [Linnet].

I: Yeah.

E: I don't know.

I: Brilliant. Next one, uh 'new experiences'.

E: I guess that's just with like formals, and like rowing and different stuff like that, I've done a lot of new stuff here.

I: What other things new have you done? Is there anything else new that you've done?

E: Um. Probably just like little random stuff, like cheese and wine that was one my friends back home found quite funny. [laughter]. Um, yeah I can't really think but-

I: -no that's fine-

E: -there will be a lot-

I: -if you think of anything throughout at all at the end, um, feel free to chip in. Um, great. Next word: 'challenging'.

E: That's just the same as difficult really isn't it? I don't really know why I've put them both. Um yeah just the same, like I found it quite difficult to maintain a decent grade.

I: Yep. 'enjoyable'.

E: I can't really explain that can I. I just enjoy being here [chuckle].

I: Yep.

E: Like, I've had a good experience, yeah.

I: Uh, have you got like an example? Like anything that you find enjoyable at [Linnet] or enjoyable experience you've had at university maybe, maybe one that's stands out? Or…

E: Just like as a whole, I'm like pretty happy here.

I: Great, and then the last one is 'friendship'.

E: Yeah I made quite like a lot of good friends throughout my time here.

I: Great, thank you very much. So then question 13, similar to question 7 and 9, there was a list of statements again and it asked you um to tick the answer that reflected your opinion the most on each of the statements, so we'll go through each statement in turn again, and then I'll ask you maybe er why that's your opinion on that statement. So 13.1, *'my speech and language has changed since coming to university'* and you've put strongly agree, so why did you put strongly agree?

E: Like, I can't notice it. I think it's more my accent but like people back home have commented saying like…like that I don't sound like I've been brought up in Blackpool, and things like that. Um…so although I can't notice it-, but I'm guessing that's probably just liv-, coz I've lived with people who are like from down South so it's probably just slightly changed.

I: Have you got an example in how it's changed? Or have they given an example if-

E:-I think it's my accent, like I don't sound maybe as Northern? I don't-, yeah.

I: Great, thank you. Uh 13.2, *'I have changed the way I dress since coming to university'* and you've put agree.

E: I don't know if that's like the university thing or just like a growing up thing. But like looking back I know I have changed, maybe.

I: Yep.

E: Maybe buy less from Primark? [chuckle]

I: Um, great. Uh 13.3 *'I feel like there is no one like me at university'* and you've put disagree.

E: Yeah I feel like there's a lot of people like similar to myself here.

I: Great, thank you. And over the page, 13.4, *'I feel uncomfortable in social situations whilst at university'* and you've put strongly disagree.

E: Yeah there's not really a situation that I feel-, that I've felt uncomfortable…yeah, ever if it's something new like people are always pretty like fine about it, they wouldn't ever make you feel uncomfortable.

I: And 13.5? *'I act differently to when I am at university to when I am at home'* and you've put neither agree nor disagree.

E: Yeah, I'm not really sure. Um, coz I know my friends back home and my friends here are completely different, so I'm guessing I probably kind of adapt to that, but that's probably more in terms of like, maybe conversation and-, I'm not sure if it's me like changing who I am or just, like, responding to them maybe. I don't know.

I: 13.6, *'I feel like I don't belong here at this university'* and you've put disagree.

E: I just I feel like I do belong here, I don't know what else to say, I'm sorry.

I: No no it's fine-

E:-[chuckle].

I: And 13.7, *'I have enjoyed my time at this university so far'* and you've put strongly agree.

E: Yeah, I have.

I: Good. Um, thank you very much. Um, that is the end of the questions. Have you anything else you'd like to say regarding your experience throughout this university? anything you'd like to add to any of your answers? Um, anything like that?

E: Um, no. I think it's all good.

I: Um, brilliant, thank you very much for attending this interview. Um, as it is said in the participant information sheet, um this interview's exploring the experiences of students um from low-income backgrounds from um low-income backgrounds at an elite university. Um, if you have anything you want to follow up with, anything you want to add or otherwise, please do get in touch on my email which you-, we've had the email correspondence with-

E: -yeah-

I:-Um, couple of questions, would you like a copy of the thesis when it's finished? You can say no or yes, it's completely up to you.

E: Um, yeah it would be nice to read it, so yeah-

I:-um-

E: -it's quite an interesting topic.

I: Great, and also um, as it again specified in the participant information sheet, um, in any research report published, including my thesis, no information will be included that will make it possible to identify you individually and there'll be no way to connect your name to your responses at any time during or after the study and um we do this through pseudonyms. Would you like to choose your own pseudonym or w-, are you happy for me to choose a pseudonym?

E: No, yeah you can choose that.

I: Okay. Brilliant, um so that's the end of the interview. Thank you very much and I'm gonna turn this off now.

E: Okay, thank y- [recording cuts out].

Appendix H: Question 11. 'Pick 5 words to describe this university'. Themes of words.

THEME	Words used by participants. (n) = frequency.						
TRADITION	traditional (3)	picturesque					
BUSYNESS	active (3)	busy (2)	variety	diverse (2)			
COMMUNITY	friendly (2)	welcolming	community (2)	close-knit	sociable	insular	
DESCRIPTION	brilliant	fun	enjoyable (2)	exciting	lively	sporadically entertaining	eccentric
ACADEMIC	academic (6)						
EXTRA-CURRICULAR	extra-curricular	sports-orientated					
EXCLUSIVITY	exclusive	elitist	prestigious	elite	disparate		
DIFFICULT	challenging (3)	demanding					
COLLEGIATE	collegiate (3)						
STATUS	posh	middle-class (2)					
EXPENSIVE	expensive (3)	money-grabbing					
MISC	successful	renowned	rewarding	inspiring	independent	innovative	dull

Appendix I: Question 12. 'Pick 5 words to describe your university experience so far'. Themes of words.

BUSYNESS	busy (4)									
COMMUNITY	friendly (2)	friendship (2)	social							
DESCRIPTION (P)	brilliant	fun (4)	enjoyable (3)	engaging (2)	exciting	interesting (2)				
DESCRIPTION (N)	sometimes uncom	depressing	dissapointing							
DIFFICULT	stress-inducing	tough	work	difficult (2)	stressful (2)	challenging (2)	intense	hard work	pressure	daunting
UNIQUE	new experiences	unique	different (2)	novel						
SUPRISING	thought-provoking	unexpected	enlightening	new	eye-opening	suprising				
EXPENSIVE	expensive (3)									
MISC	eccentric	life-changing	volunteer	independence	independent	active	reading	don't fit in w/ people	certain backgrour	

Appendix J: Questionnaire (Word version)

Thank you for agreeing to take part in a Student Experience survey conducted by Miss Emma Maslin as part of her Research Masters in the School of Education, Durham University. The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of students from low-income families at an elite university. Specifically, it will seek to understand the behaviours displayed by students from low-income backgrounds in order to 'fit in'.

This survey is looking for participants who fit specific criteria. If you do not fit these criteria, thank you for your interest but please do not complete this survey.

The survey takes approximately 20 minutes and must be completed at one time as answers can not be saved. I would like to follow up the survey with an interview to get more in-depth information. If you are willing to take part in an interview, please provide your name and email address at the end of the survey (this is not required). All answers will be kept confidential.

Please press 'Next' to begin the questionnaire.

<u>Admissions</u>

1. What attracted you to **apply** to this university? (Tick all that apply):

- ☐ League Table Position
- ☐ Academic Reputation of the Course
- ☐ Personal Recommendation from Previous/Current Student of the University
- ☐ Extra-Curricular Activities Available
- ☐ Collegiate System
- ☐ Peers were Applying
- ☐ Location
- ☐ Other (please specify)

1a. If you selected other, please specify: …………………………………………….

2. Who helped you make your decision to apply to this university? (Tick all that apply):

- ☐ School Teacher(s)
- ☐ Careers Advisor
- ☐ Family Member(s)
- ☐ Friends
- ☐ Other (please specify)

2a. If you selected other, please specify: …………………………………………….

3. What source(s) of information did you use to inform your decision? (Tick all that apply):

- ☐ University Prospectus
- ☐ University Website
- ☐ External University Guides (e.g. The Times Good University Guide)
- ☐ External Comparison Website (e.g. PUSH)
- ☐ University Open Day
- ☐ Word of Mouth
- ☐ Other (please specify)

3a. If you selected other, please specify: …………………………………………….

3b. Out of those ticked above, which of these did you feel gave you the **most** information regarding this university?

- ☐ University Prospectus
- ☐ University Website
- ☐ External University Guides (e.g. The Times Good University Guide)
- ☐ External Comparison Website (e.g. PUSH)
- ☐ University Open Day
- ☐ Word of Mouth
- ☐ Other (please specify)

3bi. If you selected other, please specify:
……………………………………………………………………………………..

3c. Out of those ticked above, which of these do you feel gave you the most **accurate** information about what this university is like?

- ☐ University Prospectus
- ☐ University Website
- ☐ External University Guides (e.g. The Times Good University Guide)
- ☐ External Comparison Website (e.g. PUSH)
- ☐ University Open Day
- ☐ Word of Mouth
- ☐ Other (please specify)

3ci. If you selected other, please specify:
…………………………………………………………………………………

<u>Making the decision</u>

4. What attracted you to **attend** this university? (Tick all that apply):

- ☐ League Table Position
- ☐ Academic Reputation of the Course
- ☐ Personal Recommendation from Previous/Current Student of the University
- ☐ Extra-Curricular Activities Available
- ☐ Collegiate System
- ☐ Peers were Applying
- ☐ Location
- ☐ Other (please specify)

4a. If you selected other, please specify: ………………………………………….

4b. Out of those ticked above, please pick the **most important factor** in your decision.

- ☐ League Table Position
- ☐ Academic Reputation of the Course
- ☐ Personal Recommendation from Previous/Current Student of the University
- ☐ Extra-Curricular Activities Available
- ☐ Collegiate System
- ☐ Peers were Applying
- ☐ Location
- ☐ Other (please specify)

4bi. If you selected other, please specify:
………………………………………………………………………………………

<u>Questions about academic work</u>

5. Of the different modes of study listed below, which of these are offered in your programme of study? Tick all that apply:

- ☐ Lectures
- ☐ Seminars
- ☐ Tutorials
- ☐ Practicals
- ☐ Supervisions
- ☐ Other (please specify)

5a. If you selected other, pleases specify: ………………………………………….

6. Approximately how many hours per week **in total** do you spend in contact time?
N.b. Contact time refers to any academic teaching/supervision where a member of staff is present.

………………………………………………………………………………

7. Please tick the answer that reflects your opinion the most on each of these statements:

a. The academic teaching methods are different to my previous educational institution

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

b. I feel comfortable with the university academic teaching methods.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

8. Approximately how many hours per week do you spend in self-study? *N.b. Self-study refers to any time spent on your own doing academic work.*

……………………………………………………………………………………

9. Please tick the answer that reflects your opinion the most on each of these statements:

a. Self-study at university is different to self-study at my previous educational institution.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

b. I am comfortable with self-study at university.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

Extra-curricular activities

10. For each of the extra-curricular activities listed below, please circle how often you attend (both at college and university level).

10.1. College Formals	Frequently; Occasionally; Never.
10.2. Environmental Society/ Activism	Frequently; Occasionally; Never.
10.3. Going to the theatre.	Frequently; Occasionally; Never.
10.4. Volunteering for Charity	Frequently; Occasionally; Never.
10.5. Religious Activity/Group	Frequently; Occasionally; Never.
10.6. Watching live music	Frequently; Occasionally; Never.
10.7. Going out to a nightclub	Frequently; Occasionally; Never.
10.8. Horse Riding	Frequently; Occasionally; Never
10.9. Croquet	Frequently; Occasionally; Never
10.10. Volunteering (other)	Frequently; Occasionally; Never.
10.11. Amateur Dramatics	Frequently; Occasionally; Never.
10.12. Political Society/Activism	Frequently; Occasionally; Never
10.13. Law/Pro Bono/Debating Societies	Frequently; Occasionally; Never.
10.14. Academic Societies (e.g. History/Law/Theology)	Frequently; Occasionally; Never.
10.15. Learning a Language	Frequently; Occasionally; Never.
10.16. Alcohol-centred Society (e.g. Cocktail Society)	Frequently; Occasionally; Never.
10.17. Leadership Role in College/Society	Frequently; Occasionally; Never.
10.18. Going to the cinema	Frequently; Occasionally; Never.
10.19. Football	Frequently; Occasionally; Never.
10.20. Chess	Frequently; Occasionally; Never.
10.21. Journalism	Frequently; Occasionally; Never.
10.22. Going to the pub	Frequently; Occasionally; Never.
10.23. Watching TV	Frequently; Occasionally; Never.
10.24. Rowing	Frequently; Occasionally; Never.
10.25. Orchestra	Frequently; Occasionally; Never.
10.26. Dance	Frequently; Occasionally; Never.

10.27. Rugby	Frequently; Occasionally; Never.
10.28. Jazz Band	Frequently; Occasionally; Never.
10.29. Pub Sports	Frequently; Occasionally; Never.
10.30. Other	Frequently; Occasionally; Never.

10.a. If answered 'Other', please specify

………..….…………………………………………………………………………

10b. Out of those ticked 'frequently' or 'occasionally', which of these activities have you taken part in **for the first time** since coming to university?

☐ College formals
☐ Environmental society/activism
☐ Going to theatre
☐ Volunteering for charity
☐ Religious activity/group
☐ Watching live music
☐ Going out to a nightclub
☐ Horse riding
☐ Croquet
☐ Volunteering (other)
☐ Amateur dramatics
☐ Political society/activism
☐ Law/Pro-Bono/Debating societies
☐ Academic societies (e.g. Law/History/Theology)
☐ Learning a language
☐ Alcohol-centred society (e.g. Cocktail society)
☐ Leadership role in college/society
☐ Going to the cinema
☐ Football
☐ Chess
☐ Journalism
☐ Going to the pub
☐ Watching TV
☐ Rowing
☐ Orchestra
☐ Dance
☐ Rugby
☐ Jazz Band
☐ Pub sports
☐ Other

10bi. If you selected 'Other', please specify

………..….………………………………………………………

University lifestyle

11. Please write down 5 words to describe this university.

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………

12. Please write down 5 words to describe **your university experience** so far.

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………

13. Please tick the answer that reflects your opinion the most on each of these statements:

1. My speech and language has changed since coming to university.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

2. I have changed the way I dress since coming to university

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

3. I feel like there is no one 'like me' at university.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

4. I feel uncomfortable in social situations whilst at university.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

5. I act differently to when I am at university to when I am at home.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

6. I feel like I don't belong here at this university.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

7. I have enjoyed my time at this university so far.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

Demographic Questions

If you are willing to take part in a follow-up interview to explore your answers in more depth, please provide your name and email address in the boxes provided and I will contact you in due course. Thank you for your assistance.

14. Name

……………………………………………………………………………………………

15. Gender

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Would prefer not to say

16. Year Group

- ☐ First year
- ☐ Second year
- ☐ Third year
- ☐ Third year (finalist)
- ☐ Fourth year (finalist)

17. Degree Subject

……………………………………………………………………………………………

18. College

……………………………………………………………………………………………

19. Please circle the type of further education establishment you studied at before attending university.

- ☐ State School Sixth Form
- ☐ State Further Education College
- ☐ Independent School Sixth Form
- ☐ Independent Further Education College
- ☐ Home Schooled
- ☐ Other

19a. If you selected Other, please specify: ………………………………………….

20. Please circle the type of qualification you achieved prior to attending this university:

- ☐ A-Levels
- ☐ BTEC
- ☐ Vocational Qualification
- ☐ Foundation Degree
- ☐ Other

20a. If you selected Other, please specify: …………………………………………

21. [Linnet] Email Address

……………………………………………………………………………………………

Thank you for taking part in this questionnaire.

Please make sure you have provided your name and email address for Miss Emma Maslin if you are willing to attend an interview.
Any questions please do not hesitate to contact Miss Emma Maslin via email at e.l.maslin@durham.ac.uk.

Appendix K: Interview Schedule

Demographic

Can you please confirm that this is your questionnaire and that the details provided are correct.

Admissions

Question 3 - *(If student has ticked open days)* Please describe to me your experiences of the university open day.

Question 3b - You said that you felt ……. gave you the most information regarding this university. Why is this?

Question 3c - You said that you felt …. Gave you the most accurate information about what this university is like. Why is this?

Making the decision

Question 4b – You said that you felt… was the most important factor in your decision. Why is this?

Academic

Question 7a - You answered _____ to the statement "*The academic teaching methods are different to my previous educational institution.*" Can you explain to me please your answer *(and how is it different/not different etc)*

Question 7b - You answered _____ to the statement "*I feel comfortable with the university academic teaching methods*". Can you please explain your answer further. *(i.e why do you feel comfortable/uncomfortable if they put disagree)*

Question 9a - You answered _____ to the statement "*Self-study at university is different to self-study at my previous educational institution*". Can you explain to me your answer please.

Question 9b - You answered _____ to the statement "*I am comfortable with self-study at university.*" Can you explain to me your answer further please?

Extra-curricular activities

Question 10 - In question 10, you have listed the activities you have started for the first time since coming to university. Please can you explain for each activity listed why you started each activity.

University lifestyle

Question 11 – In question 11 you have put 5 words to describe this university. Would you be able to explain further your answers.

Question 12 - In question 12 you have put 5 words to describe your university experience so far. Would you be able to explain further your answers.

Question 13 - For each of the following statements in Question 13, can you please explain to me each of your responses, starting with 13.1. For instance, in Q13.1 you answered _____ to the statement "*My speech and language has changed since coming to university.*" Can you explain to me please your answer.

LAST QUESTION - Have you anything else you'd like to say regarding your experience so far at this university?

Closing comments

Thank you for attending the interview today. *Would provide an explanation reiterating what the research is about. Would give contact details.*

Example List of response questions

You talked about the '[Linnet] Difference/Bubble'. Can you explain what you mean by this please?

You talked about 'rahs'. Can you explain to me what you mean by this please?

Can you tell me a bit more about that? What do you mean when you talk about ………………

You said that ……………….. Can you give me an example?

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