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Bourdieu and Brand-Me: Agri-food Higher Education students' experiences of securing industrial placements and employment, and through personal branding strategies

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Bourdieu and Brand-Me: Agri-food Higher Education students' experiences of securing industrial placements and employment, and through personal branding strategies

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Abstract

Parrott, P. (2022). Bourdieu and Brand-Me: Agri-food Higher Education students' experiences of securing industrial placements and employment and through personal branding strategies.

This thesis relates to the field of student placement and explores the strategies that higher education (HE) students use to secure industrial placement employment in the agri-food sector. Brand-Me is the collective of a person's online and offline presence. Digital technologies and how students choose their self-presentations online has blurred the lines between personal and professional. This presents a challenge for HE students in managing their digital footprint. A Bourdieusian lens (Bourdieu, 1977) and conceptual tools of habitus, capital and field was used to shed light on the practice of placement seeking and the ownership of students in shaping their Brand-Me. The role the Placement Manager plays as 'referee' is a vital link in assisting the students seeking placements and the transition of student to placement employment. Qualitative in-depth interviews with students, university staff, and employers (n= 15, 7, and 2 respectively) were undertaken using Rich Pictures to support the interviews. This visual qualitative approach provided a close generation of insights and semiotic resources for data analysis and framework for self-reflection. Students showed differing approaches to consideration of Brand-Me based on their concern for managing their digital footprint and showed a desire to convey a 'hardworking' and neoliberal self for the social logic of the field. The research uncovered how family habitus influenced placement seeking, career envisioning and geographical mobility with the misleading conceptualisations of a student as being freely single. Female students showed how the masculine dominated habitus and hegemony in the agricultural rural sector had shaped their consideration of Brand-Me. This provides a contribution to the conceptual construction of rural gender identities and how students adopt chameleon like strategies to fit-in with their surroundings. The use of Rich Pictures with individuals also provided a novel structure of reflection for employability in career support services and in consideration of Brand-Me.

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Statement of Copyright

Publications and presentations made as part of this research journey

Parrott, P. (2021). *Personal branding strategies to secure industrial placement: the pink chameleon* [Presentation Online]. WACE World virtual conference 2021, May 11-13, 2021 https://uwaterloo.ca/world-association-co-operative-education/conference-program.

Pretti, J., Parrott, P., Hoskyn, K., Fannon, A-M., Church, D. and Arsenault, C. (2020). The role of work-integrated learning in the development of entrepreneurs. *International Journal Work Integrated Learning, Special Issue, 2020,* 21 (4), 451-466.

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Parrott, P. (2019). *Exploring the use of Rich Picture Method with students in Higher Education in preparing for placement, employability and career management.* Teaching and Learning Forum, Harper Adams University, July 10 2019.

Parrott, P and Lister, J. (2019). *The role of placement in the development of entrepreneurship* [Presentation]. ASET conference, University of Hertfordshire, September 3 2019.

Parrott, P. (2018). *Marketisation and consumerism in Higher Education: the student as both consumer and producer in personal branding* [Presentation] Refereed proceedings at the 3rd International Research Symposium on Cooperative and Work Integrated Learning held Stuttgart, Germany, June 25 -27 June 2018. Available from: https://www.waceinc.org/DHBW2018/WACE_IRS_2018_Refereed_Conference_Proceedings.pdf.

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Parrott, P., and Arnold, L. (2017). *Encouraging a positive culture around social media through the concept of 'Brand-Me'* [Presentation]. Solstice and CLT conference 2017, Edge Hill University, June 5-6 2017.

Parrott, P. (2016). *Supporting personal branding in periods of transition from student to employee: 'Brand-Me'* [Poster]. WACE 2nd International Research Symposium, University of Victoria, Vancouver, Canada, June 12-15 2016.

Parrott P. (2015). *Placement partnerships: supporting student personal branding 'Brand-Me'* [Poster]. ASET conference, Exeter University, September 8-10 2015.

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1   Chapter 1 - Introduction

This research was inspired and developed out of observations pertaining to difficulties that had arisen with students in higher education (HE) in placement seeking and placement employment. This was particularly in relation to the student use of social media and in balancing the spheres between personal and professional lives. The student self-representations on social media were mainly personal and social to appeal to others (Walker, 2018). The sharing of pictures or stories about one's day using the web and social media platforms is a common theme of narrating and visualising life experiences, creating memories, for social recognition and in doing so, create a personal profile (Reckwitz, 2020). The neoliberal policies and economics that came to prominence in the 1980s advocated globalisation, privatisation, open markets, and entrepreneurialism to achieve both financial success and individual self-actualisation (Harvey, 2005). These neoliberal principles encouraged entrepreneurial activity and people to use self-presentation techniques with the reward of increased social status and to raise their profile for monetised value and business growth (Gershon, 2016). The popularity of reputation in gaining endorsements and activity tokens such as 'friends' and 'likes' motivated an individual's online engagement further (Chouldry and Kallinikos, 2018; Marwick, 2013). However, engagement in digital activities online and how students choose their self-presentations (Walker Rettberg, 2018) have decompartmentalised and blurred the lines between personal and professional spheres (JISC, 2014). This presents a challenge for HE students in managing their digital footprint.

In my role as Placement Manager and as overall university Placement Coordinator at a land-based university (LBU)[1]in England, I was involved with instances of malpractice related to students' use of social media in securing placement positions and while employed in industrial placement positions. For example, employers rejected student placement applications based on images or social media content they had seen or read about the student, and where students while on placement used social media to share work experiences which were deemed by others (employers, other students, and university) as being inappropriate[2]. Some cases escalated into a student disciplinary or the withdrawal of placement altogether by a placement employer, consequently culminating in a failed placement year[3]. Consequently, the remark "If only students would just think about what they choose to post on social media" was a common lament made in frustration among the university staff colleagues who were supporting students on placement at LBU. Rather than admonishment, the lamenting comment made by the university staff above was made in a supportive sense to raise

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[1] Land-based university (LBU) is a pseudonym for the university used in this research based in the United Kingdom which is a single rural land-based campus on a working farm estate where all courses have a period of compulsory integral industrial placement.
[2] For example where, sensitive company information was discussed between students working for competitor companies on Facebook; images of the company were uploaded to social media without the employer's consent; insensitive Tweets were made about others.
[3] Note: this was a small percentage of the student cohort.

student awareness of how they may be perceived by others through the mix of personal and social self-presentations and presentations made online. This was the motivation to explore students' awareness of how social media may contribute to their personal branding, or as I shall refer to going forward as "Brand-Me" and explained further in the next section.

1.1   Research background regarding Brand-Me

This section provides a background to the concept of branding, personal branding and Brand-Me in the context of this research. In considering a brand identity, the word "brand" is derived from an old Norse word 'brandr' which means 'to burn' as clear imprints were left on the hides of animals made with hot irons on extensive ranches in America to 'brand' and differentiate their cattle from their neighbours (Jobber and Chadwick, 2016). A personal brand is how a person is perceived by others (Schawbel, 2010). Personal branding (or self-branding) is where one thinks of oneself as a "brand" and considers how to present themselves as a brand, in effect what I call "Brand-Me". Digital technologies have enabled individuals to create an unbounded virtual self and connecting human-brand narrative to others through social media. Brand-Me is the collective of a person's online and offline presence[4] which make up a brand (De Chernatony, McDonald and Wallace, 2013). Understanding how HE students consider and portray Brand-Me (beyond the concept of just enabling students to better market themselves) in seeking and undertaking placement employment is the central thesis of this dissertation and a research gap in literature. Contiguously this also relates to having an understanding of employability and in preparation of students for work placement and work readiness to both stand-out and fit in.

The challenge of standing out and fitting in relates to the practice of being able to promote oneself for the market place to gain advantage over competitors (other students competing for the same role), to gain recognition by potential employers, while being relevant and relatable to the role and sector. The understanding of employability and particularly graduate employability in relation to the role of HE has been framed in the literature around a skills-based approach (explained in Chapter 2.2). Models such as the CareerEDGE model of employability (Dacre Pool, 2016) provide a framework for university staff to support students with the essential components of employability to reach their full potential and become a 'value added' graduate. Here, the second issue for this research came from a sense that there are 'other mystical' factors for successful employability and that the skills-based approach does not capture the complexity of employability in HE and placement seeking. The students' personal characteristics all contribute to their own Brand-Me. Whether

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[4]The personal characteristics, interests, skills, attributes, family background, past experiences, environment they have grown up in and how this is portrayed online and offline.

carefully constructed or not these may influence their ability to 'stand-out and fit in' within an occupational setting.

In addition, the neoliberal principles arising from the political reforms[5] (Harvey, 2005) encouraging entrepreneurial initiative are also evident in HE and provide challenges. The focus on graduate employability requires HE to establish students as contributors, or active *producers* with the responsibility to manage self-hood to prepare for the market place. However, marketisation of education in the HE sector has led to the premise of students as *consumers* of university products and services (Tomlinson, 2009), whilst acknowledging that the concept of student as consumer / customer / client is considered complex (Furedi, 2011; Molesworth, Scullion and Nixon, 2011). For HE students, navigating their way through the field of placement seeking and employment can be challenging as it requires a change to move from a position of passive consumer conditioned by the field of HE, to that of active producer. This raises questions how these dynamics are managed and facilitated. Attempting to understand some of these issues around employability shaped by digital technology may enable students, and those who support students, to benefit from a clearer understanding of positioning their Brand-Me in their occupational setting and social network. The context for the research is covered in the next section.

1.2   Research context

The context of this thesis relates to the field of HE in the United Kingdom and where students are preparing for and seeking compulsory industrial placement positions. The main aim of this research was to explore the field of placement seeking in the agri-food sector with HE students. The agri-food sector is particularly chosen as this is the focus of my work[6] and in my professional capacity and experience as Principal Lecturer in Marketing alongside my role in coordinating year-long industrial placements for students in HE at LBU in England. The agri-food sector is characterised by the closely knit personal and social connections through the rural background, associations, friendships and working environment. Managing these different contexts separate from each other is likened to a phenomenon called 'context collision' by danah boyd (2011). Thus, the students' digital footprint may have an effect on students both socially and in work-related situations, and merit in enabling students to develop an understanding of how employability is constructed and realised by their social interactions. The research seeks to question the strategies that HE students use to secure industrial placement and graduate employment and whether they are influenced by an awareness of personal branding and consideration of Brand-Me.

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[5] By Margaret Thatcher in the UK in 1979-80's.
[6] I have been working in education in the agri-food sector for 37 years; Chartered Marketer status, Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM).

A qualitative approach was used to take a holistic viewpoint between the main stakeholders involved in the placement process (students, agri-food employers, university placement support staff) using LBU as a specific case study in the field of agri-food placement seeking. The research focuses on students studying on the suite of agri-food related courses[7] where many come from a rural background. This background knowledge of the industry is also a component of what I call the student "career capital" and which I will expound on later. The collaborative work with employers and the compulsory year-long industrial placement is a particular feature of the courses at LBU which is a vocationally focused university. The employers supporting these students in the agri-food sector span the entire agri-food chain and encompass large multinational companies and small medium sized enterprises. As such, this research is grounded in the field of placement employment seeking in the agri-food sector. This case study facilitated an understanding of the placement seeking experiences of research participants and the meaning they take of that experience (Seidman, 2013). It enabled a holistic dimension of placement seeking and employment, and gained a comprehensive picture of the whole context in which the phenomena of interest occurred (Malhotra, 2017).

The research framework applied the Principles of Marketing and Branding concepts to the consideration of Brand-Me and student experiences with students seeking placement employment positions. This is an area under explored in marketing texts and in the literature relating to placement employment especially in the agri-food sector. In order to tease out the sensed other 'mystical' factors in force for successful employability, the research framework also adopted a sociological approach to more fully understand the values, actions, logic and concerns (Bauman and May, 2019) of participants. The conceptual tools of Pierre Bourdieu, habitus, capital, and field (see Chapter 3), were used to shed light on the practice of seeking placement employment. These provided a vocabulary and critical understanding of the challenges in students traversing and repositioning themselves between the fields of HE and employment in the agri-food sector.

Bourdieu (1990a) used the expressions 'feel for the game' and 'game' as metaphors to understand or explore the dynamics of the social world, and include the power forces at play. To play the game requires an understanding of the spaces of interaction (field) and the rules (written and unwritten), of the spaces in which individuals interact as agents, and where these agents act with respect to the forms of capital (social, economic, cultural and symbolic) which they possess and which are relevant to/in that field. Habitus is created through personal history and family and group influences and converted into dispositions that generate meaningful practices and meaning-giving perceptions

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[7] For this suite of courses over a three year average, 96% are from a rural background, with 0% BAME students and show a low percentage in POLAR4 Q12 (POLAR4 Q12, 12.6% and POLAR4 Q1 1.7%)(LBU, 2020a).

(Bourdieu, 1984). These forms of capital and habitus predispose individuals towards ways of behaving and being (Bourdieu, 1990). This lens was able to provide a vocabulary with which to understand the valued forms of capital that influence and are important in understanding the practices of placement seeking and employability. In doing so it makes a contribution to the body of knowledge relating to employability in the HE sector, particularly with regard to placement seeking employment, and in the rural and agri-food sector. The following research questions were identified:

RQ1. What are the strategies that higher education students use to secure industrial placement and graduate employment?

RQ2. Are they and if yes, to what extent, influenced by an awareness of 'Brand-Me?'

Aligned sub-questions:

SQ1: What are the valued forms of field-specific capital in the context of placement seeking from the perspectives of students, university staff supporting placements and employers of placement students?

SQ2: What is the ownership of students in shaping their personal branding and the relationship between habitus, capital and field in building Brand-Me from a student perspective?

In order to effectively address the research questions RQ1 and RQ2, it was important to understand how students construct employability, how they may consider their personal attributes and how they may be able to portray this proactively in traversing between the fields of HE and neoliberal market-place of employment with a managed Brand-Me. This led to the creation of the sub research questions (SQ) which are closely aligned to RQ1 and RQ2. The objective of SQ1 was to gain an understanding of the valued forms of capital and 'rules of the game' in the career field of placement employment seeking in the agri-food sector from each of the stakeholders in the placement process, students, university staff supporting placement and employers. The objective of SQ2 was to query to what extent students choose their props (pictures, dress) to create meaning through self-presentation to others (both offline and online using digital technologies)and whether they are cognisant of Brand-Me. A summary of the research questions and objectives is shown in Appendix A.

Qualitative research methods in the form of individual one-to-one in-depth interviews incorporating the use of Rich Pictures[8] was used to capture the perspectives of the different stakeholders who were involved in the fields of HE and placement and graduate employment at LBU. Rich Pictures are used to capture the thinking process of individuals using icons, graphics, symbols, underlining, and

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[8] Using drawings can be used as a 'soft systems' participatory approach to decision making and general management problem solving using 'soft' human interaction as part of the process looking at 'systems' and relationships in an organised way as devised by Peter Checkland (2000, 1981; and Checkland and Scholes, 1990 in Bell and Morse, 2012). The creation of drawings or pictures are used as a starting point for soft systems to gather ideas and inform strategy.

directional arrows to visually communicate feelings and affect (Bell & Morse, 2010). The Rich Picture approach facilitates the articulation of a pictorial understanding or language and enables the documentation of tacit values and how it relates within the context (Berg and Pooley, 2013). This approach was chosen in order to elicit issues that participants may conceive as difficult to express and to elucidate as much as possible from the qualitative one-to-one in-depth interviews with participants. The conversations arising from the in-depth interviews and the complementary nature of the Rich Pictures drawn during the interview are inseparable from the narrative. Therefore, *how* the Rich Picture drawings and semiotic resources may be analysed individually and comparatively when used as part of the in-depth interview was considered in this research. The next section sets out the overall structure of the thesis.

1.3   Structure of the thesis

The thesis is structured into Chapters 1-7 and supporting Appendices.

Chapter 2 begins by considering how universities have had to respond to the dynamic marketing environment and the introduction of metrics as indicators for competitiveness, and the multiple concepts relating to the issues of graduate employability. Here I highlight that there is not a uniform concept of employability, particularly in placement seeking and in adopting a sociological approach to the consideration of personal and socio-cultural resources. It discusses the impact of digital technologies and social media on consideration of Brand-Me, and outlines the theoretical framework of the study which draws on Principles of Marketing and Branding and application to Brand-Me with students seeking placement.

Chapter 3 outlines the sociological theoretical perspective using Bourdieu's concepts as a research lens drawing on notions of field, habitus and capital with which to frame an understanding of personal branding and placement seeking. The theoretical perspectives of marketing are applied to those of Bourdieu and the consideration of career capital. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the characteristics of the agri-food sector field in which the research is located in order to provide context for the analysis of the empirical data.

Chapter 4 sets out the ontological and epistemological standpoints and positionality as a researcher which directly inform the methodology and research approach. It provides an explanation of the research methods employed using Rich Pictures as part of the in-depth interviews, along with consideration of the most appropriate approach to visual data analysis using a combined complementary semiotic narrative approach.

Chapter 5 presents an analysis of three main research themes around the placement and employment seeking journey taking the perspectives of all stakeholders. The Rich Pictures and semiotic resources deployed revealed the perceived valued forms of capital for the stakeholders, and the challenges facing students on the placement seeking journey. It shows how the decisions students make in the placement seeking journey are nuanced and complicated, and the familial influence on placement seeking, career imagining and geographical (im) mobility. The final section provides an insight into notions of belonging and fitting-in.

Chapter 6 reports on the student strategic personal branding decisions which are undertaken mostly from a strategically proactive defensive approach. However, on closer analysis, it argues that their actions could be deemed as strategically proactive in protecting their digital footprint and recognition of the silent architecture of the observational apparatus (Schwan and Shapiro, 2011) that social media can be. It reveals the semiotic resources that students used to convey Brand-Me which for many was the desire to convey a rural manifestation of being 'hardworking'. Chapter 6 reveals the emergent theme relating to constructions of rural gender identities and female branding considerations in the agri-food sector to secure industrial placement employment which is an underdeveloped area.

The thesis concludes with Chapter 7. It provides a reimagined conceptual illustration of Brand-Me as part of the key findings, and articulation of the unique contributions and broader issues relating to knowledge and practice in support of placement seeking and research methods. It ends by discussing limitations and future research directions.

2 Chapter 2 - Higher Education and marketing

This chapter outlines the marketisation and commodification of the Higher Education sector in the UK and how this has shaped consumerism and graduate employability in HE. It reviews the literature and conceptualisations of graduate employability. It then considers the impact of digital technology and the challenges this may provide for students in placement seeking and managing their personal and professional spheres. Lastly, the chapter outlines how the theoretical framework using marketing principles and branding strategies may be extended to the context of students as consumer as well as producer in the field of HE in seeking placement and graduate employment.

2.1 Marketisation in higher education in the United Kingdom

Neoliberalism is a "theory of political and economic practices that propose that human well-being can be best advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institution framework characterised by private property rights, free market and free trade" (Harvey, 2005:2). The neoliberal policies and economics that came to prominence in the 1980s advocated globalisation, privatisation, open markets, and entrepreneurialism to achieve both financial success and individual self-actualisation (Harvey, 2005). These neoliberal principles encouraged entrepreneurial activity and people to use self-presentation techniques with the reward of increased social status and to raise their profile for monetised value and business growth (Gershon, 2016).

Neoliberal marketisation principles are also evident in HE. The pursuit of free trade and the process of marketization replaced the collectivist principles that underpinned education systems in the 1960s and 1970s in the UK. Since the 1990' s and publication of the Dearing Report there has been a strong policy agenda around graduate employability and demand from government and university regulators to respond to the employability agenda (HEFCE, 2011). This has shaped the shift of purpose of HE with universities now central to the development of fit-for-purpose graduates for the knowledge economy and economic prosperity as a whole, and the dominance of managerialism (Ball, 2012; Olssen and Peters, 2005). The engagement of HE with graduate employability and commercialisation is firmly entrenched in the curriculum design, content and delivery to cater for industry needs (Jackson, 2016). Additionally, the change in the funding base of undergraduate level education was seen as commodification of HE in England (Morrison, 2017) and where the rise of customer sovereignty ethos of service hospitality taken from the corporate world shaped consumerism[9] in HE (Brooks, 2017; Gewirtz, 1996). In effect, it created a market within HE through its use of state financial levers and the construction of young people re-conceptualised as consumers of a higher education 'product' (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007). However, the notion of student as

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[9] Consumerism is laden with many connotations and signifiers and 'consumer' is not an all- encompassing categorisation.

consumer /customer / client is complex, where students are also learners and citizens in a wider university experience (Furedi, 2011; Maringe, 2011). Changes in funding where students are investors (Tomlinson, 2017, 2016) encouraged the pursuit of enhancing the student experience and student satisfaction ratings, reducing academics to a service provider (Molesworth et al., 2011) to the consumer created agenda (Williams, 2011).

Metrics are used as indicators of delivery and policy processes of education in the neoliberalised universities in the UK (Ball, 2013). The Research Excellence Framework (REF) and the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) are examples of such indicators. The REF ratings are a means to derive funding for a university while the TEF rating seeks to incentivise and reward universities (expressed as achieving Gold, Silver and Bronze standards) for excellent teaching (BIS, 2015). The metrics related to REF and TEF provide indicators for both prospective students and employers when selecting universities. TEF rating is also claimed to provide better signalling for employers as to which university providers they can trust to produce 'highly skilled graduates', and gain information about quality of courses, subjects covered and skills gained (BIS, 2015). However, the TEF metrics alone cannot provide the whole set of information to either employers or students. For example, the metrics relating to the 'Highly Skilled Employment and Further Study' metric[10] are blurred. The introduction of TEF metrics was promoted as providing transparent information across a range of indicators such as workload, student satisfaction and employment destinations. However, it is also seen as an aggressive neoliberal economic discourse to drive up standards within the sector as institutions that cannot attract students would have to change their practice (BIS, 2011). The Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey data and National Student Survey (NSS) data are used to provide metrics to feed into the TEF framework and in determining TEF ratings (hence the maximum tuition fee that individual institutions can charge) and is an area of focus for senior management at the universities.

LBU is typical to other universities, where the measure of successful student outcomes and gains are articulated by the graduate employment rate[11], employer reputation[12], and much importance is based on this along with National Student Survey (NSS). The Graduate Outcomes survey measures the value of the degree experience and explores what former students are doing 15 months after

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[10] For example, many Foundation Science degree (FdSc) students at LBU do not go on to further study as they are successful in gaining graduate employment; and where the Standard Occupational Classifications (SOCs) have not kept pace with the agri-food sector where some highly skilled roles remain classified as 'non-graduate' because of their job title.

[11] LBU is no exception in promoting graduate employment rate where 98 % of its graduates were in work or further study according to Graduate Outcomes survey 2020 and 2021; achieving employability of 99.4% in 2017, and being the joint second highest score in the DHLE census showing an average employment rate 96.5% over the last 8 years, and three year average in the TEF2 core metrics at 97.2% being ahead of the sector benchmark.

[12] LBU ranked second in the world in the QS World University Subject Rankings for Agriculture & Forestry for 'employer reputation' in 2018 and 2019; winner of the WUSCA's 'Job Prospects' award in 2016 -2019; winner of the modern university of the year 2017-2020 (Sunday Times); best university in the UK, and best for job prospects in the 2021 StudentCrowd University awards based on student reviews (period 2019-2021).

completing their studies and is an indication of the strength of relationships with industry and the professions, and of the quality of graduates that the universities 'produce'. The Government's Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data is also included in the TEF calculations and examines what graduates are doing one, three, five or ten years after completing studies and links graduate outcomes and earnings to HMRC administrative data. LEO is an approach to understanding economic returns to graduates from going to university and used to inform the choices of prospective students and the transparency on the contribution universities are making to individuals once they graduate. However, LEO metrics do not reflect the wider value of the university experience or employment decisions (Universities UK, 2020). Equally, it does not include the human capital investment and socioeconomic 'credentials' of parents which may influence the potential earnings of their children (Becker, 2009).

Other metrics in the form of league tables are provided for market competitiveness, although these rankings regarding employability are full of paradoxes. For instance, the universities currently targeted by the largest number of top graduate employers (according to the High Fliers top 100 employer list) are Manchester, Birmingham, Warwick and University College London (High Fliers Research, 2020: 30). Yet the league table metrics provided by the Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2020 (where data includes entry standards, teaching performance, academic research, student funding and graduate career prospects) show Birmingham and Manchester ranked 14th and 18th places while Cambridge and Oxford are in 1st and 2nd place. Similarly, recruiters judge 'graduation from a top university' as the least important of a number of predictors of a graduate's employability (Minsky, 2016: 3). Yet, the employability ranking (Global University Employability Ranking) which is derived from the votes of the same companies recruiting puts the world's most prestigious universities such as Harvard, Yale, Cambridge and Oxford, near the very top. Much of the data collected for league and ranking tables is through deductive metrics with limited qualitative inductive methodology to hear the student voice. The next section will review the context of HE and employability in a neoliberal era.

2.2   Employability and higher education

HE has become a synonym with employability and the transitioning of graduates into jobs. However, there is no common agreed definition for 'employability'. The concepts of employability, and employability 'skills' are multi-faceted. Situational factors, the changing labour market, sector specific expectations, individual interest and attitude all have a part to play. Prevailing market environmental factors will affect graduate employment, such as the economic recession in 2008, and dips in graduate positions around decisions relating to the UK's vote to leave the European Union in 2017. Despite these challenges, during the years since the recession in 2008, and prior to the COVID-

19 pandemic in 2020, graduate vacancies at the UK leading employers rose 39%, with eight annual increases over the decade (High Fliers Research, 2020). At times in this period finding the 'right skills' in a recent graduate cohort proved difficult, leading to employers with open vacancies (NCUB, 2015) or skill gaps in some employment areas (Messum, Wilkes, Peters and Jackson, 2017). As such, employability may be seen from different perspectives and positions, for example, in meeting the needs of market, secondly as a response by universities to the political neoliberal agenda[13], and thirdly as the individual skills and attributes of students in gaining and maintaining employment.

Tomlinson (2009: 27) described three approaches to employability: as *supply-side* in the supply of human capital and graduate skills entering the economy; *graduate demand* relative to the market place, power play and credential advantage in the process; and *subjective* depending on the career disposition and goals and orientation of the individuals. These approaches are reflected in the nuanced considerations of employability by others. For instance, graduate employability as a supply-side issue is predominantly conceptualised as having a combination of qualifications, knowledge, skills and personal attributes considered important by industry and needed by graduates in order to secure employment (Rowe and Zegwaard, 2017). Graduate employability is also framed around a skills based approach such as the acquisition of dynamic interactive forms of capital (such as human capital, social capital, cultural capital, psychological capital) which are acquired through the students' lived experiences and make up 'graduate capital' or employability capital (Tomlinson and Jackson, 2019; Tomlinson, 2017a). The possession of human capital alone is perceived as a simplistic view of employability as it disassociates the graduate skill development from the experience of finding a job (Clarke, 2018). Educational credentials can be used as proxies of human capital and are used as indicators of screening for employment, which may be enabling for some students transitioning to work, but constraining for others depending on their qualifications (Okay-Somerville and Scholarios, 2017). Morrison (2019) adds to these supply-side conceptualisations of employability as

> a pedagogised process of *becoming* [his emphasis] by which an individual develops a set of skills and attributes that will enable them to navigate the vagaries of highly competitive and unpredictable labour market in which there is no promise of a 'job for life' (Morrison, 2019: 31).

It shows the need for the individual to respond to the dynamic market place. Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007: 280) define employability as "having a set of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that make a person more likely to choose and secure occupations in which they can be

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[13] Where the measure of successful student outcomes and gains are articulated by the university graduate employment rate and reputation.

satisfied and successful". It is also seen as succeeding in the chosen occupation with benefits for themselves and for the whole labour market, community and economy (Yorke, 2006). Employability is seen as being effective in the workplace:

> A set of attributes, skills and knowledge that all labour market participants should possess to ensure they have the capability of being effective in the workplace – to the benefit of themselves, their employer and the wider community (CBI/NUS, 2011: 12).

This definition highlights the employability contribution in providing 'benefits' to the individual, employer and community. Benefits to the individual may be more than economic, and include motivation, lifestyle, prospects, well-being and other individual perceived benefits. The HEA report presented by Maureen Tibby (2015) sets out that employability is a mix of personal qualities and contains a reflective component:

> Employability goes well beyond the simplistic notion of key skills, and is evidenced in the application of a mix of personal qualities and beliefs, understandings, skilful practices and the ability to reflect productively on experience (Tibby, 2015:4).

The notion that employability is located in the individuals in the skills they possess suggests that these characteristics may be measurable and developed. In some instance this is relevant, for example medicine and science and to some extent agriculture related sectors (in attaining certified machinery handling and stockmanship skills), however, for the majority, this places the onus on the individual to acquire these skills and continue to renew skills in a changing contemporary labour market. Thus, this requires individuals to take a more proactive approach to the management of their employability (Tomlinson, 2009). The human capital elements of possession of a degree and skills enables a student to enter an employability arena, however, attitude and aptitude, relevant work experience or industry placement, and degree subject are perceived to be the three top factors employers focus on, and "having a positive 'can-do' attitude" (Trought, 2017: 46). While the level of technical skills and academic abilities is important, with a greater supply of graduates posturing for a limited pool of positions, personal qualities and being in possession of other 'softer skills' or credentials are as important. Adaptability, teamwork and communication are traits desired from graduates by employers (Minsky, 2016), along with self-management, business and customer awareness (CBI, 2012). However, these beliefs vary across different employment contexts, for instance, Jackson (2016a) showed Agriculture, Architecture, Building, Surveying and Engineering assigned high importance ratings to team-working, analytic and problem-solving skills and rated communication and planning poorly, which was the opposite for arts and humanities students. Additionally, there are differences in beliefs of desired graduate employability skills between those

of the employer and student (Lisá, E., Hennelová, K., and Newman, D., 2019). All these differences show a subjective dimension to the desired skills and traits for employability.

In an attempt to address some of these nuanced differences to the concept of employability as skills, whether as soft-skills, employability-skills, or life-skills, the Confederation of British Industries (CBI, 2019) suggest that employers are talking about three interconnected pillars: character, knowledge and skills, and how they are applied in real-life scenarios which are "integral to preparing young people for the world beyond formal education" (CBI, 2019: 30). How 'character' is defined is complex and may be a mindset, a set of values, and behaviour. Employers reported some positive traits such as: personal reflection; self-awareness; grit and resilience- persistence, stick-ability, perseverance; ability to bounce back; self-regulation; self-control; self- management; self- efficacy; empathy; being able to stand in someone else's shoes; sensitivity to global concerns; ambition; aspiration; curiosity; commitment to value of diversity; inclusivity; citizenry and sense of community (CBI, 2019: 23). Some of these character traits may be developed naturally (or not) from the influence of the family, in the dispositions and cultural up-bringing in the family home (Lareau, 2011). Students may need guidance and application by the university to assist students in building self-awareness[14]. In support of this the Higher Education Academy (HEA, 2015) developed a framework for universities to consider and use to embed employability in HE and define what employability means in their own situation so that a defined and coordinated approach is understood and supported by all staff and made explicit to students.

The CareerEDGE[15] model of employability devised in 2007 (see Figure 1) is a framework widely used by universities in preparation for graduate employability (see for instance the case studies in Advance HE, 2021). The model depicts the essential components of employability and the interaction between the components for employability to provide a framework for students to reach their full potential and become a 'value added' graduate (Dacre Pool, 2016). The framework suggests that students are encouraged to develop, reflect and evaluate on these experiences on the bottom tier in order to develop higher order levels of self-esteem, self-efficacy and self-confidence, which are crucial links to employability. Self-efficacy beliefs relate to mastery of skills and experiences, in trying the task, or hearing how others have undertaken the task and persuading themselves that they possess the capabilities to master a particular activity. Self-confidence presented with assurance is linked to the portrayal of self-efficacy. Developing employability-related self-confidence may develop over time as skills are learned and new behaviours are developed and may be a situated behaviour rather than a fixed trait (Tymon, Harrison and Batistic, 2019). Self-esteem is an

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[14] Many of the students at LBU are involved with Federation of Young Farmer Clubs (YFC) where competitions are held regionally and nationally and intended to develop the characters and skills of members and in building confidence and self-awareness.
[15] CareerEDGE is a mnemonic used to remember the five components in the lower tier on the model.

important part of employability (Dacre Pool and Sewell, 2007) where self-respect and sense of worthiness are personal evaluations of themselves and belief in one's ability to succeed.

The issue for this research came from a sense that there are *other* factors of consideration not included in the Dacre Pool and Sewell model (Figure 1) and that it does not capture sufficiently the complexity of employability. Notably, that it did not capture the *other* personal mystical invisible aspects particularly from a student and sociological perspective in traversing between the fields of HE, placement seeking and employability. Acknowledging, that even with the acquisition of the essential components of employability, there will be other factors that enable a student to stand out and fit in with an employer which may not be overtly accountable. I will explore this in Chapter 3 and Section 5.3 in Chapter 5.
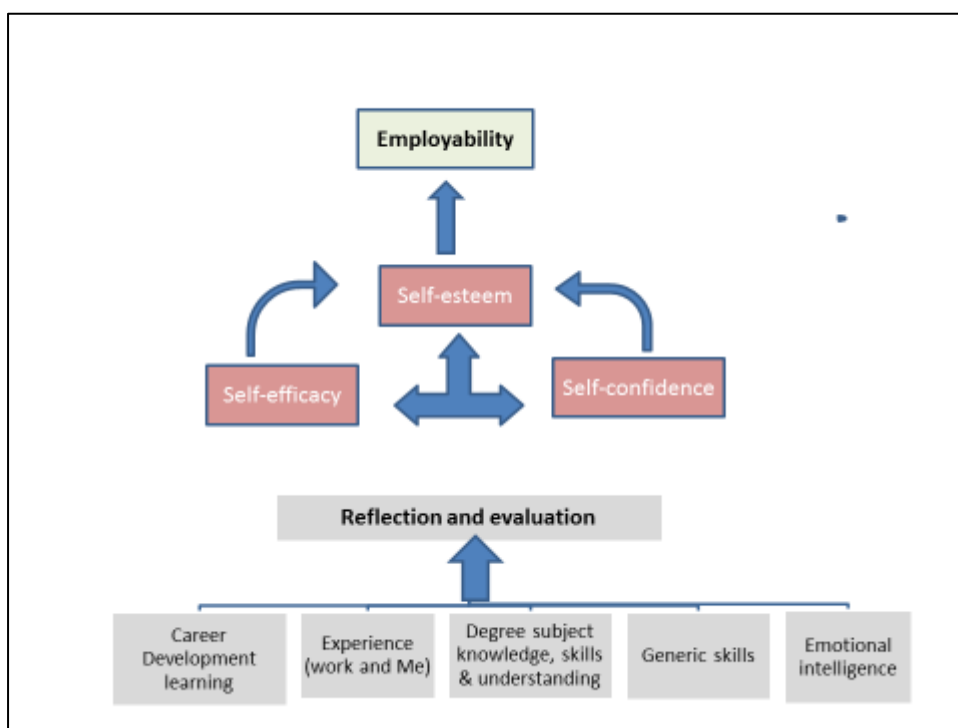
Figure 1 CareerEDGE model: The essential components of employability

Further consideration on the components of employability, the multifarious definitions of employability and frameworks for employability have evolved. For instance, 'work ready' or work-readiness are terms used in connection with graduate outcomes and employability. Work-readiness has many different nuances, and references to soft skills, essential skills, employability skills, transferable skills, and interpersonal skills have been used to describe 'work readiness'. The terms 'enterprise and entrepreneurship' are used, often interchangeably in HE in the narrative of employment (Sewell and Dacre Pool, 2010). Enterprising students and graduates are constructed as more employable than those without enterprise skills (Bell, 2016). However, being 'enterprising' or having the essential components of employability is not static as Figure 1 may intimate. Other

concepts of employability have considered the multiple components of employability in a dynamic market-place where employability is perceived as a *process,* something to be achieved and ongoing (Okay-Somerville and Scholarios, 2017; Reid, 2016).

This consideration of employability as a continual process was used to create the circular nature of the 'I Brand' employability model as developed by Trought (2017). Holmes (2013) conceptualised employability and university-to-work transitions based on the three P's and their associated capitals: *Possession* (of human capital in the form of knowledge and skills), *position* (based on social capital), and *process* (based on career self-management). Process, as conceptualised by Holmes (2013), has a focus on graduate identity, career exploration, career self-management (CSM), guidance seeking, networking, and work experience to be able to position themselves better among competitors and employers. Marilyn Clarke (2018) also conceptualised a framework of graduate employability as processional CSM that incorporates the dynamic market and with six key dimensions[16] in an attempt to address the social class issues where working-class students lacked social contacts to obtain internships in certain sectors (Bathmaker, 2015; Burke, 2016; Furlong and Cartmel 2005, 2007; Morrison, 2019).

However, much of the literature discussed here is framed around graduate employability, and reveals limited literature on employability for traversing the field of placements, who at this stage of their HE studies will not have attained the level of 'graduate employability capitals'. An integrated work-based learning approach through structured placements enables the development of skills and shown to enhance employability outcomes for students and graduates (Rowe and Zegwaard, 2017). Employability is not taught, these placement schemes provide the time and space for students to reflect and learn from their experiences and what it means to be a professional (Minsky, 2016: 10). Learning through placements is a common feature of many university programmes (BIS, 2011) and traverse the fields of HE and employment in a supportive environment. It also contributes to their pre-professional identity (PPI), a concept introduced by Jackson (2016) where a student makes sense of their intended profession through multiple memberships and differing levels of engagement with various communities within the HE 'landscape of practice' (such as professional associations, student societies, careers services and employers) and help equip students for a given profession (Tomlinson and Jackson, 2019, Tomlinson, 2017a). An integral placement can also reduce disconnect between employer and graduate expectations for skills (Lisá et al., 2019), and promote higher levels of self-exploration, guidance seeking and other proactive career behaviour for CSM (Okay-Sommerville and Scholarios (2015).

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[16] Six key dimensions: human capital (skills, competencies, work experience); social capital (networks, social class and university ranking); individual attributes (career self-management, career-building skills); individual behaviour (personality variables, adaptability, flexibility); perceived employability, and the influence of dynamic labour market factors (Clarke, 2018).

In support of this, I argue that conceptualisations of employability as being processional capture work-related and wider experiences, such as structured work placement which are instrumental in shaping identity and work-readiness. They also provide the opportunity for students to develop employability skills and capitals for their future career with others in the targeted field. Likewise, the development of innovative collaborative relationships with employers and universities enables employers to secure a talent supply chain[17], and student progression along the 'innovation escalator' (Wilson, 2012; HEFCE, 2008). The increased importance of work-experience in the competitive graduate recruitment market has meant the number of paid placements[18] has increased over the past ten years (High Fliers, 2020).

In summary, having reviewed this body of literature, I argue there appears to be no uniform theory of employability and capturing the complexity of work-readiness. The understanding of employability and particularly graduate employability in relation to the role of HE has been framed around a skills-based approach and the acquisition of dynamic interactive forms of capital. Employability is also framed towards a relational and socially constructed process, a process that entails graduates developing relationships with the market sector and associated social actors (Clarke, 2018; Holmes, 2013). In this respect, employability is a process over time, less about the deployment of skills, and more about the personal and socio-cultural resources and forms of capital, which are crucial in allowing students and graduates to navigate the employment market.

However, in traversing between fields of HE and placement employment, these forms of capital and employability frameworks discussed, do not sufficiently capture some of the challenges facing student employment. These include the other personal and often invisible forms of capital, which in part make up the concept of 'career capitals'. Here, I am especially referring to those capitals linked to Bourdieu's (1986) concept of habitus (social, economic, cultural, and symbolic capital) which are explored in Chapter 3. Additionally, the use of social media and its associated forms of self-expression can blur the boundaries between students' personal life and professional life and how this may be perceived by a prospective employer (placement or graduate employer). The next section considers the impact of social media on placement seeking and the development of personal brands.

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[17] This is the approach taken at LBU where employability in the curriculum is embedded in the curriculum and in the compulsory yearlong sandwich industrial placement year, or study and work abroad options. This compulsory placement year is considered a contributor to the high graduate employment rate and job prospects awards for LBU where employers in the agri-food sector particularly seek the university as a 'hunting ground' or talent pipeline for both placement and graduate positions.

[18] At LBU, year-long placement is compulsory for all courses, and there are often more agri-food placement provider positions available than students to take these positions.

2.3   Social media and Brand-Me

The presence of digital technology has an effect on many aspects of our lives, either directly or indirectly through increasingly everyday practices such as shopping and banking[19]. In particular, the use of social media provides the opportunity for maintaining connections with others, entertainment, social enhancement and identity formation (Ifinedo, 2016). Indeed, the pandemic in 2020 created uplift in digital capability in HE and the re-shaping of work-related learning in a digital environment (Norton and Dalrymple, 2021). The commonplace use of social media has created new opportunities for self-expression blurring the boundaries between personal life and professional life and the development of personal brands. This has been especially in response to the neoliberal context and approach to entrepreneurialism and enterprise (Marwick, 2013) and justified as being part of an untenable and precarious employment market (Beater, 2019). Traversing between the fields of HE and placement employment is shaped by the neoliberal policies framing marketisation and consumerism in the UK.

Prensky's (2001) notions of 'digital natives' and 'digital immigrants' influenced educational institutions on how students and technology are perceived and their strategic thinking on digital technology, however this notion is challenged (JISC, 2014). Whilst students in HE have grown up in a digital age it is an over-simplistic view of the reach and the impact of digital technology (Costa, Gilliland and McWatt, 2019). Caution is also needed to avoid an overly determinist account of technology use and how it is used (Costa, Hammond and Younie, 2019). The mode of engagement in digital activities online and the ubiquitous nature of the web have led to the blurring, or decompartmentalisation between the personal and professional presence online and how the functionality of online tools are used (JISC, 2014)[20]. For HE students, navigating their way through both fields can be challenging with the difficulties witnessed in using social media and in managing their digital footprint mentioned in Chapter 1 being one such challenge.

While digital technologies provide many benefits, it also poses as many challenges to the user. The use of online accounts such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram allow a person to be perceived by others and creates their Brand-Me brand whether intentional or otherwise. Competing for online digital attention and being visible to an audience leads to social recognition (Reckwitz, 2020). Vitberg (2010: 42) suggests that the old mantra of "it's not what you know but who you know" is now replaced with "it's not who you know, but who knows you; and it's not what you know, but how quickly you share your knowledge, observations, and insights". The immediacy of being able to

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[19] Social media penetration in the UK is approximately 72% nationwide as of 2019 (Statistica, 2021) and where YouTube and Facebook have had a significantly larger reach than any other social media platform (62% and 59% respondent share in 2019) (Statistica, 2021a).

[20] See Visitor and Resident mapping (JISC, 2014) as an example how functionality of online tools are appropriated differently by different users.

respond to social media enables instant engagement to the narrative and building of a personal profile. However, the instantaneous nature of social media may allow for less time for consideration of what may be shared or said, or between whom it is shared. This is likened to danah boyd's (2011) description of 'context collision' especially with the decompartmentalisation of online tools, and may have personal harmful consequences.

The web is increasingly used as a tool to acquire more social support and information and add to social resources through the aggregation of activity-tokens (user clicks) that encode defined activity-types such as liking, tagging, following (Chouldry and Kallinikos, 2018). The number of 'friends' is partially predictive of social capital, and where identity information in Facebook serves as a social lubricant in encouraging individuals to convert latent weak ties and enabling them to broadcast requests for information and support (Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe, 2011).   Social media networking sites may empower individuals to meet their personal needs and preferences by customising a social life characterised by interactive digital and face to face modalities and in building social capital offers 'customized sociality' (Manago and Vaughn, 2015:191). An aspect of customised sociality on social networking sites involves asynchronicity of computer mediated communications which allows for more social control. Asynchrony means that a person can edit themselves, reflect on what they want to say and present before transmitting their messages. Asynchrony may create a 'shroud of screen's' (Manago and Vaughn, 2015: 192) where different persons can be cultivated with the digital tools at their disposal. Conversely, it may also create anxiety to conform to the seemingly perfected images of others' lives where digital subjects participate in a media based attractiveness market and cultural "fabrication" (Reckwitz, 2020: 179) for visibility and authenticity.

The nonymous (as opposed to anonymous) online media environment such as Facebook acts to scaffold engagement between parties and identity construction (Zhao et al., 2008, Manago and Vaughn, 2015: 188) and to project and strategically present a shade of the self for the audience. The anchorage and authenticity of an online projection depends on the overlap between the online and offline networks. Social media may act as a consumer market and for the function of identity approval, a wide range of 'identities' from which a person can select (Bauman, 2001). Commercial advertisements are carefully crafted to show commodities they sell as part of a particular lifestyle, so that prospective customers can purchase symbols of such self-identity as they would wish to possess. In a similar way, social media offers identity making tools and elements of the complete identikit of a do-it-yourself (DIY) customised self and where other aspects of lifestreaming are shared beyond the staged photographs of family rituals such as birthdays and weddings.

The sharing of one's uniqueness and correspondingly authentic experiences of lifestreaming (at work, at leisure, and in one's private life), have become a common theme or "leitmotif", and created an "authenticity revolution" (Reckwitz, 2020: 73). For example, the narrative power of the selfie acts as an agentic human branding tool. It aids individuals to present their self as a visual multifaceted public identity through the conscious editorial selection of images as part of the production or promotion of oneself to mass audience (Eagar and Dann, 2016). It can be used to encapsulate and craft the self as a human brand image and is both *mimesis,* (the showing of self as a character in action – presentation of self), and *diegesis* (the telling of the unseen things, feelings and actions - the narration of self). The trend of using memes[21] as part of social media may encompass the dimensions of mimesis and diegesis as a means of demonstrating authentic self, whilst 'othering' the belief and intended as parody commentary for self-construction (or self-destruction).

Written well before social media, the Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1959) penned by Erving Goffman considered face-to-face interactions of people in everyday life and how people react to saving face, enact to create conformity or impression. Goffman framed the vignettes of people's actions as in the theatrical performance and led to his 'dramaturgical' analyses of such actions. This metaphor includes the subject as an actor with front of house performance, selecting the stage, using props, costumes and scene setting for an audience to view. Here, the main goal being to keep relevant, and to adjust according to the situation with other actors. As with every stage performance, there is a back stage where the hidden person can be themselves outside their role or identity. Face to face self-presentations are live and in the moment, they arise out of spontaneous, synchronous, and enriched social cues. However social media self-presentations entail strategic self-presentation. This may involve selecting photos, posting premeditated clever comments, sharing only noteworthy life events, engineering social exchanges to advertise social attractiveness, and associating oneself with esteemed audio-visual content recycled from other online sources.

In the shift from offline to online self-presentations, the individual faces the task of projecting an image representing one's identity onto a digital screen. This involves increased self-consciousness in crafting a self for others' viewing, this means increased attention to, and control over one's appearance (Zhao et al., 2008).The use of social media in today's society display what Goffman (1959) described as interaction coherency whereby the actors (students) foster impressions that reflect well upon themselves and encourage the others, by various means, to accept their preferred definition, in effect a 'front'. But complexities arise as our consumer-orientated society offers a

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[21] Memes – an image, video, piece of text etc. typically humorous in nature that is copied and spread by internet users often with slight variations. Acts as a unit for carrying cultural ideas, symbols or practices.

multitude of 'presentation selves' to 'self-assemble' and crafting a digital self through online social interactions offers both risks and opportunities for employment.

In essence, appearances may be manufactured and taken on and off in the seduction that comes with continual consumption and viewing of others. This highlights the importance of HE students in managing the online digital footprint as their online presence plays a part in shaping their Brand-Me to avoid the focus by others being made on the unimportant. Evans (2010) emphasises the importance for the student to be a professional digital citizen and in managing one's digital footprint. However, the use of social media also offers the potential for the blurring of lines between personal and professional use and the opportunity for non-controllable factors to lead to abuse and tension for young people where others are doing the branding and where a perceived negative image or digital shadow may have been created through others' personal ethics. It may also offer potential employers the opportunity to review those personal brands in order to dig-up 'digital dirt' (Rutledge, 2008).

Equally, the use of social media is a widely-adopted platform for real-time facilitation of relationship building for both individuals and the organisations they work for, in that the interactions of the employee feed into the two-way stream of corporate reputation and identity building management (Nolan, 2015: 289). While an employee retains his or her own identity, their reputation and image are public and they do reflect on their organisation. In effect, that branding is the intersection of identity and reputation. Social networking profiles that show a professional image may influence a candidate's chance for a job (Harris and Rae, 2011:16) whilst keeping it authentic and honest. However, this is an additional challenge where the expectations and pressure to be authentic and consistent in the work-place and its inseparability from the private existence for self-promotion erodes the difference between the external and internal self (Beater, 2019).

In the neoliberal Western world, authenticity and uniqueness is the basis for self-branding (Gershon, 2016). However, social media may also provide the opportunity for 'performing affectation' and inauthenticity where Qian (2020) explains that in China the practice of self-presentation or personal branding with e-traders is encouraged and openly presented as holding pretence or exaggeration. The entrepreneurial e-traders are professional pretentious 'zhuangbi' performers[22] fashioning themselves to embody certain dispositions to establish their status in China. The zhuangbi practices of pretentious flaunting of material wealth and desires online reflected the e-traders' dispositions of self-branding and promoting themselves into enterprising subjects to build a personal brand, and is a form of 'performative authenticity' (Reckwitz, 2020). Zhuangbi and *Xuanfu* (wealth flaunting)

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[22] The term *Zhuangbi* is generally not a positive term used to judge people or human behaviour; the word *Zhuang* means pretend, and *bi* refers to female genitalia. As a single word it conveys pretentiousness (Qian, 2020:3).

displaying manipulations and exaggerations both emphasise the marketisation of personal life for brand-building in China and is an acceptable means to stand-out and defined by social and economic status in a neoliberalist-socialist dichotomy.

The pursuit of authenticity is full of paradoxes. Authenticity is what one relates to oneself, in being genuine and not artificial for others' benefit. Yet in the current culture authenticity is a social expectation, where individuals are expected to present themselves as singular and authentic whereby the "self-production of the digital subject is nothing but the fabrication of such performative authenticity" (Reckwitz, 2020: 179). Authenticity in a dynamic and changing neoliberal employment market and the paradoxical logic of self-branding is challenged by the need to be flexible and yet show stability for employers; to be authentic and unique, but unique in a predictable standardised way (Gershon, 2016). Unlike Goffman's observations, often there is no back stage where the hidden person can be themselves outside of their role or self-created identity. The personal spaces of students are now on view to others through social media, and this was the premise for earlier work with students preparing for placement in HE (Parrott, 2014; Parrott and Walley, 2015).

In a neoliberal consumerist society increasingly shaped by digital transformations, complexities arise as our consumer-orientated society offers a mosaic of multiple of 'presentation selves' to 'self-assemble'. Who we are, our 'selves' is not an attribute we are born with but one acquired overtime through interaction with others. For Giddens, self-identity is fluid, that people are able to adapt to social structures develop their own 'life projects' against "the backdrop of shifting experiences of day-to-day life and the fragmenting tendencies of modern institutions" (Giddens, 1991: 198). There are many facets of our lives (as student, family member, or employee for example) and in each context, appropriate forms of behaviour may exist, and so judgements may be made on what is acceptable and unacceptable accordingly. Digital technologies have allowed a person to create and cultivate something singularly unique while the cultural selections they use are endorsed by others (such as liking and tagging) through automation behind the scenes (Chouldry and Kallinikos, 2018). These 'compositional singularities' make up a person's profile (Reckwitz, 2020). However, the decompartmentalisation of the digital age and how students choose their self-representations (Walker Rettberg, 2018) has blurred the lines between personal and professional identities. This complicates Tomlinson's (2017a) identity capital as the ability to "articulate a personal narrative which aligns to the employment domains they seek to enter" (Tomlinson, 2017a: 345). Social networking profiles that show a professional image may influence a candidate's chance for a job (Harris and Rae, 2011:16) whilst keeping it authentic and honest.

The need to have an online self-presentation 'safe for work' to benefit the creator (and for the benefit of a potential employer) is seen to be self-regulating in a response to uneconomic circumstances; at the same time balancing the advice emphasised in marketing strategies for 'authenticity' and 'being yourself' (Marwick, 2013). As such, a self-managed and considered reveal of personal information is seen as a marker of authenticity and approach to personal branding. In relation to students in HE, I am not advocating students to continually craft their inner souls for the benefit of employers to sell their personal brand, or to construct their social biographies to perform as "Me &Co", selling themselves on the market place (Beck, 2000 in Furlong and Cartmel, 2007:4). However, a structured learning approach to social media marketing is often limited in HE (Atwong, 2015; Seaman and Tinti-Kane, 2013). This presents a challenge for HE students and their approach for self-branding in a digital world as they traverse the journey between HE and placement, beyond just enabling students to better market themselves. For students in HE, consideration of the concept of Brand-Me may provide a framework for self-presentation with a managed articulation and projection of an emerging employability narrative for employers or other interested persons in the landscape of practice (such as industry scholarship providers, sector interest groups and organisations, talent seekers). The role of social media in particular can play a part in accessing, presenting and capitalising on brand positioning which is "the act of designing a company's offering and image to occupy a distinctive place in the minds of the target market"' (Kotler and Keller, 2012: 156). By way of explanation, the principles of marketing and concept of branding relating to personal branding are described next.

2.4   Marketing and branding principles: personal branding and Brand-Me

Principles of marketing and branding apply to products and services, cities (Kaplan et al., 2010), countries (Osei and Gbadamosi, 2011), celebrities and individuals (Hooley et al., 2012). This section will explore the consideration of marketing and branding principles as applied to personal branding and Brand-Me.

In marketing terms a product may be broken down into bundles of 'benefits' or values, and have several layers to its product anatomy[23]. These layers would consist of firstly the 'core product' or benefit; the 'specified or tangible offer'; the 'augmented offer'; and the 'potential offer'. In relating this to student's self-promotion, the layers will include those capitals for employment (as discussed in Section 2.2), and will also encapsulate Bourdieu's concept of social, economic and cultural capitals (see Chapter 3) This is illustrated in Figure 2 (source: author own) and which all in part make up what I call 'career capital' in the field of the market place.

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[23] These layers are not absolute and clear-cut as there may be blurred lines between them.
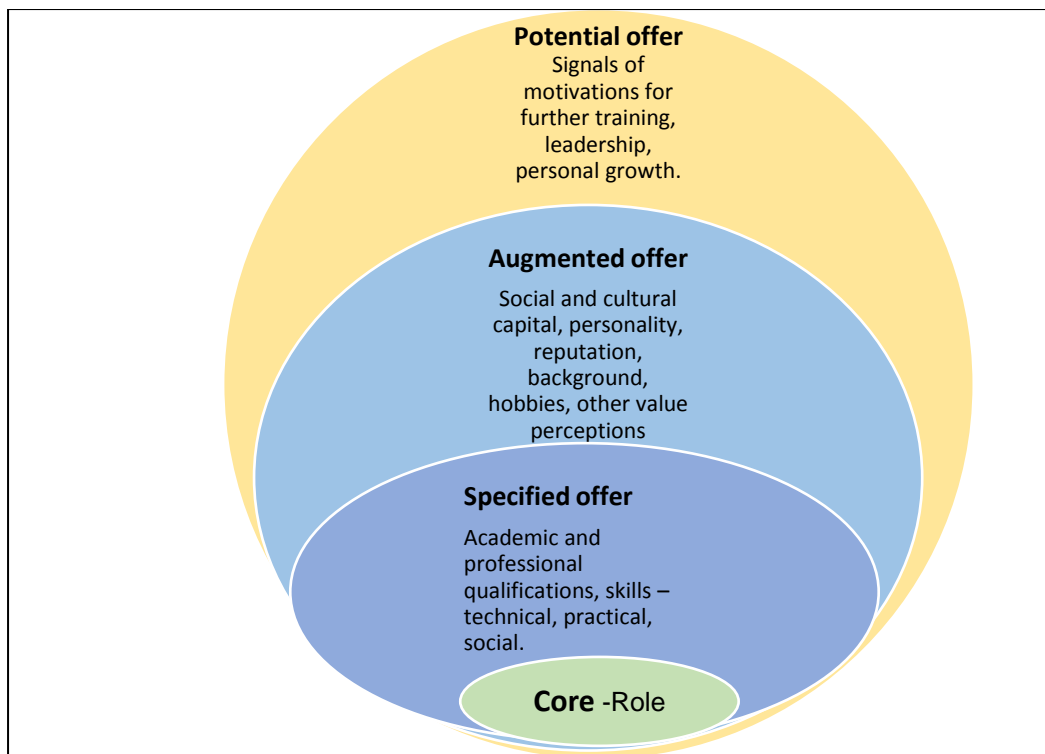
Figure 2 Students as producers: Anatomy of a product - career capital

The shifting experiences of day-to-day life (Giddens, 1991) and fluid identity is similar to a product requiring continual transformation, changes such as new flavours, designs, services for continued success as part of its Product Life Cycle[24] (PLC) (Brassington and Pettit, 2013; Kotler, et al., 2013) and this model could be applied to individuals charting the development of a career (Trought, 2017). Labrecque, Markos and Milne (2011) propose a 'sequence' of brands which are reinvented as the person's life stages alter and adjust brand positioning to suit that new identity or audience. Thereby the PLC depicts employability as a 'life project' and responsive to the fluid processional career self-management (CSM) view of Holmes (2013) and Clarke, (2018). This will require a dynamic approach to the selection of the cultural fabrications for portrayal (Reckwitz, 2020) and similar to the actors on Goffman's (1959) stage, the props (pictures, dress etc.) used will need altering to suit the changing personal and market circumstances, particularly as portrayed on social media to create meaning through self-presentation of Brand-Me.

When brands and products compete in the market-place a frame of reference of appropriate points-of-difference (PODs) and associated points-of -parity (POPs) are determined (Kotler and Keller, 2012: 158). In the field of placement/career seeking these may refer to specific skill set or qualification or career capitals required for a role. Here the creation of the personal brand and digital profile would

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[24] The PLC charts stages such as product development, introduction, growth, mature and decline phases, and at each stage a different strategy is used to reinvest in oneself and start a new direction.

try to demonstrate the heterogeneous elements to form an identifiable and appealing whole, whilst also creating an element of interest and surprise, a combination that creates its unique specialness or "cosmos" and "compositional singularity" (Reckwitz, 2020: 180). Parmentier et al. (2013) refer to this as the challenge of both fitting-in (with the company) and standing-out (against other competitors for the role). Branding is the process by which companies distinguish their product offerings from the competition (Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick, 2013; Jobber, 1998). A brand is defined as:

> A distinguishing name and / or symbol (such as a logo, trademark, or package design) intended to identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors (Aaker, 1991).

De Chernatony et al. (2011) define the term 'brand' further with an emphasis on 'promise' of the brand to be authentic: "A brand is a cluster of functional and emotional values that enables organisations to make a promise about a unique and welcomed experience" (De Chernatony et al., 2011: 31). Brand identity is how a brand signals the image it *wants* the market to perceive through the controllable elements it uses to construct the brand, in effect, the brand persona reflecting how the brand wishes to be perceived, the "desired brand image" (Tuten, 2020: 251). Brand positioning refers to the active communication of one's brand identity to a specific target and the sum of the brand assets (name, related symbols, and logo) makes up 'brand equity' (Tuten, 2020). Brand equity is a measure of the strength of the brand (Jobber and Chadwick, 2016), and the "differential effect that knowing the brand name has on customer response to a product and its marketing" (Kotler, Armstrong, Harris and Piercy, 2017: 243). Consequently, branding also encompasses the intangible features where one's personal brand is more to do with *others'* expectations and perceptions as regarding what they may expect when they engage with the person. Essentially a brand is a perception held in someone else's mind (Schawbel, 2010) and "what people say about you when you're not in the room" (Jason Kilar in Kotler et. al., 2013: 257). The collective impressions and perceptions assign a form of 'brand equity' to that person. Therefore, the intangible features, of everything a person does, how they speak, how they appear and dress, how they behave, the contacts they make, sends signals which come together to create an image and shape a personal brand as shown in Figure 3 (author own).

Figure 3 Brand positioning and equity

Personal branding[25] and articulating the personal brand or one's own Brand-Me is a part of brand positioning. Personal branding (also known as self-branding) has a different nuance to that of self-marketing[26]. Personal branding encourages individuals to discover what they have to offer, in effect a self-audit, ascertaining 'core values' which are then used to 'promote' this as a branded package to the target market (Blythe, 2016; Kelly, 2016; Shepherd, 2005). This has been built on the cry of Tom Peters (Peters 1997: 83) that, "our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called "You", with the key premise that everyone has a personal brand and where the individual is encouraged to look inside themselves to discover key identifying attributes, their 'unique promise of value', 'the core you'. From this a person can construct a compelling personal brand statement articulated and positioned around this unique set of attributes (Parmentier et al., 2013; Vitberg, 2010). Gershon (2016) goes further and suggests that a person's uniqueness would also need to fit with the standards required by the company and that personal branding is a "performance genre that includes a set of semiotic techniques designed to solve a problem that emerges when workers seek to present themselves as worthy of alliances under contemporary neoliberal conceptions of the ideal working self" (Gershon, 2016: 223).

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[25] Personal branding is also referred to as human branding (Close et al., 2011), or as 'I Brand' (Trought, 2017), or self-marketing (Shepherd, 2005) or person branding (Parmentier, Fischer and Reuber et al., 2013).

[26] Self-marketing consists of those varied activities undertaken by individuals to make them known in the market place, usually for the purpose of gaining employment in a competitive market place which relies upon communication activities and aggressive self-packaging and 'self-marketing branding skills' (Manai and Holmlund, 2015).

The consumerist neoliberal digital age with a strong focus on entrepreneurialism has driven the concept of personal branding beyond that of the concept of personal branding as introduced by Peters (1997) to a form of 'performance genre'. Beater (2019) writes about the paradoxical nature of self-brand literature advocating that the authentic self is embodied while at the same time cultivating them for the pleasure of employers, to the extent that no part of us in uninfected by the world of work. The technologies of the self (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc.) also act as a form of individual governance and creating ways for thinking about the self that is furthered by media and discourse through the technologies of the self (Marwick, 2013). In marketing communications, the PESO model categorises forms of media content into four segments -Paid, Earned, Shared, and Owned. These segments are not distinct and demonstrate another example of the era of marketing convergence (Tuten, 2020: 272). However, the steps to consider personal branding often appear to focus on the 'owned media' segment and ignore the overlap between 'shared media' such as social media and 'earned media' where people talk about a brand.

In summary, the concepts of marketing can be applied to individuals where a product has both intangible and tangible attributes (Brassington and Pettit, 2013). These collective attributes of augmented product anatomy and personal brand elements, the career capital, combine to create a bundle of functional and emotional values are part of the brand 'promise' of authenticity (de Chernatony et al., 2013:31) and brand equity as illustrated in Figure 4.
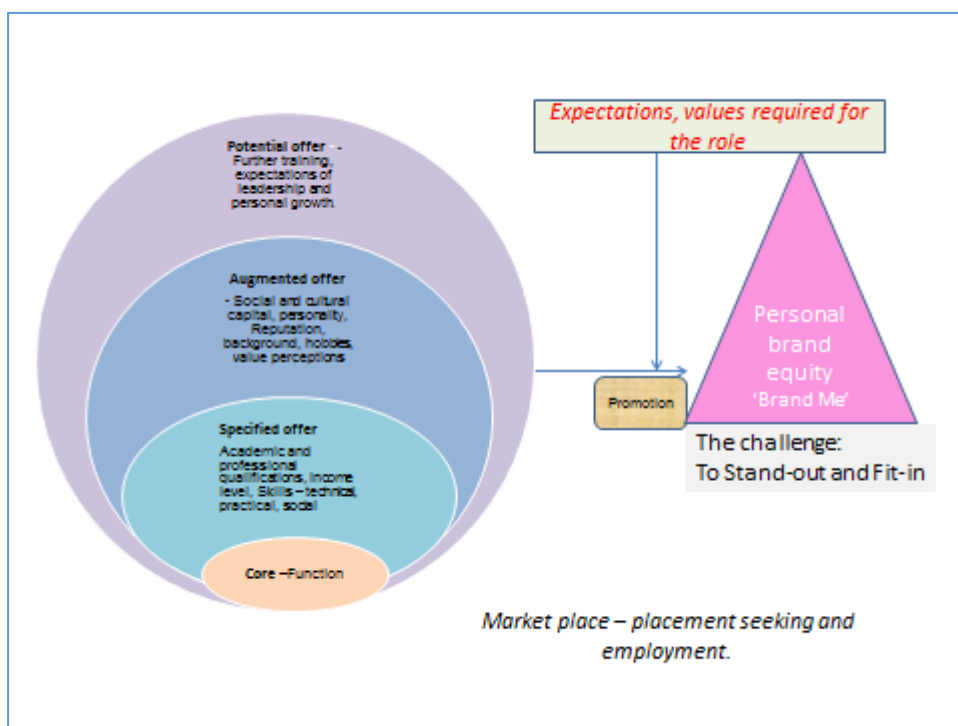
Figure 4 Student as producer: Shaping Brand-Me and personal brand equity.

The convergence or decompartmentalisation of the digital age has shaped the way personal brands are promoted and positioned. The fragmentation of traditional social structures, orders and norms has enabled individuals to create an unbounded virtual self and connecting human–brand narrative to others through social media. It has provided the chance to demonstrate the materialistic self through the assemblages of pictures and narrative in addition to self-gratification and display attributes of both material and symbolic meaning in the marketer constructed brand image (Giddens, 2013; Kedzior, Allen and Schroeder, 2016; Lee and Cavanaugh, 2016). The digital technology and convergence of media provides opportunity for promotion of the personal brand and opportunity to have an authentic brand image grounded in one's unique set of attributes embracing what it is that makes the unique individual, and "work your quirks"' (Arruda, 2017:1).

However, the digital age creates problems for a marketer constructed brand image. Being unique may be perceived and legible as 'too unique', and not standardised to fit with the company or others viewpoint. Friedman and Laurison (2019: 124) suggest that the "fuzzy, ambiguous notions of 'fit'" do not feature on social science surveys, are not found on job specifications, are not in official employment data and yet they are "tremendously powerful" in understanding why some people progress and others do not, and a pivotal driver of the UK's class pay gap. Brand equity could be likened to that of 'symbolic capital' (discussed in Chapter 3.4) encompassing the perceptions and in having the expected values/features required by the customer (employer).   A sociological perspective may help to tease out notions of fit or points of parity in traversing the field of HE to placement employment. Bourdieu's Theory of Practice (Bourdieu, 1977, Bourdieu, 1986) relating to field, capital and habitus is used as a lens to examine this further and provide a vocabulary and way of understanding the practices of employability. This is explained in Chapter 3.

3 Chapter 3 - Bourdieu and Brand-Me

Bourdieu's Theory of Practice (1977) considers 'thinking tools' with which to unearth social reality, including the concepts of habitus, capital, field and practice. Bourdieu sought to find new ways for thinking about human experience and social practice. This Chapter is comprised of five sections. Sections 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 explain the concepts of field, habitus and capital and field and how the tools may be used relationally; Section 3.4 considers Bourdieu's thinking tools and concepts with principles of marketing concepts; and Section 3.5 provides a further explanation of the field in which this research is located in the agri-food sector.

Bourdieu's focus upon the (in)visible world of social practice is located in the social constructs of being and acting in the social world (Jenkins, 2007). All fields of life (education, health, etc.) are bound by social rules and individuals occupy and compete (consciously and unconsciously) for social positions for themselves within these fields through their actions. According to Bourdieu, social practice is not consciously (or not wholly consciously) organised and orchestrated, but has a notion of practical sense or logic, and used the metaphor of having 'a feel for the game' to describe social life:

> The practical mastery of the logic or of the imminent necessity of a game – a mastery acquired by experience of the game, and one which works outside conscious control and discourse (in the way that, for instance, techniques of the body do) (Bourdieu, 1990a: 61).

Taking the metaphor further, games have rules and to some extent determine what the players can and cannot do. For Bourdieu, these rules are not that of a model or principle constructed to explain the game, but more or less consciously produced objective regularities:

> A principle of the juridical or quasi-juridical kind, more or less consciously produced and mastered by agents, or a set of objective regularities imposed on all those who join a game. When people talk of a rule of a game, it's one or other of these two meanings they have in mind (Bourdieu, 1990a: 60).

And so, games are learned through teaching as well as experientially in practice, as is social life and social competence. Most people take themselves and their social world for granted and within them they have grown up learning and acquiring a set of cultural competences, including a social identity, a sense of the position one occupies in a social space, as anything other than 'just who they are', their habitus (see Section 3.1). The interaction of habitus, cultural capital and field generates the logic of practice where "habitus realizes itself, becomes active only in relation to a field" (Bourdieu, 1990: 116). A 'social field' or 'field', can be expressed as an arena, or social space where struggles or an interaction take place over specific resources, or stakes and access to them. It is not a structure, but provides a dynamic context for the habitus and capital, a site of struggle and competition. Each

field has a different logic and taken-for-granted structure of necessity and relevance which is both the product and producer of the habitus which is specific and appropriate to the field. Each field has its own rules, traditions and history which are continually evolving because of the constant struggle among agents to acquire power.

Within the field agents act with respect to their position, which is based on capital and their disposition which is based on habitus. The possession of capital positions the agents in the field and produce in agents and institutions particular ways of thinking, being and doing. Positions stand in relationships of equivalence (homology), subordination or domination to each other by virtue of the access they afford to the resources (capital) which are at stake in the field, and where different forms of capital are legitimised. Values are presented and changing behaviour and practices take place to fit the field, "it is a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 97).

The structure of the field is a state of the power relations among the agents or institutions (Nice, 1993). Agents act in the field both consciously and unconsciously, to acquire power, or maintain or change their social position. The habitus ensures that agents act in accordance with the rules of the field and therefore appropriate capital investment is needed in order to play and succeed in the game. Bourdieu uses three steps in understanding the concept of the field, firstly, the relationship of the field in question to the 'field of power' (or politics) must be understood.[27] Second, the 'social topology', or map of the 'objective structure' and the relationships between them in competition for the field's specific form of capital. And third, the habitus(es) of the agents within the field must be analysed along with the trajectories or strategies which are produced in the interaction between habitus and the constraints and opportunities which are characterised by the structure of the field (Jenkins, 2007; Grenfell, 2008). Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 107) understand that there is a hermeneutic circle, a circular relationship between field and habitus:

> In order to construct the field, one must identify the forms of specific capital that operate within it, and to construct the forms of specific capital one must know the specific logic of the field and leads to a circular relationship between field and habitus (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 107).

The concept of habitus and its application to this research is considered in the next section.

3.1   Habitus

Bourdieu suggested that people act in ways that are meaningful to their lives and that our 'habitus' is "necessity internalised and converted into a disposition that generates meaningful practices and

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[27] Field of power in HE in Chapter 2, and Agri-food sector Section 3.5 in Chapter 3.

meaning-giving perceptions" (Bourdieu, 1984: 170). Habitus is created through personal history and other family and group influences while a person is growing up and is the physical embodiment to the experiences, skills and tastes. Habitus is not to be confused with 'habit' or fate; it is dynamic and a generative set of dispositions which are developed in response to objective conditions one meets in everyday life "constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures. It is durable but not eternal!" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:133). It is similar to 'socialisation' but manifested in deeper implicit structures within human beings and in part explains the decisions we make where people act with the cultural capital they possess and practices are often not conscious and calculated. One of the crucial features of habitus is that it is embodied (Reay, 2004) and whilst habitus also allows for individual agency it also predisposes individuals towards certain ways of behaving:

> The habitus, as a system of dispositions to certain practice, is an objective basis for regular modes of behaviour, and this for the regularity of modes of practice, and if practices can be predicted... this is because the effect of the habitus that agents who are equipped with it will behave in a certain way in certain circumstances. That being said, this tendency to act in a regular manner, when its principle is explicitly constituted, can act as the basis of a forecast … is not based on an explicit rule or law (Bourdieu, 1990: 77).

Individual histories are integral to the concept of habitus and a complex interplay between past and present (Reay, 2004). Whilst habitus reflects the social position in which it was constructed and "as the product of social conditionings, and thus of history" (Bourdieu, 1990:116), it also is capable of transcending the social conditions in which it was produced, "is endlessly transformed, either in a direction that reinforces it… or a direction that transforms it". For Bourdieu, there are no explicit rules, but that the habitus "obeys a practical logic, that of vagueness, of the more-or-less[28], which defines one's ordinary relation to the world" (Bourdieu, 1990:78). The habitus implies a "sense of one's place, but also a sense of the other's place" (Bourdieu, 1990:131). The notion of habitus is not static even though it is embodied from childhood experiences and in relation to social class. Dispositions are an inevitable reflective of the social context in which they were acquired (Reay, 2004: 435) and while dispositions are long lasting, they may be changed by a process of awareness and pedagogic effort according to Bourdieu:

> Dispositions are long lasting: they tend to perpetuate, to reproduce themselves, but they are not eternal. They may be changed by historical action oriented by intention and consciousness and using pedagogic devises…any dimension of habitus is very difficult to change, but it may be changed through a process of awareness and pedagogic effort (Bourdieu, 2002:29).

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[28] Like Friedman and Laurison's (2019: 124)"fuzzy, ambiguous notions of 'fit'"

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In terms of education, capital attracts capital. Inherited wealth presents a cultural distinction from the type of upbringing, of education, family connections which means that some people are better equipped in the field than others which helps explain differences in achievement. Knowledge as 'trans-cognisance' implies familiarity, at an implicit, tacit level as much as having knowledge of facts and things. Life changes including higher education, for example, contribute to changes in habitus and cultural capital. The processual nature of habitus and multidimensionality of habitus is a possibility of transformation. Florian von Rosenberg's work (2016) looked at developing a future-orientated habitus, a habitus transformation where individuals actively sought further cultural, symbolic, and social capital but also searched for strategies that would enable them to transfer the capital they have accumulated, a process of gaining new habitual dispositions. Whilst Bourdieu refers to the unconscious character of practical logic and the existence of dispositions beyond consciousness, there is some level of consciousness involved. Transforming habitus and gaining new habitual dispositions is not a quick fix, and according to Bourdieu is a process, "only a thoroughgoing process of counter training, involving repeated exercises, can, like an athlete's training, durably transforms habitus" (Bourdieu, 2000:172).

Bourdieu's work with the men and women of Kabylia exemplified the way the body is a mnemonic device upon which the very basics of culture, the practical taxonomies of the habitus, are imprinted and encoded. Bourdieu uses the concept of 'hexis' to conceptualise the mediating link between individuals' subjective worlds and the cultural world into which they are born and which they share with others: "Bodily hexis is political mythology realised, embodies, turned into a permanent disposition, a durable manner of standing, speaking and thereby feeling and thinking" (Bourdieu, 1977: 93). Bourdieu shares how professorial extraneous judgement of the bodily hexis of students could influence the evaluation and judgement by the language and taxonomy used by tutors in providing feedback to students, where limited technical feedback was provided to the students:

> The 'external criteria' most often implicit and even rejected by the institution, have greater importance in the remarks on his example of students' oral work, since the criteria already mentioned are compounded with all those concerning speech, and more specifically, accent, elocution and diction, which are the surest, because the most indelible, marks of spoken language, which can differ radically from written style, and finally and above all the bodily 'hexis', manners and behaviour which are often designated, very directly, in the remarks (Bourdieu, 1988: 200-201).

The human body is a site of ourselves that is always on display and people tend to judge what they can see (Bauman 2001: 103). How we manage the bodies is learnt while, at the same time, how others see us is also the product of common expectations. Thus, the shape of the body, the way it is dressed and made up in the way it moves are messages to others. How we relate to others, and

whether the others are willing to relate to us, depend on many factors and the message on our body being one factor among many. For higher education students in planning for placement and employment, often the fixation is on creating their Curriculum Vitae showcasing their educational, academic, and other achievements, and yet selection and recruitment will also be based on the whole attributes of the whole person including their digital online presence. The body is a site of value where these socially constructed taxonomies are read as a sign of the quality and values of the person. Bourdieu describes this as judgments, signs and values through the use of habitus, hexis and embodied cultural capital:

> Judgments which claim to apply to the 'whole person' take into account not only physical appearance as such, which is always socially marked (through indices such as weight, complexion, facial features) but also the socially processed body (with clothes, jewellery, make up, manners and behaviour) which is perceived through socially constructed taxonomies, and this read as the sign of the quality and value of the person…..The bodily hexis is the principal prop of a class judgement which fails to recognize itself as such: it is as if a concrete intuition of the properties of the body, grasped and designated as properties of the person, motivated the global perception and appreciation of the intellectual and moral qualities (Bourdieu, 1988: 200).

How students behave, their own habitus and mindfulness to the 'external criteria' and bodily hexis may affect the way they approach preparing for placement and performance in gaining placement positions. For instance, students seeking placement positions and employability in the agri-food and rural sector may be influenced by meaning giving perceptions and dispositions of the 'rural habitus' and associated embodied bodily hexis and cultural capital. Interactions between people are influenced by judgments made on the 'whole person' and this may include the digital presence and habitus. Within the field of the agri-food sector and actors habituated in the field, there are different forms of legitimised capital which are at stake in the field and resources in order to succeed in the game of placement seeking. Bourdieu conceptualised resources as being 'capital' and this is discussed next.

3.2   Capital

For Bourdieu (1986) forms of capital which are linked to habitus can be principally differentiated into three categories: Economic, Social, and Cultural factors. Symbolic capital is a fourth or composite form of capital, of legitimate levels of these capitals. All forms of capital are relational, but economic capital (measured by levels of monetary resources including savings, investment and property for instance) has an influence on the other forms of capital because of how the economy 'rules' society. These forms of capital 'plot' an individual's position within a social space which will depend on the volume of capital, composition of capital and change of these two over time (Bourdieu, 1984). Individuals may be placed in social groups based on similar levels of capital and attitudes, although

whilst occupying a similar position in social space it does not guarantee similar or collective practices or attitudes, but does suggest similar life chances and attitudes and more likely to socialise with each other (Burke, 2016). Social capital is the various kinds of valued relations with significant others and Bourdieu explains it as:

> The aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition (Bourdieu, 1986:248).

Social capital is embedded in the structures of social networks and the location of individuals in these networks. Social capital is comprised of the social connectives, the circle of friends, the groups of people we work and live with, the networks, who you know, the networks one has access to, the actions and behaviours we deploy and where there are levels of social rules (understanding expectations, behaviours, dispositions) expected to abide by. In the context of my research, it is located in the field of the agri-food sector, and so the connections made through being from a farming background, a rural background, the involvement in the Young Farmers Club (YFC) network for instance all provide a set of social rules, expectations and dispositions pertaining to that sector. Social capital describes the benefits individuals derive from their social relationships and interactions.

The work of Abrahams (2017) focused on the social capital that students were able to access through their family, and how their willingness to utilise this resource in their attempts to secure internships, work experience and/or jobs. In this study, a group of working-class students were reluctant to use their available social capital to secure jobs, in effect they showed 'non-mobilisation of capital' unlike the middle-class students. Abrahams (2017) includes networks and connections as a social capital resource which is symbolically legitimated capital and is also measured by their position in social space. Bourdieu describes this as:

> The volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent thus depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilise and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected (Bourdieu [1986] 2002: 286).

As mentioned earlier (Chapter 2) the online and offline opportunity for networking offers greater scope for building connections and social capital. Bourdieu suggests that networking relationships will need strategic investment: "The network of relationships is the product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term" (Bourdieu [1986] 2002: 287). The use

of social media and social networking sites (SNSs) has the potential to reshape social networks using social capital.

Capitals can produce and reproduce experiences depending on their value as conferred in the field. Cultural capital is a particular set of knowledge and skills that a person possesses without knowing; where agents never know completely what they are doing, and that what they do has more sense than what they know. The link between habitus and cultural capital is explained by Bourdieu saying:

> The habitus is at once a system of models for the production of practices and a system of models for the perception and appreciation of practices. And in both cases, its operations express the social position in which it was constructed. As a result the habitus produces practices and representation which are available for classification, which are objectively differentiated; but they are immediately perceived as such only in the case of agents who possess the code, the classificatory models necessary to understand social meaning. Thus, the habitus implies a 'sense of one's place' but also a 'sense of the other's place' (Bourdieu, 1990a: 131).

The 'code' may be an item of clothing, drink, sport, furniture; a presupposed taste of agreed classificatory social conditioning, of bodily hexis, and is the device that secures the 'overlap' between structures of social reality and of culturally regulated behaviour. The code is a system of oppositions or 'signs' – which may be visible, audible, tactile, olfactory objects. The signs point in two directions at the same time: towards the intentions of the actors and towards the given segment of social reality in which they act. These link actors' behaviour and the social figuration sustained by this behaviour provides a sense of one's place but also a sense of the other's place. Bauman (2001) refers to this as the 'cultural code'. And so it goes, that to know the code is to understand the meaning of the sign and this, in turn, means knowing how to go on in a situation in which they appear, as well as how to use them to make such a situation appear. To understand is to be able to act effectively and thereby sustain coordination between the structures of the situation and our own actions.

Cultural capital accumulation (as well as stabilisation and acquisition) becomes characterised by its relation to material ease and especially the time to acquire it (Fowler, 2000: 12). It may be comprised of three types. Firstly, it may be 'embodied' where cultural capital consists of acquired and passively 'inherited' properties of oneself (for example language, tastes, manners, skills). Secondly, 'objectified' where cultural capital consists of physical objects that is owned (such as works of art, property). Thirdly, 'institutionalised' where cultural capital consists of institutional recognition, which may be in the form of academic credentials or qualifications of the cultural capital held by the individual (which often is manifested in the 'old boy network' and social capital). Higher

Education confers onto students' cultural capital and symbolic power which gets transferred into labour market capital (Tomlinson, 2009).

Symbolic capital refers to the power to confer meaning upon objects, attributes and characteristics and the value by which they are held. Bourdieu (1990a:133) suggests that the "social world presents itself, objectively, as a symbolic system which is organised in accordance with the logic of difference". The social space functions as a symbolic space, of where the social space is characterised by different life-styles. A capital (or power) becomes symbolic capital, that is, capital endowed with a specifically symbolic efficacy. The 'power' does not arise for the dominant, but for the dominated. For the dominant, the power of the symbolic capital is inscribed in the immediate relationship between habitus and the situation, the accepted legitimate norm, of indigenous criteria, a practical acceptance (in the mode of illiusio) of the possibilities and impossibilities in the field. For Bourdieu, the expression 'This is not for us' reveals the extent by which the most deprived exclude themselves from possibilities from which they would be excluded anyway (Bourdieu, 1990a: 112).

The combination of the different types of capital is shaped into symbolic capital which is not an entirety within itself but the internal and external acknowledgement of capital by the peer competitors and other players; i.e., a form of recognition. Indeed, any resource can be deemed a form of symbolic capital if it is widely valued and sought after in the field. For example, such as 'bodily capital' (Meinert, 2004) in relation to resources for health; or 'academic capital' (Balmer, Richards and Varpio, 2015; Varpio, 2013) in recruiting medical students; or the bundle of tangible and intangible capitals to make up what could be called 'career capital' as the in recruiting students or graduates for placement positions. In order to be able to enter and succeed in the placement/career field, the different forms of capitals are likened to tokens (Walther 2015) where according to the rules, allow or not to participate. The volume of their capital (tokens) and the structure of the capital (the composition of the different types of tokens, for example economic capital, or cultural capital) will affect the way the game is played. Having a sense of the game is what Bourdieu calls the practical mastery, which is the relationship between tokens and play (Nice, 1993). An awareness of the career capital tokens will be important to understanding success in the rules of the game in the field of placement seeking. An explanation of the relationship between capitals, habitus and field is described below.

3.3   The relationship between the habitus, capital and field

The relationship between the habitus, capital *and* field need to be appreciated to fully examine a setting. Bourdieu understands positions and dispositions to be complementary and is "like a fish in water… and takes the world about itself for granted" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 127). The

dynamic nature of the field means that there may be time lag between the agents recognising the shift in the field and may need to create a strategy to move within the field due to 'lack of fit' between the habitus and the field. This is called 'hysteresis of habitus' (Bourdieu, 1977:78).

The interrelationship between the habitus and field is noted as 'doxa' or 'doxic experience' being the taken for granted or attuned understanding:

> The interrelationship of immediate adherence that is established in practice between a habitus and field to which it is attuned, the pre-verbal taking-for-granted for the world that flows from practical sense... it is because agents never completely know what they are doing that what they do has more sense than they know (Bourdieu, 1990:68).

The phrase 'doxic acceptance' is used to indicate how there are many categories of thought that we routinely employ in our understandings, but rarely reflect upon in our practice. For instance, the appearance of employees may be part of the inseparability of the product and part of the role in service environment in making successful service encounters and contribute to the ambiance of the service environment (Palmer, 2014: 94). Within my area of research in the agri-food sector, the cultural capital manifestations of what people wear and the type of clothing such as, typically tweed, wearing a branded gilet, a particular branded footwear; or body modifications, such as hair style, presence of conspicuous tattoos, nails, jewellery; and using appropriate vernacular, would show a tacit understanding of rural habitus and associated doxa, the taken for grantedness. Using the wrong terminology, or lack of knowledge and understanding of the practices in the rural sector (for example calling a male beef animal a cow, ignorance of seasonality and cropping, husbandry practices) would show lack of ruralness and 'you are not one of us'.

Habitus is not static; rather it can be altered and adapted by new experiences. However, Bourdieu suggests that when the habitus encounters a new field there is a 'dialectical confrontation' and at this point there can emerge a 'cleft habitus' or a 'habitus tug' (Bourdieu, 2002:31). It was also described as 'destabilised habitus' and the contradictory position cause suffering which Bourdieu describes this process in the following way:

> Thus, it can be observed that to contradictory positions, which tend to exert structural 'double binds' on their occupants, there often correspond destabilised habitus, torn by contradiction and internal division, generating suffering (Bourdieu, 2000: 160).

Abrahams and Ingram (2013) used the Bourdieusian lens to shed sociological light on social class and students living local to their home and university, and whether living in the two worlds is problematic causing students to 'miss out' on experiences. Thus, the contradictory position is seen as fields of struggle. However, the findings showed that despite the contradictory fields, the students developed strategies to enable them to overcome the conflict and that a 'cleft habitus' is

not always negative and can be a resource for some to negotiate both fields. Their qualitative studies showed some students were able to seamlessly switch through both fields by modifying their speech, appearance and behaviour and drawing upon a 'chameleon habitus' third space between the fields. The concept of habitus enables links between individuals' inner emotional worlds and external social and structural processes. Reay (2015) suggests that developing understandings of habitus to include the emotional underworld of individuals both extends and enriches the concept:

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

Diane Reay (2015) addressed the criticisms of Bourdieu's concept of habitus for not engaging sufficiently with the domain of the affective and emotions. She writes that Bourdieu outlines clearly the powerful emotions, conflicts and unresolved tensions within habitus and generally powerful emotions are most apparent when Bourdieu writes about the divided or cleft habitus. She suggested that we develop dispositions or 'defence mechanisms' in response to exposure when being faced with the risk of suffering, lesion, or even death. Reay's own work (2015) illustrated habitus operating as a defence mechanism, justifying class privilege with examples of parental narratives with powerful conscious and unconscious conflicts and anxiety in their consideration of schooling where the pressure to pursue academic excellence while fitting into a working-class multi-ethnic peer group would see habitus stretched to the limit. Yet these defence mechanisms were not limited to the habitus of the dominated against their disadvantaged circumstances, but dominant habitus operating as a defence mechanism against privileged circumstances. Whilst my own research does not focus especially on social class, the reflexive research elicited examples of habitus operating as a defence mechanism, or divided or cleft habitus as the students traversed between the field of HE and placement (see Chapters 5.3 rural habitus, and 6.3 gendered digital habitus).

The dynamic field of HE, qualifications and employment make the seeking of employment difficult to negotiate .The time lag between opportunities and ability to adapt to them will be influenced by the holder of the social and cultural capital to play the game, leading to potential hysteresis of habitus. With more students in higher education and more graduates in the market place, the value of the qualification may be devalued by employers who are looking for other forms of capital to exchange for a graduate position. Bourdieu suggested that hysteresis of habitus was greater in working class students in understanding the value of education and that in a socially reproductive education labour market, middle class students may enter the graduate labour market based on their real-social-qualifications (Burke, 2016). In academia the emergence of web digital technologies has

challenged the academic culture of work and associated doxic practices with those of digital scholarship which Costa and Murphy (2015a) identify as being hysteresis of habitus and the change effects they have on professional identity and the recognised order of things. Similarly, the emergence of the web (JISC, 2014) as a decompartmentalised social field whereby the online and offline self are often tightly interwoven has challenged the practices of placement seeking and in students considering their digital presence – the competing doxic approaches in the digital habitus in the personal life and professional work-related self, and by association their professional identity. Reflecting on Bourdieu's thinking tools such as social capital, doxa and hysteresis of habitus may provide a useful approach to understanding how students traverse the fields of HE and prepare for placement and employment.

 The more technologically complex and socially differentiated the society, the more fields or 'autonomous social microcosms' there will be. Social strategies are the ways people make conscious rational choices and unconscious use of their beliefs. Strategies and strategizing are the ongoing result of the interaction between the dispositions of the habitus and the constraints and possibilities which is the reality of any given social field – whether it be land holding, education or whatever (Jenkins, 2007). Habitus and capital are developed through socialisation experiences and a long-term generational process. In a field, all players have unequal status due to the individual's past-experiences, emotions, values, evolving interrelationships between personal and professional identities (Day, 2006). Constraints and struggles within fields will require changes to preferred practices, even in food consumption where food choices generated from a pre-disposed set of values inhibited willingness of consumers to try the unknown (Bava, Jaeger and Park, 2008). Practice, is rather like a jazz musician's improvisation on a theme and is the result of the relationship between an individual's habitus, different forms of capital and the field of action (Power, 1999).

For students acquiring a competitive placement or employment it may require changes or responses to practice which are not entirely isolated from one's habitus and capital, but requires modifications in response to the constraints that arise. These constraints, or breach (Akram, 2015) may provide reflexivity and open up a critical window for agents to initiate change, whilst being a difficult and fraught process. It is the struggles in the field that practices consistent with an individual's habitus and cultural capital are generated and give rise to a dynamic movement and trajectory. The field of struggles can be explained by which agents' strategies are concerned with the preservation or improvement of their positions with respect to the defining capital of the field. Von Rosenberg (2016) suggests that Bourdieu's concept of *illusio i*s a more powerful tool than that of capital and struggles within fields. Illusio provides the motivation for actors to get involved in the game and to develop a practical sense of the goal of the respective field. In my study, struggles in the field could

be related to the habitus, the background and the skill set that students have to enter the field of placement seeking and employment, and illusio being the motivation and understanding of the sector and belief that the benefits of the field are desirable for their career trajectory.

The perceptual nature of a personal brand may provide evidence of complying (or not) with the accepted measures of social capital to match the rules of the game. These rules determine the amount, type and level of resources or capital the agents (students) need to have in order to participate and succeed in the game of securing a placement or position of employment upon graduation.   Whilst Goffman's (1959) interaction theory (where actors will adopt impressions that reflect well upon themselves and encourage others to accept their preferred definition within the setting) provides an interesting illumination of self in everyday life and how actors present themselves in a particular light, the theory of social practice and concepts of habitus, field and capital by Bourdieu provides useful tools to operationalise in relation to preparing students for the world of work. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992:107) suggest that it is the field which is primary and must be the focus of research operations since legitimacy to enter the field is the possession of the necessary configuration of characteristics, or specific capital and what constitutes symbolic capital in the field. In applying the Bourdieusian concept to my research, the connection between placement as part of their HE course for their future career enables the rules of the game to be more easily understood by the players (students) as they traverse between the fields of HE and work placements in the agri-food sector.

3.4   Career capital and Brand-Me.

This section will consider the application of marketing principles in personal branding, the valued forms of career capital and understanding of habitus and field in the context of seeking placement and employment. When highly qualified individuals share similar levels of academic capital, they will have to add some form of distinction to stand apart (Tomlinson, 2009). The 'personal' credentials of a person may play an important part to standing out above their peers and adding to their credentials. At LBU the relationship and collaboration with employers through the compulsory integral industrial placement year is perceived to have a positive impact on graduate employability for the students who by occupational socialisation will have acquired a greater knowledge of the rules of the game in the employment field of the land and agri-food sector. The tripartite relationship (university, student, employer) and expectations of the partners to avoid dissatisfaction, known as 'Customer Gap' (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2000), are managed by Placement managers who could be likened to the 'referee'. The background of the students, with many from a rural background, with similar hobbies, culture and vernacular alongside the vocational nature of the courses at LBU shapes the habitus of the institution and makes the field of HE at LBU. While

Bourdieu does not use the term institutional habitus, an institution can bring about an adjustment in the habitus of individuals within it through collective actions (or the actions within it) which are adjusted to the 'logic of the field':

> In short, being the product of a particular class of objective regularities, the habitus tends to generate all the 'reasonable', 'common-sense', behaviours (and only these) which are possible within the limits of these regularities, and which are likely to be positively sanctioned because they are positively adjusted to the logic of a particular field, whose objective future they anticipate (Bourdieu, 1990: 55-56).

This set of 'common-sense, behaviours' brings agents into a state of habitus homology. It is these homologies, the shared habitus engendered by the institution, the positively sanctioned, common-sense behaviours that underpin the notion of 'institutional habitus' (Burke, Emmerich and Ingram et al., 2013). Whilst habitus is considered the principle of production of practices that are "collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of the conductor" (Bourdieu, 1990: 53), Burke et al. (2013) argue that the individual habitus can be deepened by considering its relationship to the social field and the interconnections that exist between habitus within these fields. In effect a 'collective habitus' created through collective practices of multiple individuals and the interactions of different habitus within a given field, a social and sociological realisation. Schools and institutions can directly shape the habitus and practices of individuals through their organisational forms and collective practices.

Consideration of collective habitus may be used to "comprehend practical (not just simply structural) differences within and between institutions" (Burke et. al, 2013: 172) and the homologous aspects of those institutions. Institutional habitus works with the notion of the individual and also with notions of affinity and homology that exist between individuals within collectives, and between collectives within larger social fields. This can be used to consider the concept of habitus in a theoretically coherent way and to understand the habitus of actors within an institution as members and not merely individuals. Within the agri-food higher education sector, LBU and other rural sector related higher education institutions have homologous aspects to the student body and collective habitus, a rural habitus. The collective habitus of these students would be different to those students attending other non-rural sector universities. The employers of the rural sector would also have notions of affinity and homology of habitus and this reflects the employer interest in the support of placement and graduate talent seeking in this sector.

The concept of the field represents the place where struggles take place and in this context students traversing from the field of HE to placements and their career path. The field of employment provides the arena where students are seeking placement employment and where there are

differing expectations of stakeholders and rules of game. These rules determine the amount and level of resources or capital the agents (students) need to have in order to participate and succeed in the *game* of securing a placement or position of employment upon graduation. In order for the player to succeed in the game of gaining employment, they need to have the tokens of value that form legitimate levels of capital or symbolic capital. Resources are regarded as economic, social and cultural. According to Bourdieu, levels of capital and positions within the social space enable an understanding of levels of aspiration expectation. Shaped by habitus, levels of capital may enable or restrict what individuals think they can achieve, "the field of possibilities" (Bourdieu, 1984: 110). This may include their view of their place in education and the labour market (Tomlinson, 2009), whereby students may essentially cap their aspirations, as the trajectory is "not for the likes of us" (Bourdieu, 1984: 47) and where student career choices or employability are constrained by their own pre-disposed set of capitals. Figure 5 illustrates the concept and relationship between field, habitus and symbolic capital (adapted from Walther, 2015: 68) where career capital is comprised of economic capital, social capital and cultural capital, making up a form of symbolic capital.
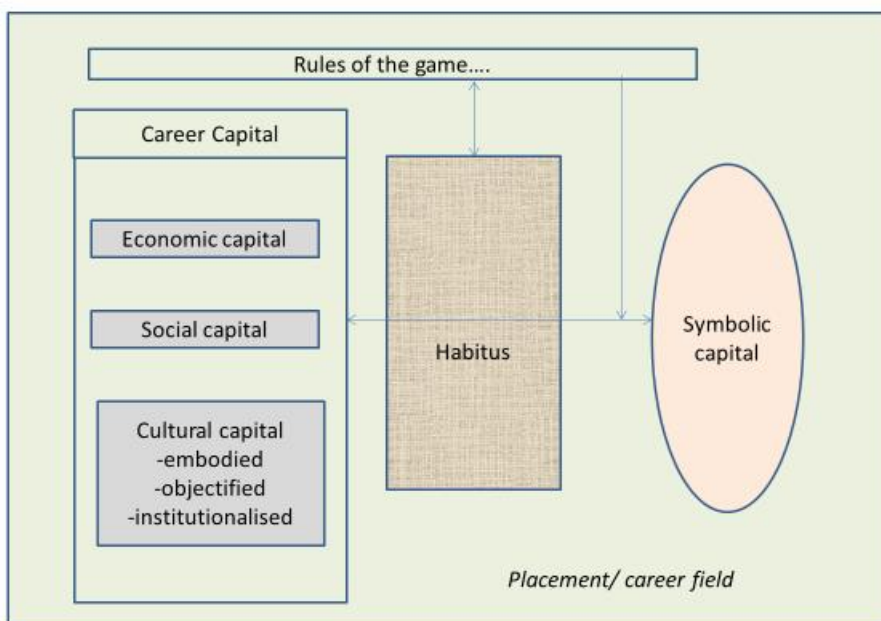
Figure 5 Relationship of field, habitus and symbolic capital

The field of contestation, involving struggle and tension often draw on the analogies of 'market' and 'game'. The field boundaries are not as autonomous as often reflected, where they can become a subfield of a larger field, or are positioned in the flaky borderlands and permeable (Bathmaker, 2015). This is true in the agri-food setting at LBU where there are subfields associated with the rural land management occupational setting, or agricultural engineering setting, or animal science setting,

and blurred edges between the fields. The analogy of game suggests rules, strategies to move, competition for capital or maintenance, and a dynamic field or social space. These rules are "historical constellations that arise, grow, change shape, and sometimes wane or perish over time" (Wacquant, 2007: 268) relating to the dynamic environment. With regard to placement seeking in the agri-food career field the embodied cultural capitals and growing up in a rural background and habitus may confer a greater understanding of the game. Symbolic capital refers to the power on which meaning is conferred upon objects, attributes and characteristics and the value by which they are held by players (students, employers, university) in the game and the success to which they succeed in the game of placement seeking.

Parmentier et al. (2013) suggest that person brand positioning within established organisational fields happens through processes that help to portray a person as having field-specific social and cultural capital. This allows them to 'stand-out' while acquiring the habitus that allows them to comply with field and occupation specific expectations in order to 'fit –in". Here in the context of this research in the agri-food placement/career seeking field, a considered personal brand combining both online and offline digital presence may help portray their personal brand and the field-specific social and cultural capital skill set to allow them to comply with the habitus of the field and employment specific expectations in order to both 'stand out' and 'fit in' within the occupational setting and landscape of practice. The resources a student has to hand, their personal attributes, personal brand values, their skills and qualifications, along with the Bourdieusian concepts of economic, social and cultural capital and their habitus combine to create their career capital. Taking a sociological perspective may help to tease out notions of fit or points of parity in traversing the field of HE to placement employment and Bourdieu's concepts can help provide a bridge in considering personal branding and Brand-Me.

As discussed in Section 2.4 of Chapter 2 (shown in Figure 2) principles of product branding and person branding have some common areas. For instance, both have several layers to their anatomy and make up the semiotic resources and cluster of benefits which can used to both stand out and fit in, all of which make up career capital in the field of the market place (as illustrated in Figure 6).
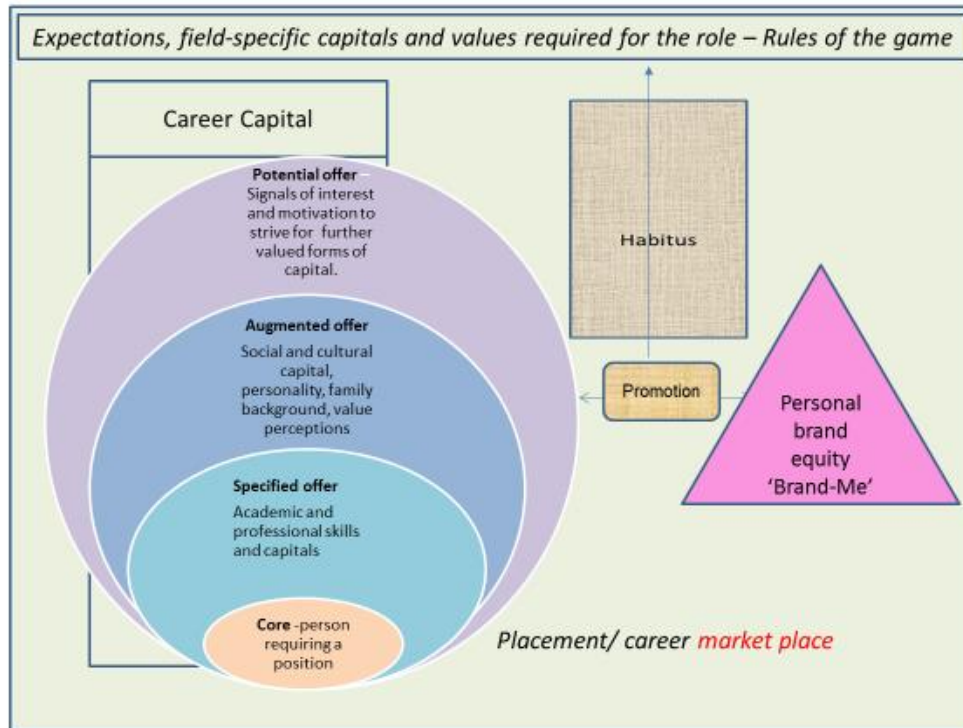
Figure 6 Career capitals and Brand-Me.

The students' habitus within the augmented offer and the personal brand elements offer a cluster of functional and emotional values, the 'brand promise' and make up the brand. The combination of specified offer and augmented offer create field -specific capital and tokens to play in the field. How students position their brand in the field, how it is portrayed, will influence others perceptions.

In summary, in marketing terms, the strength of product brand equity refers to what others think of a set of combined semiotic resources. For personal brand equity it would comprise the encompassing perceptions and expected values/features required by the customer (employer) both offline and online. In Bourdieusian terms, brand equity could be likened to that of 'symbolic capital' whereby what is regarded as tokens of power within field specific capital provide symbolic capital. Additionally, in marketing terms, striving for a 'unique selling point' helps a product to stand-out against the competitors, however in considering a personal brand this may be counterintuitive. They may benefit greater by having higher levels of the same field-specific capital with those they are competing with and understanding what constitutes symbolic capital. Being 'too unique', may not fit in with the normative expectations of the field.

The part the Placement Manager plays as 'referee' is a vital link in assisting the students to understand the rules of the game when seeking placements, and in support of the development of Brand-Me for the transition of student to graduate employment through reflexivity. This is in order that the student may have both points of parity and points of difference in the field of placement

and career planning to both stand out and fit in which is tacitly understood by those within the field and comply with the field specific behavioural expectations. This is not a static procedure. The rules of the field are dynamic (Wacquant, 2007) and field specific capitals will change. Students will be required to respond to these dynamic influences in charting their own Product Life Cycle (Brassington and Pettit, 2013; Kotler, et al., 2013) and 'life project'.

To conclude, this section and the review of literature in Chapters 2 and 3 chapters suggested further areas to explore to understand the valued forms of capital in the context of placement seeking and approaches in support of students to build Brand-Me through self-promotion and personal branding in the field of placement and career planning. The research question and research objectives arising from the literature review are shown in Appendix A.

It is useful at this stage to provide a further insight to the dynamics of the field in which these students are studying and seeking placements at LBU. A description of the characteristics of the field in which the university and students are located in the agri-food sector in seeking placement is provided next.

3.5 Characteristics of the field: HE and the agri-food sector.

While Chapter 3 (Section 3.3) provided some explanation of the field in which this research is located, it is useful to expand on this here further to provide an understanding of the field and provide a link between the methodology and the analysis of the empirical data. This research is located in the field of HE with students who will undertake placements in the agri-food supply chain sector. The case study university LBU is located in a rural campus setting and has a large commercial mixed farm business which provides a rich research and learning resource. Due to its very vocational and applied approach it is closely aligned to the field of the agri-food sector. In effect the boundaries are blurred between both fields of HE and the agri-food sector providing a set of common-sense and behaviours that are adjusted to a particular logic of the field (Bourdieu, 1990). The collaborative work with employers and the compulsory year-long industrial placement is a particular feature of the courses at LBU and a lasting tripartite relationship of over 120 years. This collaboration is believed to contribute to the employability success of graduates at LBU as shown in Chapter 2, Section 2.1.

The employers supporting students in the agri-food sector span the entire agri-food chain and encompass large multinational companies and small medium sized enterprises. Typical employers in the field are associated with supplying inputs to farm businesses (feed, fertiliser, machinery, consultancy, assurance); production, design, procurement and supply chain logistics and practices (in sectors such as poultry, livestock, fresh produce, flowers, dairy, cereals, beverages and trading); and

retail (large retailer multiples and smaller rural enterprises). In particular, this research focuses on students studying on the suite of agri-food related courses where 96% of students come from a rural background (see Appendix C).

This rural background may be reflected in where students live, the occupation of their parents in either owning or managing farms, and their connection with the broader agri-food industry. For Bourdieu (1986), the field is a social space where players (students, individuals, farmers, companies) are positioned with differing levels of resources or capitals (social, economic, cultural and symbolic) which contribute to the notion of power in the field. As such, in studying at this university these students are firmly situated in the field of the agri-food supply chain sector and collectively are likely to have a tacit understanding of the rules of the game in the field, the taken for grantedness, the silent cues, the field of doxa. This may take the form of having a shared language associated in the rural sector (such as language around livestock and cropping husbandry), and cultural embodiment (in the type of clothing worn to suit the office or country outdoors, the physical appearance relating to the body, the cadence of the walk and movement in the country in walking across land or opening gates for instance). These embodied meaning giving perceptions create a form of collective habitus (Burke et al., 2013) and an understanding of the logic of practice in the agri-food sector, a habitus homology, and what I call a rural habitus.

The power in the field (levels of social, economic and cultural capital) and rural habitus will also be influenced by the type of farm businesses with typologies such as whether the farm has a long inherited generational family history or first generation (which may influence embodiment of cultural capital and 'ways of doing things'); is owner occupied or tenanted (where owner occupied may exert more power and offer symbolic capital); structured as a farming company or family run (influencing family involvement); relating to the size and scale of land and operations for instance (where larger acreage may be deemed to hold more power and offer symbolic capital). Farmers and farm business typologies are also defined on counter-roles and identities such as traditional and commercial, agricultural producer and conservationist, progressive and non-progressive (Burton and Wilson, 2006). In addition to the farm type, the geographic and topographical location of the business will influence the enterprises grown on the farm and provide farm businesses with opportunities and constraints (such as large field scale fresh produce operations and arable operations east of England, grassland suitable for dairy farming in Cheshire, hill farming sheep in Wales, England or Scotland, apple orchards in Somerset, along with the diversity of sheep and cattle breed types to suit the terrain and agri-tourism) with associated levels of [financial] economic capital (Defra, 2020a). These differing farm business types, regional influences, differing rural family backgrounds will affect the social, economic and cultural background of the students attending the

university. The individual students' volumes of capital create forms of power in playing the game of placement employment seeking and symbolic capital. In terms of economic capital, whilst this specific student profile tends to be in the POLAR quintiles Q4-5, they are not classed as 'working class'. Economic capital will be tied up on assets (land, stock, machinery) while fluctuations in farm output will have affected the household income for many of the students whose parents are farmers, or whose work is closely associated with agri-food production.

Farm business income (FBI) varies greatly in the UK with over a fifth of the farms failing to make a positive FBI (Defra, 2020a). Despite this economic tension, the desire to pass on the farm to future generations and emotional attachment to the business means many family farm businesses strive to continue (Gasson and Errington, 1993; Glover, 2015) with the farm and their place in the agri-food sector and farming community providing varying forms of symbolic capital. For Bourdieu (1977: 179) symbolic capital consists of the "… prestige and renown attached to a family and name". Symbolic capital in the agri-food sector may be in the forms of prestige (in award winning crops and livestock), or in reputation and how they are perceived and judged by others such as being recognised as a good farmer (in stockmanship, business acumen for example), or as an agricultural leader, or attached to the attractiveness of the land and buildings. These forms of symbolic capital explain why many farmers in particular continue to farm as these forms of symbolic capital represent everything the farmer works for and is "his mark (brush stroke) in the family's history (portrait) and his status (identity) in the farming community and wider social world (Glover, 2008: 370). These in turn will have an impact on the primary family habitus of the student through their lived experiences and the subsequent decisions and [career] choices they make.

There are gendered identities around farming where the public presentation of the occupation of primary agriculture farming is often perceived as a male dominated sector, but not necessarily needed to be so with automation and technology (Brandth, 1995; Little, 2002, 2015). The masculinity of such work is socially constructed and embedded from culturally hegemonic beliefs and practices in agriculture and the relationship between knowledge and power and rural decision making (Liepins, 2000; Little 2015). In particular, the social norms and customs that historically regulated the transfer of property to men rather than to women has shaped and constructed gender roles and identities (Shortall, 2010) where the eldest son is seen as a "natural successor" and eldest female as not natural successors (Glover, 2014:281). The cultural practice of passing on farm estates to one person, usually the eldest son, and a hegemonic practice that views men as heirs to the business, has been a notable barrier to women's entry into agriculture and career choice in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2017). This, along with the exclusionary practices such as the unlikeliness of women being elected to committee positions has led to the recent Women in Agriculture Taskforce

publishing recommendations to address the "invisible, cultural and practical barriers faced by many women in the industry" (Scottish Government, 2019:3). This is the first time a government in the United Kingdom has established a Women in Agriculture Taskforce to identify practical solutions and to instigate longer-term cultural change. There is evidence of shifts in hegemonic practice in the rural areas (Pini, Brandth and Little, 2014) and these exclusionary practices are less evident elsewhere in the United Kingdom (where these students are mainly located) with many senior agricultural, food and environmental senior policy and governmental roles held by women (FarmBusiness, 2019), such as the present (2022) President of National Farmers Union, and holding positions on the Council for National Federation of Young Farmers Clubs (NFYFC) thereby providing the potential for opportunities in leadership roles for these students in the agri-food sector.

The agricultural workforce data in the UK is reported annually and includes trend data relating to farm holdings, farmers, business partners and spouses, but not whether male or female (Defra, 2020a). The Farm Structure Survey (Defra, 2016) showing agricultural labour in England and the UK showed that 84% of farm holders were male and 16% women (and showing similar data for farm managers). Women are more likely to work part-time than men, and over three-quarters of female holders worked on the holding part time, or not at all compared to just over half of male farm holders. Women made up more than half (55%) of the family workforce across all classified farm types in England (and 52% in the UK). Women have been an integral part of agriculture in working on farms, creating the Woman's Land army during the war, undertaking the harvesting of fresh produce more than 50 years ago before many women went out to work, in the role of supporting families, or being part of the rural economy. In family farms, male farmers typically exert more power in decision making (cropping, purchases for instance) whereas women have traditionally played supportive roles in assisting with farm work, financial record keeping and additional sources of income (Gasson, 1992; Gasson and Winter, 1992; Gasson and Errington, 1993). Outside the family farm scenario and traditions of inheritance and practice agricultural masculinity is perpetuated through commercial companies in rural media and the construct of gendered identities of masculinity in agri-industrial systems (Brandth, 1995). Leipins (2000) compiled a corpus of texts, interviews and rural publications characterising the dominant constructs of masculinity and how they are produced in farming and agricultural politics, which build popular discourses about agricultural masculinity and the conflation of a "true" farmer masculinity (in Australia and New Zealand). The construction based on the description of men as active, strong, outdoor workers,

decisive and tough, with associated images of muscled men and tough reportage and commercial marketing rhetoric to match[29].

Earlier in the thesis (Chapter 3, Sections 3.2 and 3.3), the interaction of habitus, capital and field (Bourdieu, 1990) was introduced. In applying this concept to this research, the agri-food sector in which the students are studying and placement seeking has a logic of practice where the habitus realises itself in relation to the field and a taken-for-granted dynamic context. The university and students in this research have an existing close relationship in the agri-food sector and will have some sense or feel for the game in the field, doxic experience and shared rural habitus. This provides a sense of stability to the field. Admittedly, individual students will possess differing levels of capital to play in the field to enable them to move within the field, or the need to identify forms of capital that operate within it in order to succeed and acquire power.

This section provided a link by way of explanation of the characteristics of field where LBU used as a case study is located, between the methodology and the resultant themes arising from the data. The ontological and epistemological considerations which directly inform the methodology and research approach are discussed in the next chapter, Chapter 4.

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[29] A scan of the popular Farmers Weekly magazine in the UK shows similar constructions of dominant forms of masculine representations in the field of agri-food, although scantily clad images of females draped over items such as potato sacks are now no longer a feature.

4 Chapter 4 - Methodology

There are four sections to this Chapter. Firstly, it will set out the methodology and ontological and epistemological considerations; secondly it will give an explanation of the methods employed; thirdly it articulates participant sampling and fieldwork considerations, and fourthly it will describe the approaches to the management and analysis of data. As a reminder, the main aim and specific research questions are shown in Appendix A.

4.1 Research philosophy and considerations

The research philosophy and design is derived via the understanding and alignment of a given ontological, epistemological and axiological perspective. Ontology is the understanding of how as a researcher I understand the world to be and the nature of reality, epistemology[30] is how I understand knowledge is developed; and axiology[31] relates to my own values and beliefs given to that knowledge on the design and analysis in relation to the phenomenon at hand. The concept of the 'research onion' of Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019: 130) has been applied to this research to explain the research philosophy and approaches to theory development. This is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 Research onion: Research philosophy and approaches used.

Philosophy	Social constructionist / Interpretivism. Subjectivism.
Approach to theory development	Inductive.
Methodological choice	Qualitative.
Strategies	Narrative enquiry.
Time horizon	Cross-sectional.
Data collection and data analysis	Individual in-depth interviews using Rich Picture with stakeholders related to the agri-food sector and using LBU as a case study for the boundaries of enquiry.

My ontological view is that reality (or being) is complex, socially constructed through culture and language, has multiple meanings, interpretations and experiences. This educational research was a sociological study and the philosophical approach was from a social constructionist approach with an interpretivist theoretical perspective to enquire into the perception and experiences of reality and where realities are co-constructed (Patton, 2015). In human sciences we are concerned with understanding of the lived experiences and this approach looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world (Crotty, 2005: 67) and viewpoint (Ritchie et al.,

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[30] Epistemology - the nature of knowledge we can have about reality, and what constitutes as acceptable, legitimate and valid types of knowledge and how it can be communicated to others (Burrell and Morgan, 2016 in Saunders et al., 2019:133).
[31] Axiological perspective – see Section 4.3.2.

2014).Thus the research philosophy is one of subjectivism, where the epistemology is focused on the narratives, interpretations and perceptions that convey the social realities, and taking an inductive approach to data collection (Saunders et al., 2019). Using a qualitative research approach enables a holistic dimension and gain a comprehensive picture of the whole context in which the phenomena of interest occur (Malhotra, 2017:154). Here LBU was used as a specific case study (Patton, 2015) defined by the boundaries of LBU relating to the stakeholders in the field of agri-food placement seeking (students, employers, university placement support staff). This acts as an *intrinsic* case study and allows the researcher to explore what is important about that case in its own setting and magnify issues and themes from within the specifics of the case which may in turn inform other future and comparable settings (Coll & Chapman, 2000). This qualitative approach aims to address the research questions and facilitate an understanding of the experiences of placement seeking (Seidman, 2013) and the meaning they take of that experience. The next section explains the methods chosen.

4.2   Method: in-depth interview incorporating Rich Pictures

The method of face-to-face in-depth interviews through the qualitative method developed by Strauss and Corbin (1998) was used in this research. A multi-method approach can be useful to inform policy or practice (Ritchie et al., 2014) and in order to explore and tease out further layers of meaning during the in-depth qualitative interviews a form of participatory or projective techniques[32] during the interview was used. Projective techniques are "an unstructured and indirect form of questioning that encourages participants to project their underlying motivations, beliefs, attitudes or feelings regarding the issues of concern" (Malhotra et al., 2017:221). The use of drawings in social sciences is a projective technique as part of qualitative research and participatory visual research methodologies (PVRM).

For this research and epistemological perspective, the participatory research approach using drawings to visually explain an answer during the in-depth interview was seen as a suitable method to use. It is a method to elicit issues that participants may conceive as difficult to express and help participants to engage in the subject. Diagrams and pictures are an integral part of human expression[33]. A picture conveys a message, if not a story, and can be considered a narrative in a broad sense and in communicating data. Pictures may be used to attempt to encapsulate representations of connections, relationships, and depict spirit and human nature. For example, cartoons are often used to depict political satire which conveys the meaning much more explicitly

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[32] Projective techniques may include the use of metaphors, word association, and other construction techniques.
[33] For example, images of the hunting scenes in cave drawings, Egyptian hieroglyphs in tombs, the Bayeux tapestry depicting 58 scenes over 65 metres, street art and graffiti).

where words may not wish to be used. The use of drawings and Rich Pictures[34] (RP) as devised by Checkland (2000; 1981) are more often used with groups (Bell and Morse, 2012; Berg and Pooley, 2013; Bowen, 2016; Williams and Hof, 2014) to encourage members to think and talk about things they would not normally do. They are used to capture the thinking process of individuals using icons, graphics, symbols, underlining, and directional arrows to visually communicate feelings and affect (Bell & Morse, 2010) and act as a catalyst to help participants articulate their thoughts emotions and feelings (Bell et al., 2016). They also provide an insightful two-dimensional perspective and collaborative approach while enabling the documentation of tacit values and how it relates within the context (Berg and Pooley, 2013). The intervention work of PVRM has been used in education (Bowen, 2016; Kose, 2008; Lee and Cavanaugh, 2016; Nurbaety, Rustaman and Sanjana, 2016; Wan, 2018); in the nursing sector (Guillemin, 2004; Horne, Masley, and Allison-Love, 2017), and in social work particularly with vulnerable subjects (Bell, 2016; Theron, Mitchell, Smith and Stuart, 2011; Zwiefel and Van Wezemael, 2012). The literature revealed different approaches taken to create and draw the Rich Pictures, where the common benefit across each research case is the discourse through the drawing.

This participatory approach using the creation of pictures was seen as a means to ask students questions about phenomena in the world, and specifically to what extent the Bourdieusian lens may be used to explore the practice of placement seeking and employability. It was considered a suitable method to address SQ1 andSQ2 to explore personal branding, habitus, agency, symbolic capital and building Brand-Me from a student perspective which are sometimes hard to express in words alone. Costa and Murphy (2015: 15) note that uncovering habitus is not straightforward and emphasise the need to operationalise the theoretical concept of habitus. Dispositions are a useful gateway to habitus and using the Rich Picture method helped to unpack how students construct employability and explore how conscious students were regarding their habitus. Developing an understanding of habitus to include the emotional underworld of individuals both extends and enriches the concept, as Reay (2015) suggests it helps to understand how the past is played out in the present and may help to respond to the wider social world:

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

This participatory approach method using drawings to visually explain an answer as part of the in-depth interview combining drawing and interviewing in a collaborative way offers a powerful

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[34] These pictures and drawings are often called 'Rich Pictures' (RP) as they communicate so much richness by their design and inference.

evolving resource of grounded data and which is the foundation to theory building (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). It would allow participants for reflection-in-action as purported by Schon (2011) and provide insight into how concepts may be visualised. This would fit with the epistemology to capture and understand the meaning of social action for the agent performing it (Moses and Knutsen, 2012).

How the Rich Picture method was implemented in this study

The method where an individual participant created the RP drawing as part of the in-depth interview was trialled in a pilot study with four HE students. This showed it to be an appropriate method to capture insight, develop thoughts and make understanding more tangible. Consideration was taken as suggested by Rose (2016) and Theron et al. (2011) with regard to the demographic profile of the participants and the choice of drawing tools being both contextually and culturally congruent. Coloured pens and clear white paper were appropriate to use for the participants in this research. For each task or question posed, the participant was provided with a large sheet of paper on which to visually explain their answer. A sheet of A3 paper allowed sufficient space to complete the task without over-facing the participant with the daunting task of a large space to fill. It also allowed the A3 sheet to be scanned through the photocopier with ease for securely saving to file for further analysis and clarity of image. All participants were provided with a large selection of coloured pens with which they used to draw, visually display, annotate and capture their thoughts. For each Rich Picture a structured specific prompt (in the form of a written question) was provided as suggested by Theron (2011) which supported the participant and contributed to richer data generation and enabled comparative analysis. A list of conventions to create the Rich Pictures was explained to each participant (see Appendix B1).

The question format used in the in-depth interviews is shown in Appendix B2. The questions were designed to provide comparative data where there were areas of commonality or difference, and yet flexible enough to respond to areas of interest. It was constructed to deal with distinct topics to make data collection more 'organised' into topics as suggested by Gillham (2003) for categorising and analysis. I was careful to be consistent when asking questions to each participant and to particularly avoid using the words 'Brand-Me' at the early stages of the interview which might be construed as leading their answers. The opening question asked the students to '*tell me about your placement planning and career journey to date*' as a function to set the respondents at ease, to undertake a light exploration of aspects to do with concepts around agency and capital and provide some context around their placement and career journey. The students were then asked to visually address the first Rich Picture question and asked:

Rich Picture 1 (Students only): W*hat are the steps you take to prepare for placement and career, and what is it about you as an individual that may contribute to you securing a placement position or chosen area of work?*

This question sought to elicit and explore aspects that relate to their own assessment of their skills and confidence, aspects that relate to personal branding, what may constitute symbolic capital or career capital / augmented product features, and steps they take to promote themselves. This was undertaken to attempt to gain an insight to the student thoughts and attempts to disentangle the components of 'rules of the game' in placement seeking, and explore the ownership of students in shaping their personal branding. Once the task and process were explained, and participants reminded that the quality of the drawing was not important, the participant was left to undertake the task on a table away from the interviewer but in the same room. This allowed the participant to focus and not feel self-conscious with the interviewer hovering over them and yet enabled the provision of reassurance and timely feedback (Oakden, 2015) and confidentiality. On completion of the task, the participant indicated that they were finished and the interview reconvened. The participant was then asked to explain their thoughts in the creation of the Rich Picture drawing to enable collaborative meaning-making (Guillemin, 2014), and discuss any additional related lines of questioning. On occasion, further annotation was made to the pictures.

At this stage of the interview process I considered it pertinent to introduce the concept of 'Brand-Me' and asked the students to do a second Rich Picture to use drawings to illustrate their thoughts and provide opportunity for expression of the inner life or 'soul' of the individual. I asked:

Rich Picture 2 (Students only): *If you had to consider yourself as 'Brand-Me' how would you take this concept forward and promote this?*

This question sought to elicit and explore any strategies for personal branding, considerations regarding their use of social media, what may constitute symbolic or career capital and particular personal aspects they wished to portray. Further lines of questioning (see Appendix B2) were pursued to ascertain issues associated with the practice of placement seeking and Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus and capital, and building 'Brand-Me' from a student perspective and to address the research questions.

The in-depth interview with staff supporting placement at the university and employers was designed to follow the same approach using the method of RP drawing in order to support discussions and triangulate the data set collected. The questions posed using the method of RP to support discussions with staff and employers were:

Rich Picture 1 (LBU staff and employers): *For the placements / students you are providing/supporting, what is it that employers are looking for in our students?*

Rich Picture 2 (LBU staff only): *What are the main challenges faced by students when seeking employment?*

These questions sought to elicit and explore the valued forms of field-specific capital in the context of placement seeking, to understand the 'rules of the game' in placement seeking in the agri-food sector, and to unpack some of the main challenges students face in seeking placement, or strategies in support of students in consideration of Brand-Me, or management of digital footprint, and any other aspects.

If there was hesitation to undertake the RP drawing[35] I suggested that we both created a picture unrelated to the topic (for instance, draw what your journey to work was like today, or what gift would you most like to be given) to illustrate visualising an answer. A jovial, encouraging personality was needed to help alleviate any fears and reassurance that whatever was produced on the paper was worthy and that no judgements are made. This proved an acceptable catalyst for hesitant participants to visually answer the questions. Some practical observations on using Rich Picture drawings with individuals to visualise an answer or thoughts as part of an in-depth interview are shown in Appendix B3. The participant profile and how the fieldwork was conducted is outlined in the next section.

4.3 Participant profile and field-work considerations.

Full ethical approval and permission was gained from the University of Keele[36] and the specialist land-based university used as a case study in this thesis prior to commencement of any fieldwork. Appendix C provides details on the background of the university case study and student body used in this research.

4.3.1 Sample frame

A purposeful random sampling strategy was undertaken as a selective technique (Cohen et al., 2011) to conduct in-depth interviews with students, placement employers and university within the boundaries of the university used in this research. For the student sample, I gained permission from the relevant course managers to contact students studying on courses across the agri-food supply chain. Students were asked to reply directly to me and this approach provided the student with the opportunity to refuse or accept in private. Students were in their second year of studies (pre-placement) and in the process of applying and securing positions, along with students who were post-placement in their final year of studies. This sample was taken from a cohort which would

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[35] Only two participants in this study needed such encouragement.

[36] Ethical Review Panel and reference ERP3136

account for approximately 280 students and who will undertake a placement in the agri-food related sector each year. This cohort is from a sector of the industry in which I am mostly involved with and involves career opportunities in large, medium and small businesses. Four students volunteered to take part in the pilot study which provided an opportunity to trial the method and research tool.

Student participants were asked for their willingness to participate in the research through the Placement Managers and Course Managers. Care was taken regarding response bias to ensure participants were representative across these course areas, or had a particularly bad/good placement experience. Within this cohort, no exclusion criteria were used. Table 2 shows the student sample frame.

Table 2 Student participant sample frame

No.	Student ID used	Male or Female	Course	Pre-or Post-Placement
1	S1	Female	Year 2 BSc Agrifood	Pre-Placement
2	S2	Female	Year 2 BSc Agri-food	Pre-Placement
3	S3	Female	Year 4 BSc Agri-food	Post Placement
4	S4	Male	Year 4 BSc BMM	Post Placement
5	S5	Female	Year 2 BSc Agrifood	Pre-Placement
6	S6	Female	Year 1 FdSc Business Mgt.	Pre-Placement
7	S7	Female	Year 2 BSc Agri-food	Pre-Placement
8	S20	Female	Year 4 BSc Agri-food	Post Placement
9	S8	Male	Year 2 BSc Agrifood	Pre-Placement
10	S9	Female	Year 2 BSc Agrifood	Pre-Placement
11	S21	Female	Year 4 BSc Agri	Post Placement
12	S22	Female	Year 4 BSc Food Nut	Post Placement
13	S25	Female	Year 3 FdSc Agri-food	Post Placement
14	S26	Male	Year 4 BSc Agri-food	Post Placement
15	S27	Male	Year 4 BSc Agri with BMM	Post Placement

The student number attained was 15 students (7 pre-placement and 8 post-placement). This was perceived to offer sufficient insight, understanding of the research topic and data saturation within the constraints of the resources. These numbers are comparable with some other inductive qualitative studies with students preparing for placement or curriculum design (Parmentier, et al., 2013 *where students n=11*; Bowen, 2016 *where students n=13;* and Wan, 2018 *where students n=8*). The sampling strategy was guided by McCracken (1988) who recommends a sample of eight with the precept of including additional interviews to a data-set until no incremental insights are generated with each new informant.

Each participant as reported in the data was given an alpha-numeric code with the prefix S, P, or E used to denote whether it was a student (S), placement and careers supporting staff (P), or employers (E) respectively. For the university stakeholders, participants included two Placement Managers, two members of staff who were connected with course management and delivering Professional Development modules, and three members of staff from careers office. These participants were all responsible for supporting these students in seeking placement employment as an integral component of the course studied in the agri-food related sector. For employers, participants selected were industrial placement providers in the agri-food related sector and known to the university for over ten years. Both companies offered placements and graduate positions to students in the agri-food, agri-business, business, and agriculture course areas (see Table 3).

Table 3 University staff and Employer participant sample frame.

No.	University Placement ID	Male or Female	Role	Years in role (at date of interview)
1	P1	Female	Placement Careers Office	19 years
2	P2	Male	Academic /Placement management	Less than 1 year
3	P3	Male	Academic /Placement management	6 years
4	P4	Female	Academic /Course management	18 years
5	P5	Female	Placement Careers Office	27 years
6	P6	Female	Academic /Course management	10 years
7	P7	Female	Placement Careers Office	8 years
No.	Employer ID	Male or Female	Company type	Years offering placements
1	E1	Male	Large company – Scholarship provider	10 + years
2	E2	Female	Large company – animal feed, nutrition and trading company	20 + years

The individual one-to-one in-depth interviews with students and staff were held between May 2018 to May 2019, and at the site of the university LBU. The interviews with employers were held on company location in July/August 2019.

4.3.2   Fieldwork and researcher positionality

The purpose of the research was explained to the participants beforehand to be clear, transparent and honest, informing them the voluntary nature of the project. All participants were provided with an Information Sheet and Consent Form (Appendix D) with a suggested time and date to meet. This gave participants the opportunity to gain further understanding about the aims, processes and confidentiality of the research and be signatories to consent forms for overall participation and the use of quotations. The individual one-to-one in-depth interviews were held in a seminar room setting and compliant with Health and Safety requirements and each lasting about one hour long. A

hand-held audio recorder was used to capture the narrative. I was privileged to have shared the views of participants' and telling me their picture put a deal of trust in me which I was careful to treat with respect.

There are ethical issues and challenges in qualitative interviewing (Cohen et al., 2011). The interview itself is a social situation (Maxwell, 2012: 143) and involves a relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee which may be unequal and power-laden (Seidman, 2013: 141). There is also constant interplay between the researcher and the research act with a fine balance between objectivity and sensitivity (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 42). Interviews are interventions and may affect people, as a good interview may evoke thoughts, feelings, knowledge and experience to both the interviewer and interviewee. These thoughts and feelings may create an impact that could not be known before the interview (Patton, 2015). Qualitative methods are highly personal and interpersonal and therefore an ethical framework for dealing with such issues was considered. The nature of this research was that it should not have caused distress to any participant; however information directing students to the availability of learning support, counsellor, and careers was made available for all student participants. In my role as overall Placement Coordinator, I was sufficiently removed from the management of individual student cohorts and relationships with students to influence and compromise their honest participation. A key research instrument is the personality of the researcher (Gummesson, 2000). Recognising this, I was cognisant to strive for an equitable relationship between myself and the participant. This included building a rapport with the participants and in considering the scheduling, conduct and setting. Maxwell (2005) refers to the contextual factors influencing research design which may be conscious and intentional, or unrecognised and implicit. The axiological implication of this is that the design of the research was influenced by my own goals, beliefs, how I wished to frame and ask questions, the research setting and relationship with the participants in the research (Saunders et al., 2019).

For instance, the agri-food sector is an area of subject area and industry involvement in my own working and personal life and as such brings with it my own personal subjectivities. Having worked within the agri-food sector on several farms, I bring a 'female in farming I' set of subjectivities and I needed to be attuned and cognisant of these in order to manage subjectivity in this research. Equally, in my 'social media I' context, I make limited use of social media in lifestreaming my personal stories and images through platforms such as Facebook, or Instagram. This is a conscious decision to maintain my own personal privacy since the spheres of my personal social life, my professional life in HE, my involvement in the local, national and international agri-food sector, and through the social lives of my children, are all tightly interwoven and where everyone knows everyone. Therefore it was important to demonstrate my axiological skill crucial to the interpretivist

philosophy (Saunders et al., 2019) and enter the social world of the participant with an empathetic stance. In conducting the in-depth interviews I was careful to make sure that I put the participants at ease and was respectful and grateful for the giving of their time. The approach used in the in-depth interview was as a constructivist enquirer posture and as that of a co-constructor of knowledge, of understanding and interpretation of the meaning of their placement seeking experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The questions were iterative and responsive with a focus to the research question but without becoming too focused that they impeded and constrained the study.

While subjectivities occur in conducting the research, understanding the importance of self-reflexivity (Bourdieu, 1988) is also required in qualitative analysis as well as empirical work (Patton, 2015). The analysis from the in-depth interviews and Rich Pictures may be influenced by personal beliefs, values and the way knowledge is understood and constructed. For example, my dual background as Principal Lecturer in Agri-food marketing and Chartered Marketer coupled with working as Placement Manager in a vocational university focused on placement and graduate employment shaped how I could see the merits of a considered personal branding strategy in seeking placement employment[37]. This had the potential to influence how the data was analysed, the difference in perspectives of placement practitioner/marketer, or perspectives of researcher. How the data was analysed is explained in the next section.

4.4   Management and analysis of data.

This section discusses the considerations taken in the management and analysis of the data arising from the in-depth interviews and accompanying Rich Pictures. It considers approaches to the visual analysis of Rich Pictures when conducted as part of the in-depth interview with individuals, and concludes with the chosen process of analysis and generation of categories and themes.

4.4.1   Approaches to the analysis of in-depth interview data incorporating Rich Pictures

The term *analysis* is used here to describe the handling of the data from both in-depth interviews and the Rich Pictures. Criteria of validity and guidelines for analysing visual productions narratively are elusive (Squire, Davis, Esin et al., 2014). This was especially pertinent for this research using Rich Pictures with individuals as part of the in-depth interview. The pictures drawn in this research are an important part of data collection. The picture drawing is not a product; it needs clarification in order to acquire meaning. The drawing is a process of production and what can be learned from it, both in the act of drawing the picture, on reflection during the explanation to the interviewer, and in drawing out meaning through opening up possible spaces of analysis that could be discussed during the interview. This presented a challenge as to how to go about analysing the narrative and

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[37] As discussed in Chapter 6.1

drawings. Paul Ricoeur was known for his qualitative narrative approach and text interpretation using a three-stage process of analysis, the initial or naïve reading, structural analysis and comprehensive interpretation (Ericson and Kjellander, 2018; de Juan, Russo and Roque, 2017), and Bell (2011) extended these stages as an interpretive arc with more phases[38]. These phases were not consciously followed as steps in my interpreting of the data, but recognised as being part of the data handling process. As such, I approached the analysis of data in several phases and attempted to seek the most useful method to provide interpretive authority for the *combined consideration* of both narrative and visual data provided in the Rich Pictures.

In order to do this several phases of analysis were needed, but without much guidance on how to go about this since in the process of analysing the audio transcripts the complementary nature of the Rich Pictures drawn are inseparable from the narrative. Therefore, *how* the Rich Picture drawings may be analysed when used as part of the in-depth interview was of consideration as part of the analysis. The extensive works of Sarah Pink (2012) and Gillian Rose (2016) on visual methodologies provide a good background into the visual analysis of visual methods. However, their work in particular is connected to the use of advertisements, video and photographs and to a lesser extent drawings. This is true for the many qualitative research method texts, where the analysis of participant- produced drawings have little or no mention.

Methods of analysing the Rich Pictures is still emerging and recent work by Bell, Berg and Morse (2019, 2016) considered ways to compare RP's with the same question from different groups. They developed a form of content analysis (CA) termed Eductive Interpretation (EI) where EI can draw out messages, stories and emotion, or as *educed*, by eductive interpretation (Bell et al., 2019) using a grid system[39] to systematically and methodologically analyse the drawings and way to recognise powerful iconography in terms of borders, connections, relationships and colour (Bell, et al., 2016). However, this grid system to analyse the Rich Pictures between individuals was not seen as being appropriate, as each individual has their own unique story and experiences.

Ascertaining the most appropriate approach in the analysis of the Rich Picture drawings undertaken with individuals as part of the in-depth interview is not clear. For this research, several approaches were considered:

- appraising the Rich Picture as a form of art;
- interpreting the Rich Picture as complementary to the narrative
- looking at the Rich Pictures for 'signs' using a social semiotic multimodal approach;
- or, using a combination of approaches.

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[38] Starting with estrangement, viewing, analysis and understanding, culminating in the ownership of the text and data (Bell, 2011).

[39] In comparing Rich Pictures created *between* groups, they divided the Rich Picture into a grid (4, 6, or 9 segments) of which to undertake EI and provide any comparisons or situational summaries.

The pilot study trialled the use of appraising the Rich Pictures as an art form (shown in Appendix E, as devised by Carney, 1994) which Bell and Morse (2012) had used to visually appraise both context and content of Rich Picture drawings when working with groups. This framework allowed for a much closer analysis than was initially evident from reading the transcripts. However, what it does not do is to facilitate a comparison between the respondents of common substantive themes and categories. The way in which ideas, values and identities are communicated and what elements, processes and causalities are displayed or hidden needed to be explored further. It was apparent that a combination of approaches was needed and used in the analysis of data and these are explained in the next section.

4.4.2   Narrative and Visual analysis – complementarity approach

This approach entwined the interpretation of the narrative in the in-depth interview alongside the visual images in the Rich Picture drawing as explained by the participant. The main emphasis of the analysis and interpretation was on the *complementarity* of the Rich Picture drawing with the interview as they give meaning. Interpreting visual images can be problematic as they do not show the full narrative and accessing the "silent story existing in the gaps between the images" (Squire, et al., 2014: 45). The Rich Pictures do not narrate the full story in their own right. Therefore, in taking a complementary approach with the narrative supporting the Rich Pictures avoids dislocating the narrative from the visual image. This provides a greater interpretive authority to the data collected and demonstrates a symbiotic relationship between the image and verbal texts.

The question format for the in-depth interviews were constructed into distinct topics to make data collection more 'organised' for categorising and analysis (Gilham, 2003). During the in-depth interview, and early reading of the data I made personal analytical notes identifying ideas arising from the data or further areas to pursue as well as building levels of abstraction directly from the data (Charmaz, 2012). The pictures and notes made during the interview were used in conjunction with an audio recorder to capture the full transcript and each participant was given alphanumeric coding (for example, S1 or P1 as shown in Table 2 and Table 3) to protect their identity in the data. The recorded audio data was personally transcribed verbatim to a word file. Concurrently hand-written notes were made on the Rich Pictures (A4 size copies) to capture the narrative with the drawings (see Appendix F).

The data was categorised into themes using a combination of both the narrative and drawing. This is similar to the approach used by Zweifel et al. (2012) where the data collected was analysed together without creating a '*fuzzy double coding situation*'. The transcripts were read several times going through highlighted statements to derive categories for the responses to the questions and to

attempt to assign each substantive statement (where possible) to a category or sub code. Categories were entered onto an analysis grid as suggested by Gillham (2003: 65) with the respondents along the top and categories down the side. These common views in time became clusters of concepts and themes which were then organised eventually into hierarchical taxonomies. This 'conceptual ordering' is basic to theorizing and is the organisation of data into discrete categories according to their properties and dimensions and then using description to elucidate those categories (Maxwell, 2012).The transcripts were reviewed several times taking a hermeneutic approach to "find out in the little what eludes us in the large" (Clifford Geertz in Moses and Knutsen, 2012: 252) where he suggests the analysis "moves, tacks, oscillates and hop", and to enable different voices to be heard (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) and layers of meaning (Bell, 2014). The process was iterative, inductive and interactional (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) and also fit with a Bourdieusian perspective encapsulating the reflexive element:

> When research comes to study the very realm within which it operates, the results which it obtains can be immediately reinvested in scientific work as instruments of reflexive knowledge of the conditions and the social limits of the work, which is one of the principal weapons of epistemological vigilance (Bourdieu, 1988: 15).

Some statements were unclassifiable but not unimportant, and care was taken to avoid selective bias whereby selecting to favour a particular emphasis. This was found to be a useful exercise in building a framework of context with qualitative quotations.

In addition, at this early phase of getting acquainted and in understanding of the dialogic nature of the data, I found creating short vignettes provided a useful aide memoire and overview of the Rich Picture data. Throughout the analysis phases it provided a useful overview of the data. The creation of 'Participant Vignettes' was firstly used with the four students in the pilot phase of the research and included a summary of the participant's background, of the narrative as described from the transcripts, and a copy of both Rich Pictures. Then, as the data collection unfolded, subsequently each participant was added to the summary and finally showing all participants (as shown in Appendix H). This approach enabled viewing and highlighting descriptive features and structures in the Rich Pictures and between the Rich Pictures of the participants, but without going into any detail. Visual analysis using a social semiotic approach is a useful way to analyse the data further and is described below.

4.4.3   Visual analysis - social semiotics and multimodal texts

When undertaking visual analysis and visual communication, a social semiotic approach is used to understand what choices are made in the design and what they are able to communicate. This approach is considered as a suitable approach when analysing Rich Pictures. Semiology is the science

of signs, taken from the Greek word *semeîon* meaning 'sign', and *semiotics* is the study of signs. Semiotics is used as an umbrella term to embrace the whole field of signs (Chandler, 2011: 7). Signs may be visual signs as well as social signs. Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) was a linguist and founder of what is referred to as semiotics, the science of the life of signs in society. Semiotics or sign-systems are mentioned in qualitative research texts but mainly in context of visual images from film, photography. The French writer Roland Barthes (1981) followed Saussure as a 'reader of myths' or mythology, looking at layers of meaning and a system of connotation in pictures, which Barthes later replaced as 'a play of signifiers'. Semiotics is the science of signs and a fusion of form and word, the signifier, and a concept, the signified (Silverman, 2014: 363). The work by Gunther Kress has foregrounded much of the understanding of semiotics and that language alone cannot give full meaning, as there are many *modes* of meaning:

> Language alone can no longer give us full access to the meanings of most contemporary messages, which are constituted in several modes: on pages in the mode of *writing* and of *image,* on screens through CD-ROMS and on the Web; in *speech, music, image-* moving or still; in *gesture, colour and soundtrack.* In these forms of **texts** each mode, language included, is a partial bearer of meaning only (Kress, as cited in Somekh and Lewin, 2005: 172, original emphasis).

The co-presence of modes may be replicating, or echoing the language, or they may have different cultural meanings and affordances. A meaning of a sign is never fixed (Silverman, 2014: 367). The perspective of understanding the meaning, with that of social semiotics, and the specific parts to play in the making of meaning, is the perspective of *multimodality.*

The data from the in-depth qualitative interviews in this research along with the use of the Rich Picture drawings provides multimodality and opens up scope for studying signs as part of the data gathering and meaning making. It is different to content analysis which is a method often used to analyse advertisements and counts the occurrence in images of the pre-established categories and systematic linkages between them and when those categories are used in a particular item of text (Rose, 2016; Chandler, 2011). In a multimodal social semiotic approach, the whole landscape of the many modes of representation and sign-making and semiotic context in shaping meaning is taken into consideration in the analysis. The outwardly made signs function as a form of communication, and the changes in modal resources reflects and tracks the social and cultural world (Kress, in Somekh and Lewin, 2005).

Social semiotics is also interested in the choice of the form of communication that are called *semiotic materials* (for example, packaging, a book, a song, a poster, a web page). The semiotic materials themselves are loaded with ideas and assumption, which are called '*affordances'* and shape communication and behaviour. Gibson (1979) in Ledin and Machin (2018: 21) coined the

notion of affordance and how the environment is important for thinking about the 'things' we use to produce visual communication and how it can be meaningful to a viewer from an anthropological approach. For example, water could depict human life or for bathing; it could be rippling, gentle or dramatic. For surfaces and spaces, the horizontal and stable surface has important affordances; it gives an equilibrium that helps us maintain balance and posture[40]. Social semiotics is a form of analysis that emphasizes the idea of choices that come with associations built up over time. The analysis it carries out involves identifying the affordances of different semiotic materials and making inventories of the semiotic resources that lie in their design and what are the kinds of social meanings. A semiotic approach to visual analysis enables us to examine imagery both systematically and critically (Aiello and Parry, 2020). It may also need to be examined for not only what is being said and their complexities, but also for their silences (Rose, 2016: 238). By this, it may mean identifying areas that could expect to be shown and yet which are not evident.

In analysing visual communication, it may require two stages 1) to ask *what* exactly is being communicated and social meanings they create and 2) also *how* it is communicated and how they create social meaning (Ledin and Machin, 2018:15). The semiotic resources may mean to consider all the design details that comprise any form of visual communication. This could include the qualities of the fonts, colours, use of borders and so on. This is important as in each case design choices can communicate quite specific ideas. This may involve choosing the meaning potentials of thicker typefaces or of rich saturated colours to evoke things about them from a particular view.

Writing and visual communication are interrelated and what can be called 'integrated design' where linkages, causalities are communicated by symbolism. This may be in the form of arrows connecting boxes and the use of acronyms. Whilst text has an order to how it is to be read, the reading order of visual communication can be from any direction:

> A running text has a clear sense of running order, cohesion and conjunction. Here, in visual communication, the overall coherence comes from a visual design where different semiotic materials are deployed such as alignment, spacing, colour coordination, iconographic representations and graphic shapes (Ledin and Machin, 2018:30).

New writing in contemporary documents may use bulleted lists, flow charts, images and graphics that in the past would have been mainly in written text. Thus, the integration of text, images and graphic elements has led to a shift in how basic things like causalities and categorizations are communicated. Therefore, a Rich Picture does not need to be classified as having only pictures or images and may be comprised of mostly writing. The range of images and icons are used to convey

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[40] This was seen in the drawings collected in the data depicting the colour green for countryside, and blue text thinking of the sky and future dreams (see Appendix H)

meaning and so an understanding of semiotics can assist to become more aware of reality and the roles of others and ourselves in constructing it. In this way, semiotics also provide an insight into brand positioning and how it interacts with the cultural landscape (Lawes, 2002 in de Chernatony et al., 2013: 146).

Semiology (or social semiotics) offers a full box of analysis tools with which to help with compositional interpretation or content analysis (Rose, 2016: 106; Silverman, 2014: 364). Rose suggests a number of steps through which, faced with an image, a semiological analysis is initiated:

- Decide what the signs are
- Decide what they signify 'in themselves'.
- Think about how they relate to other signs 'in themselves'
- Then explore the connections (and the connections of the connections) to wider systems of meaning, from codes to ideologies.
- Finally return to the signs via their codes to explore the precise articulation of ideology and mythology (Rose, 2016: 132).

The study of signs is the "study of the construction and maintenance of reality" (Chandler, 2011: 15). The participants in this research created the Rich Pictures as part of the in-depth interview to visually answer the question, and then as part of the narrative, described the Rich Picture. This approach allowed a co-construction of the reality and understanding of both the signified, and signifiers. This approach is in keeping with the epistemological approach of the research.

Table 4 (author own) was compiled from a review of literature to use as part of the toolkit to help describe and investigate more accurately what is seen in the Rich Picture drawings during the analysis and how semiotic resources are used and their signifiers. The toolkit starts with denotation, connotation and then carriers of connotation. The creation of the toolkit helped me to understand the extent of visual analysis and to inform my analysis of the Rich Pictures created by participants.

Table 4 Visual analysis - social semiotics and resources.

Table 4 Visual analysis – social semiotics and resources.	
Description	Example
Denotation	First impressions of what is seen on the image, literal, obvious or common-sense meaning.
Connotation	Consider and identify the meaning potentials that have been deployed and what they mean. The 'discourse' – the taken for granted models of the world that tend to be shared, or explain how things work. The implied communication situation- implied speaker and implied recipient. The socio-cultural and personal associations (related to the interpreter's class, age, and ethnicity and so on).
Carriers of connotation: Colour	Objects used to signal. Symbol/symbolic – relationship must be learnt Where are they positioned Colours used and coordinated Linkages between objects Binary oppositions and contrast pairs to enable inferences to be drawn.
	Colour is a semiotic resource. It can link elements, create bonds or contrasts, evoke moods and associations Saturation: colours can be saturated or muted. Highly saturated colours tend to connote increased emotions and exuberance. These can be used to communicate fun, energy and vibrancy. Brightness: Light and dark may include associations with clarity and obscurity Purity: Pure colours tend to be used to communicate simplicity and truth. Impure colours tend to be associated with complexity, ambiguity and hybridity. For example, pure red for anger Range: a large range of colours can communicate playfulness and fun. Monochrome may communicate something more reserved and contained. Coordination and composition: look for the way colour qualities are used across a design, how they may link objects, and how they may code the objects and settings into marking a coherent whole.
Colour as experiential metaphor	A colour has a range of associations that arise from experiential metaphors, our experiences of life and culture. For example: Blue: Sky is blue - communicate reflection, objectivity; Water is blue- used to communicate purity, soft, cleansing, soothing. Red: exertion causes heart to speed and the face can become reddened, a wound will bleed. Thus, red may communicate, energy, fire, heat, passion, aggression, warmth. Orange – can be associated with the sun and warmth. Yellow – associated with brightness of sunshine Green and Brown – related to earth and nature. Black can mean darker moods, seriousness, secrets, concealment Pink – female babies White – associated with purity and softness Gold – associated with luxury
Iconography	The ways in which visual signs and representations may be used to communicate wider associations Objects: animals, farm machinery, fruit, heart symbolising love, natural environment Persons: farmer representing honest work, child, female. Emblems: brand marks, crests, shapes, colours
Settings	Note denotations (where) and connotations carried, i.e. what ideas these choices connote, for instance green grass connotes nature. May be contextualised or decontextualized.
Participants	Individual and groups : homogenised or individual Categorisation – individual, collective, cultural, biological Cultural categorisation – dress, hair clothing, gender, race Biological categorisation- stereotyped physical characteristics (both positive and negative), Representation of bodies: Generic and specific categorisation- articulation of detail, levels of genericity can be increased can be increased through reduction of articulation of detail None representation

Actions and Indexical links	In semiotics indexes are things that correlate to, or infer another thing (for example, dog footprint in the snow in a photograph indexes the presence of a dog). Inventory of action processes in images and their affordance. Emotional processes – pose and facial expressions indexes an emotional state (anger, concern, happy) Mental processes – person thinking and sensing (looking, listening and pondering) Verbal processes – person talking or shouting. The indexing will depend on the nature of facial expression and poses Material processes – a person indexes an action in the material world (for example in building a house, lecturer teaching students, doing an action (or conversely, an absence of material processes). Activity – movement, touch, positional communication (superior/inferior) Settings - apparently 'normal' to the 'exotic' and fantasies
Typography	Features of letter forms – fonts, colour, framing, alignment can create meaning. Typeface weight – can signal headings and ranking. Heavy can mean 'solid', assertive', 'heavy',' domineering'. Light weight may mean 'delicate' 'insubstantial', 'subtle', 'mobile'. Height and width –Tall and slim could relate to aspirations, short and squat can appear immobile and grounded. Expansion – narrow or wide typeface Curvature – a font can be angular or curved, or combination of both. Angular may be 'harsh', 'technical' where round fonts can be 'feminine' , soft', 'comforting' and depending on the use valued accordingly. Proximity of letters – close or spaced, suggesting 'integration' and 'coherence' or 'space to think' or 'easy going'. Regularity- irregularity can suggest 'playfulness', 'creativity' and 'energy'. Slope – sloping fonts suggest something less formal and more personal Flourishes – these can be loops or elaborate circles for dots and may bring emotional expression to the font and self-style extravagance.
Linguistic signs	Words and phrases used act as metaphors
Line spacing and alignment	The way fonts are arranged in terms of line spacing and alignment offer affordances. These semiotic resources may be: Spacing – small levels of spacing may appear cramped and suggest 'integration', 'unity', 'coherence', 'closed 'up' where more spaced may suggest 'fragmentation', room to think', 'openness'.
Borders	Borders point to the way the elements are shaped and related and framed, either together by alignment or differently framed. Segregation – where elements are separated from each other by a border and meaning they occupy different domains. Separation – Where elements are separated but by empty space. Here the elements may be part of the same domain but have some similarity since they are separated by space. Integration- where elements occupy the same space and communicating as one element.
	Source: (summarised and adapted from Ledin and Machin, 2018; Rose, 2016; Dyer, 1982 in Rose 2016:115; Lawes, 2002 in de Chernatony et al., 2013:146; Chandler, 2011).

4.4.4   Combined approach to analysis: semiotic narrative approach

In summary, a combined approach was used to analyse the data. This was in taking a complementarity approach whereby the narrative was analysed in combination with the drawings (described in Section 4.4.2), casting an overall holistic appraisal of the drawing as an art form (although not analysing the detail as undertaken in the pilot), while further analysing the visual using a social semiotic approach (Section 4.4.3). This combined approach provided the development of categories and themes for analysis and construction of theoretical framework. Using a semiotic approach to Rich Pictures as part of the in-depth interview offers the co-construction of reality and knowledge. Semiotic narratology is concerned with narrative of any mode (Chandler, 2011: 62).

Therefore, the research analysis approach used was a semiotic narrative approach. Figure 7 illustrates the iterative approach taken to analysing the semiotic narratology leading to a categorisation of main themes. A table showing the main themes arising from the in-depth interview and associated Rich Pictures is shown in Appendix G1 for students, university staff and employers. The table is divided into two parts broadly reflecting the sequence of the in-depth interview, where Part 1 considers the preparation for placement and understanding of what employers are looking for, while Part 2 considers themes around strategic personal branding.

Throughout the whole data collection and analysis phase, I constantly reviewed the data to look for new themes and categories to emerge. Short vignettes for each participant and their associated Rich Picture were collated into a format to assist with data analysis and also used as an aid for reflection (Appendix H). A further level of iterative analysis was undertaken in the analysis phase where I re-read, analysed and considered the literature I had read in the early phase of the research journey. This included using a theoretical lens of Pierre Bourdieu to shed light on practice and provide a language and critical understanding of the lived experiences and challenges in students traversing and repositioning themselves between the fields of HE and placement employment in the agri-food sector. Bourdieu suggested three steps to investigate a given field and in understanding the logic of the field (referred to in Chapter 3). These steps are not necessarily sequential and the need for iterative analysis was apparent in order to understand the circulation between field and habitus (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

Transcribe audio from in-depth interview

Analyse audio text and codify to categories and themes

Evaluate codified data

Create participant vignettes

Analyse Rich Picture using narrative and semiotic approach

Combined multimodal evaluation of codified Rich Picture with in-depth narrative

Complementary approach

Individual Analysis of narrative and Rich Picture drawings together.

Creation of vignettes.

Semiotic narratology.

Emerging categories and themes

Visual Art form

Analysis of Rich Picture drawings as overview to gain initial understanding and interpretation.

Emerging themes

Social semiotics and multimodal texts

Analysis of Rich Pictures individually and comparatively for denotation, connotation, semiotic resources, signs and signifiers.

Emerging and common themes.

Figure 7 Personal research process: combined complementary semiotic narrative approach

As such, the structure of the thesis evolved as further understanding and application of Bourdieu's thinking tools of habitus, field and capitals were considered from the data. For instance, the emergence in the data of the strong family influence in the placement journey and decision making of the student participants required further exploration with literature (as discussed in Chapter 5). Additionally, the issue of gender was an emerging topic from the data and required further consideration of literature relating to gender and the rural sector (as discussed in Chapter 6.3). Other data judged to not closely align with the research question was removed (for instance areas relating to placement service and scholarships). Using Bourdieu's tools of field, capitals and habitus allowed me to 'see' and provide a language in order to understand the data and field of enquiry more critically. The resultant main categories and themes for consideration in the subsequent Chapters 5 and 6 are shown on the right-hand column in Table 5.

Table 5 Categories and themes to investigate using a Bourdieusian lens

Common themes to pursue in analysis	Using a Bourdieusian lens
The Placement Journey Issues of confidence Having a career plan Rejections and struggles Influence of family Fitting in and standing out Methods used for promotion **What are employers looking for?** Strategic approach to securing talent Skills – technical and professional Personality – Attitudes and values Rules of the game	**Chapter 5. The placement journey** 5.1 Referees in the field, confidence and capitals (Placement staff and employer perspectives) 5.2 Career envisioning – (Student perspective) Social capital Influence of the familial habitus and geographical (im)mobility 5.3 Field and habitus - Fitting in and Fish in water
Strategic Personal Branding – how is Brand-Me considered and portrayed Demonstrating marketing and branding principles Hardworking, Determined Personal and Professional Brand positioning – offline and online Gender	**Chapter 6. Influence of familial habitus and digital habitus in personal branding:** 6.1 Personal branding -Defensive and differentiated branding strategy 6.2 Personal branding – Brand-Me and symbolic capitals 6.3 Masculine domination- Rural habitus, gendered rural habitus and chameleon habitus

The research provides a valuable insight into the placement journey for students in the agri-food sector and fills a gap in the literature in using a theoretical lens of Pierre Bourdieu to shed light on practice and provide a language and critical understanding of the challenges in students traversing and repositioning themselves between the fields of HE and employment in the agri-food sector.

Chapter 5 will consider the main themes arising from the data associated with the placement seeking journey, and the factors influencing their placement seeking and success. Chapter 6 will consider the main themes arising from the data associated with strategic personal branding.

5 Chapter 5 - The placement journey and valued forms of capital

Three main themes arising from the data are reported in this chapter. Firstly, Section 5.1 provides the perceived valued forms of capital in traversing the field of HE to the field of placement employment. Here, the use of Rich Pictures and semiotic resources deployed bring a new dimension to the symbolic markers around field specific capitals and dispositions, and the challenges facing students on the placement seeking journey. Secondly, Section 5.2 reveals further considerations on placement seeking and career imagining and shows that the decisions students make in the placement seeking journey are nuanced and complicated. Examples are given relating to issues of self-confidence, (silent) personal relationships, and the influence of family in providing a cultural logic which affect geographical (im) mobility and placement seeking. Thirdly, Section 5.3 reflects on the notion of 'fit' and 'fitting-in', applying Bourdieu's concept of fish-in-water to understand the relationship between habitus, capital and field in securing a placement position in the agri-food sector, and the wearing of the metaphorical 'grass slipper'.

5.1 Valued forms of capital in placement seeking

This section begins with the consideration of career planning and placement seeking providing perspectives of students and university. It then provides the perceived valued forms of capital for placement employment in the agri-food sector from the perspectives of staff, employers and students.

Students mentioned that their decision to select the university itself was integral to their career plans. This was tactical in mobilising capitals in order to gain subject knowledge, in providing professional contacts, networking, and support in securing a placement or career management. S2 was strategic taking a neoliberal emphasis in selecting the university future career planning commenting, "The University [LBU] is the most important because I came here to university to get a career, I mean it's a route for the industry I suppose... and come for the links and contacts" (S2) and since the course curriculum is vocational and applied to specific aspects of the agri-food sector this selection of university is not surprising. S2 went on to describe the benefit of the social network of "links and contacts". This tactical approach is similar to that included in Christie's framework (2019: 335) regarding employability. The social capital provided by these links and contacts provide an insight and understanding of other [employer] players in the field and landscape of practice.

Placement staff, as referees in the field, are immersed in the awareness of struggles and the strategic moves of the student players in the field of placement seeking. The placement staff reported dimensions of the valued forms of career capital as generally centred around the student having the required knowledge, professional and technical skills as discussed in the literature (and

similar to those on the second layer of the anatomy of a product, the specified or tangible product features as discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.4). These forms of academic capitals were referred to as having the necessary "inputs" (P6) and "basic knowledge and skills (P5), and the "basic essential tick list" (P7). The basic essential tick list as described by P7 included the particular qualification, the degree that they are working towards or a particular course. It also referred to the professional skills required to undertake the role (as applied to the sector including related work experience and the necessary licences for a car, tractor, fork-lift truck, trailer licence, animal handling skills, chemical handling certification or gun licence for instance). They spoke of attaining these capitals as means to get past the hurdle(s) before proceeding to interview stages. P7 articulated this as being "a journey, a board game" (P7) with sequential steps and challenges to face (see Figure 8).The Rich Picture displayed a fully integrated design (Ledin and Machin, 2018) where linkages and causalities were communicated by symbolism and iconographic representation and used to explain the preparations for securing a placement, or how to play the placement game.
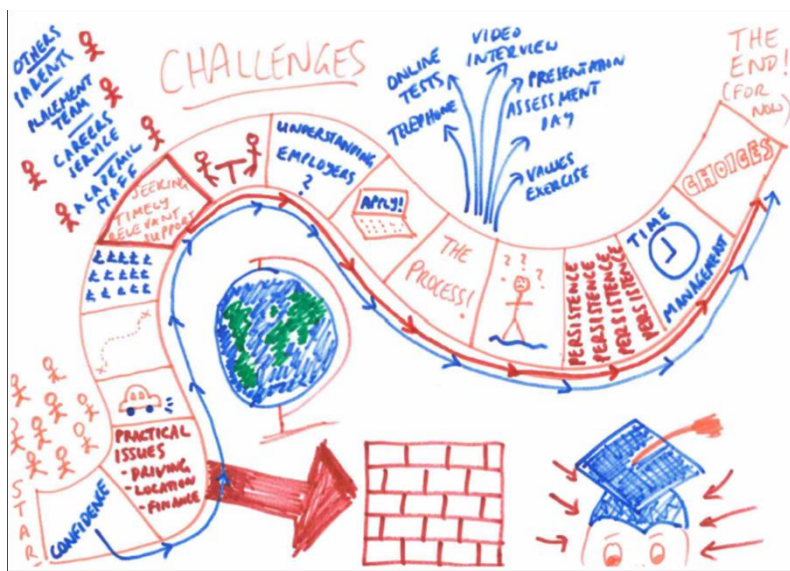
Figure 8 Challenges facing students on the placement journey: Board game (P7)

P2 spoke of the valuable technical skill (academic capitals) set as being visible and easy to 'evidence' for a student or graduate seeking employment while the invaluable professional 'soft skill set' as less visible and less easy to evidence to play the game. P2 illustrated this dilemma in the Rich Picture drawing as shown in Figure 9 and described it as an "iceberg" that employers are looking for both technical skills and professional skills, or attributes or transferable skills.
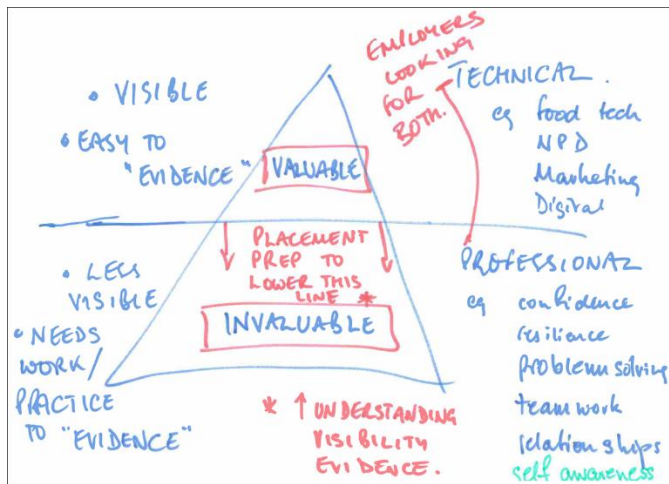
Figure 9 Employability iceberg: valuable and invaluable / visible and less visible skills (P2)

The iceberg drawing was used to convey that technical skills are probably easier for students to understand their value and provide visible evidence of (through their CV), however the professional transferable skills (written as confidence, reliance, problem solving, teamwork and self-awareness) are even more valuable, but they are less visible, and from a student's perspective these are not so easy to understand and communicate. While their university qualification was seen as important to the students, students (both pre and post placement) spoke of selecting particular course modules, researching the company's policies, building particular skills for specific role, gaining work experience, and undertaking additional qualifications (such as HACCP and Food Safety) in order to equip themselves with the technical skills required by potential employers for placement and graduate employment. The practice of undertaking a placement is able to assist the students to accept the value of the technical skills and improve their understanding and importance of the professional skills in effect lowering the water line on the metaphorical iceberg to make them more visible:

> What we are trying to do is to lower that water line on the iceberg so that we still have the valuable visible technical skills but placement preparation is trying to lower the waterline so that more of the invaluable skills are understood, visible, evidenced by the students (P2).

Lowering the waterline in providing examples and being able to tell stories was seen as ways in which students may 'evidence' the skills and attributes that hold value for employers. Increasingly employers are looking beyond academic qualities and hard skills but disposition to work, and personal and organisational skills (Burke, 2016). This was evident here for placement, where academic capital is of far less importance[41], as endorsed by E1: "90% of the selection will be from the interview and how the student behaves [at interview], [farming] background and skills are not the most important". P3 described employers as thinking that "LBU students are in particular very hard

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[41] Likely this is because academic capital will be used as an entry requirement to university.

working" (thus symbolic capital of LBU bestowed on the students) as depicted by the drawing of a pink stickman with a fork depicting hard work in the Rich Picture. This was endorsed by E2, also drawing a stickman with a broom to convey an impression of hard-working attributes and that they would be seeking evidence of work experience (any type) and attention to detail which might be evidenced of holding positions in committees such as Chairman, Secretary, university ambassador, or Duke of Edinburgh scheme.

These hardworking qualities were attributes which the students also wished to convey in their Brand-Me (I will return to 'hardworking' later in Section 6.2 of Chapter 6). The exposure to work-experience and other activities has the potential to leverage cultural knowledge and insight and "enable a student to open up significant sets of social relations with significant others in their targeted field" (Tomlinson and Jackson, 2019: 5). P5 considered that employers look for "interesting people" which may be portrayed through these types of extracurricular activities. Students showed an understanding of this and were keen to highlight the value of work-experience, their involvement in Young Farmers Clubs, and in building social networks with others in the industry. This was also corroborated by S7 who spoke about how the employers regarded the extracurricular activities in fostering the skills and experiences:

> They really, really picked up on my Duke of Ed gold award, really liked that. Also, they really liked some of my waitressing stuff, because some of that was organising weddings and wedding events and problems you might encounter and how you might compromise and how you might solve different problems (S7).

These participant views concur with Drewery et al. (2020) of the benefit of these types of work-experience and the placement period, that students can learn about their own talents, and better communicate those talents to employers with examples and share their 'own story' (Drewery et al., 2020). All these are an attempt to lower the iceberg waterline and assist students to articulate and communicate with employers.

Further evidence of the interest in non-academic capitals was evident from the drawings and in-depth interviews from the participants in this thesis which concurs with the previous observations (such as those of Artess et al., 2017; Burke, 2016; and McRae et al., 2019). The dimensions of personality, attributes and behaviours are similar to those on the third layer of the anatomy of a product, the augmented or intangible product features (as discussed in Section 2.4). Some of the common themes between student, placement staff and employer participants in my research was that employers would be looking for students who are engaging, have enthusiasm, have ideas, creativity and new thinking, resilience and adaptability, positive attitude and awareness of self (but not necessarily from an agri-related family). These attributes are common to those found in other

bodies of work that investigate disposition to work and personal graduate attributes critical to being employable (Artess et al., 2017; CBI, 2011, 2019; Clarke, 2018; Messum et al., 2017; Trought, 2017).

The Rich Pictures and the semiotic resources used bring a new dimension to the symbolic markers around work, what employers are looking for and how this may be considered and articulated through Brand-Me. An image of a stickman with a speech bubble and the words "Truth /Lies" was used by E2 to explain that while the academic skill levels allow easy evidence of intellectual ability, for them as a company symbolic capital would present itself as a "dependable, honest, scrupulous and decent type of person to represent the company and do a job to the best of their ability". In order to ascertain this, they used the interview to gauge their level of work ethic beyond academia and would try to "dig into their character, their family (whether agriculture background), what they do as a sport, all the layers" to see what other roles were undertaken. These layers are the intangible elements to a person, the non-visible elements below the waterline (using iceberg metaphor earlier). This employer particularly wanted the student to organise and manage rural shows and events (and had been particularly impacted where a previous student had failed to book a show with major consequences to the company) and so dependability was of major importance as well as an "understanding of agriculture…as farmers are quite a different breed and they like to talk to someone who can understand what a calf is, and a cow, and silaging", thereby having an understanding of the field and rural habitus. However, the primary image drawn in the Rich Picture for E2 and area of discussion was on the importance of first impressions of a student at interview. E2 had carefully applied smiles to the stick people images in the drawing "First impressions, a smile never goes amiss, being confident, and how the first greeting goes" (E2). These meaning giving perceptions were conveyed in the very similar Rich Pictures of P6 and E1 as to what it was that employers were looking for (as shown in Figure 10).
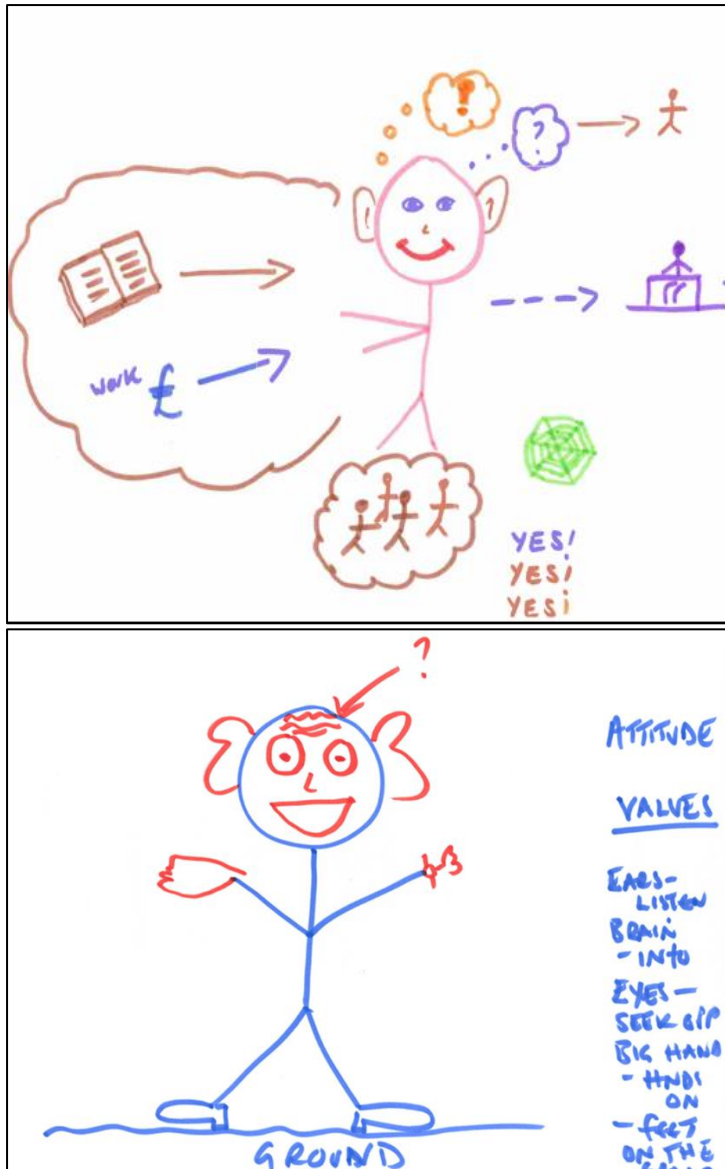
Figure 10 What employers are looking for: Smile, Eyes, Ears and attitude (P6 and E1)

Both P6 and E1 had drawn an image of the student in the middle of the picture and both identified the student's personality as being important and a large smile which might indicate they are a happy confident person and also happy in their role. The impact of a person smiling was important for both staff and employers. E1 spoke of the effect to the business that occurred from a person having a smiling face, "if you turn up to a farm and you are down, it has a knock-on effect and people will instantly make judgements, like this person does not want to be here or not enjoying X, Y, or Z". The conveyance of being able to smile even "through adversity" was seen as a positive disposition:

> Some of the student background is in the student smile, because they have got some work which they bring to university and so that might be farm related work if they have family farms, but it's a kind of that they can smile through adversity really and keep on going and be determined, which a lot of them can, they are very capable people and they are quite

hard workers I think and still smiling. You know they have waitressed at weddings with hundreds of people being polite for hours on end (P6).

The bodily hexis in smiling for interview, while in work, and being able to reflect with a positive spin on challenging times was seen as important external criteria to demonstrate. This evokes the work of Arlie Russell Hochschild (2012) where flight attendants were told to smile; as such, the smile became the "flight attendant's asset" (Hochschild, 2012:4) and a "rhythm of feeling" where personality was seen as a form of capital. Here smiling "through adversity" (P6) is a form of Hochschild's emotional labour where feelings may be suppressed in order to sustain the outward countenance for the benefit of others. Thus, the smile may be a natural disposition of bodily hexis and an authentic natural feeling, or staged as in Irving Goffman's dramaturgy, for the staged effect of offering comfort to others, the "managed heart" (Hochschild, 2012). This then becomes a value to the company where the person is obeying to the rules of expressing feelings and emotional tone for commercial purposes, a form of emotional labour. For players in the field, there is need to have both an authentic and inauthentic display of natural feeling, where students have an authentic smiling disposition to associate with other players (students and employers) creating a form of social capital in the workplace, while also smiling through adversity with difficult clients and customers or, after a long physical day working at an event obeying to the [often unspoken] feeling rules of the company in how to "be nicer/ or smile more than natural" as part of the role.

A smiling disposition was seen as desirable by these employers and placement staff, and also by students (in their portrayal of Brand-Me which is discussed in Section 6.2) where several students expressed the desire to reflect their smiling personality. For instance, S1 wanted to be "portrayed as bright bubbly and happy…. bring in happy ray" and had drawn an image of yellow sunshine to depict this on the Rich Picture, while S3 used a rainbow of colours to represent a bright personality on their personal logo. Students had used smiley faces in the drawings of Brand-Me to depict a happy person (S1, S3, and S26). The smiling facial disposition forms a display of emotional tone for the company and the student, and therefore in seeking authenticity in personal branding, there may be a fine balance in where the person end and the act begin.

Participants explained about the relevance of the other desired characteristics drawn on the face. Large clear eyes wide open to "be observant" (P6, S22), very large ears "to listen and learning" (P6, E1, S22), and "seeking opportunities, not being afraid, throwing yourself in there" (E1) where seeking opportunities that may not be directly related to the role but the business in general was seen as a positive trait. A large wide mouth was drawn to denote "not being afraid to ask questions and not being afraid to speak up, and also not being afraid to give feedback to management if things are good, bad or indifferent… and it's having the confidence to do it" (E1). Not being "afraid to

speak up" was also a positive trait for E2 in the context of owning up to weaknesses in the workplace, where it was perceived as an indication of being "dependable, honest and scrupulous". A student having ideas and the act of asking for help was seen as an important feature of evidencing professional skills and a curious mind (P3, P5, P6, P7, E1, E2, S1, and S21). In the drawings of P6 and E1 (see Figure 10) both had drawn question marks coming out of the head of the person. This was used to convey two forms of meaning, the orange lightbulb (as drawn by P6 and S1) to denote the expectation that students would be thinking of new idea; but also (the purple question mark as drawn by P6, and the red question mark drawn by E1) to indicate that ideally a student would seek help if they are concerned about something.

The importance of other interpersonal and communication skills was evident where in the Rich Picture of E1 (Figure 10) the large hand was drawn to denote the desired trait for a student to be willing to be hands-on and to "get stuck in" (E1) which S21 had also used in their portrayal of Brand-Me to "get stuck in" (S21) wishing to show skilfulness and knowledge. While the image drawn of a student with their feet firmly on the ground was used to convey "how you conduct yourself and how you convey yourself to others, be grounded and compassionate" (to co-workers and dealing with suppliers and customers) and in having a "Yes, yes, yes" (P6) can-do approach to work. This can-do approach to work is carried further by the students in their depiction of Brand-Me as discussed in Chapter 6.

The triangulated participant data showed agreement in the non-academic capitals and personal dispositions such as smiling, can-do attitude appeared to be of greater symbolic value for these players in the field. The practical implications of these findings are that a well-supported environment in the field of placement seeking provides the student the opportunity to gain career capitals throughout the journey and learn about both themselves and navigate the employment market before entering the market-place as a graduate (Jackson, 2016; Tomlinson and Jackson, 2019). P2 illustrated the placement seeking journey as a road map (see Figure 11). This was depicted with iconography and metaphors to denote and connote meanings of an emotional and troublesome journey to negotiate (see highway code image denoting a bumpy road and route choices or various road patterns of road closures) placement seeking. The start of the game embraced the first dilemma with "WHAT!" in capital letters to depict the student questioning which way to go, or what career route to follow, or, as drawn, which road to follow at the roundabout. While the applied and vocational aspects of the university courses assume potential understanding of the logic of the field, the notion of being able to sequentially manoeuvre over the steps, hurdles or decisions identified in the process by these referees will require the individual player [student] having the necessary values and volumes of legitimate capitals to play the game which are

recognised and incorporated into the habitus of the field. The possession and acquisition of these capitals and how the students can play the journey game will also depend on their individual set of resources with respect to social, cultural and economic capitals and requires the referees to reflect and understand this.
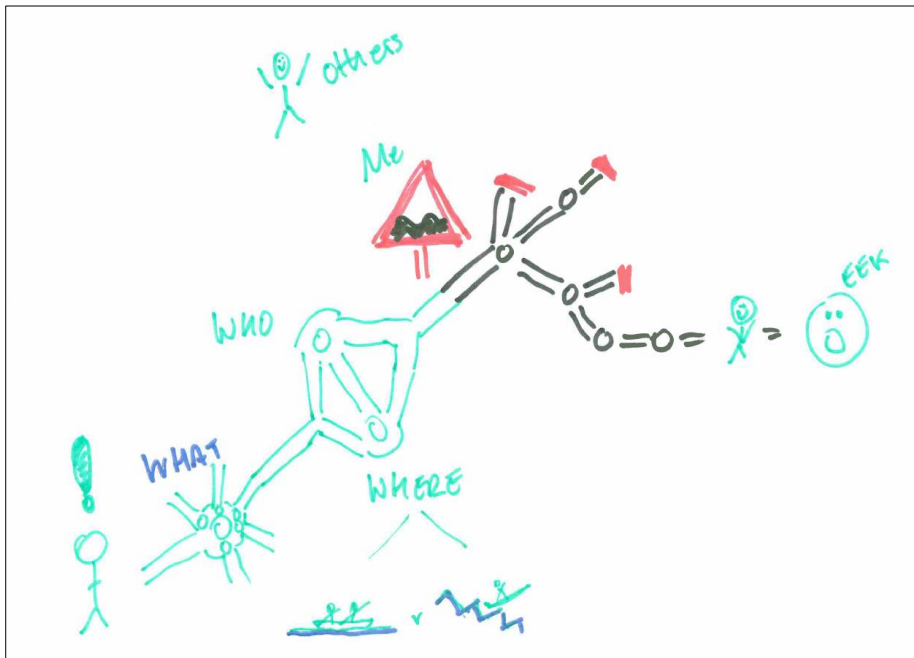
Figure 11 Challenges facing students when seeking placement: Road map (P2)

On the surface it seemed that both the journeys as described by P2 and P7 are positioned as a journey game in collecting tokens of capital along the route, where the function of the game is to overcome challenges in this journey game. These challenges appear to encompass the CBI (2019) concept of employability of three pillars: character (as in 'character building') with the development of being able to deal with set-backs and make responsible choices in different situations; in acquiring knowledge of the industry sector, and in acquiring skills such as communication, problem solving and self-awareness, which are all seen as positive functions and aspects of the game. It is suggested that individuals displaying adaptability have a high tolerance for uncertainty and that the capacity to change personal factors, behaviours and dispositions is a desirable feature for employers (CBI, 2019; Clarke, 2018; Lim, Foo, Yeo, Chan, and Loh, 2020) and when encountering de-stabilising job market conditions (Tomlinson, 2017a). However, the literature has a lack of consideration of the structural constraints and complexities affecting *how* the student may be able to navigate their way along the journey. Negotiating these hazards and *how* students can play the placement journey game will depend on their individual set of resources with respect to social, cultural and economic capitals. This is explored in the next two sections where Section 5.2 explores career envisioning and the

influence of the family on placement seeking, while Section 5.3 explores further notions of 'fit' and in relation to Bourdieu's thinking tools of field, capital and habitus in placement seeking.

5.2   Familial influence on placement seeking

The placement staff illustrated the placement seeking journey (Figure 8 and Figure 11) that required a sequential set of steps, or hurdles to be conquered, or tokens of capital collected in order to successfully play the game of placement seeking. The end place was shown as being temporary "The End, For Now" (P7), depicting the processional concept of employability and in building career self-management as proposed by Clarke, (2018), Okay-Somerville and Scholarios, (2017), and Reid, (2016). However, the acquisition of necessary capitals for employment is not always transparent where we have seen the importance of non-academic capitals in the previous section. The ability to play the game will also depend on their individual set of resources with respect to social, cultural and economic capitals, and how they 'read' the field and how that is reflected in their habitus. The issue of self-confidence is one example of this, along with the influence of the family which I will explore in this section.

Issues of confidence

The word *confidence* appeared in both student and placement staff representations of the placement journey. It particularly featured in the centre of the drawing of P5 who had been in the role for over 27 years (see Figure 12).
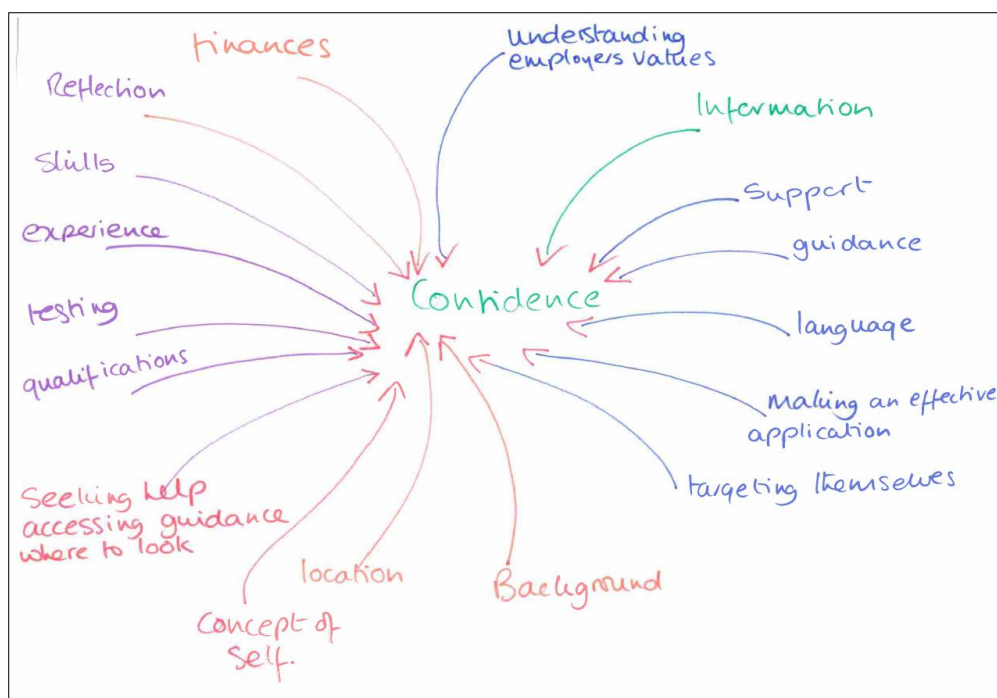
Figure 12 Challenges of placement seeking:-issues of confidence (P5)

The Rich Picture showed a range of placement seeking actions feeding into 'confidence' and connected by directional arrows to the centre depicting " the main thing that brings them [students] into careers for extra support is confidence…and it is just kind of practicing with them… and getting them to reflect and identify their particular skills and experience"(P5).

Indeed, 'confidence' is shown as the first step in the board game (Figure 8) where P7 suggested that the first step in the placement or employment process was " fundamental thing here [having] self-confidence, as if you can't get past that you are going to struggle with everything else on this journey" (P7). The large red arrow pointing to iconography of a large brick wall was used to afford the notion of how difficult self-confidence was for many students and where a student was lacking in self-confidence they had to climb a huge wall, or hurdle to get over before the next stage of the process or journey could be continued.

However, attaining self-confidence is more than a fundamental hurdle to overcome in the start of the placement seeking journey, or as shown in the Dacre Pool and Sewell model (2007) (see Section 2.2). Understanding confidence is complicated as there are many factors which influence it. In the work of Friedman and Laurison (2019) exploring social class background and employability the term confidence is viewed as operating as a "holding term, a vessel through which a myriad of other, quite distinct, processes were folded into" (Friedman and Laurison, 2019:24). Their work explored confidence with regard to social mobility and a class ceiling in employment where there is a perceived relationship between class background and self-confidence in gaining employment

positions. Christie's work (2016) with careers staff also showed that the world isn't an equal place and the perceived relationship between social mobility and self-confidence. I add to this body of work where the relationship between confidence and social, economic and cultural capitals also applies here in this research with students in seeking placements. For instance, the confidence in the context of willingness to take risks in their placement seeking and career may be related to access to economic capital, or family habitus and the "invisible ways that families' practices translate into differential advantage for their children" (Lareau, 2011: 265). The account of S1 showed that attending university gave S1 the academic capitals and confidence, while family economic capital provided the opportunity to undertake a preferred placement position that was low-paying. For S22, the support of a placement scholarship provided the economic capital and confidence to take a risk and apply for a placement in a totally new sector and location where the monies could be used to buy a car.

For some students, lack of clear plans for their placement and career was evident, and attending university is part of their personal exploration and space to consider what to do. S7 referred to this as a "stumbling block", while S6 spoke of having a more open approach to seeing how the placement and career may unfold "at the moment my vision is just placement, finish my degree and see what happens" (S6). Here S6 is taking a step-by-step approach to career planning prioritising and utilising the placement year as a way to help determine which direction to pursue or not. The possibility of being afforded the opportunity to take a considered approach to career planning and 'see what happens' may appear individualistic and agential in managing their employability. Tomlinson (2009) identified a high level of self-location in students' understanding of their employability management and individualisation of future career progression. However, a more recent study by Xu (2021) challenges this individualistic notion, and suggests that career imagination is shaped by class, privilege and time where the choice of career strategies is conditioned by the personal and familial economic, social and cultural capitals and circumstances reflecting fine-grained class differences. Indeed, comments such as 'at the moment', 'see what happens', 'future, future plans' , 'route for the industry' provided in the narratives of student participants in this research, display a temporal perspective of career envisioning for these students as being dynamic, and that it can be re-calibrated and reconfigured. This was evident in the accounts of both pre- and post-placement students where the image of a question mark in the Rich Pictures was used to convey their concerns in considering placement and career plans. The colour blue is often an experiential metaphor used with the connotation of blue sky thinking and conveyed here in the images in Figure 13.
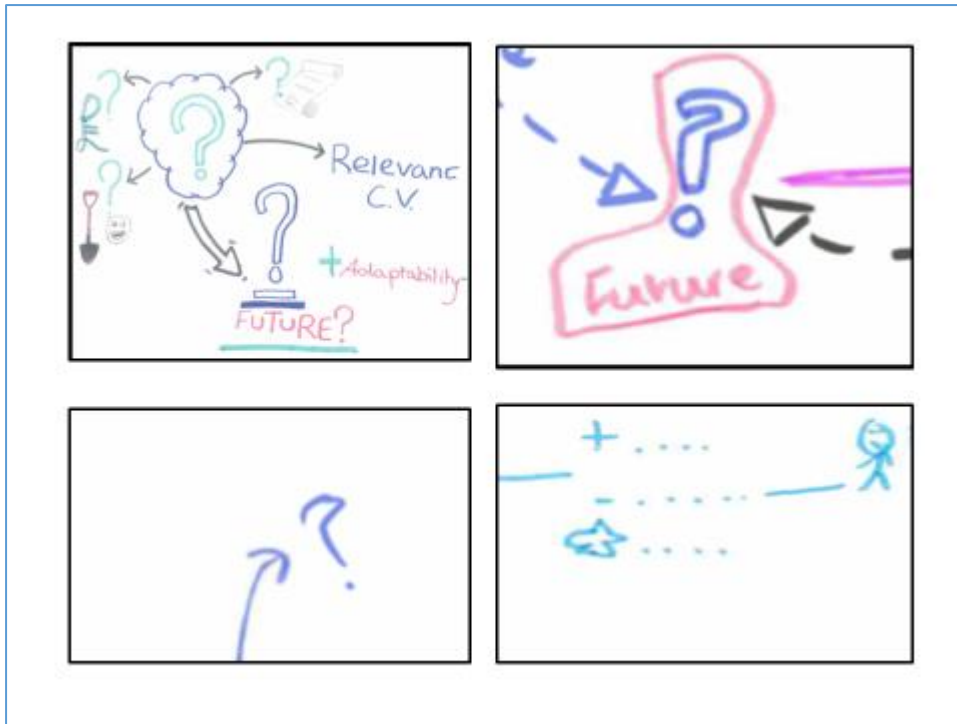
Figure 13 Images used to show concern over future career planning

S26 had conveyed the entire placement journey in the colour blue and depicted future career plans as a blue star and a series of blue dots which was used to connote the thought process of the future "working out what I was good at, what I was bad at and what I wanted to work at… and not sure [of the future]" (S26). S27 used the image a large blue question mark which took centre stage on the picture with the word 'FUTURE?' written in red and also underlined for greater emphasis to depict concerns for the future. Both personal, economic and the wider market environmental factors were weighing heavily on deciding views of the sector as a whole:

> I thought about what do I want to do with my qualification and what work do I actually enjoy and then how much money am I going to make….I had to put all of that in terms of where I want to go in the future…. You show a question mark that is because it is still up in the air… obviously the experience I gained in the placement definitely showed up what I already knew about the types of work that I enjoy. But with the new Agricultural Bill [post BREXIT] coming in and not knowing what trade deals we are going to get etc., I really don't know what direction' (S27).

Having the confidence to be able to take risks and 'see what happens' may depend on the economic capital and supportive resources of family as observed by Friedman and Laurison (2019). Xu (2021) refers to the slowing down of the pace of career as 'deferred gratification' and a career strategy. Here the 'waiting' behaviour forms an integral part of growing up to get a feel for the game and is made possible through students' access to family capitals sustained through class privilege. Whatever the conscious or unconscious influences that impact their envisioning of their career and strategies in seeking placement and graduate employment, using Goffman's dramaturgical

metaphor of actors on stage, the placement year is a stage for rehearsal in which to help decide future plans. While the placement year may help students to make sense of their directions for future occupational lives and create an additional 'turning point' and 'transformation of identity' (Tomlinson, 2009: 48) in the transitioning into future institutions of work or study, there are other complexities at play. Life events and family background may provide a temporal perspective to career envisioning and strategies (Xu, 2021) and was revealed in this research with students and the influence of the family background.

Influence on career choices – the passion and sedimented habitus

Although Bourdieu (1977:82) suggests that habitus is created and reformulated through personal history and is a system of "lasting, transposable dispositions, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions", it is open to change through time or from one generation to the next. Here in this research the data showed the strong influence of the primary family [rural] habitus in repeating history "in accordance with the schemes engendered in history" (Bourdieu, 1977: 82). This was related to the influence of career direction, in providing a passion for the sector, familial and relational influence on relationships and personal life, and how these affected the students' mobility in placement seeking. These themes are explored here and in the next sub-section.

The word *passion* appeared throughout the in-depth interviews and related to the influence of growing up in the rural sector and the influence of the family and rural habitus on their career direction. Duckworth (2016) suggests that passion and perseverance are better predictors for success than talent or qualifications and consequently may form part of the motivation and drive for students. Here, the 'passion' for many of these students was linked to their family background and consideration of the agri-food sector as part of their career planning. This is not surprising as the profile of these students is mainly from a rural farming background (see Chapter 3, Section 3.5 and Appendix C). Annette Lareau's work (2011) looking at the cultural logic of childrearing showed the important reality of the socially powerful, but typically invisible ways that families' practices translate into differential advantage for their children. Her work showed that parents transmit habitus in the home, and this habitus in specific institutional encounters, functions as a form of capital. Here, the cultural logic in farming families was seen to affect the practices of placement seeking in the rural sector. The influence of the family and background in considering and preparing students for their placement year and career was evident in the Rich Pictures. Glover (2013) suggests that the farm is a form of symbolic capital for many farmers, offering them recognition in the sector and the culmination of hard work and family commitment. Here students had drawn images of tractors, cattle, sheep, farm buildings, cereals, fresh produce to denote their rural

background in the Rich Pictures and credited for influencing their 'passion' for the sector and what could be recognised as their primary habitus. S3 had drawn an image of a sheep to denote this as an influencing passion:

> Sheep – I'm passionate about... I have a small flock of mule faced cheviots at the moment and the passion I put towards my sheep I want to put that to my career….getting a couple of sheep of my own that's when I became more interested in the farm and actually generally agriculture as well. So, this has been part of the process of the career (S3).

For S3, the passion towards tending the sheep had influenced their career choice, and also in putting that level of passion into managing their career. The lived experiences of growing up in a social context of a family farming business or self-employment will have influenced students' thinking, attitudes and behaviour, their habitus. This was evident here where S3 also referred to their father in being a "role model" to follow and in helping to provide the "right path" and career direction showing how the family habitus may contribute to social reproduction. Similarly, S20 showed how the influence of the family background shaped her decision making about study and work,

> I didn't really want to go to university but I loved the whole field to fork thing and also because I live on a family farm at home I don't want to go too far away from home. I'm about two and a half hours from home. But [LBU] is so nice it's really friendly and my mum knew about [LBU] and I knew people who came, so yeah, I just applied and then I thought being at [LBU] I would probably get a job or something in farming which is what I want to do (S20).

From the account of S20, the social networks (social capital) and familiarity of the university in the sector provided a shared understanding, and subsequently influenced the idea of studying at LBU which enabled S20 access to this well-projected well-envisaged route of getting a job in the agri-food sector that aligns with their rural habitus.

The influence of the family farm was echoed by S9 with images drawn of the family as stickmen at the start of their lineal Rich Picture and saying "Everything starts at home, growing up on the family farm, obviously my passion came from that, and then came Young Farmers Club, which is a big part of my life"(S9). For S9, the family habitus was credited for 'obviously' giving them the passion for the sector, and displaying a sense of 'taken for granted-ness' and influence based on their formative experiences. The levels of social capital from friends in the same sector and through the association of the Young Farmers Club reassured them with the "confidence" (S9) to study hard and in assuring them that they were selecting and investing their time in a university which would allow them to follow their chosen career path (and cultural capitals to play the game). These contributing factors in in managing their career path may be evidenced by their very lineal Rich Picture.

S8 also started their lineal Rich Picture[42] showing an image of red tomatoes to denote their family background (in fresh produce) and also spoke about having 'passion' for the sector and how their home background had influenced where they wished their career path to follow and university choice:

> Well my passion is for the fresh produce industry and [LBU] especially with all the development work we do here is perfect for that and I want to come out of [LBU] four or five years after to come back here [business at home] and push our business forward (S8).

Indeed, for S8 the benefit of attending university was to return home to 'push the business forward' using the newly acquired academic and cultural capitals. This was in acquiring new skills and ideas and where the placement year in industry was said to provide "new insight or further visions" or relevant cultural capital which could be subsequently used in the family business. The choice of career direction and the compulsory integral placement year also related to the family business succession planning for S8. This was the same for S1 where attending university for S1 "gives me the education and qualifications, and that gives me confidence" where the confidence was intrinsically linked to having the knowledge (academic capital) to be able to take-over the family business in the future and providing a strategic temporal framework for the development of the business:

> When I graduate, my dad will be at retirement age and so it gives him a chance of what he wants to do, and also gives me a chance of what I want to do and we have scope to change the business… and he's very keen for me to be involved (S1).

The strong rural family habitus was evident where S1 spoke about using the colour green to illustrate her rural background in the Rich Picture and the influence of the family on the career choices where she "had to take in a lot of considerations from family, and where 'Green' is for my grass roots sort of establishment" (S1). Going to university with an integral placement year gave S1 and their family members "a chance of what [he/me]…wants to do" and providing the opportunity to use the university experience and newly acquired cultural capital to provide a new vision or direction to the business. Cultural capital (the ways of farming and practices) can be passed on from one generation to the next. For both S8 and S1 attending LBU served as the impetus and sources of relevant necessary cultural and academic capital for the business to allow for inter-generational negotiation around the scope and direction of the family business whilst acquiring the academic capital to enable such inter-generational new development of the business. The succession of the farm to family members is a major priority for many farmers, a sense of prestige which Glover (2013) suggests is a form of symbolic capital and why family farm businesses manage to survive many generations compared to non-farming businesses. Jaskiewicz (2015) uses the term "entrepreneurial

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[42] Note: from the Rich Picture data, a lineal depiction of career planning does not necessarily equate to having a clear career direction.

legacy" to explain the knowledge gained through involvement in a farming business from birth and active involvement in a family context and where this legacy may have an effect on the young people in deciding their future career paths. These examples of student data showed how farming familial socialisation is sedimented into their habitus which in turn shapes their negotiation about education and work. The next section explores geographical mobility on placement.

Influence of family and leaving home – geographical (im) mobility

Geographical (im) mobility and location of placement was influenced by the family and home of the students. The placement positions on offer to the students are geographically widespread and students are encouraged to seek a placement position for the experience it will bring to them. The conditions of LBU are that students are not permitted to work for friends or family. Even though these students are young adults and have already chosen to move away to study at LBU, many shared in the in-depth interview that they found moving locations to be a stressful and worrying experience. This is typified by S5 saying "I am moving two hours away from home which is daunting" (S5). Many of the Rich Pictures for both students and placement staff contained images of homes, farming scenes, families and faces to portray the issue of moving away from home and depicting concerns and emotions. The colour red is used to denote a sign of importance or alert and this was evident in some of the drawings. The red lines drawn from the direction of the home in the drawing of S22 was explained as showing a fear of the unknown and being scared. In the Rich Picture of P2, the image of a home with two parents standing outside it leading to a road and the word 'distance' written in colour red was used to show the significant challenge for many students to be far away from home, despite the fact they had already left home to attend university.

The difference in being away from home on placement was the underlying fear that the distance would be too far to go home on weekends to visit family or friends, or that the work may involve weekend work which would affect their (im)mobility. The home and rural life for these students was a strong binding comfort and integral rhythm of their everyday life. All the placement staff participants acknowledged the security and stable moorings of having home, family and friendships to be close by and that "Being away from all things familiar can be a challenge for students" (P6). These fears resonate with the observations of Kirsty Finn (Finn and Holton, 2019; Finn, 2016; Finn, 2013) who conducted a longitudinal study examining the private social worlds of locally-mobile (or 'stay at home') students' decision making in their selection of universities and choices of mobility. Singleness is often embedded within popular conceptualisations of the authentic student in the decision-making and choices in the transition to HE (Finn, 2013:107). However, Finn illuminates this as a misconception and showed that students' were not 'free and single' in their decision making; instead the banality of everyday life, multiple commitments, emotional ties and romantic

relationships that students have outside the campus may cause tensions between mobilities in selecting a university away from their moorings of home. These findings are relevant in understanding the decision making of both selecting universities and, as in this research, in seeking year-long placements. In this research the participants highlighted the significance of family and intimate lives, and how relationships can affect selection and mobility regarding location of placement.

The process of placement seeking was seen as stressful where students may struggle to gain positions, but often these were because they were limiting themselves to a particular geographic area. Regional stickiness and the emotional connections may affect decision-making (Crew, 2019) and it was clear that for many of the students the location is more important than the job itself. Indeed, an image of a red brick wall was drawn in the Rich Picture of P7 to depict it as a hurdle for students to get over in the placement journey where location was an inhibiting factor. P3 also commented that "it's a bit like Maslow's hierarchy of needs, they [the students] were prioritising where they were going to live and where they want to be over perhaps the job and the role itself which seemed a bit strange" (P3). Selecting location rather than the placement position itself was seen as "strange"' for P3 as they went on to further reflect on changes in how students approached placement,

> there used to be a perception you could go anywhere, you would live anywhere, and you would just get on with it, however, I think now, I have termed them the 'en-suite' generation because that's what they wanted to know, where they were going to be, where they were going to live (P3).

The observations of P3 over the period of time of students concerned for and wanting their "creature comforts" (P3) was a challenge for students to overcome (both male and females) and a challenge to placement managers in encouraging students to apply for or select placement positions due to the students' own self-restriction. This (im)mobility may also extend to the mobility of digital technology (Finn and Holton, 2019) in having connectivity such as having Wi-Fi, and other digital 'creature comforts' are deemed appropriate by the student in the transition decision making. The comments from P3 (and other placement staff) reveal the perception that students should be more geographically mobile as they are free and single, and as referees in the field concede to the popular singleness conceptualisation of students. For instance, the picture of P2 (see Figure 11) and images of people in a boat on calm water was used to connote a student deciding to pursue a placement near to the comfort of their home and was seen as less challenging, compared with the image drawn of a person in a boat on blue choppy water depicting the pursuit of adventure and where there may be a more challenging experiences. However, the decision on negotiating many of these placement

hazards or the location of "where?" is more complex than the 'near-home-therefore-less-challenging versus / far-therefore-more-challenging' game play decision. Such assumptions and relational binaries such as markers of career ambition related to mobility as being close to home (proximate), or far away (elastic) are misleading (Finn, 2016).

Students also referred to the binaries of proximate and elastic geographical mobility. For instance S21 and S7 spoke of their observations on being geographically mobile and the benefits for themselves, while providing limitations for their peers who preferred to stay close to home. S21 had drawn a map on their Rich Picture to represent geographical mobility on placement although it particularly represented being very homesick on placement, and yet how it had also been beneficial:

> In the first year I was incredibly homesick and thought I'm going to have to move back home, but then I met with everyone else from home [Northern Ireland] and we have [LBU] Ireland which kept me here. So I thought to myself, for placement, I don't think I want to go back home as I have come this far now and have two years away from home and if I go home now I will get homesick again in the final year. So I thought, push yourself, and I did that and I went to Scotland for the year and Sweden for three months as well. But if I look back, I know that all the people that did go home for their placement, it hasn't helped them at all, it hasn't pushed them as a person. It may have done a lot for their career path but I think I have definitely developed as a person through moving away… have grown up a lot and it makes you a lot more independent than you realise (S21).

Despite the loneliness and being homesick S21 reflected that on the benefits of being able to 'push yourself' and how this has helped in the development of themselves, being independent and in acquiring more skills. Pushing oneself to relocate to geographical faraway places was seen as a positive means for personal development and even a sign of 'distinction' similar to the study of Tindal et al. (2015) in which intra-state migration and border crossing of Scottish students rendered the home-domicile students as lesser. The making reference to what 'others do' are tools by which people think through how they see others' actions and beliefs (Holdsworth and Morgan, 2005) and this enabled S7 (who had the necessary capitals to undertake a placement year studying overseas) to see the merits of delimiting location as a choice in placement selection. Strategising placement planning around a geographic base was acknowledged to have negatively affected opportunities and had increased "the amount of stress" (S7) on their peers:

> Friends of mine who have struggled the most have been the ones who have limited themselves to going home. Some have really struggled. Luckily they have all got here and got really good jobs in the end but the amount of stress they have caused themselves, I mean one girl had her heart set on going back to Ireland, home, and has just not been able to find anything and she has missed the first four months of applying to all the jobs she'd want here because they have now already gone (S7).

Working within the binary of geographies as mobile or non-mobile and distinctions between local or international oversimplifies the nature of HE choices and experiences (Finn and Holton, 2019; Finn, 2017; Finn, 2016). This is true also for placement seeking where geographies of (im)mobility are only one facet of the decision-making on location. Personal mobility may be constrained by the wishing to remain near home where students have high level of social networks, or for economic reasons as well as general 'life' occurrences. As suggested by Christie and Burke (2021) the challenge for practitioners is raised of respecting the choices the students make to stay close to family, even though being more elastic and geographically mobile may secure more advantageous employment positions elsewhere.

These geographical mobility decisions are also closely linked to temporal general life considerations. At this juncture in the students' passage of adulthood and traversing from HE to year of work, the commitment with a partner may be intertwined with decisions on geographical mobility and in strategizing placement planning around geographic base. S25 shared how her placement planning was centred around a commitment to a relationship and where her boyfriend was living. S25 freely spoke about the selection of the placement position being based around his location, not the role itself and how in hindsight this was acknowledged to have been unwise:

> [the company] were based near where my ex-boyfriend lived at the time in the first year and I thought, oh this is great, I can stay close to him, which is a stupid thing to do, but actually worked out fine ...I mean I probably wouldn't do that now and make that decision. I think I would pick something a bit more sensible, but that was just young me and I just did it, and I just thought, why not, just go with it (S25).

Although S25 went on to have a highly successful placement year in the company, she reflected that it was a "stupid thing to do" as the relationship with the boy-friend ended soon after starting the placement and therefore indicating that such location-based decision making about placements was not wise. The placement year had provided a chance to grow in maturity and her retrospection that it was 'just young me' can be seen as a marker of development in this journey through adulthood and the time in placement as a form of temporal investment. The strength of these temporal and private decisions such as revealed by S25 is not an isolated case in decision making and this is similar to the findings of Holdsworth and Morgan (2005) and Finn (2013) in university selection where students underplayed the significance of partner relationships. These (silent) personal relationships influencing choice of location may not be overtly shared with the placement staff, or staff are not intuitive to it, or dismiss it as being of low importance. Clearly it does matter as students make HE based decisions on this and as such requires further understanding of the impact of this influencing factor in helping to advise students on placement selection.

These examples from the research show the strategies and decisions students make around their placement year in the navigation of placement seeking. The importance of the family was evident for these students, in providing role models, social and cultural capital and feel for the game anchored in the habitus. The families also offered advice and support. The studies of Christie and Burke, (2021) and Christie (2019) also showed the importance for educators to be aware of the rich influence of family background with graduates in career transitioning and where graduates are often wrongly perceived as being highly rational and autonomous with 'freewheeling individualism' (Christie, 2019:334). The Rich Pictures and in-depth interviews evidenced images of fear, anxiety, stress, being homesick, worries, and the moving away from home as daunting. Traversing these challenges along the journey of placement seeking may be likened to the interconnected pillars of employability in building character and skills (CBI, 2019). However, it has to be recognised that the decisions students make in the placement seeking journey are much more nuanced than merely saying that some are more adaptable and some are not adaptable enough or simply dismissing those who chose to stay closer to home as not 'pushing' themselves enough. Like the work of Finn and Holton (2019), appreciating the myriad of environments (home, work, travel, social spaces) and people (students, families, work colleagues) that constitute living at/near home for students on their placement year is important when working with a heterogeneous cohort. The practical implication for placement and university staff is to raise the awareness of these fears and anxieties to students as part of the placement preparation and support areas where practicable. It may not necessarily be in resolving some of the issues. It may be in enabling students to accept there are unknown challenges, to take solace, and allow time for students to reflect how their fears and decisions have enabled them to develop as young adults, build skills and self-confidence and enable students to cross a supportive 'bridge' over the transition of study-to-work.

The next section explores the final part of the placement journey in securing a placement and the relationships between habitus, capital and field in the agri-food sector.

5.3   Field and Habitus: Fish in water, fitting-in, and the 'grass slipper'.

This section explores the valued forms of capital in the context of placement seeking and the ownership in students shaping their personal branding and is comprised of data as arising from the student Rich Picture task 1. Firstly, I will illustrate the challenges that students faced in securing placement positions to get a sense of their feel for the game and capitals to play in the field of agri-food placement. Secondly, I will use the data to explore the relationship between habitus, capital and field with the unspoken rules of the game and ambiguous notions of 'fit'. These notions of fit and 'fitting-in' (in the context of, are you like us/ do you work like us/ do you dress and talk like us?) may influence the selection and sense of belonging in a university (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2010)

and are tremendously powerful in the workplace where subjective lifestyle markers operate as class signifiers (Friedman & Laurison, 2019; Ingram and Allen, 2019). These notions of fit are like a magic ingredient, often hard to define 'highly ambiguous, magical, mystical quality' (Ingram and Allen, 2019:730) and yet easy to spot. My contribution to these bodies of work relates to evidence of these lifestyle markers relating to the rural sector in students seeking placements and employment.

Issues of rejection – fish out of water

The Rich Pictures depicting the preparations for placement and career management displayed many areas of anxiety and emotions where images of faces were used to connote sad feelings and portray the struggles and rejections faced during the interview process. The colour red and use of 'X' was often used to denote the meaning non-success in the interview processes. Faces were used to depict emotions and feelings, depicting their distress, or uncertainty; dotted lines used to convey the decision-making process (see Figure 14 and Figure 15).
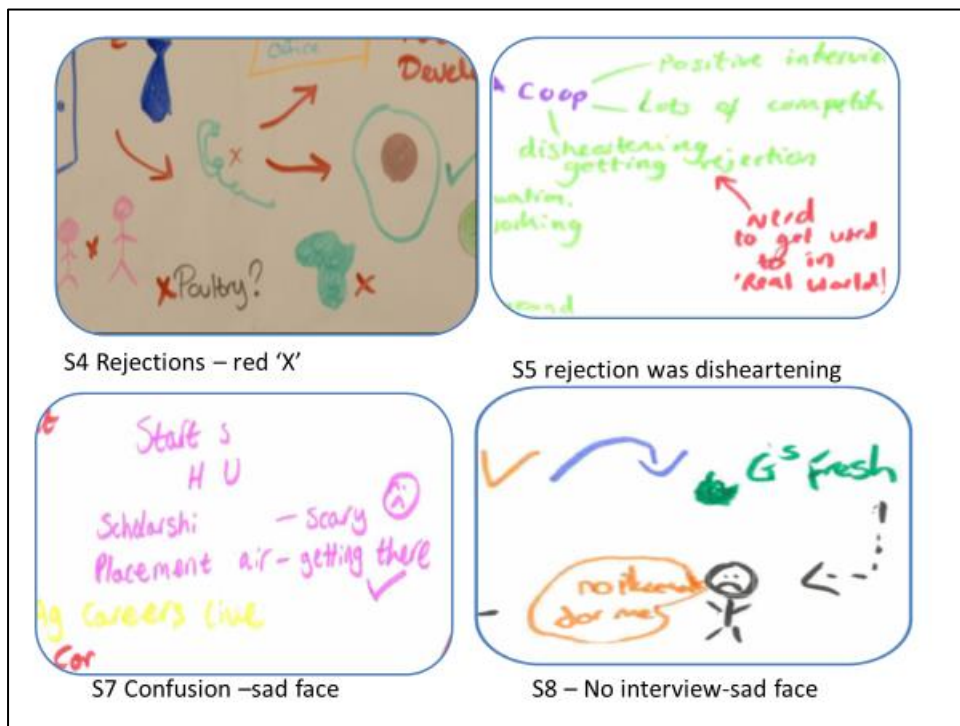
Figure 14 Struggles and rejections
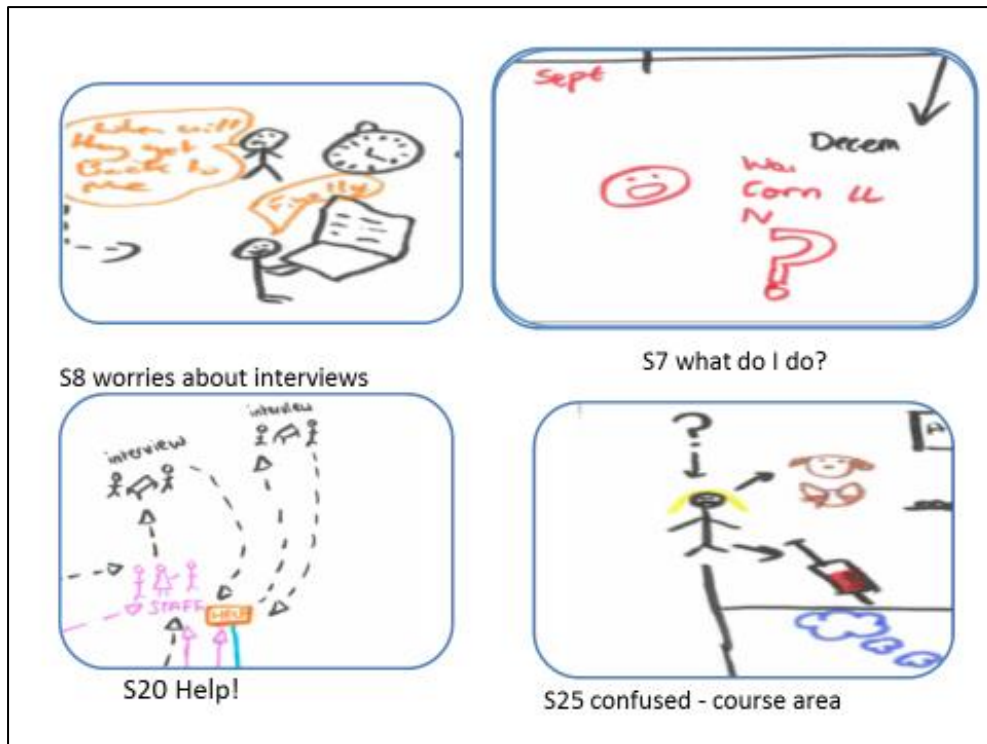
Figure 15 Interview worries in attaining employment

I will use the accounts of S20, S6 and S4 to illustrate the struggles in the field and where different forms of capital are legitimised. S20 and S4 were post-placement and had undertaken the compulsory placement and both spoke of having great difficulties in placement seeking. S20 had been rejected from several interviews and was fearful of securing a placement position where "It did knock my confidence quite a lot because I went to so many interviews" (S20). However, knowing the reasons *why* they had been rejected enabled S20 to accept that they lacked the necessary capitals, and were factors beyond their control:

> I applied to loads actually, and I went to one … it was about 5 hours away and then they said sorry you haven't got the job, and I said why – can you give me feedback and they said well they wanted a Welsh girl and they did choose a Welsh girl so I was glad of that (S20).

In this case, (on face value) not having the cultural capitals of being Welsh speaking was the indicated lack of symbolic capital for this role (whether this is real reason is not known). It showed how students can move between a self-critical stance, to one of being context- critical for the role in the process of placement seeking and facing rejections. S20 went to explain that after facing several rejections and loss of confidence, that being relaxed and 'yourself' assisted in securing the placement role as articulated*:*

> I was a lot more relaxed, I wore more informal, like just a jumper and shirt rather than like a suit, but I guess that suited the job really well, so that's probably why…. I could talk to him

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with things in common like family business and things like that…and to be myself… rather than trying to be someone that I'm not. Which is what I did (S20).

The experience of the previous interview rejections allowed S20 to reflect how being relaxed, how the conversation flowed during the interview, how she could "be myself' and "talk to him with things in common" all point to Bourdieu's feel for the game and shared habitus. This resonates with Bourdieu's most well-known of statements about habitus and field:

> 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: 127).

Here, S20 was equipped with the necessary levels of social and cultural capitals and habitus to be able to read (the taken for granted-ness) and ability to play the game.

S6 had a similar journey to that of S20 discussed above. S6 had encountered several rejections at interview for placement but did not discuss this as being a struggle, but an acceptance of the rejections in the interview process, saying "out of the five [interviews] I got the one I wanted the most so it was really good, really easy" (S6). S6 was also able to accept the rejections as on reflection S6 articulated how comfortable they felt on meeting the final company and when asked what they thought it was that made the interview successful and in choosing them above others:

> I don't really know..., I arrived at the site and I immediately felt really comfortable and everyone was very similar to people I had worked with before…I don't know what it was but I felt I just clicked in straight away which is really, really lovely and I am just glad that they felt the same way about me and I got the job. I felt really relaxed [at the interview] it wasn't uncomfortable at all, I mean I was in an interview where there were three people interviewing me which ordinarily I would have just not been able to handle, but it was very very relaxed and just like a chat with someone which was really really lovely and yeah, I'm not really sure what it was but a really, really good fit (S6).

The aspect of the student talking about how they may 'fit in' shows some understanding of the tripartite nature of the relationship between habitus, capital and field. The student showed a tacit understanding of the game rules. The narrative expressed how deeply S6 felt about being comfortable, relaxed and could fit in with the company during the interview and sums up the feeling as explained by Bourdieu of being a fish in water. The same student S6 went on to show an acceptance and understanding of the field's habitus in saying:

> Well it's all very well to have all the skills and ideas going to work for a company but if you don't... if it's not the right company for you, it shows and it's not worth the time (S6).

Here the student referred to the notion that despite having the necessary skills [academic and technical], without having the social and cultural capitals it will limit the ability to succeed in the

game of placement employment. S6 saw that the constraints and dispositions associated with their habitus would influence their practice and that 'it's not worth the time' in seeking to play the [this particular] game.

The RP drawn by S4 was an eclectic mass of images, icons, arrows and red crosses to epitomise the rejections and difficulties S4 had faced in securing a placement employment. S4 considered having an African background was the reason for the lack of success at interview in "not fitting with the company values" (S4). The concept of habitus enables links between individuals' inner emotional worlds and external social and structural process. Wacquant (2016: 64) contends that the dissection of dispositions should "proceed in close connection with the mapping of the system of positions that alternately excite, suppress, or redirect the socially constituted capacities and inclinations of the agent". Here, the multiple rejections faced by S4 in securing a role illustrates habitus operating like a defence mechanism in response to powerful emotions and exposure where S4 used the African background as a defence mechanism in justifying and causing the distress. S4 may have been experiencing a 'dialectical confrontation' (Bourdieu, 2002:31) where the habitus enters a new field and generating suffering and where there can emerge a 'cleft habitus' or a 'habitus tug', or 'divided habitus'. The Rich Picture method provides opportunity for reflection and this was evident with S4 where later on in the in-depth interview and in describing the Rich Picture drawings, S4 showed a clear understanding of how the past difficulties had played out in the present and described it as:

> Coming away from placement and the last year at [LBU] has made me realise that basically 'you are who you are' and like, I'm from Africa, I live in England now. To be successful you have to just embrace who you are and be able to run with it rather than fit into the mould (S4).

S4 explained that the process of feeling the distress of rejections, and then when finally securing a role (with a manager who shared a similar upbringing) it had helped him realise that "you are who you are", and to embrace that, essentially to be yourself. Reay (2015) suggests that developing understandings of habitus to include the emotional underworld of individuals both extends and enriches the concept of habitus, and how it provides us with ''a better grasp of the degree of ease and/or discomfort with which people respond to and internalise the wider social world, as they move across a range of familiar and unfamiliar fields" (Reay, 2015:22).   Habitus is shown as dispositions, and the negative emotional experiences of S4 highlight the relationship between habitus and field. For S4, a white student with an African upbringing, adaptation was necessary to live in England "to embrace who you are", accept and "run with it" rather than going against it and squeeze into an uncomfortable mould that does not fit. It seems that time has played a significant role here, as time went by, experiences accumulated and this gave S4 the opportunity to realise this.

At the end of the in-depth interview S4 reflected on the feelings of rejection as a positive outcome "as much as there is rejection, there is also experience of what people are looking for, what to say, what not to say, how to present yourself" and that "rather than fit in the mould" of what the company wants, it is important to embrace yourself in being, 'Be You'. However, being authentic 'You' will still need to meet the balanced nuances of 'fitting-in' and understanding logic of the field.

Resilience, grit, perseverance and ability to bounce back are part of desirable character traits (CBI, 2019; Trought, 2017; Duckworth, 2016) which may be natural, or need guidance by the university to develop. However, this judgemental approach to endorsing and reifying the 'knock-backs' in 'character building' does not reveal other complexities which may be at play in the rejection and placement seeking process for these students. The ability to move within a field may be due to a lack of fit between the habitus and the field where Bourdieu understands positions and dispositions to be complementary like a fish in water. The three student accounts above (S20, S6 and S4) provide examples of being 'fish out of water'. P4 spoke about interviews often being "literally a chat over a coffee and can be as informal as that really, and if they like you and the face fits, then you might be in" (P4). However, referring back to the iceberg metaphor earlier, lowering the waterline may not be sufficient in evidencing and the mobilisation of capitals to play the game and 'fit' with an organisation. For instance, the waters in which the iceberg is located (as epitomised by the sector or industry of employment) may prove unnavigable if there is a misalignment between the field and student habitus. And so, it could be considered that no matter how far the waterline is lowered to reveal the proposed 'invaluable' non-academic capitals to play the game, if a student is like a fish out of water, they will not have the recognised tokens of symbolic capital to fit in.

Sense of belonging and notions of fit- Fish in water

Students, university staff and employers referred to the notion of 'fit' and 'fitting in' as part of the career and placement journey epitomising a sense of belonging. However, these terms had different nuances and were conveyed in several ways as shown in Table 6.

Table 6 Notions of fit and fitting-in arising from the data

Notions of Fit and Fitting-in arising from the data
Understanding of the company ethos
Understanding of the values of the company
Having a similar passion and motivation for the company
Having a similar mind-set
Attitude and approach to work
Understanding the levels of hierarchy and 'place' in the business (in doing menial tasks).
Are you a person like us?
Can you socialise like us (in office environment, having a meal as a team, in drinking together, or sport event)?
Can you be in a team with us (in working and socialising together)?
Do you look like us and our brand (in dress and appearance)?

Placement staff participants particularly referred to notions of fit and where P5 included the word 'fit', and underlined twice in red colour on their Rich Picture and described how employers were looking for a person with "the enthusiasm, the fit", and where you could be "the most able student but if you are not the right fit for small, medium and large companies, if you are not the kind of fit or mould that the companies are looking for, then probably it will be a 'no'" (P5). As a referee in the field, P5 believed students should understand (play) the 'values' of the company and for the student to match the employers' values:

> So going back to the ideas of their [company] values, looking at those sections on the website on 'about us', I think it is really useful if the students visit that and absorb it like a sponge, consider it and how they 'fit' into that particular employer and that particular environment (P5).

Students (S6, S8, and S22) explained how they had particularly researched the company by following on Twitter or reviewing the company website and their ways of working and core values, and whether they would fit with their own values. As articulated by S6, "I looked at companies that matched my own ethics and personality – I wanted to work for a company that was British based. I just think I want to champion British" (S6). Whilst the students did not overtly refer to their personal branding, they were showing an understanding of their own personal values and how this may influence their choice in selection and application. Brands reveal their values embodied in an organisation to consumers, employees and society (Tuten, 2020) and so these students demonstrated some awareness of personal branding and used it in their strategic selection of potential employers.

To 'fit in' was described as fitting with the "ethos of the company" by S22 and explained it as being the reason that helped them to secure the employment position. For S22 the company ethos was the sense that "some people have come from LBU and from farming backgrounds and so being of the same mind-set", essentially providing a rural habitus and attributing to a collective habitus, or here an institutional habitus and the social capital that affords to employers. This provided a common understanding and 'mind-set' (and rules of the game) with S22 further explaining that "I have purple foot marker on my hand today, but people just think, oh fine, she's just been working with sheep" (S22). The purple marker on the hand referred to may appear as unappealing at interview for many employment positions outside of the agri-food sector as it may look like the person is dirty and un-kept. Here, it is mentioned by the student as evidence of practical work with sheep, (cultural capital- as the purple spray is a well- recognised medication used to treat foot rot in sheep when checking for lameness) and as an authentication of knowledge and understanding of the sector it affords and provides a tacit and shared understanding. The home background of S22 was

similar to those who were working in the company and the common mind-set referred to by S22 demonstrates a resonance between the S22's habitus and the field in which the specific company was positioned. Although S22 did not have previous experience in this actual agri-food sector, she spoke about having the same 'mind-set' and why the non-verbal communication of the purple spray foot marker on the hands would have been accepted as the norm without question.

 P7 perceived the values of a company as multifaceted and used the analogy (see Figure 16) of a jigsaw to explain how 'fit' and 'fit-in' covered many facets and were interlinked.
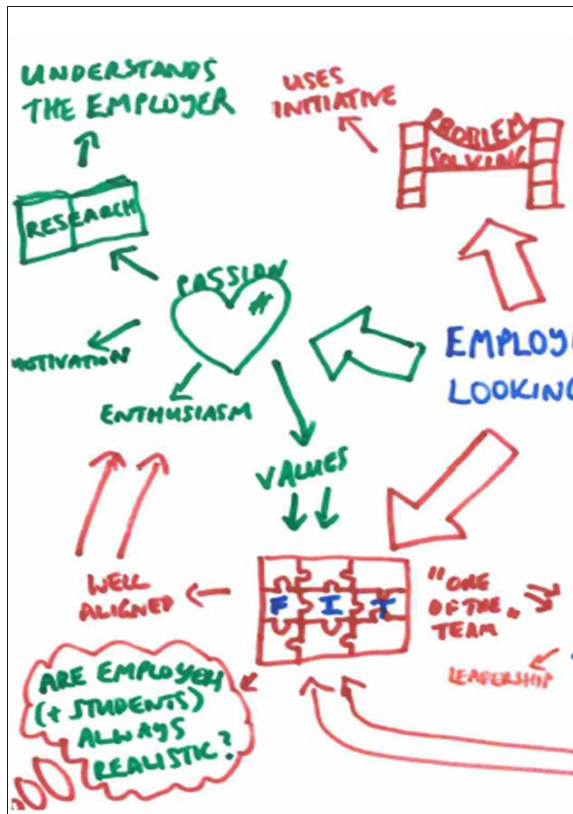
Figure 16 'Fit in': A jigsaw- like us, values, passion, or approach (P7)

The drawing built on the image of a green heart with the words saying 'passion' and explained it as having two parts, passion for the subject and passion for the employer, which was then linked using arrows to an image of a jigsaw drawn in red with the letters spelling 'FIT' on three of the jigsaw pieces, and explained:

> The students' need to have explored the employer and understand the employer and what they do, are they a family business, are they responsible to their shareholders, do they have a passion for producing a product in a particular way and really being about to show how they **fit in** [their emphasis] with that – so that is my little jigsaw [see jigsaw drawn in the RP], whether they fit with that company and its values and its motivation because that is something that the employers often highlight to us in our work, that they want to see the student has researched them (P7).

P7 went on to elaborate this further and explained how it linked with another image drawn on the RP explaining that sometimes 'fit' can be an attitude or approach to things and problem solving. Here, to illustrate this further P7 had drawn a bridge in colour red to depict problem solving, how to get from one side to another and how 'fit' may be seen as an approach to work and "are you a person that will just fit fantastically with us…a person just like us" (P7). Being 'like us' also extended to other work-related roles. E2 explained the Rich Picture image (showing a glass of red wine in the middle of a group of stickmen) as fitting in being able to "socialise like us", and be "in a team with us", both in the open plan office space, and having a meal together after a work event, or playing sport. The choice of red wine glass in the image compared to an image of a crate of beer is telling as to the expectation of the type of social event and rules of the game associated with that.

Bourdieu's work with the men and women of Kabylia exemplified the way the body is a mnemonic device upon which the very basics of culture, the practical taxonomies of the habitus, are imprinted and encoded. In a similar way, the agrarian farming sector has stable practical taxonomies of the habitus. Here, associations of 'fit', was also seen as "do you look like us" (P7). This was particularly the case if it was a customer-facing role and "they want you to have the right appearance without saying what that appearance might be" (P4). When questioned further, appearance was in relation to the brand values:

> Just if you are the face of the brand… our students don't generally go for tattoos and things like that, but if that was an issue then some employers might be reluctant [to recruit] if that employee was going to be customer facing (P4).

The 'face of the brand' in effect is referring to the embodied cultural capitals and illusio (as discussed in Chapter 3.2). In the Rich Picture of E2, the second most important factor for this employer was the image drawn of a person described as being "presentable, smartly dressed for work in a shirt and trousers, or skirt". This is quite a 'normal' dress code, but of significance here as E2 recounted an occasion when a placement student wore a "black leather skirt and looked so awful" which were not in-keeping with the company and farmer customer expectations on an agricultural show stand. In any other field of work (say perhaps in a fashion sector or urban setting they may have been perfectly acceptable). Judgements are made on the student's deportment (bodily hexis), the way they speak, dress etc., the 'external criteria' (Bourdieu, 1988: 200-201) and is used by employers to select students. Ingram and Allen (2019:735) use the concept of social magic to illustrate how like the 'slight of hand trick' and wave of a wand, the particular presentation of self (dress, accent, for instance) become objective measures of professional competence. How students dressed is also part of the 'do you look like us' understanding of habitus.

The students showed awareness of meeting others' expectations and perceptions regarding what companies may expect to both stand out in looking presentable (but not so much as to look too different) and fit in when going for placement interviews. Below are some of the students' comments explaining their decisions and doxic thinking,

> I always go shopping and get a new outfit… Normally smart dress, blazer, never go for heels (S3).

> Tie? It's like dressing up for interviews and makes yourself smart, presentable (S4).

> They gave a dress code of business dress. I went the full suit, smart tie, smart shirt that sort of thing but better to be overdressed than under dressed. Looking around at the other people there I didn't look out of place really (S8).

> Most of the people that go for interview go 'dressy dressy', a little dress and cardigan – well that's not me. I'm not that kind of person, so I wore a pair of jeans, boots, and a shirt and that's about as dressy as I go without being in a dress…I was quite relieved at the interview… and I saw others lined up… I didn't stand out for being the one that was over dressed (S21).

> I talked to mum, and said does this look alright… I always go to my parents for advice really, and ask my house-mates does this look alright? (S22).

Some of this was also demonstrated in the Rich Pictures with the students drawing an image of a dress and also an image of a tie, all of which show an awareness of doxa of the field. Here the encoding of appropriate dress demonstrated by the wearing of a dress for females and ties for males could be seen as criteria for common professional expectations as well as the traditions, tastes and norms in the agri-food sector – the attire to play the game in the field. Professional extraneous judgement made on how the students dressed at interviews could determine their success or not, the 'external criteria'. The accounts of S8, S21 and S22 all spoke of referencing their appearance to others who were attending the interviews, showing their tacit understanding of the rules of the game in what to wear. S20 attended many interviews for placement position without success and reflected on the final interview to being more relaxed:

> Yes, I went more relaxed to this one actually… I wore more informal, like just a jumper and shirt rather than a suit, but I guess that suited the job really well. Yeah I was a lot more relaxed and I had an interview in a Farm Shop office so that was more relaxed. And actually he was a man, and I got on better talking, he was like a farmer; whereas [the other company] was a proper interview like in a board room (S20).

Here, S20 selected the clothing appropriate for the role "I wore more informal" to suit the role. Having the interview in the farm shop was more suited to her disposition and shared habitus and rules of the game with the employer. Similarly, S4 changed style of clothing to match the circumstances of the working environment and this was depicted in the drawings in the Rich Picture

showing an awareness of habitus match within the field of the interviewer and the clothing demonstrating an awareness of the accepted embodiment of cultural capitals:

> The blue tie is probably the [LBU] … being at [LBU] you feel you have to be dressed in tweed and in a specific way; whereas moving to London, it was smart but in a different way, you were in a suit every day as opposed to the country'. Q So did you physically change as to how you dressed and look? A. Yes, smart clothes, shoes, completely different (S4).

The adaptation of clothing shows how S4 was aware of the values of the workplace and personification to suit rural (smart tweed)/urban (smart suit) expectations and embodiment of cultural capital. In marketing terms, the cultural embodiment of dress and appearance could be likened to having compatible brand values to suit the company brand. Student S6 referred to the values of the company as the "Company Way" and how an understanding of those values from work experience had helped to shape understanding of customer facing brand awareness:

> I think they were looking for someone that would suit their brand…the job that they wanted to do which was really digital marketing, but also someone that can work in an office but also can go to a trade stand or be in front of customers and not be uncomfortable…someone would be able to work in what they called the 'Company X Way' and deliver the customer service they were looking for (S6).

Mastering some of these behavioural codes may represent metaphorical "glass slipper" rendering workplaces a natural fit for some and uncomfortable for others (Friedman and Laurison, 2019: 124).

In the rural sector, I suggest that it could be represented by the metaphorical green "grass slipper" representing and encompassing the rural habitus where similarly the workplace is a natural fit for some but uncomfortable for others to 'fit-in' requiring a 'grass slipper' in having the social and cultural capitals to be able to have a feel for the game in the field of the rural and agricultural sector.

Chapter summary

This chapter explored the valued forms of capital in placement seeking and approaches taken by university staff in support of students to build Brand-Me through self- promotion and personal branding. The accounts and Rich Picture drawings of placement staff, employers and students showed that much greater importance was held on the non-scholastic capitals and on notions of fit. The data showed triangulation between the expectations of employers, placement staff and students in respect to the valued forms of capital. These were evident in the Rich Pictures and also as applied by the students in their depiction of Brand-Me. The accounts of placement staff had a very much processional approach to placement seeking and limited attention to the structural constraints and individual resources with respect to social, cultural and economic capitals. The influence of the family habitus and resources was instrumental in career envisioning and placement

seeking for these students and offers a rural placement seeking perspective to the body of literature and geographical mobilities. Section 5.3 focused on the theme 'fitting in' and Bourdieu's concept of 'fish in water'. Notions of 'fit' or 'fitting-in' had several different nuances which were identified in the analysis and raised by students, placement staff and employers and staff as part of the career and placement journey. While there was evidence of student struggles in the field, this research showed that students had a subconscious awareness of the 'rules of the game' and the interrelationship between the habitus and field, and 'fitting-in'. Reverting to the 'glass slipper' metaphor of Friedman and Laurison (2019), many students were able to show the magic (Ingram and Allen, 2019) of being able to wear the 'grass slipper' in having the embodied social and cultural capitals and feel for the game in the rural and agri-food sector. To what extent the students are able to articulate this to potential employers is discussed in Chapter 6.

6 Chapter 6 - Strategic personal branding

This chapter 6 explores students' consideration of personal branding and whether their strategies to secure industrial placement and graduate employment are influenced by an awareness of personal branding and how their personal brand is articulated offline and online. The use of social media and marketing strategies related to personal branding and brand positioning were explored earlier (in Section 2.3 and 2.4) and draw on Goffman's (1959) interaction theory and impression management (in Sections 2.3 and 3.2). Brand positioning is a form of impression management to create an image to occupy a distinctive place in "the minds of the target market" (Kotler and Keller, 2012: 156) whereby a marketer constructed brand image is created to display material and symbolic meaning (Giddens, 2013; Kedzior et al., 2016; Lee and Cavanaugh, 2016). Here I argue that consideration of marketing principles and those of brand positioning may be applicable to the Bourdieusian field which has various stakes and resources for social agents to compete for akin to the competitive market place.

In a competitive marketplace, businesses analyse the competition (or dynamic forces) in the field and select differing competitive marketing strategies in order to build customer relationships and gain competitive advantage. No one strategy is deemed best as differing strategies are required for different businesses or products (Kotler et al., 2017: 537-546; Brassington and Pettit, 2012: 552-556). In a similar vein, students seeking placements will be vying for placement positions with their peers. Individual students will hold different volumes of capital (social, economic and cultural) with which to play in the field of placement seeking and affect how they are able to play the game and the strategies they consciously/unconsciously choose for Brand-Me. However, the mosaic of a person's multiple selves and compositional singularities (Reckwitz, 2020) that make up a person's profile (as discussed in Sections 2.3 and 2.4) create challenges for an individual to respond to the neoliberal entrepreneurial marketing concept to create a coherent brand strategy with both offline and online self-presentations, if indeed they even desire to do so. Additionally, the impression management created by the combination of physical and online attributes connecting a human-brand narrative to others through social media and projecting an image representing one's identity online involves increased self-consciousness in crafting a self for others' viewing (Zhao et al., 2008). In doing so, social media is likened to a modern form of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon (Rayner, 2012), a virtual Panopticon[43]. Sharing is basic to social media and in a social media virtual Panopticon, like a stage, potential employers are able to view student online activities, (and likewise students can view employers) which have been selected for sharing by the students. This requires a

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[43] The major effect of Foucault's (1995) prison Panopticon was to induce in the inmates or guards a sense of conscious and permanent visibility because they never know when they are being watched, and the concept of a virtual Panopticon works in a similar way.

self-reflexive aspect for students to consider especially in a culture of sharing content which is constantly fabricated and judged.

Section 6.1 reports on the personal branding strategies as evidenced from the student in-depth interviews in the context of preparing for placement. Students mostly reflected on the value of the Curriculum Vitae (CV) and appeared to reflect a limited and defensive approach to personal branding from a placement practitioner/marketer perspective. They resisted taking part in what they indirectly deemed a form of surveillance, a virtual Panopticon characterised by the field (which they could only do if they are sharing anonymously and carefully managing others' activities connected to themselves). However, on closer analysis, their actions could be deemed as strategically proactive from a researcher and theoretical perspective in protecting their digital footprint and recognition of the silent architecture of the observational apparatus (Schwan and Shapiro, 2011) that social media can be.

Secondly, Section 6.2 reports on the analysis of the Rich Picture drawing task to consider Brand-Me (see Appendices H for Rich Picture data) and the semiotic resources and marketing techniques students used to describe their personal brand which for many was the desire to convey a rural manifestation of being 'hardworking'. Thirdly, the in-depth interviews and complementary Rich Picture drawings elicited a 'female in farming' perspective working in a socially constructed masculine sector. This was not the intention of the research and in listening to the students it caused me to reflect on my own experiences as a female involved in the agri-food sector as practitioner for almost 40 years[44]. During these years in farming practice, I recognised yet silently acquiesced to the masculine dominant subjectivities in the sector (related to clothing, performance, competence) and adopted a 'just get on with it' approach to practice and not raising it as an issue. However, I don't believe these experiences framed the analysis as the interpretivist inductive epistemological approach using the creation of Rich Pictures as part of the methodology and the unadulterated semiotic resources they provided allowed for participant freedom to share their views and experiences. And so, the findings in Section 6.3 specifically report on the emergent theme in the data relating to female branding considerations in the agri-food sector and strategies to secure industrial placement employment.

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[44] As a female practitioner in the farming sector, I was often 'tested' by farmers, for example where they selected the largest animals for me to administer animal husbandry tasks; or at interview for lecturing posts asked how I would physically manage working with sheep outdoors all day, or handle 'lusty young male students', or how I would manage my children when the role involved working away from home and many other such instances. All of which were recognised, accepted and silently obeyed to the masculine domination in the sector, and personally managed by an attitude of 'just get on with it' approach. It reminded me also that when I was a new female lecturer, females were instructed to keep our shoulders covered and to wear a skirt in classroom- trousers were only worn doing practical outdoor tasks. Remarkably, during these early years of lecturing (late 80's, early 90's) the local Agricultural Society gave free admission to the annual beef show for persons (women) wearing a skirt.

6.1   Personal branding as part of the placement journey: defensive and differentiated strategies

The questioning format in the in-depth interview deliberately avoided the use of the term 'Brand-Me' in the early stages in order to tease out if personal branding was considered. From the in-depth interviews, the creation of the Curriculum Vitae (CV) appeared to be the main approach mentioned by the students (and placement staff) to promote themselves to prospective employers. The CV was seen as quite a perfunctory, impersonal, and factual way to account for one's skills:

> [CV] is quite black and white. It is what it is. I've put my work experience, my education. I haven't gone over the top with it, because I think a CV is a thing that what you need to know, you don't want it too extravagant (S2).

In the account of S21, the CV was compartmentalised as being created as a form of self-marketing for the professional world, whereas, thinking of personal branding would consider and include other areas that were not "specific to your job" although S21 acknowledged that "you can't split it as such, but there are two different sides to it, the professional and personal" (S21). While the students created the CV tailored for the professional positions, and also referred to the compositional singularities of professional and personal, they did not reflect on their personal side and use of social media in their consideration of personal branding. As described earlier in Section 2.3, the ubiquitous nature of the web has led to the blurring or decompartmentalisation between the personal and professional (JISC, 2014). Thereby, the digital technology is working as a tool of self-marketing and creates their personal brand whether intentional or otherwise.

Section 2.3 described how the online/digital environment is also recognised as a cultural environment charged with affects, where narrative, aesthetics and other design based formats of culture have inherent value from a participant perspective (Reckwitz, 2020). These create an impression from which judgements are made, and where in a neoliberal world personal businesses emerge. Participants in this research were familiar with using social media technologies to circulate and receive narrative, images and other semiotic resources, and were cautious of how their personal activities on social media conveying formats of culture may affect and have inherent value from the perspective of employer participants. In doing so, from a student perspective they were proactive in managing their digital footprint, which in a neoliberal marketing context could be described as a defensive personal branding strategy, or a differentiated personal branding strategy. These are discussed next.

Defensive personal branding strategy

The cautionary perspective regarding managing one's digital footprint was a recurring theme with participants where the approach taken by students to use social media for online promotion and

personal branding was limited and mostly undertaken by way of a defensive marketing approach[45]. The use of social media and awareness in preparing for placement and promotion of Brand-Me was not evident in the Rich Picture drawings as part of their preparation for placement or careers, showing a clear separation in the social and professional self. Whilst students in this study would have grown up with social media as a means to socialise and in forming networks, acquiring necessary skills to use in support of personal branding, social media was not seen as being part of a personal promotional tool, "Facebook we have grown up with it through school and we never saw it as a promotional tool" (S4). This was echoed by S25:

> It makes perfect sense [to use social media for promotion of self]. It's just that because social media is literally your social life, your personal life and then you are a very different person I suppose in the business world, that I didn't even think about the two going hand in hand. But actually, as I've grown up it's become more, because I don't go out drinking anymore and I am genuinely interested in articles and I'll share them like my mum does on Facebook and things. I think naturally I have become more like that but it's not been intended for a professional use (S25).

Using social media for personal use and not intended for professional use was very typical of the participants. Students were aware of their online presence and many had taken steps to look at their digital footprint in preparing for placement. From a placement practitioner/ marketer perspective, their actions could be construed as a defensive action and not strategic in their consideration of social media in preparing for placement or career planning as part of their promotional toolkit. While, from a researcher perspective, their defensive actions could be construed as being strategically proactive as students spoke of conducting a personal search of their own online presence to make sure that any potential employers would not see what could be inappropriate images "like drunk pictures and things" (S25), "Because they [employers] do check don't they" (S20). In doing so, they were showing an understanding of how the internet is an 'affect machine' (Reckwitz, 2020: 170) and a cultural environment where cultural formats (design, images etc.) are charged with affects and have inherent value from the perspective of participants. Students used their family as a baseline of what would be appropriate to show the family, "make sure everything was PG [Parental Guidance cinema rating]" (S25), and used that baseline as to what would be acceptable for an employer to see. The students were aware that employers would check social media as a means to screen candidates and their social connections as explained by S22,

> My manager always looked on Facebook before the CV, she did that quite often and I was surprised. I think that is what made me think I'd better sort mine out, even though I'd already done so. It amazed me how quickly they could find you on Facebook and see what

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[45] This was similar to the findings in earlier work undertaken in a quantitative study that examined students' use of social media in preparing for placement (Parrott, 2014; Parrott and Walley, 2015).

you get up to, and who are friends with you as well and other connections. And so, it's really important to portray yourself on social media quite well (S22).

This knowledge influenced the students to individually reflect on their own online activity and attempt to avoid danah boyd's (2011) 'context collision' with the decompartmentalisation of the personal and professional world (see Section 2.3). This was similar to other work where students showed anxiety and fear of misrepresentation of the professional self (Bowen, 2016a) and intentionally chose to not disclose certain types of information as part of their brand identity strategy. Instead, like actors on Goffman's (1959) stage, participants tactically chose their props (pictures, applications) and dress (information, images) to create meaning through self-presentation to others including potential employers (Labrecque et al., 2011). Here, the carefully crafted CV is presented by the students as front stage to employers, while now mindful that their personal social media is no longer backstage. Now, the presence of social media is increasingly front stage which demands crafting for others' viewing. Written before online social media and all its forms of visual communication, Bourdieu suggested that "the meaning of work (artistic, literary, philosophical, etc.) changes automatically with each change in field within which it is situated for the spectator or reader" (Bourdieu, 1983: 313).

And so, as the students traverse through their years of study with a social media legacy of lifestreaming their early years of student activity and move to placement seeking, the social media practices and choices of images with their associated recognised inherent values and affective characteristics create meaning for different players in the field (their peers or employers). These aesthetic intentions provoke judgements, which may (or not) be perceived as 'a good form', or of 'pure taste', or in providing a 'sense of distinction' (Bourdieu, 1984). What is acceptable practice and imagery as depicted to student peers may provoke a different judgement from employers. These aesthetic dispositions are formed in the social conditions and the implicitly shared perceptual codes in the field, the doxa of the field. Here the mismatch between personal use of social media developed through the students' early years before and during HE is now challenged due to the dynamic nature and social conditions of the field. The habitus of the students has directed them to adopt a strategic proactive stance to safeguard their social media practice. While checking one's online presence is considered as a first step in developing a social media profile (Milliken, 2019) to prevent leaving a negative digital footprint, the students showed a tacit understanding in the doxa of the field of what might be acceptable (or not) and were responsive to this in their strategic defensive action for placement seeking.

As players in the field, students showed familiarity with the rules of the game in which they operate in placement seeking. They were familiar with using social media as a means to connect with their

peers socially, without seeing the need to use these digital skills in using social media for showcasing their Brand-Me and a defensive strategic approach was deemed suitable and successful strategy in protection of their personal social sphere. The pictures, images and texts used on their social media accounts were about showing and depicting their home, themselves, their university life. Essentially fostering a 'front' showing the particular facets to their life:

> Q Is there anything you particularly wanted to show? A. Yes, I guess like my farm side of it, so… I think my cover photo was like a rapeseed oil field which was quite good because I'd had that picture before I went to the placement [Company X] but not intentionally….On the [Facebook] 'about' page, putting school, university making sure that I had agri-food marketing at [LBU] and then like the photos of me on the farm or of [LBU], of me walking a dog, in a field, or I think there is pictures of us playing netball here or at the rugby watching (S20).

The context of S20's account of selecting social media images was more about the theme of life-streaming and their lived world rather than being a culturally fabricated form of 'performative authenticity' (Reckwitz, 2020) for the advantage of a potential employer. While the defensive approach to Brand-Me was more evident, the images selected of fields, the farm, the purposeful mentioning of the course being studied showed a considered strategic intentional promotional communications plan and a tacit understanding of the rules of the game and doxa of the field.

From a placement practitioner /marketer perspective, using social media could be a strategic component to personal branding or marketing of self. While this approach appears to embrace neoliberalism, its intention is in supporting students to play the game of placement seeking through the ability to articulate their capitals. There is a difference in having a social media account and being socially strategic and tactical (Kelly, 2016). Using social media in a strategic manner for placement employment seeking was of limited consideration with the students and articulated as, ''I've never thought of it that way…'' (S21). Others strategically evaded social media and connecting it to Brand-Me in order to be more invisible to their own professional benefit, thereby resisting this approach. For S1, little information available was seen as positive, "I think the less people know about you, the more exciting it is to find out" (S1), while S20 "didn't really use Twitter and Facebook to try and find jobs, I just relied on the [university] website" (S20). The lack of need for a personally active managed social media approach may be due to the fact that the university has a bespoke system for placement providers and employers to promote positions directly to the student cohort with limited self-search. It also demonstrates how students compartmentalised the tools of social media; Twitter and Facebook may not be spaces for finding positions, however potential employers use these platforms as a form of surveillance to form a picture of any applicants. Thereby, the consideration of placement practitioners (acting like a coach to players in the field) asking students

to take a strategic tactical approach to using social media to create an impression of Brand-Me and demonstrate an understanding of the dynamic nature of the field is the premise of consideration of Brand-Me at the university. In effect, it is encouraging students to think of themselves in a more neo-liberalised way but equally in the management and protection of their social sphere.

Differentiated branding strategy

Forms of differentiated branding strategy were evident in how students used differing social media tools and highlighting the interplay between personal and professional use. For instance, S6 was familiar in using social media and particularly Twitter as part of a planned '*offensive'* (tactical and targeted) promotion and branding strategy in the promotion of the family business. Twitter was used "as an open window [for the business] to see and be seen" and in providing a "more informal introduction to myself" (S6). However, S6 was reluctant to use social media in their own personal branding but used Twitter to co-brand the business with the personal. Whilst S6 had the necessary skills to use social media to help promote the family business, a more defensive approach was taken with their own self where S6 remarked how their parents and school had cautioned them to be careful, because what is on the internet and online is "there forever". This early parental intervention of caution had made them careful of using social media for their own personal use as they did not want "anything to bite me later on" (S6) and epitomised the tensions raised earlier regarding their online digital footprint and fear of a negative image or employers digging up any digital dirt (Rutledge, 2008). At the same time S6 spoke of the paradoxical challenge in displaying authenticity and in not trying to make a false impression showing a banal image of a person front stage "and not trying to make myself out as this amazing person who has no flaws" (S6). Thus, S6 was cognisant to be careful to create meaning through self-presentation to others (the selection of meaning-giving pictures, images used on their social media pages) and seemingly undertaken in a strategic defensive tactical approach. Thus S6 showed ability to use social media to promote the family business and Brand-Me by using different approaches.

S8 also used Twitter to develop their family business (fresh produce) by interacting with people in the industry to raise awareness of the family business in order to,

> make a bit of a name for my family business through me… a lot of the businesses we work with follow me and I follow packaging, seed [companies] and trying to paint myself in the best way as well…keeping it as professional as possible (S8).

Whilst S8 had acquired the necessary volumes of cultural capital about the rural sector and social connections to use Twitter to promote the business and "build a name or reputation" for the business, S8 was similar to S6 and chose to not use Twitter for personal use. Here the student used Twitter nonymously showing images and information relating to their business, whilst paradoxically

acknowledging that they were not really a "people person on social media". The student was comfortable communicating in this arena where it was a social but also 'professional' arena and connecting with suppliers and other stakeholders in the business sector that they were involved with. In promoting their business, S8 was inadvertently promoting their own self and Brand-Me. Similarly, S5 came from a family business growing sugar beet and had created a hashtag on Twitter to promote British farming:

> I do Twitter and try and get noticed. By using [#hashtag] quite a bit and I put photos up from home. So we've started sugar beet last year, and I have noticed that consumers/ a lot of people don't actually know that sugar is grown in the UK so I have done a few photos with the silver spoon [image] with the sugar beet behind (S5).

In the same way that S6, S8 and S5 accounted for the use of Twitter to promote their family business or sector, S9 attempted to compartmentalise the online personal and professional spaces and used Twitter as a professional medium in which to connect with the sector for networking and building social capital,

> I have my other social media accounts like Facebook and Instagram and Snapchat all very private and so you can't actually see anything if you log on. But Twitter I keep as an Industry thing because agriculture on Twitter is really big and so it's a way to connect after [LBU industry meetings] as well and people. I have to have that open so nothing personal goes on it. It is all professional [LBU] or my career (S9).

The use of social media offers the potential for the blurring of lines between personal and professional use. While there appeared to be limited evidence of consideration to 'strategically present a shade of the self' (Manago and Vaughn, 2015: 188) and adoption of a neo-liberalised strategic marketing approach to personal branding, the students used their understanding of the rural sector for the promotion of their businesses and also to educate and create an awareness of the sector. The concern for managing the digital footprint has been the reluctance of students to consider online medium as part of personal branding and thereby attempting to compartmentalise the personal and the professional. Although the students may appear to be disinterested in fostering a personal brand, by their digital actions in 'educating and creating an awareness of the sector' and 'connect' in building social capital, they are in fact establishing a reputation for themselves and their Brand-Me. This unintended outcome is derived from the students' judgement of taste and showing 'distinction' in using the perceived power and digital habitus they have in the field in which they and their family business operates, and with the interaction in their personal sphere.

The rules of the field and combining the digital personal and professional were problematic for some students. In mastering this, in playing the placement game the students showed a dual digital

habitus in their approach to managing their personal and professional social media content. Firstly, a considered strategic defensive approach to the personal aspects was used showing a tacit understanding of the rules of the game. Secondly, in taking a differentiated marketing approach showing a greater willingness for player status in the professional field being embodied with the cultural capital and showing an understanding of the sector, which contiguously shaped their Brand-Me. The next section explores how students considered their personal brand and their strategies to articulate and portray Brand-Me through their creation of Rich Pictures.

6.2   Personal branding: consideration of Brand-Me through Rich Pictures

Personal branding for placement and graduate positions requires students having an awareness of the field-specific career capital that allows them to stand-out whilst having the habitus that allows them to comply with the field-specific expectations in order to fit-in. The consideration of branding as part of the marketing process is a perceptual process (De Chernatony et al., 2013) where the ultimate assessor of value of a brand is the buyer or in this context the potential employer or placement provider. How a student is perceived by an employer or placement provider will be influenced by the messages and images perceived through their own perceptions. Therefore, in order to further explore and gain an understanding of the students' perception of the concept Brand-Me the students were asked to visually address the question, If you had to consider yourself as 'Brand-Me', how would you take this concept forward and promote this?

The complementarity of the research method chosen using the student in-depth interviews alongside the Rich Pictures allowed for explanation of the carriers of connotation to be explained by the students themselves and how they considered themselves as Brand-Me. Key words from the in-depth interviews and Rich Pictures used by students to convey meaning are shown in Appendix G2. In visually analysing the Rich Picture drawings (Appendix H), on first impression, individual Brand-Me were conveyed in the following ways by the student participants:

- Showing a clear central logo and understanding of principles of marketing (S2, S3, S22, S25, S27)
- Using key words to convey meaning (all students except S1)
- Showing a central image with connecting arrows to other images (S8, S9, S20)
- Using a range of images which are not connected (S1, S3, S4, S21, S26),
- A Rich Picture containing mainly written text (S5, S6, S7)

However, the resultant data and themes did not always fit exclusively as shown above as different ways were used to convey the same dimension arising from the complementary narrative and semiotic resources used by the students in the Rich Pictures. The approaches used by students to convey Brand-Me were centred around a common theme of wanting to portray themselves as

hardworking. In doing so, they were presenting their brand for the world of work (Beater, 2019) and using semiotic techniques to present themselves as being worthy alliances to show their conceptions of the ideal neoliberal self into practice (Gershon, 2016; Marwick, 2013). Like other studies they were adopting the 'neoliberal social imagery' reflecting success is about personal hard work and determination (Christie and Burke, 2021:87). In their Rich Pictures, students applied marketing branding principles such as logos, straplines and metaphors to convey presentation of selves. These two approaches are explained in the next two subsections exploring the student's strategic consideration of hardworking characteristics, and the use of marketing and branding tools to convey their brand assets.

Hardworking dimension of Brand-Me

To be seen as 'hardworking' was a recurring theme arising from the data for employers, placement staff and students. Nine of the students in the sample used 'hardworking' to describe their brand attributes in considering Brand-Me in the Rich Picture creation (Appendix G2). It is appropriate to understand what is meant by 'hardworking' and subsequently to be able to explore how it is constructed by the participants in this research. The definition of hardworking is a term used to describe a person or thing that is diligent, industrious, assiduous, dedicated and persevering at completing a task (Yourdictionary, 2021), and putting a lot of effort and care into the work (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2021) and doing it well (Oxford Learner Dictionary, 2021). The construct of hardworking has multiple dimensions and value judgements such as the type of work being undertaken (such as indoor office work requiring detailed versus outdoor manual and physical work); level of behavioural engagement and feelings of success (Picton, Kahu, and Nelson, 2018); where hardworking characteristics improve performance (Bages, Verniers, and Martinot, 2016); in the physical embodiment of muscles as a visual index of a disciplined and hardworking professional (Peng, 2021); expectations relating to gender and women professionals (Peng, 2021; Tijani-Adenle, 2016); cultural differences in work-family balance (Vaziri, Benson and Campo, 2019) and religiosity (Elci, Sener, and Alpkan, 2011). While to be described as 'hardworking' leads to perceptions of greater honesty and as a heuristic for moral character, which Amos, Zhang and Read (2019) warn may affect manager judgements and detection of deviant behaviour. In this research, the Rich Picture drawings and complementary narrative in the in-depth interviews provided an insight into the constructs of hardworking with students seeking placement in the agri-food sector.

The account and RP of S2 showed an application of marketing theory from the modules studied as part of their academic course where S2 had applied neoliberal marketing principles to their depiction of Brand-Me to clearly promote themselves to an employer and two distinct components in the drawing. A set of bullet points showing key attributes (hardworking, good communicator, and

strong attention to detail) next to a picture of self with a speech bubble saying 'I'll have a go at anything' on the top half of the picture". The lower half of the picture showed the student as an anatomy of a product as depicted in marketing terms, with several layers to illustrate their perception of Brand-Me as shown in Figure 17. In doing so, S2 was illustrated as a student product in a commodified HE market place (Morrison, 2017).
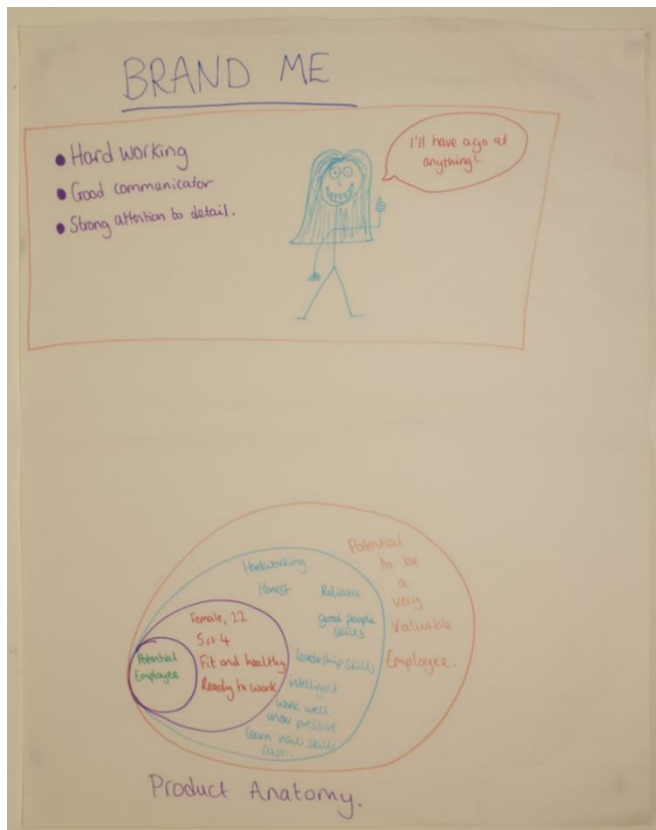
Figure 17 Brand-Me: Product Anatomy (S2)

The student S2 described themselves as a product for the market-place in terms of tangible specified product features as being "Female, 22, 5ft 4inches, fit and healthy, ready to work" and in red text for emphasis. The augmented or intangible product features as "hardworking, honest, reliable, good people skills, leadership skills, intelligent, work well under pressure, and learn new skills fast", all synonymous relating to hardworking, while the fourth level, the potential product ("Potential to be a very valuable employee") were all targeting employers and selling themselves to the market place. Moore et al. (2017) proposed that individuals with a strong self-verification and self-awareness communicated in this way are perceived as more authentic by employers, and here S2 is showing signs of strong self-awareness and self-marketing and conveying this through their depiction of Brand-Me (and no sign of *zhuangbi*).

 The students used images associated with typically rural manual work to convey the concept of being a hardworking person. S27 included a drawing of a spade in both the drawing of the

placement and career journey and also in conveying Brand-Me. Here S27 explained that the spade "symbolises work" and "hard work" and was used to show their experience in both livestock, arable and office work. Other images to connote the attribute of willingness to work hard were shown as a set of hands depicting 'hands on' (S21) or as a hammer and nail (S3). These images all denote a sense of manual work to depict the concept of hard working. Like Bourdieu's (1984) signs of distinction, they provide a sense of physicality to the concept of 'hard-working' particularly sedimented in a masculine dominated habitus. Participant P3 continued with this theme suggesting that employers in particular think that "[LBU] students are in particular very hard working" and had drawn a stickman in pink with a field fork to depict the concept of hard work. This was supported by E2 who used the image of a stickman using a yard brush to convey that the concept of the importance of having a hardworking attitude. A collection of images to convey being seen as, or wanting hardworking attributes are shown in Figure 18 and are props chosen that would be appropriate in a manual work-based situation.
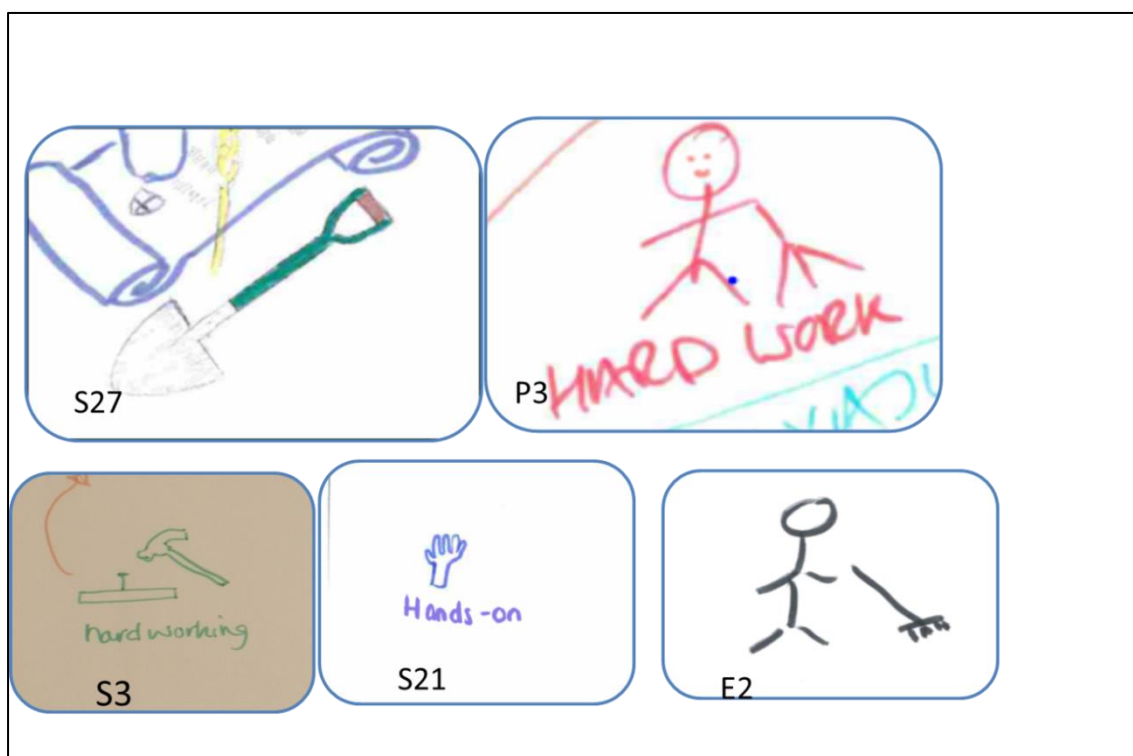
Figure 18 Brand-Me: Images used to depict 'Hardworking'

The creation of these particular images provides a language of social identity arising from the historical subjective structures of masculine dominance in the agricultural sector. They are used to convey the concept of hardworking as depicted by a rural habitus, and showing a tacit understanding of the sector for which these students are seeking employment. This was also conveyed through the metaphors and straplines used by the students.

Straplines are often used by brands to convey their brand (think of Beanz Meanz Heinz, Every Little Helps) and in seeking to position the brand, S8 used linguistic signs as a form of semiotics to help decode the brand positioning, using words and phrases to act as a metaphor (Lawes, 2002). Here, S8 used the words '*the best three words*' on the RP to describe how they would like to be perceived and qualities to offer as, 'Hardworking, Motivated and Trustworthy'. Similarly, S9 spoke about having the strapline "Determined to please" (S9). Both of these straplines are about satisfying the expectations of the end customer - the employers. Brands may also act as metaphors for the image that is intended to be portrayed. Understanding the image that surrounds a brand and how it is perceived by the end consumer is an important part of brand management. Some of the ways in which the images associated with the brand may be assessed are by using guided projective qualitative techniques[46] (de Chernatony et al., 2013; Keller et al., 2012). S7 created a text-based Rich Picture drawing using a black colour normal sized font which could be challenged as not being a Rich Picture and discarded from the data set. This may not seem particularly rich picture-like, however, the process of visualising the question prompted a metaphorical connection in considering Brand-Me:

> I'm quite organised, hopefully reliable, if I say I'll do something then I'll do it, I'll work hard, I'm determined, well presented and sort of want to be progressive and progress, I want to succeed and so that's sort of the same as driven. When I thought of 'driven' I thought of Jaguar Land Rover and they sort of cover those things as well… so 'driven' that made me think about JLR and that actually they are well presented, the cars look nice, they are hard working as their cars hopefully won't break down, 4x4's and reliable (S7).

The brand Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) was seen by S7 as a suitably representative metaphor to use in describing their Brand-Me. It points to Bourdieu's sign of "distinction" where clusters of individuals in a social space would connect with this metaphor as a judgement of taste (Grenfell, 2008). Distinction points to what is recognised and misrecognised by default. Land Rover vehicles are used extensively in the agricultural sector where its durability and features lend itself suitable for tackling many terrains and tough hard work. In the agricultural social space, reference to JLR endows recognition of approval and a distinctive judgement of taste, providing social meaning and a recognised form of symbolic cultural capital. S7 attributed the brand values and distinction of JLR to match their own brand perception where the hardworking synonyms associated with JLR would create meaning to the sector in which S7 was placement seeking and provided the logic for the selection of JLR. As discussed in Section 3.2, Bourdieu (1990) suggests that the social world presents itself objectively as a symbolic system, a space of lifestyles and status groups characterised by different lifestyles. Here, the rural social space is linked by pertinent categories of perception and

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[46] Such as questions: if the brand came to life, what sort of person would it be? Or if the brand were a person and they died, what would be written on their epitaph? Or more commonly, if the brand were a car, what sort of car would it be?

function in the reality of the social life as signs. The differences function as distinctive signs and thereby the social logic of the brand JLR would have a different meaning to the lifestyles of a different sector and group of people (Wacquant, 2000). For example, the metaphor of a sleek shiny Porsche car, rather than a rugged Land Rover, may better reflect the cultural embodiment and mosaic of components that make up the notion of hardworking and polish in occupations such as accountancy or law (Freidman and Laurison, 2019).

Thus the accounts and creation of the Rich Pictures shared by the participants (even the picture comprised of only written text) and semiotic resources chosen (images, text, metaphors and straplines) were endowed with pertinent categories of perception with distinctive signs synonymous with a rural based sector and hardworking physicality sedimented in a habitus of masculine domination, what could be described as a rural habitus. These students showed an understanding of the logic of the field in which they are situated in placement seeking and were positioning their Brand-Me as being a hardworking worthy self for the neoliberal world of work. The next subsection shows other approaches and semiotic resources used by students to convey Brand-Me and the use of other marketing and branding tools in brand positioning.

Visual dimension of Brand-Me – use of logo

Other students used branding principles to create a visual dimension of Brand-Me in the form of a logo to represent their brand. Logos are a shorthand device to recalling a brand's capability (see Section 2.4) and the sum of the brand assets (name, related symbols, logo, and liabilities). From a visual communication standpoint, logos may have powerful emotional appeal, their simplicity may convey 'look and feel', and they may offer symbolic currency (Aiello and Parry, 2020). Figure 19 shows a collection of logos designed to visually communicate Brand-Me in this research.
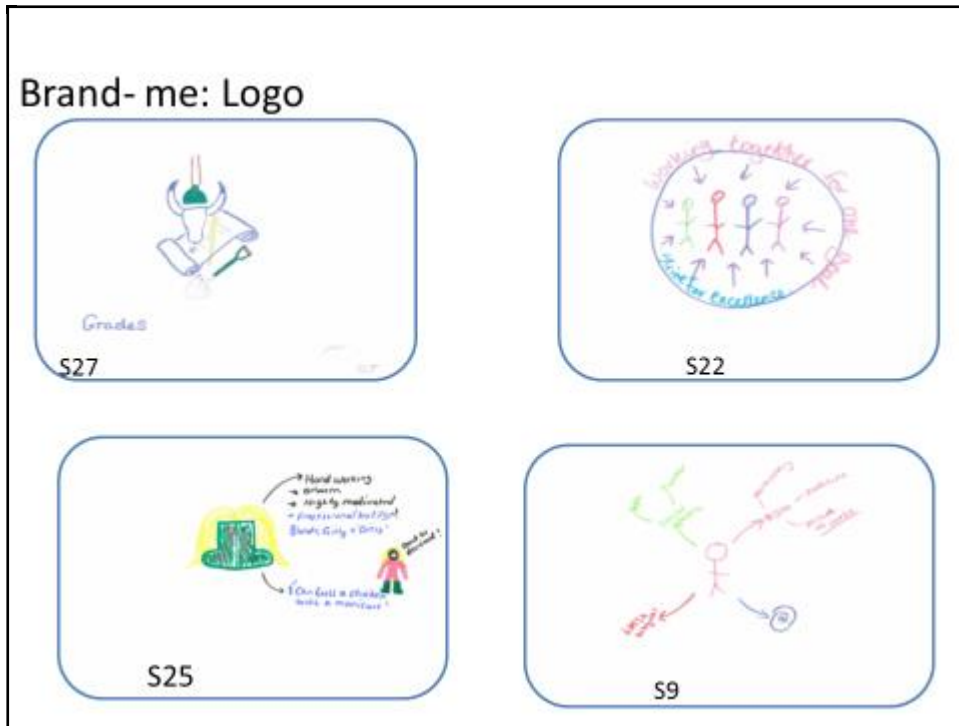
Figure 19 Brand-Me: Examples of consideration of logo

The Rich Pictures of S22 and S9 displayed less easily recognised symbolic properties related to a rural habitus (as discussed in previous subsection) than those of S27 and S25 which required more explanation to gain an understanding of the brand assets. S22 created a logo to depict Brand-Me showing a circle with stickmen inside in different colours. The words surrounding the circle were written in a pink colour with the words 'working together for one goal' at the top, and the words 'strive for excellence' at the bottom written in blue (synonymous with the hardworking theme above). The look and feel of the logo was S22's attempt to represent the values of people working together. Colours may be used to denote meaning, or as 'experiential metaphors' (Ledin and Machin, 2018) from associations related to our lived experiences (such as blue sky thinking). Here the logo of S22 used a rainbow of colours to connote cultural diversity where the images of colourful stickmen were used to depict a "cultural mind-set" and working in a team with a range of differing cultural background. The words "strive for excellence" were related to both working professionally and personal life (such as gaining points in Young Farmer competitions). In all, the logo created by S22 was influenced and by and intertwined with the values of the company [placement company] and her personal life, showed a merged set of brand values, the intertwined personal and professional spheres.

This intertwined approach to displaying Brand-Me was similar to S9. In the in-depth interview S9 particularly wished to highlight the "swirl shape in a rainbow of colours" in the Rich Picture as being

a logo depicting the intertwining of their passion for the industry and working with people all encompassed into one shape and explained as:

> If I had a logo it would be something like this [points to the swirl in Rich Picture drawing], it's a bit crazy, there's loads of different colours, showing different aspects to it but it's all linked…the colours are the different aspects, I'm passionate about the different beef and sheep industry in Wales, but also about the whole marketing and retail side of it as well and I am also passionate about people and about meeting people and about all the different aspects encompassed into one, swirl to get it all in together and to make it work (S9).

The colours chosen and sense of interconnectivity of the working place and people was similar to that of S22 in consideration of Brand-Me.

The Rich Picture drawings of S27 and S25 contained rural related images to present the sum of their brand assets and how they wished to position their brand with recognisable signs of distinction. For instance, S27 presented a logo to represent Brand-Me with carefully selected images to represent the aspects of countryside and livestock production and as underpinned by research and knowledge. S27 explained the logo to represent Brand-Me as "agricultural with a knowledgeable background defined by work" with "not just the practical ability but also the ability to use your brain as well and underpinned with the ability to go out and do the job" (S27). The image of a spade was drawn to represent the practical, functional aspect and also included in the logo was areas which they were 'passionate' about which included a shepherd's whistle to denote sheep or sheep dog work. This logo offers a tacit understanding and acts as a clear non-verbal communication device to provide symbolic (emotional) and functional (rational) dimensions for employers in the agri-food sector. A successful brand will evolve and change over time to suit the prevailing market conditions and product life cycle (Keller et al., 2012), and in the interview S27 explained that the logo was Brand-Me "at the moment…. but, need to push myself for professional role and for my own experience, so I don't see that staying exactly the same" (S27). Thus, S27 was showing a sense of temporality and transience with the recognition that different forms or volumes of capital (for example economic or cultural capita) required in order to move within the field of employment. This sense of transience was also conveyed by S4 who included images of a brown wall to depict the constant strive in building their career and a drawing of a ladder to connote moving forward and climbing up the career ladder displaying consideration of a processional concept of career management (Clarke, 2018; Holmes, 2013) and promotion of hardworking self for the world of work.

Similarly, for S25 the Rich Picture drawing of Brand-Me and logo showed a large dominant image of blond coloured hair flowing out of green coloured muddy wellington boots as a way to connote undertaking dirty and manual outdoors work to "push the brand even further" and particularly

portray that this was a hardworking *female.* This was a clear strategic branding decision by the student (although only realised by S25 on reflection through undertaking the research task) and showing signs of what Tom Peters (1997) described as being a 'head marketer' to the brand called 'You'. I will return to this student S25 and issues of gender in the next section (Chapter 6.3).

In summary, the Rich Picture activity provided a lens in order to gain an understanding of the students' awareness and perception of Brand-Me as described in both subsections above. Overall, the presentations of Brand-Me were positioned towards employers, intertwined with the personal and professional brand values. The activity also enabled the operationalisation of Bourdieu's thinking tools of habitus, capital and field. The semiotic resources deployed by students displayed the symbolic properties and embodied dispositions which are defined as habitus (Grenfell, 2014). Through different forms of semiotic resources using images, metaphors and straplines, the students showed an awareness of how they wished to portray and position Brand-Me suitable for the logic of the field. These were used to connote their hardworking attributes as being reliable, manual, outdoor, rugged, and endowed with the pertinent categories of perceived symbolic capital for the social logic of the field in the agri-food supply chain sector. These were the perceived valued hardworking qualities desired, the embodied cultural capital or signs of distinction indicative of a masculine dominated rural habitus.

6.3   Personal branding: rural gender perspectives

Branding encompasses both tangible and intangible features (see Section 2.4). In the context of HE, students' tangible features would include their set of academic achievements and skills sets. It is the intangible features of everything a person does, how they appear and dress, how they behave that sends signals which come together to create an image and where one's personal brand is more to do with *others'* expectations and perceptions (Schawbel, 2010). Clothing and appearance are often used by people to create conformity or impression and appear part of a social group (Goffman, 1959). In a similar way, a chameleon alters its colour shade to fit in with the habitat. Abraham & Ingram (2013) used a Bourdieusian lens to explore how university students who lived at home managed the difference between university and home life where they were able to overcome a 'dialectical confrontation' (Bourdieu, 2002:31) when the habitus encounters a new field and emergent 'cleft habitus' or 'habitus tug'. They found that students were able to draw upon a 'chameleon habitus' between the fields and change to suit each setting. A similar approach was seen with students from the data in this research and three types of strategies were identified which enabled the students to both 'stand out' and 'fit in' to the workplace.

These strategies include, firstly by adopting a chameleon approach through adapting their appearance to suit the setting; secondly, a *strategic differentiated chameleon* approach where female students adopted a chameleon habitus in the workplace and then strategically emphasised their female gendered assets on social media; and thirdly, where the female student fully embraced their femininity in the workplace, not changing like a chameleon to suit the setting, but to strategically show the self as being a female, using the colour pink to demonstrate this, and what I shall call a '*pink chameleon'*. Before I present these three strategic approaches it is helpful to briefly discuss gender and gender in the rural sector at this juncture (see also Section 3.5 explaining characteristics of the agri-food sector).

'Gender' is a social construct and should not be used synonymously with biological indicators / constructs of being male or female (Pessar and Mahler, 2003). Gender is saturated with meanings and is a process of identities, relations and ideologies that are fluid and not fixed. People may change over time and in bodily ways, through life stages and situations. In her work with school children, Diane Reay (2001, 1997, and 1991) noted a nexus of competing gender discourses related to social class, different ethnic groupings, and their peer group to which they belong. To view gender as male or female prevents us from seeing the full range of diversity and differentiation that exists within one gender as well as between categories of males and females (Reay, 2001). We are born male or female sex but not necessarily masculine or feminine. Femininity is self-constructed and according to Sandra Lee Bartky (1988:64) it is an artifice:

> Femininity is an artifice, an achievement and a mode of enacting and re-enacting gender norms … The disciplinary practices that produce a body which in gesture and appearance that is recognisably feminine comprise of, those that aim to produce a body of a certain size and general configuration; those that bring forth from this body a specific repertoire of gestures, postures, and movement; and those that are directed toward the display of this body as an ornamented surface.

Bartky refers to femininity as enacting and re-enacting gender norms. The female identity and subjectivity may be socially imposed by others (such as a uniform for school children, army uniform). It may be a natural reflection of the field, where the habitus is reflecting what the field has structured/imprinted on oneself and one's bodily hexis. It may also be a self-imposed social construction of the feminine body, self-committed to a self-surveillance to demonstrate adulthood, to display economic level and social status, for personal indulgence, or to be part of a reference group. It is not easy to distinguish between self-imposed and socially imposed behaviour and beliefs. Indeed, gender operates 'so natural' that it may escape awareness (Mahler and Pessar, 2006).

Dominant forms of masculinities in agriculture heavily focus on stereotypical physical attributes of being tough, strong and decisive in controlling nature (Leipins, 2000; Little, 2014), and rural females

are often perceived as being homely and a practical femininity adopting a practical caring role underpinning the smooth-running of rural life (Gasson,1992; Little, 2014, 2015). While much work has focused on rural wives and mothers, the relationship between femininity and the body and how this has been played out in women's presentation of the body or clothing is limited (Little, 2015; Pini, Brandth, and Little, 2014). Additionally, gendered studies of education have been largely urban-centric (Pini, Moletsane and Mills, 2014a). This research with students working in a rural agri-food supply chain setting provides a contribution to the conceptual construction of rural gender identities which is relatively underdeveloped in existing literature. These considerations of gender and gendered identities in rural settings are pivotal for informing the interpretation of the data. In exploring personal branding and their own perceptions of Brand Me, the Rich Pictures revealed other facets relating to power in the field which may not have come from pure narrative. The perceived three chameleon type approaches to personal branding in the rural setting and rural gender identities are explained below.

Chameleon habitus

Issues of personal branding and gender identity in the field of agri-food work placements were evident from the data where male and female students adopted a chameleon approach adapting their appearance to suit the setting. This was in the context of wishing to appear professional in the workplace, wearing clothes deemed appropriate to the setting (for example whether in office, on farm, or customer facing) and modifying their appearance and behaviour with the intention of displaying awareness of cultural capital and doxa befitting the particular workplace. As mentioned earlier in this section, the tangible and intangible personal brand elements are part of the brand 'promise' that make up personal brand equity (Kotler et al., 2013) and influence how they are viewed by others. S26 recognised the perceptual nature of branding and how the concept of Brand-Me "is about **branding me by someone else** [my emphasis], it's not what you think of yourself" (S26, male). While being 'professional' is subjective, and may be seen as the responsibility to make judgements and decisions in the context of practice (Trede, 2012) one of the key components to personal branding and impression management in the workplace is in regard to appearance and dress. This was applicable to both male and female students. For instance, the Rich Picture of S4 (male) used an image of a blue tie to reflect a professional image in the workplace, where, wearing shirt and tie was the office norm in reflecting the habitus of the work-place.

Female students S20 and S21 also spoke of adopting a chameleon type approach in the work-place loaded with additional considerations. For S20, the decisions on what to wear at interview were about standing-out to be seen as different, but also in deliberately not showing the girly feminine side. Bourdieu suggests that access to power of any kind places women in a 'double bind' as "if they

behave like men they risk losing obligatory attributes of 'femininity' and call into question the natural right of men in positions in power; if they behave like women, they appear incapable and unfit or the job" (Bourdieu, 2001:67). This double bind was felt by S20 who explained that their approach to this was "I guess not [wearing] the same as everyone else because you want to stand out, but you don't want to wear anything that shows like that side [points to girly image on picture] you'd want to be suit, shirt" (S20). She emphasised this further and spoke about wearing gender neutral clothing in an attempt to be more 'professional'. S21 also spoke about dressing according to the situation and in effect adopting a chameleon habitus:

> Dressing the way you should and acting the way you should depending on what situation you are in. For example, with [company X] there was two different settings, on farm and in the office and the few days you are in the office you had to dress up and look the part … whereas when you are on the farm you could just go in your own clothes as you had to shower and change into uniform anyway so it didn't matter what you wore (S21, female).

These students chose to seamlessly switch through different fields of working environment and personal life by modifying their appearance and behaviour and by drawing upon a 'chameleon habitus' between the fields (Abraham and Ingram, 2013).

Strategic chameleon – female differentiated strategic approach using social media

In their consideration of Brand-Me, female students S20 and S25 particularly spoke about being female in the work-place and how this would present itself in their promotion of Brand-Me. These students strategically used social media to emphasise their femininity on social media, while adopting a chameleon habitus in the workplace. For them this was a main feature in their expression of their personal brand and in how they would wish to communicate Brand-Me (as shown in Figure 20 and Figure 21). These students showed awareness to be mindful to seamlessly switch through both fields of personal life and work life by modifying their appearance and behaviour as the need presented and chose to overtly portray this as part of their personal Brand-Me. In effect, this enabled them to release themselves from Bourdieu's sense of double bind. Here, both students S20 and S25 showed a strong inclination to have a body felt to be 'feminine', a body demonstrably socially constructed through the appropriate practices to her sense of herself as an existing female individual and personal identity. Both students S25 and S20 showed evidence of 'strategically presenting a shade of the self' (Manago and Vaughn, 2015: 188) but in different ways, as follows.

S20 spoke about deliberately not showing the feminine side in her appearance despite wishing to "take this forward" in her branding. This is more likened to self-marketing (tactical promotion) than personal branding and demonstrating self-marketing branding skills (Manai and Holmlund, 2015) where S20 showed an awareness of other people's perception of herself. This being-perceived is

from a dominant (masculine) perspective. For S20, managing a double-bind was about 'brand positioning' in striking the right balance between what the brand is and in the minds of the target market, in this case the employers (Kotler and Keller, 2012). Here she demonstrated that she understood the need to both 'fit in' with employer expectations and to also 'stand out' to be different and herself. S20 was strategic in her approach to promote her personal brand online and offline, displaying a chameleon approach whereby she spoke about adopting a chameleon habitus in the workplace and then purposefully emphasised her feminine side on social media. This was to show two sides, the professional and the female:

> The positive things, the people person, the communicating and the determination stuff, and then on my social media I am very much this [girly, country] so who I am, so like the country girl, the fashion and stuff like that through images and that's what subconsciously what I am posting by my pictures about what people think about me. And the same with an interview, you want people to think differently to that, but you are also, you are trying to do something so that they know who you are (S20).

In showcasing Brand-Me (see Figure 20) S20 had used words to describe her work values as being competitive, determined, and being a people person, people pleaser. The student had drawn pink and purple flowers, hearts and stars and the word 'girly' in the Rich Pictures.
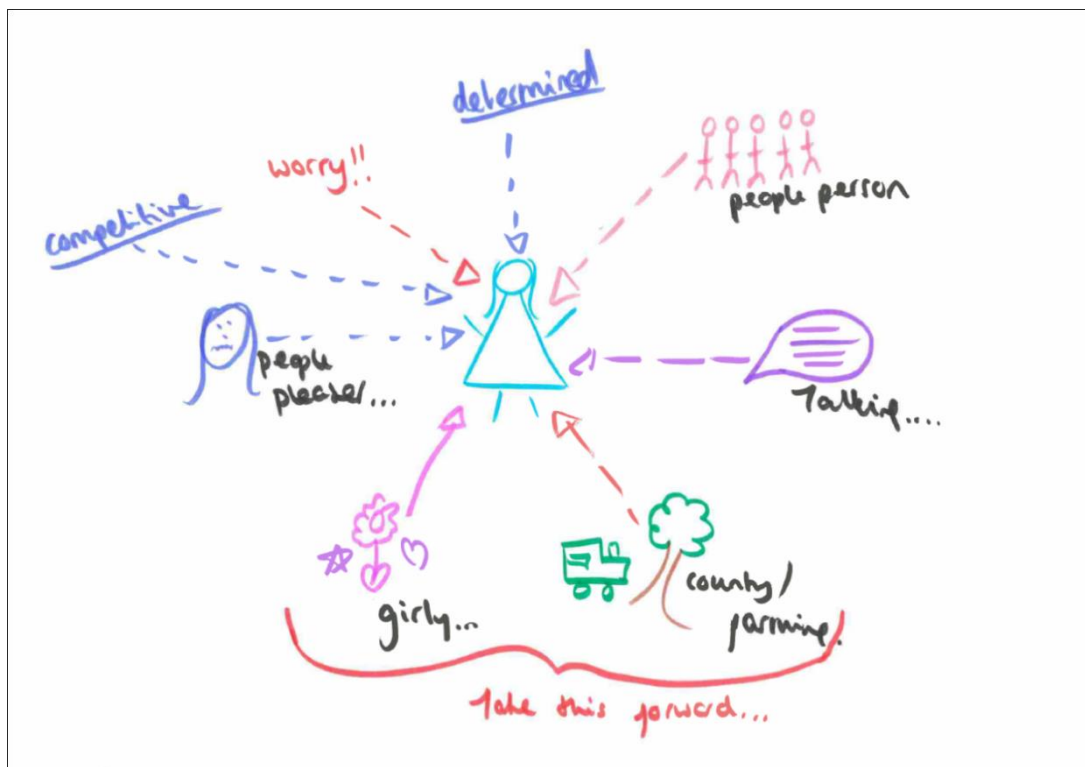

Figure 20 Brand-Me: Strategic positioning (S20).

In the narrative, this was the main area of discussion that she wished to take forward as her brand and show "the girlyness and the country, as I'm quite fashionable, well I think I am, and then like I

am also can get down and dirty in the country in farming [see tractor and tree image in Rich Picture]" (S20). The term 'girly' is generally seen as derogatory and limiting gender discourse of femininity (Reay 2001), and yet paradoxically as empowering and liberating for women who wish to enjoy being 'girlie girls' (Little, 2015; Pini et al., 2014). S20 was very clear in how the brand would be portrayed as being 'girly' and had purposely chosen to draw the images of the pink and purple flowers, hearts and stars to construct and depict feminine and country attributes. S20 particularly wanted to portray this image to people and explained it as liking to be different and yet comfortable in herself: "I'm not like a proper farmer person, I still like to get my nails done, stuff like that, yeah, I don't know, yeah it's like a brand" (S20). It seemed that S20 was quite flexible about switching her different facets for different appropriate settings, similar to how a chameleon adapts to suit the surrounding habitat.

S20 showed awareness of having a different brand positioning strategy for online and at interview and what aspects would be portrayed accordingly. Social media was used to convey the gendered assets of being a girly country girl, with S20 saying "on my social media I am very much this [pointing to images of girly, country] so who I am, so like the country girl, the fashion and stuff like that through images and that's what subconsciously what I am posting by my pictures about what people think about me" (S20). However, S20 acquiesced to self-impose the uniform expected in the workplace to 'fit in and look professional" and spoke about displaying "the positive things, the people person, the communicating and the determination stuff". This was not only how she looked but also in how the questions were answered in order to look more professional:

> Well I guess with placement you do try and change with the interviews, I tried to be more professional and sensible and put the whole girly side away and like I would never show that I am a people pleaser or worrier in an interview. I would just try and portray all the other good things, the communication and people person…so just answer what they want to hear kind of thing rather than waffling on about stuff' (S20).

It was interesting to hear that "not waffling on about stuff' was perceived to be a female attribute, and so a much more succinct answer was required and reflected the gender burden to "put the whole girly side away" despite this being a key feature to display as Brand-Me in the Rich Picture. Even though in her picture she had acknowledged her brand as being a people pleaser and worrier, she did not want to promote this, and perhaps a nod to perceiving them as female traits and having subconsciously adopted this discriminatory attitude towards females and of male domination and gendered occupation unlike S25 as discussed here below.

For S25, her decision around her personal brand was to be seen as hard-working and particularly to portray that she was a *hardworking rural female.* The Rich Picture drawing contained a large dominant image of blond coloured hair flowing out of green coloured muddy wellington boots as a way to connote undertaking dirty and manual outdoors work (as shown in Figure 21).
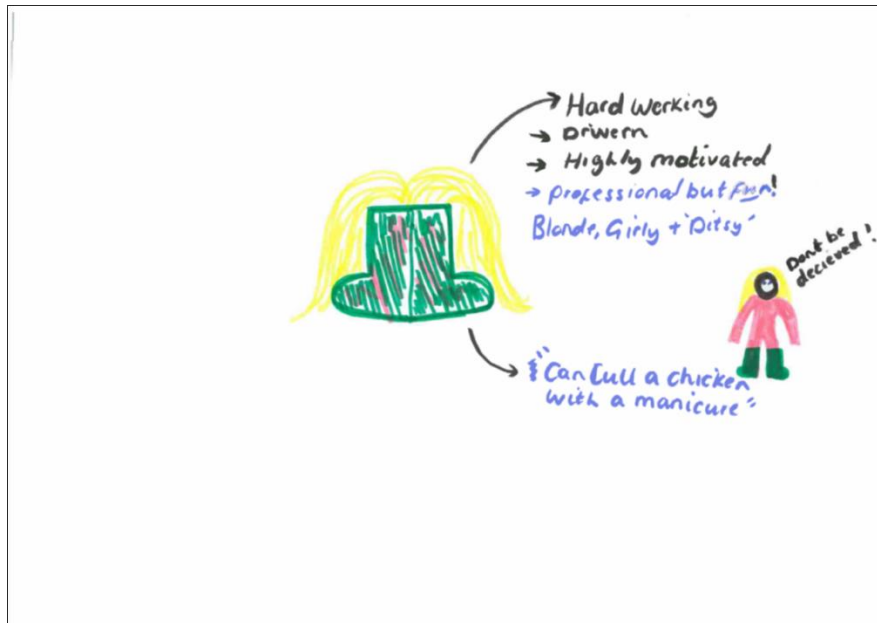

Figure 21 Brand-Me: Hardworking female (S25)

This was a different approach to the other students and in explaining her Rich Picture to depict Brand-Me, she suggested:

> Green wellies and blond hair – this is my wellies and then all my blond hair which is I think just a good summary of me and I put a bit of pink in there [on the wellies and overalls] as well to push the brand even further (S25).

S25 showed empowerment in asserting her feminine self as portrayed in her images in the Rich Picture drawing. The drawing showed a person wearing pink overalls was explained by S25 as being herself and that the colour pink that would be chosen by the company, saying:

> I am in pink overalls because one time they said they were going to try and find pink overalls for me, and I thought that would be quite funny, because I am quite girly which also links with what I have put here which says, 'I can cull a chicken with a manicure'. Because, well I walked onto a farm once and I said I've just had my nails done, I had acrylic nails on and they were quite long and then I just was walking around one of the sheds with the farmer and they were big birds and I was culling ones that needed taking out, but my nails were so long as I'd had them done that they were like digging in to my own hand. But I still did it and I think the farmer's wife was like, "You are so funny because you will just come onto the farm and like in your little blazer and you have all your nails done and stuff and then you will just come and cull a massive chicken", she said "I don't know how you can be both" (S25).

Colours connote semiotic meaning (Ledin and Machin, 2018) and the colour pink is often used in

marketing campaigns in connection with females, such as baby pink for female babies, and in raising female breast cancer awareness. And so, for S25, the wearing of pink overalls is an indication of her female identity, essentially, an example of an enculturated view as being natural, but is in fact a human construct (Pessar and Mahler, 2003). Here, S25 is confident in showing her authentic self in the workplace and in showcasing Brand-Me. The concept of branding was explored earlier where the emphasis is on 'promise' of the brand to be authentic (De Chernatony et al., 2011) and S25 continually emphasised the cluster of functional and emotional values that make up a promise and authenticity and understanding of self. In the interview S25 recounted that while working alongside the farmer undertaking a very dirty and manual task on the farm, she still took care to have painted nails which may show she was "quite girly" and still persevered with the practical task of "can cull a chicken with a manicure" and proud to show her femininity while doing so.

The farmer's wife's remark "I don't know how you can do both" reinforces the gendered practices of demarcating between male and female domains in activities, tasks and dress and gender normativity (Pessar and Mahler, 2003). It may also highlight the challenges that females face in a male dominated world, in downplaying their femaleness and presenting themselves as a male. Or, it may just be that it is difficult to carry out the task with long nails! The agricultural sector in the UK is historically rooted in physical manual work and a male dominated work-place at the primary end of the supply chain (although improved technology means less brute force is needed today). It is often the work culture that defines an occupation as male or female, not the work itself (Hakim, 2004:158). S25 embraced the gendered stereotype of females being less able to do the work in a male dominated sector and demonstrated that she was equally as hardworking as a male. This may not have been a deliberate attempt to prove the stereotype wrong, but more in being true to her own self.

For Bourdieu the physical strength attachment to the values of masculinity is a characteristic of people who have little to fall back on other than their labour power and that masculinity is one of the last refuges of the identity of the dominated classes (Nice, 1993). However, in an inverted form of snobbery and working-class culture, un-skilled physical manual labour may be associated with social superiority of masculinity, while work roles associated with mental labour associated with social inferiority of femininity (Willis, 1977:147-52 in Hakim, 2004: 75). Habitus is located in deeply ingrained habits of behaviour and the accepted doxa to the world. Domination is centred on the concept of habitus explaining the process of recognition and misrecognition through which domination is legitimated. Bourdieu makes a connection between domination and legitimation, where the dominant groups derive their authority from the loyalty of the dominated in the name of their alleged 'gifts' which would be as nothing without the recognition from which they benefit

(Poupeau, 2000). Male domination (Bourdieu, 2001) and its occurrence in part to *gendered habitus* is where the masculine habitus is an inclination and ability to play the game which is historically and socially constituted *between men.* Gender becomes embedded in institutions and forms the foundation for analysing the structural factors that condition gender relations and ideological factors and should be understood as a structure or as a "lattice of institutionalised social relationships that, by creating and manipulation the categories of gender, organise and signify power at levels above the individual" (Ferree et al., 1999, in Pessar and Mahler, 2003). Thereby, these gendered principles shape the major areas of life, shaped by hierarchies of power and privilege and reinforced through repetitions in the ways in which gender is embedded and re-enacted (Pessar and Mahler, 2003). Domination is not just power over a given group but also a relationship of meaning between individuals in a group. For instance, the gender roles and relations characterised in the farming rural sector (as discussed in Chapter 3.5) include succession, decision making, and often the constructions of physicality hardworking hetero-normative masculinity associated with power strength and fitness (Little, 2014) and as depicted in the tractor adverts of Brandth's work (1995). The masculine traits characterised from a historical and social culture appear as a symbolic aspect of domination, and symbolic violence is that form of violence which only acts on social agents with their complicity,

> Symbolic violence is achieved by means of an act of recognition and misrecognition, which is situated beyond the control of the conscious mind and will, in the misty regions of schemata of the habitus (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:168).

Hegemonic masculinity is the legitimation of the form of masculinity traits legitimated by the social agents in the group. Here, S25 challenged the hegemonic gender regimes in the agri-food sector relating to the physicality of work and was not complicit to the domination and symbolic violence. In the drawing of S25, the words "Don't be deceived!" were written and positioned next to an image of a person wearing pink overalls and green wellington boots. Student S25 explained that this was an image of herself in the Rich Picture and from something a farmer had said to her in the workplace:

> Well that is what somebody said to me on placement, I think it was one of the farmers, he had me to help him bed up all the sheds so, you have big bales and dragging them down towards one side of the shed, lifting them, throwing them and emptying them,…but I could keep up with him and he was like "don't be deceived, by what you look like, you are a really hard worker"; and then because they all talk to each other, a couple of days later I was at a completely different farm and even he [the farmer] said, "John has been saying how good you were bedding up the other day" and that just stuck with me a little bit and was quite nice to hear (S25).

From this we may assume that the farmer had made a judgement about the perceived hard-working ability of S25 based on their appearance and gender, a legacy of male domination in the sector (and as depicted in the student's images showing hammers, shovels to denote hardwork as described in

Section 6.2). However, the student embraced a sense of worth from what could be interpreted as a negative connotation by the employer, with the inflection being that either the employer thought the student would not be able to do the work, or that the student would not be a hard worker because she was female. The student described her ability to do a very manual piece of work and keeping up with the male employer.

S25 had positively taken these comments to show her own attributes by visually drawing Brand-Me to reflect her personality as 'Blonde, girly and 'ditsy'. The word 'ditsy' is often used as an adjective to describe someone who is silly, or scatter-brained; a ditsy person, especially a woman, is described as stupid, silly and blonde (Cambridge English Dictionary). Here, S25 is empowered to use this often perceived negative female description and embrace it overtly and described the drawing to represent Brand-Me:

> Blond girly and ditsy – that's what they always say I am, cos I do sometimes do silly things or say silly things and I can't really pretend that I am anything else, so that's fine, that's who I am.
> Q You are happy with that, you don't want to change that? A. Yeah, I am. Obviously there are somethings which are not good to make mistakes and say "Oh well I'm blond", or "I'm a girl, its fine" and play on that, it's not good to do that, but I can't make myself into any different. I do sometimes lack common sense very occasionally and forget things and stuff, so I can't force myself to be a different person (S25).

In this narrative the student was buying into the negative labels of gender discourse of femininity that others have assigned to her. S25 appeared to be empowered and showed self-deprecating acknowledgment that she could appear silly and 'ditsy' to others, but was happy to embrace this as their personality as "that's who I am". In saying "I can't force myself to be a different person" shows an awareness of self and an understanding of being authentic and having confidence in her own personal values and attributes as part of building the personal brand and in resisting the doxa of the field.

Habitus allows inter-subjective understanding between individuals as participation in the same game, to show a commitment to stakes in the game, to put into play their feel for the game and for the elaboration of strategies (Poupeau, 2000). By virtue of the farmer feeling the need to make comment on the student's work ethic showed a trait of masculine domination in the field. The images drawn by S25 and S20 show acknowledgement of the issues that females can face in a typically manual male dominated sector and the strategies of these female students showed a 'feel for the game' and ability to perform the required tasks and challenging the male domination.

However, despite this very positive attitude displayed, S25 spoke about discrimination for being a female in the role:

I have had discrimination sometimes where I have had like where a farmer has said, I don't want [participant S25] to come down as she won't be able to do the job, even though I have never done it for him before, and I have had to still go and prove myself and maybe work harder than other people to make myself at their level. Like when tipping chicks into the shed I am having to go full blaze, like I am dying in there as I feel I need to keep up with them so they don't think any less of me. So it is a really weird mix, like none of my friends or family can get their heads around it because they only ever see me outside of work, they don't understand how I can go and kill a little chick or big bird or get covered in poo and chicken sick and blood and everything. They don't understand it. It's quite funny to have the two sides of me (S25).

The student felt 'discrimination' where the farmer, despite never having met the student, held a view 'that *she* would not be able to do the job'. In modern society there are few remaining areas or 'games' from which women are excluded and women have no longer the need to pass as men in male enclaves, even in war and military arenas which have often been traditional male reserve spaces (Lovell, 2000). Yet, in agriculture, as mentioned earlier, the practice of male inheritance has gendered the occupation of agriculture and was demonstrated in the male farmer wanting a male worker. Bourdieu distinguishes between cultures which are forged through working class daily struggle and others that can take a different view on the world and self. In the working class the culture of necessity celebrates physical body strength where it is a form of embodied cultural capital. For working class men this physicality provides male dominancy although working-class and peasant women do not seem to develop the habitus and culture which Bourdieu identifies in men (Lovell, 2000).

Friedman and Laurison's (2019: 191) write about women from a working class and ethnic background facing a distinct 'double disadvantage' in having to work harder than the male counter-parts in Britain's elite occupations and facing a 'triple disadvantage' when the technical expertise is included. Rather than facing a glass ceiling, the legacy of the class system (class slipper and class ceiling) these females face a 'gender ceiling'. Although this may not be the case in my research, the narrative of S25 showed awareness of the need to have doubled the cultural currency (the need to work twice as hard) in this male dominated occupational setting to be effective. S25 saying she had to "go full blaze, like I am dying in there as I feel I need to keep up with them so they don't think any less of me" shows S25 trying to prove herself as equal to the other workers in doing the task "to make myself at their level" and challenge the gender stereotype. In the agricultural workplace where masculine dominance is demonstrated by strength (Leipins, 2000), S25 may sense underlying criticism and feels she has to 'go full blaze' in the workplace. S25 accepts this as commonplace to work at the same rate, to have equality between male and female. Yet it may be unacceptable to do this as other workers may have greater experience, physical strength which the female student does

not have to match their performance, and that we should not expect equality with the difference in the sexed hexis particularly when it may compromise health and safety in the workplace.

S25 showed that despite the potential for perceived masculine dominance in the sector she was able to accept and build on her own brand values, remain true to her own identity. She appeared to openly display herself as feminine, with the artifices of decorated nails and easily recognisable as feminine enacting gender norms (Bartky, 1988). S25 chose to overtly share the feminine 'girly' signals in her personal branding, keeping her brand authentic and true to her own self. In effect, showing personal branding as 'inside-out' encapsulating the uniqueness of the individual as described by Shepherd (2005), and revealing the 'core you' (Peters, 1997). S25 showed the ability to reflect on the core values and to 'embody it' (Blythe, 2016; Kelly, 2016) and spoke about having two sides, "it's quite funny to have the two sides of me" being the dirty hard-working farm side, and then the blond, girly, manicured female side" (S25). Where a chameleon can change its colour to suit any habitat S25 did not feel a cleft habitus which required her to change her shade of colour to suit, rather, she was comfortable to display her natural reflection of her habitus in the field and stay the same shade, epitomised in female pink overalls, or as I have coined, the 'pink chameleon'.

Chapter summary

Eliciting and understanding the different approaches undertaken by students to consideration of Brand-Me revealed tensions between the perspective of being a placement practitioner and those of researcher requiring self- reflexivity in analysing the data. Several different strategic approaches were taken by students in consideration of Brand-Me, and no one lesser or greater than each other. Section 6.1 explored personal branding strategies as evidenced from the student in-depth interviews in the context of preparing for placement. Aside from the creation of a CV, students used a considered strategic defensive approach to personal branding in managing their digital footprint, showing a tacit understanding of the rules of the game. Others adopted a differentiated approach to using social media in promoting their brand where the dual approach (defensive personal spaces, yet proactive using social media in professional spaces) contiguously shaped their Brand-Me.

Section 6.2 reported on the creation of Rich Pictures in consideration of their personal Brand Me which complemented the in-depth interview. The conveyance of characteristics associated with hardworking, personality and being professional offered a sense of understanding of the rules of the game and field specific capitals. Here students used semiotic techniques and marketing branding principles through the use of logos, metaphors to present themselves as hardworking selves for the market place and convey the concepts of Brand-Me and habitus working together. This method allowed for the exploration in Section 6.3 of the strategic branding decisions and teased out the

emergent theme relating to strategic female branding considerations and constructions of rural gender identities in the agri-food sector which had not been fully explored by the university previously and is an underdeveloped area. This chapter provides a contribution to the literature on rural gender relations and the shifts in hegemonic masculinity in the rural sector. Chapter7 provides a concluding discussion of the research findings.

7   Chapter 7 – Conclusions

In this final chapter, I will begin with a recap of the key research findings in this study. I will then move on to highlight the main original contributions of this study to the relevant research fields. On that basis, I explain the implications and limitations of this study and make recommendations for future placement researchers and practitioners.

7.1   Conceptual reflection and key research findings

The main aim of this research study was to explore the strategies that higher education students use to secure industrial placement and graduate employment and whether they are influenced by an awareness of personal branding and 'Brand-Me'. The research was developed out of observations pertaining to difficulties that had arisen with students both before and during placement in managing their online presence and where limited awareness and concept of personal branding was evident. The perspectives of students and universities operating in commodified HE market in a neoliberal era was discussed in Chapter 2 (Sections 2.1 and 2.2) and highlighted the limited literature on employability that focused on HE students traversing the field of placements. Section 2.3 revealed how decompartmentalisation of the digital age and how students choose to negotiate with their self-representations have blurred the line between personal and professional identities which complicates the concepts of employability and identity capital (Tomlinson, 2017). Marketing and branding principles were applied in consideration of Brand-Me from a student perspective (Section 2.4 and Section 3.4) in building the concept of the bundle of benefits the person has to offer, the student career capitals which was illustrated in Figure 4, Figure 5, and Figure 6. Bourdieu's Theory of Practice (Chapter 3) was used as a lens in order to provide a way of exploring the practices, approaches and consideration of employability in the context of placement seeking in the agri-food sector. At LBU, like many other universities, the year-long placement is comprised of a tripartite relationship (between the student, university, and employer). Students are required to promote themselves to potential employers in the marketplace when applying and competing for positions for placement and employment positions. In doing so, an awareness of what is required by potential placement employers, the field-specific capital, and awareness of one's impression on others in a digital age and the creation of Brand-Me is pivotal in support of the student transitioning to placement and graduate employment.

To this end, I have carried out a study using in-depth interviews incorporating the creation of individual Rich Pictures with students, university staff supporting placement, and employers of both placement and graduate students at LBU. As such, this research is grounded in the field of placement employment seeking. Chapters 5 and 6 present the main findings and where the complementary

approach using Rich Pictures and the resultant semiotic resources deployed by the participants helped to uncover aspects regarding their habitus. In doing so, from the research findings I have refined the earlier illustrated concepts of Brand-Me and how it is inter-related to concepts of career capital for the logic of the field, as shown in Figure 22.

Figure 22 Brand Me and career capital for the logic of the field

The research showed the importance of the familial habitus for students seeking placement and social and cultural capitals for the logic of the field which I have included in the consideration of authentic Brand-me. Likewise, while Bourdieu does not talk about institutionalised habitus, I have included it in the refined illustrated consideration of Brand Me as the 'institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition' (Bourdieu, 1986:248) provided in attending a vocational university and shared habitus (Burke et al., 2013) can generate 'common-sense' behaviours adjusted to the logic of the field (Section 3.4). Three key research findings were uncovered and are presented here particularly highlighting the valued forms of field specific capital, how the dominant family habitus plays a role in influencing placement seeking, and also how gender influences students' strategies in a field with a masculine dominated habitus.

Valued forms of field-specific capital

Firstly, in terms of the valued forms of field-specific capital (Section 5.1), the participant data with employers, placement practitioners and students showed agreement in the value of personal dispositions when placement seeking (such as smiling, being curious, and having a can-do willing approach to work). The process of students seeking placement was understood by the placement

staff as similar to a board game in overcoming hurdles along the placement journey and acquiring skills, like tokens of capital in order to play the game. While the applied and vocational aspects of the university courses assume potential understanding of the logic of the field, the notion of being able to sequentially manoeuvre over the hurdles or decisions identified in the process by the placement staff will require the individual player [student] having the necessary values and volumes of legitimate capitals to play the game which are recognised and incorporated into the habitus of the field. Here, a key finding for many students was the crucial role of the family in the provision of social, economic and cultural capital and feel for the game anchored in the rural habitus (Section 5.2). This was evident in the student decision making and how they played the placement journey and career planning game. For instance the ability for a student to be more geographically mobile, or adopt a more temporal perspective to placement and career planning may depend on economic support. Students spoke of making placement and career decisions around intergenerational family succession planning and acquiring the academic capitals and the relevant cultural capital which could be used in the family business. The data showed how the lived experiences of students growing up in the rural sector and their social networks are sedimented into their habitus. This shapes their negotiation about education and work. It showed how placement seeking students are not free and single and how their strategies for placement seeking are influenced by their families and relationships. The familial rural habitus is expanded further in the second key finding.

Family rural habitus

Secondly, for the students at LBU, the familial influence and the vocational nature of the university provided a sense of understanding of the 'logic of the field' (Bourdieu, 1990). This was evidenced by the Rich Pictures and complementary narrative with participants. The family rural habitus was influential in providing a sense of belonging and providing a feel for the game and a key form of cultural capitals to play in the field of agri-food placement employment (Section 5.2).

 Bourdieu's tools of field, capital and habitus were helpful to understand the valued forms of capital arising from the data around the notions of fitting-in (as shown in Table 6) and the varied notions of belonging discussed by participants (Section 5.3). It provided evidence of shared cultural life-style markers for the logic of the field (dress, language, purple spray on hands for example).These associations of belonging evoked Bourdieu's concept of fish-in-water and while some students displayed being a fish out of water, it showed that many of the students had a subconscious awareness of the rules of the game and the interrelationship between the habitus and field. Friedman and Laurison (2019) likened these behavioural codes as the ability to wear the metaphorical glass slipper. Here, in the rural and agri-food based sector, I called this the ability to wear the 'grass slipper' and having the social 'magic dust' which Ingram and Allen (2019 refer to, in

having the required embodied social and cultural capitals (habitus) and feel for the game in the rural and agri-food sector.

This association with the rural family habitus also extended to the social media strategies regarding Brand-Me where students showed a subconscious awareness of the 'rules of the game' and a tacit understanding in the field of what is acceptable or not as evidenced by the selection of images, selection of dress attire, and embody the cultural capital of the field. Through the creation of Rich Pictures to depict Brand-Me, different forms of semiotic resources using images, metaphors and straplines, were used by the students to show an awareness of how they wished to portray and position Brand-Me suitable for the logic of the field (Sections 5.3, 6.2, 6.3). The logos, straplines and images created to represent Brand-Me demonstrated an awareness of augmented product features and career capitals that were perceived to be of value to the market place where the semiotic resources deployed by students enabled the elicitation and display of symbolic properties and embodied dispositions which are defined as habitus (Grenfell, 2014).The combination of habitus with the augmented features offer a cluster of functional and emotional values as part of the personal brand elements, the brand promise, which shapes the personal brand equity. Many students presented themselves as hardworking and neoliberal self for the marketplace. The semiotic resources were used to connote their hardworking attributes as being reliable, manual, outdoor, rugged, and endowed with the pertinent categories of perception and perceived symbolic capital for the social logic of the field in the agri-food supply chain sector. The students used images associated with typically rural manual work to convey the concept of being a hardworking person. Like Bourdieu's (1984) signs of distinction, these semiotic resources connote a recognised sense of physicality to the concept of 'hard-working' particularly for a sector sedimented in a masculine dominated habitus.

Personal Branding

Thirdly, the preparations for placement and processional nature of career self-management shared (Section 5.1) were not evident in the consideration of any form of strategic personal branding from placement support staff. For the majority of students, the blurred lines and tensions between personal and professional use of social media and concern where a person is subject to others' branding of them has led students to manage their digital footprint using a 'defensive strategy' with limited attention to conscious personal branding (Section 2.3.and Section 6.1). This can also be seen as a strategic 'proactive strategy' adopted to protect their digital footprint and social spheres. The different approaches to the management of social media and promotion shared by student participants in this study may enlighten university placement practitioners (as coaches to the players), that different tactics and tools are helpful to highlight to students from which they may

choose for impression management and in positioning Brand-Me. The development of a purported crafted and structured approach by placement practitioners to use for a strategic marketing approach to Brand-Me in playing the placement game is not straightforward as students have different levels of capital at their disposal from their family habitus at which to use. This was evident by the differentiated approach to using social media for personal or professional use, where students showed interest in using social media to promote the family business, and yet not for personal use. Their ability to use social media to promote their business, whilst compartmentalising the personal and professional, provided for the opportunity for co-branding combining their personal with their professional, and the unintended creation and contiguous shaping of Brand-Me.

However, in exploring the placement journey and students' own perceptions of Brand-Me (Sections 6.2 and 6.3), the Rich Pictures revealed other facets relating to power in the field which may not have come from the pure narrative. In particular, the data revealed three strategic chameleon type approaches to personal branding in the rural setting and rural gender identities. Firstly, male and female students modified their appearance and behaviour to fit-in with their surroundings. This was in the context of wishing to appear professional in the workplace and with the intention of displaying awareness of cultural capital and doxa befitting the particular workplace. Secondly, female students adopted a chameleon type approach in the work-place loaded with additional considerations where the masculine dominated habitus and hegemony in the agricultural rural sector shaped their choice of personal presentation and consideration of Brand-Me. This placed some female students in Bourdieu's (2001) concept of a double bind where they felt they could not reveal their feminine side in a traditionally masculine dominated habitus. In order to get around this, and release themselves from Bourdieu's sense of double bind, they deliberately chose to not show their girly feminine side in the work-place in an attempt to appear more professional but strategically presented their feminine side on social media. In doing so, they were drawing upon a chameleon habitus (Abraham and Ingram, 2013) between the fields of professional and personal life. The third strategic approach was undertaken by one female student, but worthy of note. Here the female student showed that despite the potential for the perceived masculine dominance in the sector and in having to 'prove herself' physically in the workplace to challenge the gender stereotype, she chose to overtly embody and share the feminine 'girly' signals in the workplace and in her personal branding. In effect she was resisting the doxa of the field and staying true to herself. Where a chameleon can change its colour to suit its habitat, this student strategically chose to display her natural reflection of her habitus in the field and stay the same shade, epitomised in her

Rich Picture drawing of pink overalls[47] and as I called the 'pink chameleon'. In adopting these differing strategies for personal branding students showed agency in some aspects of their preparation for placement. They were displaying awareness of others' perceptions regarding what they may expect when they engage with the person to be distinctive to both stand out and fit in, and yet also to embrace to 'Be You'.

In conclusion, the perceptual nature of a personal brand provides evidence of complying, or not, with the accepted measures of capital to match the rules of the game. These rules determine the amount, type and level of resources or capital the students need to have in order to participate and succeed in the game of securing a placement or position of employment upon graduation. Thus, it is useful for a student to understand both themselves and the employer in consideration of field-specific capital to understand the rules of the game and so that they may have both points of parity and points of difference to both stand out and fit in, and where their cluster of functional and emotional values is part of their brand 'promise' and brand equity (de Chernatony et al., 2013). In the study, the Rich Picture task asked students to consider Brand-Me and how they would take this forward (as discussed in Section 6.2). This enabled the operationalisation of Bourdieu's thinking tools of habitus, capital and field as well as the operationalisation of Principles of Marketing. It enabled students the opportunity for self-reflection on their career capitals, to untangle aspects relating to their family habitus and how they wished to articulate an authentic online and offline personal brand promise.

7.2   Contributions to knowledge and practice.

The research contributes to the body of knowledge relating to employability in the HE sector, particularly with regard to placement seeking and the practice of placement support in the agri-food sector. This is namely in relation to the literature on the influence of family in placement seeking. Secondly, the contribution is related to the conceptual construction of rural gender identities in the agri-food sector in the working environment and personal branding.

Influence of family in placement seeking

The study focused on participants in education and the work-place in the rural and agri-food sector. Here, I contend that for students seeking placement and graduate employment in the agri-food sector, that the combined components of discipline specific skills and qualifications, combined with the Bourdieusian concepts of economic, social and cultural capital and their habitus combine to create a student's individual set of resources, their career capital. Inextricably linked to this is their

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[47] I later met with the employer (male) of this student on placement, who was highly impressed and commended the student's performance on placement and mention how the student was able to overtly demonstrate her femininity in the workplace.

familial influence in providing the cultural capitals for the logic of the field and presenting the rural familial sedimented habitus as evident in the Rich Pictures and interview narratives (Glover, 2013; Lareau, 2011; Lareau and Weininger, 2003). It shows placement practitioners and educators the influence of family on placement seeking, career envisioning and notions of fit.

The accounts of placement staff and students regarding influence of family and leaving home for placement positions adds to the body of work on mobilisation of capitals (Christie, 2019; Christie and Burke, 2021; Finn and Holton, 2019; Finn, 2016; Finn, 2013; Lareau, 2011; Tindal et al., 2015). This particularly relates to the misleading conceptualisations of a student as being freely single (in assuming that they are free to go anywhere); as well as the judged binaries associated with proximate and elastic mobility. This matters because it is important for placement staff (and educators in the wider university) to understand that these factors impact on student decision making so as to provide students with a supportive 'bridge' to cross over the transition from study to work.

Gender identities in the agri-food sector

This qualitative research with students working in a rural agri-food setting provides a contribution to the conceptual construction of rural gender identities in the UK which is a relatively underdeveloped area and identified as a research gap in existing literature (Morris et al., 2021; Pini, 2014a). This particularly relates to the relationship between femininity and how this is played out in rural women's presentation of the body or clothing (Little, 2015; Pini et al., 2014). The strategic decisions around personal branding provided the application of Abraham and Ingram's (2013) concept of students drawing upon a chameleon habitus between the fields, where examples of male and female students were able to seamlessly switch between different fields of working life and personal life by modifying their appearance. However, female students, in this rural masculine dominated sector showed further considerations in personal branding when faced with how to manage Bourdieu's concept of 'double bind' and gender burden, in either acquiescing to, or in resisting the doxa of the field. The research showed that while the term 'girly' is generally seen as derogatory and a limiting gender discourse of femininity (Reay 2001), here it was also paradoxically empowering and liberating for those females who wish to enjoy being 'girlie girls' (Little, 2015; Pini et al., 2014); this, in this research, was expressed as the 'pink chameleon'.

This research informs both placement practitioners and university educators by providing data into the challenges faced by females in the rural agri-food sector. Aside from the personal branding considerations, the data showed that female students faced challenges to their physicality and ability in the work-place in having to prove themselves in a male dominated occupational setting

(Section 6.3). Thus this research highlights the hegemonic gender regimes in the sector and the role that educators and industry may need to embrace in managing these perceptions for successful placement employment and attractiveness of the sector.

7.3   Contribution to research methods: use of Rich Picture method with individuals

The creation of Rich Pictures as part of a qualitative in-depth interview with individuals is part of my contribution to knowledge. The method presents the merit to give priority to self-representation and is powerful in the conversation it ensues from discussing it which may not have been revealed from the narrative enquiry alone. Here I shall identify my area of contribution to Research Methods in using Rich Pictures with individuals as part of the complementary in-depth interview

Using Rich Pictures with individuals

My contribution is the approach using this method of Rich Pictures with individuals as part of the complementary qualitative in-depth interview and the resultant analysis. This contributes to the existing literature that primarily concerns itself with the applications of participatory and community work with groups of people and where the individual production and analysis of Rich Pictures is rarely reported in the literature (Bell, Morse and Berg, 2016).

In this study, all participants engaged with the creation of Rich Picture drawing in the one-to-one in-depth interview and reported that it was fun, interesting to do, thought provoking, and provided a break in the interview which enabled personal thinking time as well as the opportunity for reflection. On the other hand, some participants spoke of undertaking the drawing task as being difficult and challenging to do. This was mainly in reference that they believed they were not good at drawing or embarrassed of the 'quality' of the drawing. However, the data showed that all Rich Pictures are rich with visual images to connote meaning and intended (and unintended) visual metaphors.

The analysis of Rich Pictures created by groups of people is not straightforward or even single things, "they are combinatorial, multiplex, complex and even chaotic at times" (Bell et al., 2016: 167). With groups there is potential when analysing Rich Pictures for misinterpretation, oversight of important issues and making links where there are none, 'apophenia' (Bell et al., 2019). Here in my work, the narrative in the in-depth interviews is complementary to the visual analysis asking the individual to explain their Rich Picture and therefore retains the nature of their visual intention. Therefore, apophenia is less concerning, compared to researchers interpreting the creative work of others where they are attempting to draw out meaning and messages, or as educed, using eductive interpretation (Bell et al., 2019) to draw out meaning (Section 4.4.1).

However, the multimodal data from the in-depth qualitative interviews in this research along with the use of the Rich Picture drawings and their subsequent explanation adds further levels of analysis. Although, a benefit of the Rich Picture is that it acts as an aide-memoir for analysis alongside the audio transcript and a map of the interview. Considerations of how best to analyse the complementary data of Rich Picture combined with in-depth narrative are set out in Section 4.4. Semiotic narratology is concerned with narrative of any mode (Chandler, 2011) and an iterative complementarity approach was used whereby the narrative was analysed in combination with the drawings, and where the visual was further analysed using a social semiotic approach. There is no one clear approach in analysing the content of Rich Pictures and as such the table was created from existing literature (shown in Section 4.4, Table 4) in order to compile and create a toolkit of typical social semiotic resources as a means to assist with the consideration of visual analysis and typical social semiotic resources. While I have shown in Chapters 5 and 6 examples of images that connote similar meanings, the ultimate creation of a concluding table of legends used in placement seeking and personal branding would be misleading. This is because, while there is commonality in the use of some images, there is also variation in their meaning. For instance, the image of the world was drawn to connote 'travel', while for another participant, the same image meant 'embracing their own culture'. As such, the iterative approach to the analysis of the individual Rich Pictures using a participatory based analysis and co-construction of understanding provided confidence in the data.

7.4   Contribution to practice: Using Rich Picture method with individuals in career understanding and placement seeking in HE

My second contribution relating to Rich Picture method is its application to practice in career understanding and placement seeking with students in higher education. This is novel because this is one of the first attempts to use Rich Pictures as a form of reflection for employability in career support services (Clarke, 2018; Dacre Pool and Sewell, 2007; Trought, 2017) and in consideration of Brand-Me which were discussed in Section 2.2.

Here, the Rich Picture task provided an original structure and anchorage for reflection, interpretation, and re-construction of the lived experience of participants in seeking placement employment. It revealed some of the complexities around employability for students in placement seeking and graduate employment especially related to Bourdieu's thinking tools of habitus, social, economic and cultural capital. It provided a structure for self-reflection where the participant has ownership of the conversation and making sense of what was experienced. The Rich Picture method provided a fascinating dynamic to the in-depth interview and allowed participants to express themselves in ways which are unusual and challenging and enabled reflection on the 'swampy

lowlands' of human interaction (Schon, 1983, 2011) as epitomised by the struggles revealed by the participants in Chapter 5. The Rich Picture takes the function of *the facilitator* in the reflective conversation as part of the in-depth interview, and provided a catalyst to spur discussion and scaffold reflection, where the subsequent understanding may take the individual forward to a decision or action. In this case, the result may be a subtle effect, or result in action (such as acting as a catalyst to articulate and undertake strategic personal brand management). Enlightenment and empowerment are at the heart of reflective conversations (Ghaye and Ghaye, 1998) and this was evident in this research through the use of Rich Pictures.

The Rich Pictures created by individuals (like those created by groups) are not a product. Here in my research, they provided a co-generation of knowledge and a powerful catalyst to facilitate ongoing leaning and processional career self-management thus making a contribution to literature on the processional conceptualisation of employability (Holmes, 2013; Reid, 2016) as discussed in Section 2.2. The Rich Picture method with individuals as part of the in-depth interview provided participants with a personal thinking process and a learning journey, particularly enabling the students to think about themselves, their values, and how they wanted to present this as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, both in placement preparation and post placement. The pictures are 'rich' in terms of what they tell us about how the participants approached the questions asked. Bell and Morse (2012) suggested that even if the 'rich' pictures that result can be deemed to be 'poorer' than others, there can still be valuable learning in the process. This was evident here in my research with individuals, even where the participants chose to use only word text in the generation of the Rich Picture drawings, or to represent Brand-Me, this is still rich as the emergent properties of the Rich Pictures and the process of drawing educes or draws out ideas, and inner held beliefs.

It was evident from the student feedback that the analysis which emerges in a Rich Picture is not an end but a beginning, and that it provides the information for the next step in a process and thus, Rich Pictures have transience. For example, this was seen in the accounts of students post placement who were in their final year of studies where the Rich Picture task had provided an opportunity for reflection on their placement year, in understanding how they had come to the decisions made on the placement journey, and how it had affected their future career plans. Reflection is a learning experience towards new insights, or changed perceptions of self and practices (Johns, 2007). This research showed evidence of students gaining an understanding, insight and empowerment into their self.

This work also makes a contribution to the practice of career support, where a focus on career self-management is seen as a robust and a sound basis for curriculum design and intervention to achieve

graduate employability (Clarke, 2018; Okay-Somerville and Scholarios, 2017). All participants (students, placement staff and employers) found the Rich Picture method useful in the reflection and planning for placement employment and career management. The collaborative nature of the task and reflective element can be an aid to learning above the normal professional development skills in preparing for placement and graduate positions. Student participants spoke of 'going through the motions of things' (such as in making placement applications, CV preparation, going to careers and scholarship fairs) in placement preparation. Where placement preparation was part of modules in the early stages of the taught curriculum, student participants felt that it was compartmentalised and lacked applicability. The in-depth interviews and Rich Pictures created by the university placement staff showed an insight into the world of acting as both coach and referee with students in the field of placement seeking where their approach was heavily emphasised on a securing a placement. This is an activity which had not been undertaken at LBU before despite the compulsory placement year and successful employability outcomes as articulated in national and international metrics (in Section 2.1).

This body of work offers practical observations on using Rich Picture drawings with individuals to visualise an answer or thoughts (Appendix B3), and here I summarise some additional observations on using Rich Pictures as part of the in-depth interview which may be of use to practitioners:

- Rich Picture method as part of the in-depth interview with individuals was an acceptable method for data collection and co-construction of reality.
- Rich Picture is a device to aid conversation – it may not be logical and so participants should be encouraged to include everything they think, or which articulates their thoughts.
- Rich Picture method was able to facilitate and provide a structure self-reflection.
- The Rich Picture provided a reflective stage to the interview and provided a 'next step' aspect to consider.
- Rich Picture method was able to elicit conversation and tease out further thoughts and understanding.
- The Rich Picture evolves and has transience.
- The Rich Pictures appeared to offer an expression of the inner life or 'soul' of the individual.
- Rich Picture links to the memory and ideas are often remembered afterwards.
- The participants put great conscious effort into the pictures which highlighted the unconscious during the plenary session and teased out a level of thinking and knowledge which was not evident in the initial verbal questioning.
- Rich Picture is powerful in the conversation it ensues from discussing it.
- The Rich Picture contains consent from the individual member as to what they wish to draw, share, and discuss, placing a degree of trust with the interviewer.

The last point is particularly pertinent, that the creation of the Rich Picture and its subsequent discussion, places a degree of trust with the interviewer. This is important to understand and to give sufficient attention and time to the participant in the process. Each in-depth interview including the

creation of the Rich Picture(s) is time-laden and has resource implications. However, the contribution of the Rich Picture component to the process of placement seeking and employability, and the semiotic resources deployed by the individual, present the ideas which are held as important from their thinking and reflection relating to their career capitals and Brand-Me.

7.5   Limitations and future research directions

As with other qualitative interviews, a limiting factor may be the time lapse between the events of placement seeking and the discussion which may have influence on the reflection. Additionally, it should be considered that while the Rich Picture contains consent from the individual in what they wish to share, there may be silence in what they do not wish to share which may also have important meaning and inference to the research. However, I felt that the narrative and Rich Picture data collected with the participants was rich data, meaning that I felt that there was even more stories to uncover. Namely, I would like to have gone back to the students later and see whether they had considered further their personal branding decisions. It would be interesting to explore further with students, placement staff and employers the emergent themes around gender and family. However, this was constrained due to access, ethics, and time issues. These could be directions for future research and form longitudinal types of research.

Secondly, it would be interesting to expand this research using Rich Picture method into an activity with all students seeking placement as part of their placement preparation or professional skills modules and assess how it may influence their management online and offline in consideration of Brand-Me for placement seeking and regarding the social media panopticon.

Thirdly, for this university operating in the rural sector, this qualitative work with students revealed aspects relating to gender issues and masculine domination which may need further attention in support of the students. Therefore, in future research it would be desirable to consider further issues relating to *all* gendered perspectives and experiences of these in this sector to understand and enhance the considerations of Brand-Me and working in the rural sector.

Fourthly, the emergent findings of the research work have been shared with university staff within my own university and with colleagues nationally and internationally as each stage has progressed. This has benefited both parties in the sharing of practice, and for me in gaining further understanding. An awareness of Bourdieu's conceptual tools of habitus, capital and field with placement practitioners and other academic staff in support of placement may be helpful to understand that the students are not 'single and free' and better support student decision making. The method of using Rich Pictures with individuals as part of the in-depth interview is transferable into other areas of research. For example, parallel with this study, I have conducted research with

LBU alumni who have gone on to become entrepreneurs to explore the influence of placement on their entrepreneurial business and accompany a quantitative study (Parrott and Lister, 2019 funded by ASET Bursary). This approach was successfully replicated with colleagues from Canada and New Zealand for a cross-country collaborative project exploring placement and entrepreneurs (Pretti, Parrott, Hoskyn, Fannon, Church, and Arsenault, 2020). In my capacity as dissertation supervisor, Rich Pictures were used as part of a focus group to explore consumers' perceptions to the poultry sector and was able to elicit the disconnect between production practice and consumer perceptions in the purchase of poultry meat. As such, this qualitative approach is versatile and provides many benefits to add to the in-depth interview.

Lastly, the rich volume of data collected as part of this research can be likened to an enormous oak tree, and what is presented here in this thesis represents some of the key themes arising from the data in relation to placement seeking and Brand-Me. There are potentially more branches to explore and information to carve out of the trunk, and even delve into the roots regarding other forms of placement employment support (role of the placement scholarships, different sectors of industry, with other university departments such as Engineering, Veterinary, Land Management for instance). The analysis was carried out during the presence of COVID-19 which is rapidly changing the field of education (QAA, 2020) and we are seeing accelerated digital practice and spaces. Articulation of Brand-Me will likely to be even more digitally present, in both application, online interviews and working practices. Resilience, both personal and institutional will be a challenge for universities, students and employers to be agile enough to pivot and flex with new challenges. Going back to my metaphor of the large oak tree, if we are sculpting change, often the unfinished is equally interesting and I find there is more to go at here beyond these considerations of Bourdieu and Brand-Me.

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9   Appendices

9.1   Appendix A: Research questions, Aim, and Objectives.

Table 7 Summary of Research aim, research questions, and objectives.

Main aim	
To explore the field of placement seeking in the agri-food sector with HE students and question whether strategies that HE students use to secure industrial placement and graduate employment are influenced by an awareness of personal branding and consideration of the self and Brand-Me.	
Central Research Questions(RQ)	
RQ1.What are the strategies that higher education students use to secure industrial placement and graduate employment? RQ2. Are they and if yes, to what extent, influenced by an awareness of 'Brand-Me?	
Associated Sub Research Questions (SQ)	
SQ1	What are the valued forms of field-specific capital in the context of placement seeking from the perspectives of students, university staff supporting placements and employers of placement students?
SQ22	What is the ownership of students in shaping their personal branding and the relationship between habitus, capital and field in building Brand-Me from a student perspective?
Research Objectives (RO)	
Obj.1	To gain an understanding of the 'rules of the game' in the 'career field' of placement employment seeking in the agri-food sector.
Obj.2	To query to what extent students choose their props (pictures, dress) to create meaning through self-presentation to others and whether they are cognisant of personal branding.

9.2 Appendix B: Indicative interview questions and Rich Picture instructions

9.2.1 Appendix B1 A list of conventions to create the Rich Pictures

a. To help interpret a situation, choose symbols, scenes or images that represent the situation.
b. Use as many colours as necessary and draw the symbols on a large piece of paper.
c. Put in whatever connections you see between your pictorial symbols: avoid producing merely an unconnected set; messy drawing is fine.
d. Avoid too much writing
e. Fall back on words only where ideas fail you for a sketch that encapsulates your meaning.
f. Place the elements on your sheet wherever your instinct prompts.
g. Finally include yourself in the picture. Make sure that your roles and relationships in the situation are clear.
(Open University, not dated; Oakden, 2015)

9.2.2 Appendix B2 Qualitative interview topic questions

Table 8 Format of qualitative in-depth Interview and questions-students

Order	Indicative lines of questioning for in-depth interview	Purpose
	Tell me about your placement planning and career journey to date.	Opening introductory question to settle the participant.
1.	Explain the use of Rich Pictures (RP) and provide participants with materials and will ask the following question to the students where they will use drawings to illustrate their thoughts	To introduce the RP task and materials provided.
2.	Q1 Rich Picture task 1: What are the steps you take in preparing for placement and career; and what is it about you as an individual that may contribute to you securing a placement position or chosen area of work? On completion, the RP is described and other associated lines of questioning pursued	To understand ways students prepare for placement and career management. To elicit and explore aspects that relate to their own assessment of their skills, forms of capital and disposition, and career planning. Aspects that relate to personal branding, any social media considerations and any steps they take to promote themselves.
3	Q2What other methods, other than CV do you use to promote yourself?	To explore what other methods used including social media that students use to promote themselves.
3.	Q3 In the positions you are interested in, what is it that employers are looking for? Q4- What particular challenges have you faced on your placement journey? Q5- How the placement experience benefited you personally? Q6-How will you use what you have learned about yourself, including your personal strengths and weaknesses in future career planning	These questions were asked dependent on the iterative line of questioning arising from the RP task1.
4.	Q7 Rich Picture task 2: If you had to consider yourself as 'Brand Me' how would you take this concept forward and promote this? On completion, the RP is described and other associated lines of questioning pursued	This line of questioning seeks to elicit and directly explore further aspects that relate to their own perception of Brand-Me and steps they take to promote themselves (CV, social media, networking etc.)
5	Q8- What might (the university do to) support your career planning in the future?	To identify any areas of need by the participant and elicit areas of support that the university may be able to provide
6	*Q9. Have you any final thoughts you wish to share from this meeting and in using RP?*	To conclude the meeting and allowing time for any final thoughts to emerge To explore the views of the participant in using RP.
7.	The participant was thanked and the meeting ended.	

Table 9 Format of qualitative in-depth interview and questions - University staff and employers

Order	Indicative lines of questioning for in-depth interview	Purpose
	Tell me about your involvement in offering placements and employing graduates to date?	Opening introductory question to settle the participant.
1.	Explain the use of Rich Pictures (RP) and provide participants with materials and will ask the following question to the students where they will use drawings to illustrate their thoughts	To introduce the RP task and materials provided.
2.	Q1 Rich Picture task 1: For the placements / students you are providing/supporting, what is it that employers are looking for in our students? On completion, the RP is described and other associated lines of questioning pursued	Relates to SQ1. This line of questioning seeks to elicit and explore aspects that relate to forms of capital, career capital, augmented product features
3.	Q2 Rich Picture task: What are the main challenges faced by students when seeking employment? (LBU staff only) On completion, the RP is described and other associated lines of questioning pursued	Using Bourdieu lens – to explore having a feel for the game? Questions relating to this will attempt to ascertain 'rules of the game', uncover any dispositions. To elicit any considerations in support of students in consideration of Brand-me and digital technologies.
4.	Q3- What might (the university do to) support career planning in the future?	To identify any areas of need by the participant and elicit areas of support that the university may be able to provide
5	*Q4.Have you any final thoughts you wish to share from this meeting and in using RP?*	To conclude the meeting and allowing time for any final thoughts to emerge To explore the views of the participant in using RP.
6	*The participant was thanked and the meeting ended.*	

9.2.3 Appendix B3 Practical observations on using Rich Picture drawings with individuals to visualise an answer or thoughts as part of an in-depth interview

a. Need to be clear that it is personal at the start, and aware that the topic may be deemed as private and sensitive.
b. In considering whether to use a Flip chart paper or A3 paper size - A3 size is easier to manage and can be scanned to upload a digital version.
c. A selection of coloured pens was freely available from which participants could select to use.
d. In a one-hour long interview, undertaking two drawing tasks is maximum that can be undertaken to achieve the time to create the picture, and to communicate the visual answer in the narrative.
e. Allow sufficient space in the room to be able to turn away and leave the participant doing the tasks, or the freedom to not feel under pressure (I often used the drawing period as a time to pop out and make a cup of tea for the participant in an attempt to lessen any pressure or anxiety).
f. Care is needed to not influence the participant. Spontaneity is best, although prompts or encouragement may be needed at the start.
g. A sense of 'can-do', encouraging and positive disposition is needed by the facilitator whilst maintaining sensitive to any cues of reluctance or reservations by the participant in carrying out the task.

9.3 Appendix C: Student sample and background of university used in the case study.

The land-based university used as part of this research is a single rural based campus on a working farm estate. It has approximately 2,550 undergraduate students actively studying on predominantly full-time sandwich programmes, of whom about 91% are home or EU students (University data, 2020).

The students are recruited nationally and internationally to the specialist land-based curriculum and predominantly from rural catchment. The courses are vocational and aligned to careers and employment in the rural-land based sector. Typically, around 76% of the university new entrants declare themselves from a rural background and a high number of the student intake is from farm worker families, which is higher than the sector mean. A low number of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students enrolled reflects data from similar UK land-based specialist universities and that 1.5% of the BAME population is rural (University data, 2020). The Social Mobility Commission (2020) and Participation of Local Areas (POLAR -of which POLAR4 is the most recent iteration) are geographical and socioeconomic measures of how likely young people are to participate in higher education across the UK (OfS, 2020). The UK is divided into 'local' areas and statistics are compiled by the Government on how many people in each of the local areas typically go to university (where the lowest 20% participation rates are "quintile 1", and the top 20% are "quintile 5" and everywhere else is somewhere in between). This thesis focused on students studying on the agri-food related courses. For this suite of courses over a three - year average, 96% are from a rural background, with 0% BAME students and show a low percentage in POLAR4 Q12 (POLAR4 Q12, 12.6% and POLAR4 Q1 1.7%) (University data, 2020a).

About 2% of the students in this university case study are considered 'local' by the OfS, and 75% of the students are in the 'domicile to study' POLAR4 quintiles 4-5 (showing a ratio of POLAR Q4-5: Q1-2 was 4.6:1 over the 2013-2017 intakes where 'working class' POLAR Q1-2). The OfS data set (University data, 2020) has not shown any statistically significant disadvantageous differences or gaps in progression based on their POLAR4 status or IMD status (Index of Multiple Deprivation; Ministry of Housing, 2020), although continuation rates identified as IMD Q1-2 are lower than the POLAR4 analysis.

Levels of household income is used as a socioeconomic indicator; however, for students from a rural background it is not a stable indicator of disadvantage for students, and particularly those from an agricultural background. The reason being that their backgrounds may be subject to highly fluctuating annual household incomes, based on the volatility of agricultural output prices, weather, exchange rates and global supply and stocks of commodities as shown in farm business survey data

(DEFRA, 2020a; DEFRA, 2020).   The survey data highlights the extreme volatility on farm income and using 2009/10 as a base year, household incomes in this sector have had variations from -36% to + 43% (University data, 2020). Therefore, whilst the student profile tends to be in the POLAR quintiles Q4-5 and thereby not classed as 'working class', nevertheless, these fluctuations in farm output will have affected the household income for many of the students whose parents are farmers, or who work close to either side of the 'farm gate' within the food chain. Within the farming sector, there may be other influencing factors also affecting the socioeconomic and cultural background of the students attending the university, such as whether the farm is owner occupied, tenanted, generational background, inherited, geographic and topographical location opportunities and constraints and such like. This research is focused on students studying on the agri-food related courses where 96% are from a rural background with 0% BAME (University data 2020a).

9.4 Appendix D: Research Participant Information and Consent Form(s)

Keele University

CONSENT FORM (redacted)

Title of Project: An investigation with Higher Education students into preparing for placement and career management in the agri-food supply chain.

Name and contact details of Principal Investigator:
This project is being undertaken by Patricia Parrott ███████████ University, ███████████
███████████ University Telephone number: ███████████
Email: tparrott@███████████.ac.uk

		Please initial box if you agree with the statement
1	I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	
2	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw up to 6 weeks after the interview.	
3	I agree to take part in this study.	
4	I agree to allow the dataset collected to be used for this EdD Thesis.	
5	I understand that data collected about me during this study will be anonymised before it is used for this EdD thesis.	
6	I agree to the interview being audio recorded.	
7	I agree for my quotes and illustrations to be used in the EdD thesis	

_____   _____   _____
Name of participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____
Researcher   Date   Signature

INFORMATION SHEET – Student (redacted)

Study Title: An investigation with Higher Education students into preparing for placement and career management in the agri-food supply chain.

Aims of the Research

The aims of this research are to gain an understanding of the perspectives of students in preparing for placement and career planning and will particularly focus on students in the agri-food sector. The research hopes to gain further qualitative insight into how the university may support students in their career trajectory.

Invitation

You are being invited to consider taking part in the research study: *An investigation with Higher Education students into preparing for placement and career management in the agri-food supply chain.*
This project is being undertaken by Patricia Parrott, Principal Lecturer in Agri-food marketing, ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ University as part of a professional doctorate in education (EdD) at Keele University.
 Before you decide whether or not you wish to take part, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read this information carefully and discuss it with friends and relatives if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information.

Why have I been invited?

The research is focused on the views of students and placement employers and staff supporting placement in the agri-food sector at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ University, therefore, you are very much part of this research.

Do I have to take part?

You are free to decide whether you wish to take part or not. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign two consent forms, one is for you to keep and the other is for our records. You are free to withdraw from this study and without giving reasons within six weeks of the in-depth interview. To withdraw, please contact Patricia Parrott (the principal researcher) by email. Please be assured that all data gathered through the interview process will be anonymised in its presentation and each participant will be given an alphanumeric code.

If I take part, what do I have to do?

You will be invited to meet with Patricia Parrott on an individual basis and questions will prompt you to discuss your approach and attitude to your personal career management and placement seeking. You may be asked to explain your answer through further questioning or by drawing and illustrating your views. This may take about one hour of your time. Notes may be made during the interview and an audio recorder used to capture your views. Participants will be anonymised by the use of an alphanumeric code in the resultant data. This is to ensure that no comments will be attributed back to any participant as an individual.

What are the benefits (if any) of taking part?

You will be able to share your opinions and experiences of preparing for placement and your career. This might be useful in thinking through how you may approach this and alter how you think in the future. The findings of this research may also be of use to the university and the process of placement at the university and, therefore, you may well have a direct impact on future preparation of placement and personal career management of other students.

What are the risks (if any) of taking part?

Participants will be given an alphanumeric code to protect their anonymity in the writing up of the research findings. All transcripts will be carefully reviewed to ensure that anonymity is maintained. However, there may be a risk of identification by a reader familiar with the placement process at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ University, who can

deduct from a comment or analysis in the transcript, of a student or cohort. This risk is believed to be very small, but important that consent is given with this being understood.

How will information about me be used?

Participants will be identified as undergraduate students related to the agri-food sector only. The discussion held as part of the interview will be recorded and transcribed by Patricia Parrott, the principal researcher. The resultant data will be used in the EdD thesis being undertaken in this area. The data will be protected on a password protected secure University computer drive.

Who will have access to information about me?

Patricia Parrott is the principal researcher for this pilot project and supervised by a member of staff at Keele University (Dr. Cora Xu, l.xu@keele.ac.uk) there are no other co-workers involved. Throughout the process, confidentiality will be maintained and your anonymity protected. Please note the following steps taken to maintain confidentiality:

- Participants will be given an alphanumeric code to protect their anonymity in the writing up of the research findings and identified as undergraduate students related to the agri-food sector only and not by any course cohort or individual.
- The discussion held as part of the interview will be recorded and transcribed.
- The research data presented will be from the transcribed one to one interviews.
- The data will be stored on a password protected University computer drive.
- Only the supervisor and I will have access to the study data.
- The data will be stored in line with the guidelines of Keele University and will be retained by myself as principal investigator for at least five years.
- In the longer-term, as principal researcher, I will arrange for the transcribed data to be securely deleted.

I do however have to work within the confines of current legislation over such matters as privacy and confidentiality, data protection and human rights and so offers of confidentiality may sometimes be overridden by law. For example in circumstances whereby I am concerned over any actual or potential harm to yourself or others I must pass this information to the relevant authorities.

Who is funding and organising the research?

I am doing this project as part of my doctoral research as a student of Keele University on the Professional Doctorate of Education programme and part funded by my employer ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ University.

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you may wish to speak to the researcher who will do their best to answer your questions. You should contact Patricia Parrott on tparrott@▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮.ac.uk.

If you remain unhappy about the research and/or wish to raise a complaint about any aspect of the way that you have been approached or treated during the course of the study please write to the address below which is the University's contact for complaints regarding research:

Research Integrity Team
Directorate of Research, Innovation and Engagement
IC2 Building
Keele University , ST5 5NE
E-mail: research.governance@keele.ac.uk
Tel: 01782 733371

Contact for further information

Mrs Patricia Parrott tparrott@▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮.ac.uk   or p.a.parrott@keele.ac.uk

INFORMATION SHEET – *Employers.* **(redacted)**

Study Title: An investigation with Higher Education students into preparing for placement and career management in the agri-food supply chain.

Aims of the Research
The aims of this research are to gain an understanding of the perspectives of students in preparing for placement and career planning and will particularly focus on students in the agri-food sector. The research hopes to gain further qualitative insight into how the university may support students in their career trajectory.

Invitation
You are being invited to consider taking part in the research study: *An investigation with Higher Education students into preparing for placement and career management in the agri-food supply chain.* This project is being undertaken by Patricia Parrott, Principal Lecturer in Agri-food marketing ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ University as part of a professional doctorate in education (EdD) at Keele University.

Before you decide whether or not you wish to take part, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read this information carefully and discuss it with friends and relatives if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information.

Why have I been invited?
The research is focused on the views of students and placement employers and staff supporting placement in the agri-food sector at ▮▮▮▮▮▮ University, therefore, you are very much part of this research.

Do I have to take part?
You are free to decide whether you wish to take part or not. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign two consent forms, one is for you to keep and the other is for our records. You are free to withdraw from this study and without giving reasons within six weeks of the in-depth interview. To withdraw, please contact Patricia Parrott (the principal researcher) by email. Please be assured that all data gathered through the interview process will be anonymised in its presentation and each participant will be given an alphanumeric code.

If I take part, what do I have to do?
You will be invited to meet with Patricia Parrott on an individual basis and questions will prompt you to discuss your approach and attitude to recruiting students and graduates. You may be asked to explain your answer through further questioning or by drawing and illustrating your views. This may take about one hour of your time. Notes may be made during the interview and an audio recorder used to capture your views. Participants will be anonymised by the use of an alphanumeric code in the resultant data. This is to ensure that no comments will be attributed back to any participant as an individual.

What are the benefits (if any) of taking part?
You will be able to share your opinions and experiences in support of students for placement and employability. This might be useful in thinking through how you may approach this and alter how you think in the future.
The findings of this research may also be of use to the university and the process of placement at the university and, therefore, you may well have a direct impact on future preparation of placement and personal career management of other students.
What are the risks (if any) of taking part?
Participants will be given an alphanumeric code to protect their anonymity in the writing up of the research findings. All transcripts will be carefully reviewed to ensure that anonymity is maintained. However, there may be a risk of identification by a reader familiar with the placement process at ▮▮▮▮▮▮ University, who can

deduct from a comment or analysis in the transcript, of an employer. This risk is believed to be very small, but important that consent is given with this being understood.

How will information about me be used?
Participants will be identified as undergraduate students related to the agri-food sector only. The discussion held as part of the interview will be recorded and transcribed by Patricia Parrott, the principal researcher. The resultant data will be used in the EdD thesis being undertaken in this area. The data will be protected on a password protected secure University computer drive.

Who will have access to information about me?
Patricia Parrott is the principal researcher for this pilot project and supervised by a member of staff at Keele University (Dr. Cora Xu, l.xu@keele.ac.uk) there are no other co-workers involved. Throughout the process, confidentiality will be maintained and your anonymity protected. Please note the following steps taken to maintain confidentiality:

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Who is funding and organising the research?
I am doing this project as part of my doctoral research as a student of Keele University on the Professional Doctorate of Education programme and part funded by my employer ███████████ University.

What if there is a problem?
If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you may wish to speak to the researcher who will do their best to answer your questions. You should contact Patricia Parrott on tparrott@███████████.ac.uk. If you remain unhappy about the research and/or wish to raise a complaint about any aspect of the way that you have been approached or treated during the course of the study please write to the address below which is the University's contact for complaints regarding research:

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Tel: 01782 733371

Contact for further information
Mrs Patricia Parrott tparrott@███████████.ac.uk   or p.a.parrott@keele.ac.uk

Study Title: An investigation with Higher Education students into preparing for placement and career management in the agri-food supply chain.

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Do I have to take part?
You are free to decide whether you wish to take part or not. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign two consent forms, one is for you to keep and the other is for our records. You are free to withdraw from this study and without giving reasons within six weeks of the in-depth interview. To withdraw, please contact Patricia Parrott (the principal researcher) by email. Please be assured that all data gathered through the interview process will be anonymised in its presentation and each participant will be given an alphanumeric code.

If I take part, what do I have to do?
You will be invited to meet with Patricia Parrott on an individual basis and questions will prompt you to discuss your approach and attitude to the preparation and support of students for placement and employment.   You may be asked to explain your answer through further questioning or by drawing and illustrating your views. This may take about one hour of your time. Notes may be made during the interview and an audio recorder used to capture your views. Participants will be anonymised by the use of an alphanumeric code in the resultant data. This is to ensure that no comments will be attributed back to any participant as an individual.

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deduct from a comment or analysis in the transcript, of a member of staff. This risk is believed to be very small, but important that consent is given with this being understood.

How will information about me be used?
Participants will be identified as undergraduate students related to the agri-food sector only. The discussion held as part of the interview will be recorded and transcribed by Patricia Parrott, the principal researcher. The resultant data will be used in the EdD thesis being undertaken in this area. The data will be protected on a password protected secure University computer drive.

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- In the longer-term, as principal researcher, I will arrange for the transcribed data to be securely deleted.

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Who is funding and organising the research?
I am doing this project as part of my doctoral research as a student of Keele University on the Professional Doctorate of Education programme and part funded by my employer ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ University.

What if there is a problem?
If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you may wish to speak to the researcher who will do their best to answer your questions. You should contact Patricia Parrott on tparrott@▮▮▮▮▮▮.ac.uk. If you remain unhappy about the research and/or wish to raise a complaint about any aspect of the way that you have been approached or treated during the course of the study please write to the address below which is the University's contact for complaints regarding research:

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Contact for further information
Mrs Patricia Parrott tparrott@▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮.ac.uk or p.a.parrott@keele.ac.uk

9.5 Appendix E: Rich Picture as art form –Pilot data

Table 10 Analytical framework for art as set out by Carney (1994) and how it could apply to Rich Pictures

Step	Name of step	Notes	Rich Pictures
The analytical framework for art as set out by Carney (1994) and how it could apply to Rich Pictures (Bell and Morse, 2012: 24).			
1	Locate the style	Note the art-historical context and its characteristic features upon which the content of the piece depends	The content of the RP; the problem or system being analysed
2	Descriptive Features and Structures	Note the descriptive features and structures in the piece. For example, the colours, shapes, arrangements, textures, brush strokes and thickness of lines	Content of the RP; the use of colour, shapes, drawings etc.
3	Primary Aesthetic Features	Presence of any representational, expressive and exemplified features.	Are any features dominant in the picture? Perhaps because they are placed more centrally or drawn larger and in bolder lines.
4	Value Features	These encompass aspects of both form and content. For example, the relationships of features in the picture.	Linkages between the elements of the RP; whether the components are isolated or grouped
5	Low-level Interpretation	The meaning or the content of the picture in its basic form	The overall content of the picture; is it narrow in focus or does it encompass many points?
6	High-level Interpretation	Brings together the low-level interpretations along with such things as the artist's oeuvre, declarations made by the artist about the work and the art in an historical context.	Note the points made by the team when presenting the RP during a plenary. Are the points in the RP? How rich is the description given.
7	Critical Judgement	Whether the picture has (or lacks) aesthetic value to a degree and whether the artwork has more (or less) value than another.	Some overall sense of the quality of the RP which emerges from all the above.

Table 11 Framework for critiquing RP as art-used in Pilot –Seeking Placement

	Carney's (1994) framework for critiquing art and its application to Rich Pictures in preparation for placement Figures 1-4.			
	Name of step	RP figure 1- S1	RP figure 2 –S2	RP Figure 3- S3	RP Figure 4 – S4
1	Locate the style	Context is around 'self' preparing for employment.	Context is clear that it is preparing for placement and career management	Context is not evidently clear that it is in preparing for employment.	Context is about job seeking.
2	Descriptive Features and Structures	Picture has a number of components, all centred on a diagram of a person and constructed like a mind map. Good use of colour.	Picture is solely comprised of words, centred on the topic and constructed like a process map. Good use of colour in words and lines.	Picture has a number of components with good use of colour. The pictures scattered around the sheet without the appearance of order or lines.	Picture has a number of components, some related and with good use of colour.
3	Primary Aesthetic Features	The picture has a large centre image of 'self' and many images connected from these using pink lines in an organised structure with descriptive titles to each image. Images of the globe, a CV, Money, microphone at the top, family home and LBU with a double line, a building to the right depicting future opportunities. To the bottom left are a cluster of images showing people, briefcase, and computers relating to the placement. To the left were images depicting family farm, past experience and also career development.	The picture has three themes – University is placed at the top, Personal at bottom right and Career management to the left and each with the same level of boldness. Each title area has further arrows and words explaining the process. No images are used at all.	The picture has a number of colourful images scattered around the sheet without the appearance of order or lines. The top half shows images of a computer, a map, lecture notes and farmers weekly. The bottom half shows images of people, a clock, letters ABC, musical notes, a dress and a sheep.	The picture is covered with colourful images and words spread over the entire sheet. There does not appear to be an order to the picture, and looks very eclectic. The eye is drawn to the centre of the sheet to the words, CV and Covering letter written in red beneath which are red arrows and red crosses next to an image of a door, a blue tie, a book showing studies, pink stick people with a cross, an image of a phone with a cross, the word 'poultry' with a cross and a map of Africa with a cross. A red arrow is besides this leading to the careers office and an image of an avocado with a green tick and the words Personal development in red and Tesco in blue positioned next to a building. The top right of the picture has the word 'Confidence'' written in red and surrounded by images of stick people, a car, an aeroplane, people giving a presentation and the words: presentation skills; travel?; and home?? .To the top left of the picture there are red ticks next to a document, wine bottle and glasses, a graduation image a set of books and the words: aspirations, graduation? and work?
4	Value Features	The images have been sequenced into clear spaces using pink connecting lines to self and titles for each image in purple on the right side and in red on the left side.	The three themes are written in large capital letters (University and Personal in red, Career management in purple) and appear to be distinct from each other with a cluster of items for each, and some showing a process. There is connectivity between the three themes.	The images are all isolated no grouping, lines or connectivity shown.	Apparent groupings are not immediately evident. However there are some clear linkages in parts of the picture if starting from the centre of the picture where the words are in red and following the red arrows from here. This then takes the story to the right and upwards.

5	Low-level Interpretation	The picture has a strong focus on the theme and the person is very much the focus of the story.	'University' has the most topics flowing from it covering: lectures, lecturers, assignments, LBU reputation and contacts, and careers advisors showing a process from this to giving ideas, placement adverts, assignments, viewing job ideas and what is available. 'Personal' has arrows linking up to University and across to Career Management and shows items around using holidays, building skills, interview preparation, building a good CV. 'Career Management' links to gaining a placement which further leads to a grad. scheme, choosing particular modules to study and speaking with other students to gain knowledge of jobs. This also links o the process of gaining a placement in the 'University' section.	The picture has numerous images, but also plenty of spaces between the images. Not much of a story appears to be told here.	The picture has a strong focus on the theme, covers many points and the red crosses and ticks and question marks show some negativity, consideration and success in the story.
6	High-level Interpretation	During the plenary, the lines in pink were chosen for being strong minded; the blue lines being importance of LBU and family; the pale blue globe explained as being *'dreamy and hazy'*, green colour showing grass roots , whilst the red titles depicted coping areas, firm areas and the influence of the YFC placement.	During the plenary, the colours were said to have had no meaning and the desire to not use pictures. The topic areas Personal and University are joined together *'because it's what you make it isn't it'*.	During the plenary, the story came much more apparent and alive and explanations provided for each image revealing an organised process to preparing for career. The top half was more about researching the company, using lectures and farmers weekly and maps to check job areas, always talking to people, importance of time management and having determination after being diagnosed with dyslexia (noted by ABC). The musical notes depicted building confidence and singing 'powerhouse ballads', the dress depicted always going shopping for an interview outfit; the sheep was described as 'a *passion which I put to my career as well'*.	During the plenary, the picture was divided into two halves starting with the CV and moving to the right and upwards. The red crosses depicted rejection after rejection in the interview process and blaming having an African background for these rejections. The success (green tick) with an avocado company and Tesco led to greater confidence and job offer. Whether to travel, go home, or work were future decisions as depicted by the images and words in the top left of the picture.
7	Critical Judgement	A strong RP that tells a clear, coherent and focussed story.	A RP which does address and provides an insight to the issue and a story, but does not reveal more than the words shown.	A strong RP when the images are discussed in context. Without the narrative, the images do not tell a coherent story.	A strong RP that tells a difficult and successful story and enriched by the narrative.

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Table 12 Framework for critiquing RP as art used in Pilot - Brand-Me

	Name of step	RP figure 5- S1	RP figure 6 –S2	RP Figure 7- S3	RP Figure 8 – S4
		Carney's (1994) framework for critiquing art and its application to Rich Pictures in Brand-Me Figures 5-8.			
1	Locate the style	Context is not evidently clear; it seems to be about a female.	Context is clear that it is about brand me and self-promotion.	Context is about something being colourful and bold.	Context is about different aspects about a person.
2	Descriptive Features and Structures	Picture has a number of components with good use of colour. The pictures are scattered around the sheet without the appearance of order or lines.	Picture is in two halves, an image of a person on the top half and a diagram of product anatomy on the bottom half. Good use of colour in words and lines.	Picture has a number of components with good use of colour which are assembled around one large central image.	Picture has a number of components with good use of colour which are assembled around one large central image.
3	Primary Aesthetic Features	The picture has a number of colourful images scattered around the sheet without the appearance of order, grouping or lines. There are no dominant features other than having a female stick person appearing 4 times in the picture. The top half shows images of a sun, smiley face, cloud and clock. The middle section shows a large briefcase, a stick person holding a briefcase, a row of stick people, lightbulb and box. The lower part of the picture has a row of animals of different species with one highlighted by a yellow circle, a red stick person by a bus, a purple stick person on their own and a purple stick person by a sun.	The top half shows a blue stick person with long hair with a speech bubble saying 'I'll have a go at anything'. Beside to the left is a list of three bullet points saying the words: hardworking; good communicator; and strong attention to detail. The Product anatomy has four circles, the first saying: potential employee; the second with attributes of age, health and availability to work. The third describing personality attributes; and the fourth saying: potential to be a very valuable employee.	The picture has a number of colourful images surrounding a central dominant image with large letters A and G in a box with a border in a rainbow of colours. Two pink arrows point towards the box saying the words: colourful; and bold. On the right hand side are images of a speech bubble below words saying, communicate with others; beneath are images of wheat, cattle and sheep and the word saying, farming background. On the bottom right an image of a large smiley face. On the left hand side is a hammer and nail with the word hardworking beneath and connecting by an arrow to a money sign above saying: value for money.	The picture is covered with colourful images and words spread over the sheet. There does not appear to be an order to the picture, and looks very eclectic. The eye is drawn to the centre of the sheet to an orange coloured stick man. On the right hand side the words, confidence, adaptability and think on my feet are written in green above a brown brick wall. Below is a purple tie and blue ladder. beneath the stick man is a winner podium with a trophy on the top. To the left hand side is a group of purple stick people with the word, relationships above. On the left is a race with a red cross beside it and at the top of the page is a globe with the words, embrace, and identity, written in black beneath.
4	Value Features	The images are all isolated no grouping, lines or connectivity shown.	The two halves of the picture are distinct, no connectivity shown.	The large central colourful image is the main focus of the picture and surrounded by colourful images with some connectivity to the centre and with each other.	The images are all isolated no grouping, lines or connectivity shown
5	Low-level Interpretation	The picture has numerous images, but also plenty of spaces between the images. Not much of a story appears to be told here.	The picture is very precise in showing values pertaining to 'Brand –Me' in mainly a professional capacity and limited personality conveyed.	The picture has several images surrounding the main image and a sense of colour, happiness and hardworking emanates from the picture and attempt to portray a story about brand -me.	The picture has several images surrounding the main image and a sense of striving, ambition, to be a winner, to climb, and sense of confidence emanates from the picture and attempt to portray a story about brand -me.

| 6	High-level Interpretation	During the plenary, the story came much more apparent and alive and explanations provided for each image revealing perception of brand me but not portrayal of brand me. The stick people represented confident me, professional me, fun person me and opportunity seeking me not waiting for a bus. The row of animals depicted independence and explained as '*I don't follow the crowd…to fit in and also own person to speak out*'; and images at the top right depicted imagination, thinking outside the box and good timekeeping. The lack of connections was explained that '*they are all stand alone, yes they are all intertwined but I see them as different things as I go about my daily life*'.	During the plenary, the colours were said to have had no meaning. The three bullet points were said to be the '*winning combination*'. Little more was added to describe the picture.	During the plenary, the central colourful box was explained as a logo and that the colours were a deliberate choice in attempting to display a colourful and bold personality explained as '*I like to stand out*'.	During the plenary, the first image explained was the globe and to '*You are who you are, embrace who you are and run with it*' and the theme of having a winner mentality to '*put yourself first and to always build includ*ing relationships'.
7	Critical Judgement	A RP that provides an insight to the students' self-perception of brand me, but only with the benefit of narrative. It does not tell an obvious coherent story that portrays 'brand-me'.	A strong RP which attempts to portray brand-me, but does not reveal more about the student than the words shown.	A strong RP attempting to portray brand-me.	A RP that pulls some images together that provides an insight to the students' self-perception and an attempt to portray brand me.
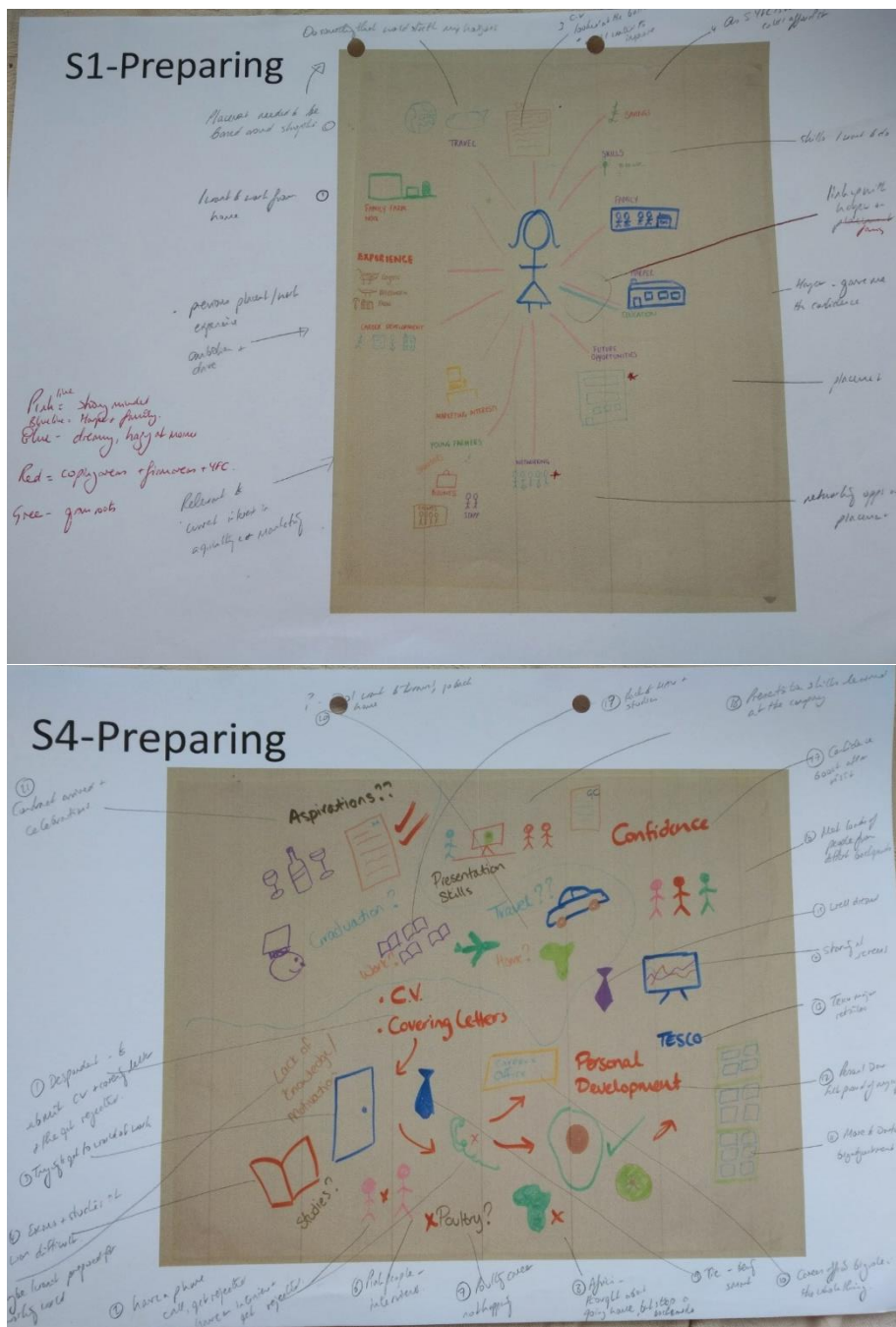
Figure 23 Example of RP analysis

9.7 Appendix G: Example of assembling themes from qualitative data.

9.7.1 Appendix G1 Themes arising from in-depth interviews and Rich Pictures

Table 13 Themes arising from the in-depth interviews and Rich Pictures.

Part 1- Preparing for Placement		
Themes arising from students	Themes arising from University staff supporting student placement support and employers	Common themes for analysis
Preparing for placement Having a vision and clear planning University - in gaining qualifications, confidence Placement Scholarships Family – connections, support, background Planning – research, CV, dress, interview, skills. Concerns – financial, location, rejection. Methods used for promotion -online and offline	**Challenges faced by students in seeking placement** Difficult journey to employability Issues of confidence Evidence of technical and soft skills Concerns – financial, moving location. Gaining work experience	**The Placement Journey** Issues of confidence Career planning Rejections and struggles Influence of family Fitting in and standing out Methods used for promotion
What are employers looking for? Personality Skills Rules of the game Brand values Professionalism	**What are employers looking for?** Smiling, can-do personality, and soft skills Work experience, membership of teams and committees, showing leadership Understanding of company values Strategic approach to securing talent	**What are employers looking for?** Strategic approach to securing talent Skills – technical and professional Personality – Attitudes and values Rules of the game
Using Rich Picture Using Rich Picture method as part of interview In consideration of Brand-Me Rich Picture creation allowed for reflection	**Using Rich Picture** Using Rich Picture method as part of interview Rich Picture creation allowed for reflection	**Using Rich Picture** The use of Rich Picture method as a reflective tool
Part 2- Strategic Personal Branding - Brand-Me		
Themes arising from students		Common themes for analysis
How is Brand-Me portrayed Timekeeping Personality, colourful, attitude Appearance Professionalism Networking, Team player Fitting in, Standing out Hardworking, Value for money Family and farming background Clubs, societies, hobbies and interests LBU as co-brand Brand-Me by being 'Be You' Brand values Using logos, straplines, metaphors		**Strategic Personal Branding – how is Brand-Me considered and portrayed** Demonstrating marketing and branding principles Hardworking, Determined Personal and Professional Brand positioning – offline and online Gender

9.7.2 Appendix G2 Key words students used to describe their attributes.

Table 14 Key words used by students to describe their brand attributes in their Rich Picture drawings of Brand-Me
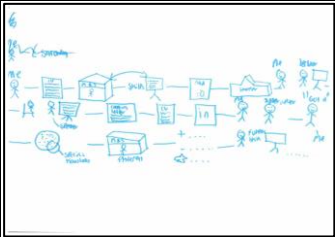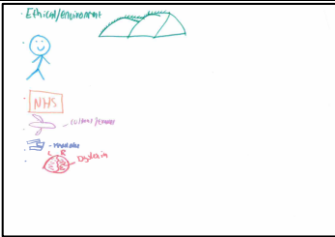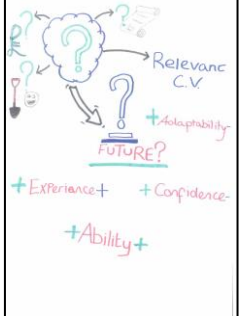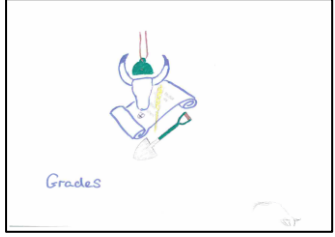
Description provided in text	Used by Student
Hard working	S2, S3, S5, S7, S8, S9, S21, S25, S27
Determined	S5, S7, S9, S20
Good communication	S2, S3, S20
Motivation, Driven	S7, S8, S25
Team player, people person	S5, S20
Reliable	S2, S7
Organised	S5, S7
Farming background	S3, S20
Confidence	S4, S9
Want to succeed	S5, S7
Strong attention to detail	S2
Happy and friendly, value for money	S3
Adaptability, Think on my feet	S4
Time conscious, Perfectionist	S5
Trustworthy	S8
Competitive, People pleaser	S20
Caring, Skilful, Knowledgeable, Professional but fun	S21
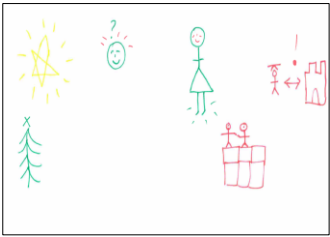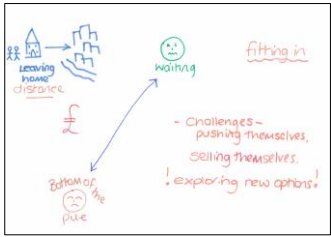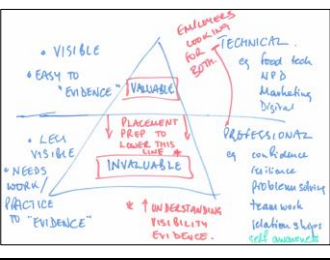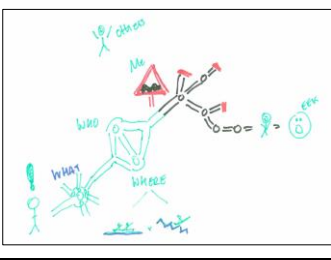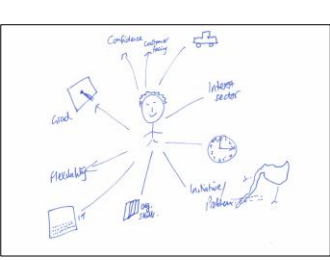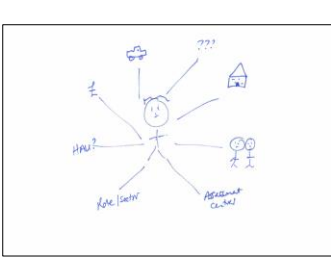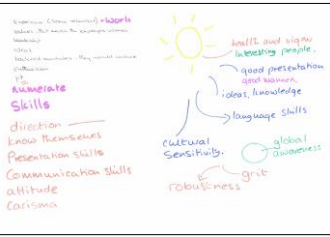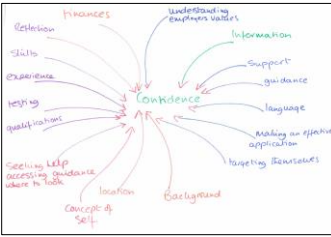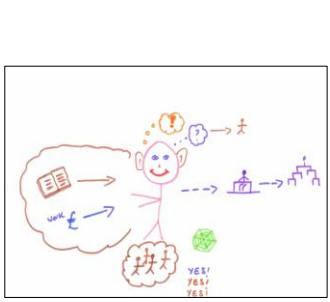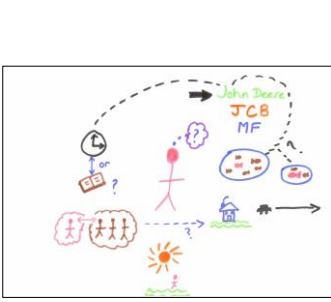
Table 15 Participant vignettes and Rich Pictures

	Student ID	Background	Preparing for placement/career	Brand-Me
1	S1 Year 2 BSc Agrifood Pre Placement Female	Student putting image of self into the Rich Picture and all the steps taken in methodically preparing for placement. Farming background and intending to return home to farm. Brand- Me was a collection of images to show values and personal qualities.		
2	S2 Year 2 Pre Placement Female	Rich Pictures with mostly text, but following a series of integrated connecting lines to show preparations made. Brand-Me was in two halves, showing augmented product features and positive can-do approach to work saying *'I'll have a go at anything"*		
3	S3 Year 4 BSc Agri-food Post Placement Female	Student spoke about taking many steps in preparing for placement, and taking care in appearance for interviews and in singing as a way to manage stress. Family connected to agri-food sector. Brand-Me was showing colourful personality.		
4	S4 Year 4 BSc BMM Post Placement Male	Student faced many struggles in securing a placement as shown in RP. This was perceived to be because of his background and being different. The placement experience gave him confidence to embrace his identify.		
5	S5 BSc Agrifood Year 2 Pre Placement Female	Really wanted a specific job with one company but nerves got the better of person in the interview and subsequently offered a job elsewhere. Family farming business. Likes to promote British Foods and has twitter account to promote this – but not promote herself. Both RP's were purple and green written visuals. Red was chosen to reflect the view saying "*need to get into the real world"*.		
6	S6 FdSc Business Management and Marketing Year 1 Pre Placement Female	Had five interviews before accepting position at SME where she felt she could fit in. Family have non-farming entrepreneurial business at home but she did not want to utilise the networking of this *"it wasn't a job I earned"*. In Brand-Me, talks a lot about values, but not able to explain. Fluent in French and Spanish, but did not occur to her to include.		

	Student ID	Background	Preparing for placement/career	Brand-Me
7	S7 BSc Agri-food Year 2 Pre Placement Female	Gained a place to study at an overseas university in America for part of placement and Food retailing company for the other 6 months of placement. Worried about securing a role. Found timeline easy to show on RP. Family members working in cereals and fresh produce. Brand-Me showed her tendency to do lists and used metaphor of herself as Jaguar Landrover being *"a 4x4 being reliable, hardworking and will not break down".* No personal brand preparation, other than to *"be yourself".*		
8	S20 BSc4 Agri-food Post Placement Female	Placement year spent on a small family run rural business. Chose LBU for course and prospects. Several interviews knocked her confidence. From a farming background. Brand-Me- showing range of qualities and female gender shown in *'girliness'* and *"get down and dirty in the country"*. A worrier (red) and wants to please people.		
9	S8 BSc Agrifood Year 2 Pre-Placement Male	Student faced multiple rejection and so skilled up to balance this out. Very future orientated. Little of own personality shown. From a family owned large fresh produce business. Brand-Me, conscious to build networks and active on social media in professional circles in order to do this.		
10	S9 BSc Agrifood Year 2 Pre-Placement Female	Background of YFC and farming influenced 'passion' for the sector. Has professional and personal social media accounts. Brand-Me showing self in the centre with several attributes and logo swirl to depict passion about people, the agri-food sector, and marketing and retail all swirled into one. Unique Selling Point –USP is in being Welsh and bilingual.		
11	S21 BSc Agri year 4 Post Placement Female	Scholarship placement. Prepared to travel widely for placement year. Family helped with advice and finding work experience roles. Believed her personality helped secure roles rather than skills set. Brand-Me shown as a disparate set of images and text.		
12	S22 BSc Food Nut year 4 Post Placement Female	Scholarship placement. YFC background. Family background in farm and also food restaurant business. Prepared for placement by looking at skill set, but concerned about moving location. Brand-Me, logo drawn showing importance of teamwork, a cross-cultural mind-set. Personal values intertwined and striving for excellence.		
13	S25 FdSc Agrifood year 3 Post Placement Female	Scholarship Placement. Originally started on VN course as wanted vet medicine but swapped to agri-food. Doing the RP helped her realise and reflect she had come full circle with career. Family horticultural business. Brand-Me showed bubbly, personality and awareness of *"Who I am"*. Spoke about being a female in the work-place and that this was overcome through hard work and personality, *"ditzy blonde-haired person in pink overalls".*		

	Student ID	Background	Preparing for placement/career	Brand-Me
14	S26 BSc Agrifood Year 4 Post Placement Male	Scholarship placement with retailer. Worked at same organisation previously. RP is one colour and very process focussed. Knowledge finding was of importance. Family farming background. Brand-Me showed disparate images, spoke about ethical personal values in workplace also exuded in personal life. Used NHS as a metaphor for self in having a 'caring' nature.		
15	S27 BSc AFBM Year 4 Post Placement Male	Student wanted to show that he was very hard working, with many skills and concerned for the future. Motivated by money. Farming background. Brand-Me, he wished to show interest in livestock and arable supported by academic qualifications. Had previously a company with a logo (bottom right) showing a bull with head down throwing up dust – to illustrate determined nature.		

	University staff ID	Background	What are employers looking for?	What are the main challenges faced by students when seeking placement/employment?
1	P1 Female	Placement Careers Office. 19 years in office. Employers looking for a "shining star" and performing at the "top of the tree". Bringing new ideas and talent, and building relationships as a two way process. Main challenges for students are in leaving home, waiting for interview information, fitting in, and in pushing themselves to explore new options and *"selling themselves".*		
2	P2 Male	Academic/Placement management. 1 year in office. Employers looking for both visible, valuable and technical skills, but also the less visible, invaluable professional skills. Shown like an iceberg. Main challenges for students are show like a road journey with decisions, personal challenges, bumps in the road, leading to end point, which is also a shock as reality of world of work looms, student saying "EEK".		
3	P3 Male	Academic/Placement management. 6 years in office. Employers looking for two aspects: strategic in "future proofing" their business for sustainability. Day to day -skills such as hardworking, enthusiasm, ideas and bringing new knowledge and skills to the company. Main challenges are the unknown, location, parents, peer pressure and money worries.		
4	P4 Female	Academic/Course management. 18 years in office. RP shows nothing of greater or lesser importance. Employer at the centre and looking for range of soft skills, interest and appearance *"you are the face of the brand";* it is a year-long interview to get "new blood in" the business. The student at the centre of challenged by wishing to stay close to home, and friends; students naivety in interview, attaining driving licence.		
5	P5 Female	Placement Careers Office 27 years in office. Employers are looking for work experience, fit, personal awareness, *"vitality", global and cultural awareness, "robustness.. and grit".* Main challenges are all centred around confidence, seeking help and guidance, "*their concept of self in this whole process, in building confidence where do they fit".*		
6	P6 Female	Academic/Course management. 10 years in office. Employers looking for smiling, eyes and ears open personality, capable of thinking new ideas, able to seek help, with a range of inputs for the employer and willing to be part of a team, with a yes, can-do attitude, with the potential to lead the organisation in the future. Main challenges are student wondering what to do in seeking placement, time pressures and conflict with study, time waiting, time deciding, delaying making decisions, leaving a comfortable home, being lonely… but in giving them confidence. After placement *"I think they are ready"* for world of work.		

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	University staff ID	Background	What are employers looking for?	What are the main challenges faced by students when seeking placement/employment?
7	P7 Female	Placement Careers Office. 8 years in office. Employers are looking for the *"essential tick list".* Need for passion, problem solving, cultural awareness, ability to communicate and fit-in: *"so that's my little jigsaw".* Main challenges are shown as a journey "*a bit like a board game"* in building confidence and getting over each brick wall in an ever evolving world of work, requiring persistence.		

	Employer ID	Background	What are employers looking for?
1	E1 Male	Large company – Scholarship provider. Offering placements for over 10 years. Employers are looking for students with drive, passion, big listening ears, big eyes open to opportunities, big smiling face, which has a knock-on effect in business. The confidence to ask for questions. One big hand to *"get stuck in";* feet on the ground; not clock watching, (see small hand with watch on it). Seeking opportunities, and company will give "add-ons".	
2	E2 Female	Large agri-food company. Offering placements for over 20 years. Employers are looking for first impressions, smiling, confident, evidence of being hard working (from previous positions held within societies, university, Dof E, YFC, any work), dependable, honest, ability to socialise and 'fit-in'. *"Ability to relate to people rather than technical knowledge".*	