

The Apprentice's Tale: entry to multiple communities of practice for working class boys

PhD

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'I, Robert George Galvani confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.'

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Galvani', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small horizontal line at the end.

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Abstract

This small scale, qualitative study examines the apprenticeship experiences of a group of working class young men from the London area during the years 1959-1989, to determine the impact of those experiences on the formation of their adult, male, self-identities. The research contributes to current debates and literature on apprenticeships, youth transitions, masculinity, social class and identity. It records as social history the recollections of ten ex-apprentices from the telecommunications and construction industries (five from each sector) and includes evidence of how they chose their apprenticeships. Data consists of participants' memories collected as oral histories during semi-structured interviews, and from written answers to pre-interview questionnaires.

The research was designed to ascertain the impact of their apprenticeships on the construction of the participants' adult identities as defined by the concept of 'standard adulthood' (Parsons, 1971). This I describe as a series of interconnecting communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), into which the participants entered as legitimate peripheral participants. Drawing on situated learning theory (Lave and Wenger, 1991), I contend that their post-war apprenticeships were part of a social and cultural institution that continued to serve as an integrative vehicle for the attainment of the 'classic markers of adulthood' (Blatterer, 2007a; 2007b) as a 'life apprenticeship', and through participation in diverse adult social worlds enabled them to become full participants in society (Goodwin, 2007).

This thesis also examines the influence of social factors such as families, education and class on the participants' school to work transitions. The research reveals a noticeable difference in the ways that these factors determined the two participant groups' choice of apprenticeship. Drawing on social reproduction theory and the concept of cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990), I reveal the extent that family and social class played in deciding the participants' future life courses.

For my grandchildren

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Finally, my thanks go to my wife Barbara, my sons Robert and Thomas, and all of my grandchildren who have had to suffer my bad moods, anxieties, frustrations and general irritability over the past six years. None of this could be achieved without your love and support. I can now finally start to decorate our new house.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Perhaps as I tell you my story, which, with variations, is the story of hundreds of thousands of my East End neighbours and of millions of my brothers all over the country, you will begin to understand (*My Life's Battles*, Will Thorne, 1927: 13).

1.1 Introduction

This quotation from the introduction to the eminent trade unionist and political activist Will Thorne's autobiography, *My Life's Battles*, succinctly sums up the dual purposes of this research. It is to record as social history, the stories of the early working life experiences in mid to late 20th century London of a small group of ordinary working men and, in so doing, create a better understanding of apprenticeship's purpose in society of the time.

Apprenticeships have for many years, featured as an important model of skills training in the United Kingdom (*inter alia*, Aldrich, 1999; Fuller and Unwin, 2009). Currently, they form a cornerstone of government training policy, with significant amounts of public money promised for investment to improve their quality and quantity. They are considered by the government to be an essential method of developing skills and for boosting productivity, to meet the country's future economic needs. To this end, the present Conservative government ambitiously promised after the last election to create three million apprenticeship places by 2020 (HM Government, 2015). Apprenticeships therefore, remain a germane topic for research.

Up to now, research on apprenticeship of the mid to late 20th century has generally tended to focus on its value as a training method for the acquisition of occupational skills (*inter alia*, Fuller and Unwin, 2003b; Brockmann, Clarke, and Winch, 2010). In an attempt to expand our knowledge of apprenticeship's

purpose, this thesis considers to what extent if any, serving an apprenticeship during the period 1959-1989, had on the participants' transitions to adulthood.

In this thesis, research evidence will be presented and analysed, to reveal whether or not the dual status of the apprentice as a worker and a learner, contributed through socialisation at work to the creation of adult identities by the research participants. Therefore, it will provide useful indications to inform current debates surrounding apprenticeship and youth transitions, and in so doing, shape future practice. In addition, by recording the lived experience of an apprenticeship from the viewpoint of the apprentice, this research gives 'voice' to a group of people who are often unheard in government policy and in research.

It is in part, my story also as I was one of those young apprentices, and so my memories are recorded as part of this study. Consequently, this research project may be considered to be the work of an insider researcher (Robson, 2002). This term, as used throughout this thesis, relates to the 'insider knowledge' (Rabe, 2003: 151) that I possess as an ex-apprentice, and also through the experience of working in two of the trades in which the apprenticeships in this study were situated. The fact that the research participants are all well known to me as friends and work colleagues, adds complications to this stance. Research such as this is referred to by Taylor (2011: 5) as 'intimate insider research' and the research participants are described as 'friend-informants' (*ibid.*, 2011: 8). These concepts will be more fully explored later in the methodology chapter (Chapter Five) of this thesis.

My personal journey started in the summer of 1971, when five days after my 17th birthday, I became an apprentice telecommunications technician with a

communications company called Telephone Rentals Limited¹, based in their Central London branch. Most of the research sample in this study left school and started work or an apprenticeship aged 15 or 16, depending on the school leaving age of the time. But I started my apprenticeship later, as I had decided to stay on at school for another year to re-take the GCE 'O' level maths examination² that I had previously failed, and which was a prerequisite for my apprenticeship.

In January 1980, five years after finishing or 'coming out' of my apprenticeship, I joined the then state-owned telecommunications company, Post Office Telecommunications (PO) as a Technician 2B (T2B)³. The PO later became British Telecom and after privatisation in 1984, is now BT. In the course of my career, I progressed through the job grades or ranks as they were called in the PO at the time, until I was made redundant in the mid-1990s from my post as a Technical Officer (TO), at that time the most senior rank on the technician pay scale. After a rapid re-appraisal of my career, I enrolled on a course at my local Further Education⁴ (FE) college to retrain, and after gaining my NVQ Level 3⁵, set up in business as a self-employed Painter and Decorator.

At some time during the 15 years that I ran my Painting and Decorating business, I began teaching the trade one day per week at the same FE college where I had myself trained. This was as a consequence of my continuing friendship with one of my college lecturers, who as a fellow supporter of

¹ Telephone Rentals Ltd was taken over by Cable and Wireless in 1988 and no longer exists as a company.

² General Certificate of Education-see footnote 10 for full explanation.

³ T2B was the lowest adult technician rank in Post Office Telecommunications.

⁴ The Further Education Sector in Britain provides education at below degree level, for people over school age. These include vocational and academic subjects at various levels. It also provides some specialist courses for pupils still at school.

⁵ National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) are recognised by employers and are based on national occupational standards.

Tottenham Hotspur Football Club, I still meet at football matches, and is incidentally also a participant in this research. The outcome of this was that I was gradually drawn into teaching and later underwent Initial Teacher Training to become a lecturer in Further Education, teaching Painting and Decorating for many years.

The accounts of my participants' apprenticeships are set in London during the mid to late 20th century and begin at a time before government interventions into youth training, such as the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP), Youth Training Scheme (YTS) or Modern Apprenticeships (MA) were put in place, and conclude in 1989, a few years after the introduction of YTS. Therefore, the experiences of this research sample, span a period of time in which some important changes to the structure and organisation of apprenticeships in England, took place.

As will be further detailed in Chapter Five, the evidence for this research has been mainly gathered by using an oral history method. Respondents recalled general and specific memories of their apprenticeships in semi-structured interviews, which were recorded, collated and analysed, principally through the conceptual theoretical lens of situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991). These recollections were used to document their apprenticeship experiences from a life-history perspective, and to investigate the socialisation aspect of their apprenticeships.

The interview recordings collected for this research will, with the participants' consent, be made available to add to the body of knowledge accessible by researchers. This is because, as the remaining stock of ex-apprentices from this period grows older and diminishes, the need to record their shared experience

as social history inversely increases. Research into apprentices' and ex-apprentices' views of vocational education is also important because it is an area considered still to be greatly under-researched (Fuller and Unwin, 2001; Vickerstaff, 2007). The next section presents the underlying rationale for this research.

1.2 Rationale for thesis

The principal aim for this research is to consider the extent to which serving an apprenticeship was a factor in both the construction of adult self-identities, and integration into adult society in mid to late 20th century London. My main reason for choosing this topic is one of personal interest: how my apprenticeship prepared me for life as an adult. The research was prompted partly by my own apprenticeship experience, and partly by an occurrence which I refer to as 'The Party Question'. This latter phenomenon happens whenever people are introduced for very first time at a social gathering and consists of one or the other very quickly asking a question that is a variation of 'What work do you do?'. Any subsequent conversation proceeds along lines that are determined by the personal, class and work identities established by the answers given.

This type of social positioning has always intrigued me, and my personal experience, along with reading the existing research literature, has underpinned the development of my research questions. These seek to discover how the relationship between work and identity formation has been understood in the past; how this relationship helped to create the adult identities of the research participants; whether an apprenticeship influenced those identities, and how this knowledge may be used to inform future practice.

Such social behaviour as described above suggests that our self-identities are

fashioned, at least to some degree, by our occupational identities. As an illustration of work's perceived primacy over other social activities, Noon and Blyton (2007:50) claim that children are still frequently asked by adults 'What do you want to be when you grow up?'. Indeed, work's function in how we create a social identity has led Casey (1995:28) to maintain that paid work '...has been a primary factor in socialization, in social cohesion and personal identity formation in modern societies'. Therefore, because of this general assumption that work has a central position in life, others judge us first by our employment ambitions as children, and in later life by our employment status (Noon and Blyton, 2007).

Since status, occupation and identity appear to be so closely entwined, it has been argued that '...we are what we do' (Ball, Maguire and Macrae, 2000:7). This claim suggests that work, as a central domain of life, has a reciprocal relationship with identity, and effects other aspects of individuals' lives (Casey, 1995). Therefore, how we learn to 'do what we do' is relevant to our sense of self and identity formation, and so the manner in which we learn as apprentices to become adult social beings may also be considered to be of importance. This is primarily because in most Western societies until recently, apprenticeship traditionally coincided with a crucial period in the human life-course in which adolescents construct adult identities (Ball, *et al.*, 2000). For this reason, the role played by past apprenticeships in determining who we are and our place as social beings, merits further research.

Drawing principally on work by Lave and Wenger (1991), and that of Goodwin (2007), this thesis uses the concepts of situated learning, communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and constellations of practice (Wenger, 1998) to consider the extent to which apprenticeship served as an significant rite of passage from youth to adulthood for the research participants. Lave and

Wenger's (1991) situated learning theory proposes that learning is a social action that takes place as a normal function of the context, culture, and actions of a participant within a group of people engaged in a common undertaking. They describe this as a community of practice. This was further developed by Wenger, (1998: 126) to include notions of clusters of communities of practice, which he terms constellations of practice, that are '...too broad, too diverse or too diffuse' to be considered as a single community of practice.

Goodwin (2007) has applied situated learning theory to other aspects of adult behaviour to suggest that these are also learned through participating in a range of adult communities of practice. Therefore this thesis investigates the extent that an apprenticeship contributed to the adult identity formation of my participants, which is considered here as a nexus of multi-membership in an adult constellation of practice (Wenger, 1998).

As this research considers the social aspects of apprenticeship, symbolic interaction theory (Blumer, 1969), social capital theory (*inter alia*, Lin, 1982; Coleman, 1986; 1988; Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990; Putnam, 1995; 2000) and social identity theory (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) are also used to explain the development of identity as a social construct. As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three, symbolic interactionism proposes that reality is a social construct determined between actors, and this includes the concept of the self. Social identity theory is drawn on to reveal how self-stereotyping contributes to the creation of self-identity within a group. Similarly, social capital theory is used to illustrate how access to resources embedded in social networks reproduced dominant values in the dynamic social context provided by an apprenticeship.

Therefore in this study, the research participants' interactions with the world as apprentices (and their dual status within it, as both workers *and* learners) are explored to understand their creation of personal adult identities through the dynamic and collaborative effects of social capital in a constellation of practice (Wenger, 1998). The extent to which both 'weak' and 'strong' ties (Granovetter, 1973), and their associated 'bonding' and 'bridging' social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998), contributed to this process will be appraised. Consequently, this thesis examines whether an apprenticeship enriched and assisted the construction of the participants' self-identities.

Furthermore, I explore the proposition that apprenticeship of the period under study retained elements of its historic function as a social and cultural institution, and not only provided the means to learn a trade, but because of its timing in the life course, served as an important rite of passage. This dimension of apprenticeship is discussed in more detail in Chapter Two to establish its social and cultural importance. In the next section, the research focus, and the primary and secondary research questions are outlined.

1.3 Research focus and questions

This section presents the principal research question and its associated sub-questions. Through these, this thesis seeks to investigate if serving an apprenticeship in London from 1959 to 1989 enriched and advanced the school-to-work, and subsequent youth-to-adult transitions of a group of working class youths. It will examine whether in so doing, access to diverse communities of practice became available which subsequently contributed to the creation of the participants' adult identities. It therefore seeks to explore apprenticeship's wider relationship with society, as an economic, social and cultural institution, by

moving beyond modern narrow conceptions of skills acquisition, and examining the effects that entry to multiple communities of practice may have had on the maturation process and identity formation of the research participants as apprentices.

Consequently, this research will contribute to current debates and literature on apprenticeships, youth transitions, masculinity, social class and identity by providing a holistic account of the interrelated nature of identity formation as experienced in the recent past, and will reflect upon the emerging messages for contemporary apprenticeship research, policy and practice.

Because of these aims, my research question is as follows:

In what ways did serving an apprenticeship influence apprentices' transition to adulthood in London during the period 1959-1989?

The over-arching research question raises two key sub-questions:

1. What was the lived experience of these London apprentices during their apprenticeships?
2. To what extent did social class, gender and family background influence the participants' choice of apprenticeship?

How these questions are resolved is considered in the following section, which also gives a broad outline of the thesis' structure.

1.4 Overview of the thesis structure

This thesis consists of nine chapters including this chapter. I now provide a synopsis for each chapter.

Chapter Two provides a historical context to this study and seeks to emphasise the importance of the socialisation aspect of apprenticeship. Its sections discuss diverse historical aspects and developments that have had a bearing on the

participants' apprenticeships. It outlines apprenticeships' evolving nature and emphasises its important historic function as an integrative vehicle, which not only provided occupational training, but also served to socialise youths into adulthood. A brief examination is provided of the development of compulsory education in England and Wales in the period from 1944 to the late 20th century to provide a perspective on the participants' education and qualifications prior to securing an apprenticeship. This chapter also provides context to the participants' apprenticeships, by describing the period of rapid social and economic change taking place both globally and nationally, and the subsequent drastic effects on the youth labour market

Chapter Three presents and reviews the primary literature and theoretical concepts relevant to this research. Two organising concepts (Understanding the self in the social world and Apprenticeship as a social theory of learning) introduce and discuss a range of topics and theoretical perspectives that are used to examine and interpret the collected evidence in this thesis. I then draw together the theories that have influenced my understanding of identity formation to develop a conceptual language which I use later to explain notions of the self and the participants' evidence.

The fourth chapter positions the meaning and continuing significance of paid work in Western societies; its pivotal role in apprenticeships, and its centrality to the discourse of identity formation. It seeks to define work's purpose through an exploration of its practice, and the different social functions it has served over time. From a classical sociological perspective, work is briefly analysed by drawing on Marx, Durkheim and Weber to describe the division of labour, and how this influenced the creation of identity. The relationship between work and identity is further explored through reviewing the way it has historically shaped

society. Social identity theory (SIT) is used to further illustrate how being a member of an occupational group contributed to forming a localised version of hegemonic masculine identity (Connell R. W., 1987; 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

Chapter Five is the methodology chapter and details the constructivist ontological and interpretivist epistemological position taken in this thesis. It provides a discussion and appraisal of the research design, and includes the qualitative methods chosen for data collection. The consequences of these methods for identifying and selecting the research sample are also considered. Ethical matters presented by this study are discussed in the final section.

Chapters Six and Seven, present the research findings. Chapter Six describes the participants' transitions to work and reveals how the participants' secured their apprenticeships. The evidence illustrates the effects of social capital (*inter alia*, Lin, 1982; Coleman, 1986; 1988; Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990; Putnam, 1995; 2000) and shows how the participants used it to select their apprenticeships.

Chapter Seven centres on the transition to adulthood, and analyses the research evidence through the lens of Lave and Wenger's situated learning theory (1991). The participants' accounts of apprenticeship reveal their day-to-day activities and explore how the participants progressed from 'newcomer' towards 'old-timer' status in their occupational communities of practice. It illustrates how material symbols, such as apprenticeship indentures and trade awards aided the creation of an occupational identity. The 'reality shock' (Goodwin, 2007: 98) the participants experienced when they entered an adult social world is revealed, as is the workplace humour and rituals they

experienced in their apprenticeships, which inducted them into the work community. Lastly it addresses the main focus of this study; the socialisation of the apprentice into adulthood. The findings disclose the new responsibilities and freedoms experienced by the participants, and how specific adult social behaviours were learned through socialisation in their apprenticeships.

The various themes explored during this study are drawn together in Chapter Eight and related to the literature to discuss my findings. Examples from the participants' evidence are used to illustrate how their apprenticeships contributed to the construction of adult identities. The focus returns to the historical function of apprenticeship as a way to socialise adolescents into society, and assesses its relevance to the evidence presented in this thesis.

The dual status of the apprentice, and apprenticeship's relevance to participation in adult communities of practice is described. This chapter proposes a new conceptual framework, in which the apprenticeship model plays an important role.

Chapter Nine, presents the conclusions to my research. I consider the contribution made by this study to the knowledge about and understandings of apprenticeships; discuss future implications for the apprenticeship programme; evaluate the research and reveal areas requiring future exploration.

Chapter 2 Historical Context

What's past is prologue (William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, 1610-11).

2.1 Introduction

This chapter historically locates this research. The research participants served their apprenticeships in Britain during the mid to late 20th century; a period of major social and economic change. The discussion provides a prologue to the rest of this thesis as the quotation above suggests, and a historical context to the research evidence by presenting a short history of apprenticeship and the English educational system, and an overview of the economic conditions existing during the research period.

This chapter is organised into three sections. It presents a brief account of the apprenticeship model's history in Britain from its medieval origins up to the period in which this research is situated. This account stresses apprenticeship's significance as a cultural institution, which provided a mechanism through which, young people not only reached occupational competence, but also attained adult status and social standing. An outline of the education system of this period in England and Wales is included to allow the participants' evidence to be evaluated in the context of their education. Scotland is not included in this analysis, because it has had an independent education system since 1872. A brief summary of the economic conditions during the time of the participants' apprenticeships is included to provide context to the years in which this research is located. In particular, it considers the effects that these conditions had on employment, skills, apprenticeships, the youth labour market and the participants' entry to work.

2.2 Historically situating the research

Serving an apprenticeship features predominantly in historical English working class autobiographies (Humphries, 2010), and its history needs to be understood to contextualise the oral histories collected for this research as 'real-life' stories which form a part of the country's social history. The principal theme in this section is that the apprenticeship model throughout its history had extra-economic dimensions, which encompassed a range of legal, moral, social and administrative issues (*inter alia*, Hanawalt, 1993; Lane, 1996; Snell, 1996; Aldrich, 1999; Clarke, 1999) in addition to being an approach to vocational training.

2.2.1 *The evolution of English apprenticeships*

The origins of apprenticeship reach back to the earliest times with records in existence from ancient Babylon, Egypt, Greece and Rome of artisans teaching youths their craft in a regulated system (see for example, Johns, 1915). In England, its beginnings as an important method of youth training can be traced to the medieval period, which is a distinction shared with such august institutions as the university system and parliament itself (Aldrich, 1999).

A medieval apprenticeship provided a young person with a privileged position because of its potential to provide upward social mobility, wealth, and security (Hanawalt, 1993). In addition to learning a trade, Hanawalt (1993: 129) describes it as a method of training in which youths learned the '...characteristics of the role they would eventually play as adults'. She further states that due to the length of term of an apprenticeship, it could occupy as much as a quarter of a man's (*sic*) life. The important social function of apprenticeship as a method of youth training may also be deduced from

Mortimer's (2009) estimate that 35-40 percent of the English population were aged under 15 years of age as a consequence of the high mortality rates of this period.

Traditionally, an apprenticeship had distinctive features, which identified it as a method of general, social and occupational education. Its unique pedagogy of learning by doing, hierarchical structure and extended period of training, continued until relatively modern times (Fuller and Unwin, 2009). Apprenticeship provided a person with a path towards employment as a journeyman⁶ in the employ of a master, which as will be shown, could eventually lead to becoming a master in their own right, and hence a method of gaining citizenship of a chartered city or town. Its sustained appeal throughout English history relied for its resilience on its broad occupational, educational, social, religious, legal and familial functions (Aldrich, 1999).

Apprenticeships were valued as being not only of crucial importance to a youth's prospects, but also to their family's futures. Humphries' (2010) analysis of apprenticeship through autobiographical evidence provides many instances of collective family decisions reached over the likely returns of various apprenticeships. Through mutual agreements, apprenticeships were also generally regarded as an effective method of compensating for failures of human capital investment in training, offsetting opportunistic behaviours by both parties such as masters reducing costs by using apprentices as cheap labour, and apprentices taking their new skills to another employer (Humphries, 2010).

⁶ Each guild recognised three ranks of workers: apprentices; journeyman and master. A journeyman was a skilled worker that had served a recognised apprenticeship in a trade or craft, but had not completed a sufficient amount of time working at the trade, and was therefore unable to work as a self-employed master. Instead, they worked as an employee of a master and were paid daily. Hence the term 'journeyman' from the French word *journée*-a day.

Initially apprenticeships were conducted under the authority of the craft guilds, which were organisations formed by artisans during the medieval period to promote and protect their common interests (Lane, 1996). The guilds purchased the right to exclusively administer the operation of their particular crafts from city corporations or the monarch, which were then performed by their registered members. They established regulations, via internal rules known as guild ordinances, for persons engaging in their particular trade within their jurisdiction (Rosser, 1997). Consequently, they nominally controlled entry to, and set conditions of service for apprenticeships in their respective trades.

The areas covered by their authority were specific, usually urban, and easily regulated, with London's guilds being the leading example of this practice in England. Large fines could at least, theoretically, be imposed on masters by the guilds for breaches of these ordinances, such as setting apprentices to work before their time was served, or for employing 'forrens' - the name given to those craftsmen (*sic*) who were neither freemen of the city, nor registered with the guild (Clarke, 1999).

Membership of a guild during the medieval period, could eventually lead to an individual being granted the 'freedom' of a municipality, in which they were freed from obligatory bonded labour to their manorial lord as a duty of the feudal system (Jones & Ereira, 2005). Freedom also entailed relief from many local duties and tolls paid by non-freemen such as pavage (collected for the use and upkeep of the roads) and pontage (for the use and upkeep of bridges), which amounted to a considerable financial saving (Mortimer, 2009).

Although the guilds ostensibly administered apprenticeships, they were not legally enforced, originally relying on a complex relationship between family,

corporate law, custom, individual inclination, and the guilds for their operation (Wallis, 2008). It was not until 1349, under the Statute of Labourers that some apprenticeships (originally those in agriculture and building), were first legally recognised and became tacitly regulated by the state, with fixed national rates of pay and length of service (Clarke, 1999).

Analysis of the guilds' regulation of trade and apprenticeships has suggested that their ordinances enshrined ideals rather than actual descriptions of historical practice, as a considerable amount of work naturally took place in geographical areas outside of their limited control (Swanson, 1988).

Consequently, it is argued that the guilds' powers over their trades were often illusionary (Epstein, 1998), and that a principal purpose of the guilds during the medieval period was to function as part of the broader political system. In this way, they acted as administrative agents of the civic authorities by maintaining law, enforcing order (Snell, 1996), and collecting taxes from their members (Swanson, 1988).

Exercising social control was an important aspect of the guild's authority. They regulated the lives of their members through enforcing a compliance with the social norms of the time (Rosser, 1997). Through a combination of sumptuary laws and guild ordinances, civic authorities imposed a hierarchy of consumption which sought to preserve society's moral fabric. Sumptuary laws were intended to regulate personal extravagance and to reinforce social hierarchies by such means as stipulating food and clothing appropriate for each person's social rank. In conjunction with guild ordinances, they also sought to preserve public morals by prohibiting certain aspects of apprentices' behaviour, such as gambling, dancing and early marriage (Smith, 1973).

Throughout most of history, arranging an apprenticeship for a youth was often a matter of mutual acquaintance, utilising social and familial networks, and relying on personal recommendations. In later years, both masters and parents of prospective apprentices would respectively advertise for an apprentice or a work placement. Hanawalt (1993) claims that in medieval London, most apprentices came from rural areas outside the city, and therefore the masters' networks of contacts with their home villages made selecting an apprentice less risky. This was because these contacts stood as sponsors or guarantors of the apprentice; an important consideration as the apprentice was a '...potential guild brother, son-in-law, and even successor to the master's wife and business should the master die' (*ibid.*, 1993:131).

Once terms were agreed, the youth's parents or guardian paid the master a premium to cover the costs of the apprentice's training and lodging. As these examples from a later period show, these were often very large indeed for prestigious professions: in 1623 in the city of Bristol, a merchant's apprenticeship premium amounted to £200, an enormous sum for those times. Even trades of lesser prestige, such as smiths and coopers, attracted substantial premiums of £10 during the same decade (Bristol (England) Corporation, 1936). Although direct historical comparisons with modern monetary values are misleading due to disparities in long-term inflation as a consequence of the interval of time (Mortimer, 2009), these large premiums effectively ensured that apprentices came from landed or financially comfortable artisan backgrounds-the labour aristocracy, and so engendered a sense of '...inter-generational social stability' (Humphries, 2010: 263).

A contract of articles known as an indenture would be signed which stipulated the terms and conditions of the apprentice's service (although these sometimes

took the form of a verbal contract when agreed between family, or close acquaintances). The apprentice, who was usually but not always male, dependent on the trade, was bound by his indentures to serve a master for a fixed period of time. This was between five and nine years, but was quite commonly seven. In return, the apprentice could expect to live in the master's household, receiving board, lodging, clothing, and gain a general education, along with instruction into the 'mysteries' of his craft (*inter alia*, Hanawalt, 1993: Aldrich, 1999; Lane, 1996).

The master would register the apprentice with their guild, and also with the civic authorities in their parish (the basic unit of civil administration of pre-modern England), as proof of the legal association between the apprentice and the locality (Wallis, 2008). Registration was important, as apprentices were originally classed as landless persons, and serving an apprenticeship was a key mechanism through which the freedom of towns and cities, and in later years the right of settlement, could be obtained by individuals. Freedom of a municipality meant that not only was a person exempt from the duties of feudal service and certain taxes described earlier, but it also gave them a status, with significant rights including the vote. But it incurred other obligations such as paying some local taxes in the form of rates, which provided for local services and officials. Consequently, through apprenticeship documentation, a sense of place, citizenship and adult status, were linked with craft membership.

The later rights of settlement were enshrined in laws, broadly in force from 1662 to 1948 (Snell, 1996), and were a vital instrument of civic administration. Their main function was to legally bind a person to a parish from which they could claim poor relief in times of hardship: a proto-welfare system. But settlement also brought other privileges, which like the freedoms mentioned earlier, entitled

them to precedence over 'foreigners' (Snell, 1996: 307) from other parishes in matters of employment, housing, obtaining raw materials and food. Therefore, through this close relationship with citizenship, apprenticeships functioned as a cultural institution within the community that enabled (at least in theory) a landless youth to achieve a respectable adult status, with a legal right of residency.

The regulatory frameworks of the guilds weakened during the late medieval period, and they were eventually no longer able to exert even nominal levels of control over their trades (Lane, 1996). The growing disregard for guild ordinances meant an increasing use of 'forrens' lessened apprenticeship's appeal to employers, and changing socio-economic conditions meant that craft distinctions became increasingly blurred (Swanson, 1988). Moreover, their civic administrative function diminished, as city councils eventually made anyone a freeman by the process of redemption, in which freedom of the city was purchased. As examples of this practice, Hanawalt (1993) states that in 14th century London most men became citizens through redemption, and Swanson (1998) estimates that in late 15th century York only about a quarter of freemen had been apprentices.

Two important pieces of legislation, the Statute of Artificers in 1562/3, and in 1601 The Poor Law Act, replaced local guild and civic ordinances, with state powers over the provision and regulation of apprenticeships (Lane, 1996). The first of these laws, the Statute of Artificers of 1562/3, saw apprenticeships coming under the direct control of the state for the first time. This significant piece of Elizabethan legislation protected the interests of both masters and journeymen by reducing commodity and labour market competition for the former through trade regulation, and by raising the status of the latter

(Eisenberg, 1991). It also created a national standardisation of terms and conditions, which replaced the diverse local systems that had previously existed, and went on to have an impact on all aspects of apprenticeship until the Statute's repeal, over 250 years later. This period of statutory apprenticeship is considered by many historians to be a 'golden age', and saw the introduction of a written, lawful, contractual form of indentures, which were enforced by local magistrates, known as Justices of the Peace (Lane, 1996).

The state had now created a legal institution for '...moral, familial, social and political control, as well as a means of market and labour-force supervision' (Snell, 1996: 306). These factors, when added to the established link between rights of settlement or citizenship and craft status, identifies apprenticeship as fulfilling a social purpose in creating a sense of place, identity and belonging that belies modern narrow instrumental and economic understandings of vocational training.

Apprenticeships now had nationally standardised lengths of service.

Apprentices had to serve at least seven years, or until they reached the age of 21, or even 24 for some trades, although recent autobiographical research (Humphries, 2010) suggests that, much like the earlier medieval craft guild ordinances, this stipulation was increasingly flouted. Humphries' (2010) research indicates that periods of service remained flexible despite this new legislation, and enabled youths that had delayed entry to an apprenticeship, to still finish when they were 21 years of age. This evidence suggests that irrespective of these variations in the length of service, the legislation was intended to allow apprenticeships to still function as a method of social control and regulation of the life-cycle, as an extension of Elizabethan sumptuary laws (Snell, 1996).

According to Clarke (1999: 29), another social dimension of the Statute was that it was expected to ‘...stem vagrancy and banish idleness’ by allowing parish officers to enter into apprenticeship those persons unable to support themselves. This function was later reinforced with the enactment of the Poor Law Act of 1601 in which a new type of apprenticeship was introduced: the parish apprenticeship. This Act transferred responsibility for ‘...illegitimate and orphaned children, and those of vagrants, paupers or criminals, from the parish and local justices to employers and residents’ (Aldrich, 1999: 16), thereby removing the cost of their upkeep and provision from the parish’s rates. This action may have relieved the local tax burden imposed on businesses and wealthy residents, but often placed vulnerable children in some of the most undesirable or dangerous occupations. This aspect of the Poor Law’s impact on parish apprentices would not be fully evident until after the Industrial Revolution in England began in the latter part of the 18th century.

The Industrial Revolution marked a phase of economic growth driven by new industries and methods of production. It introduced the political tradition of *laissez-faire* which ‘...justified the state’s reluctance to assume responsibility for industrial training, which was considered the responsibility of the employer’s themselves’ (Evans, B., 1992:1). The newly created factories and cotton mills created a huge demand for child labour and saw ‘...cartloads of children ...dispatched from various parts of England to the industrial areas’ (Aldrich, 1999:17) to work in them. These children were sent by parishes that were eager to be rid of them, as compared to the rising costs of providing relief, paying an apprenticeship premium was considered to be the cheaper option (Humphries, 2010). However, it is understood that some children were virtually sold by the parish to masters requiring cheap labour (Aldrich, 1999).

Conversely, despite the demand for child labour, historians generally accept that the number of formal apprenticeships declined during this period, although they are unable to agree as to the causes or timing (Humphries, 2010). De Munck and Soley (2007) suggest that population growth produced by the earlier Agricultural Revolution, triggered national changes in socio-economic conditions which, hastened by the social and geographic mobility of the 17th and 18th centuries, started a general decline in apprenticeship as embodied in the Statute. This argument proposes that the national system of apprenticeship exacerbated rural to urban migration, which expedited the impending Industrial Revolution and England's increasing urbanisation, and its ensuing population explosion (Aldrich, 1999).

Another explanation of apprenticeship's decline, suggests that the artisan production system with its hierarchy of master, journeyman and apprentice had started to become untenable, as qualified craftsmen (*sic*) frequently became unable to make the transition to master after completing their required period as a journeyman, often due to a lack of initial capital to fund a business (Clarke, 1999). A further explanation suggests that industrialisation produced a deskilling and reorganisation process of the semi-skilled trades that saw a reduction in demand for time-served, trained workers and triggered a rise in illegal apprenticeships (Humphries, 2010). However, it is likely that a combination of all these factors linked to changes in political ideology, contributed to apprenticeships' decline in popularity. This latter point is exemplified by the economist Adam Smith's view of apprenticeship as a part of the 'Policy of Europe', asserting that it '...represented the exclusive privileges of corporations, established to prevent any reduction in prices...restricted competition...offered no guarantee of quality' (Clarke, 1999:31).

The social and ideological changes in England, combined with the development of new occupations, industries and technological advances meant that the existing system of apprenticeships had become anachronistic. By the end of the 18th century even the legal structure underpinning the system had ended as it was no longer administered by magistrates (Clarke, 1999). Apprenticeships had been crucial in the past to the artisan system of production and also to that of citizenship, but were considered to be more suited to an outdated feudal system of governance, and so ‘...the Elizabethan statutes were progressively sidelined by liberal free-market ideology’ (Marchand, 2008:259). Consequently, apprenticeship began a new phase of evolution, adapting to the new prevailing economic conditions.

The Statute of Artificers was eventually repealed in 1814 amid protests from both masters and journeymen (Eisenberg, 1991), and its demise removed the notional legal requirement to serve an apprenticeship before practising a trade. It marked a significant event in the history of vocational education, primarily because of a failure to replace it in any officially recognised form (Fuller and Unwin, 2009). Apprenticeships continued to be served, but without a legal support system long considered by its opponents to be irrelevant and restrictive (Lane, 1996). Without the support of a statutory framework, apprenticeships increasingly became less formal arrangements between the master and the apprentice, his parents or representatives. The use of legal indentures died out by the late 19th century and instead, agreements often consisted of only a verbal contract (Gospel, 1995; Clarke, 1999).

In the ensuing residual vacuum, the trade unions with their growing strength due to the development of collective bargaining, began to take an active part in regulating apprenticeship training during the 19th century; a situation that

brought them into a conflict of interest with the employers. However, the form of apprenticeship that the unions attempted to maintain was that of the outmoded statutory system, with all its limitations including gender and age inequity (Clarke, 1999). Apprenticeships were narrow in scope and still confined to the traditional trades; at this time, workers outside those trades were considered to be labourers and were not accepted into the trades unions, and consequently, were excluded from apprenticeship (Clarke, 1999).

Apprenticeships still endured however, but their relevance continued to be under increasing threat. Further changes to the apprenticeship system meant that by 1834, the state had abrogated all responsibility for overseeing apprenticeships, relying instead on voluntary training by employers (Green, 2013). The prevailing liberal political economy's doctrine of *laissez-faire*, frequently meant that such training was inadequate. In the 1890s, the social researcher and philanthropist, Charles Booth observed that large building companies '...won't be bothered' (Clarke, 1999:34) about training, preferring 'improvers'; low paid trainees instead, thereby removing any possibility of regulating entry to the trades and the quality control systems consequently produced. In addition, masters as local ratepayers, were reluctant to pay potentially increasing taxes to fund Poor Law payments to settled ex-apprentices requiring parish relief. This, along with the growing propensity for the apprentice to live outside the master's family, would eventually put pressure on the right of settlement (Snell, 1996).

The state's belated entry to the field of education (further discussed in the next subsection) was signalled by the 1870 Education Act (Green, 2013), and this along with the later introduction of compulsory education removed many of the general education aspects from apprenticeships, which further reduced their

attractiveness to potential apprentices and their families. However, in the late 19th century increased concerns were being voiced over the quality of occupational training available, and also about the escalating levels of youth unemployment (Snell, 1996). Prompted by a mounting sense of necessity as a consequence of Britain's lack of economic competitiveness, several attempts were made to improve standards of technical education throughout this time. Most notable of these were the founding of the City and Guilds of London Institute in 1878, by the City of London and a number of Livery Companies who were successors to the original guilds⁷, and the review of technical instruction by the Samuelson Commission set up in 1881.

Apprenticeships persisted in some form into the 20th century, although concerns were still being raised over the effectiveness of the training being provided. Keep and Mayhew (1991: 194) observe that '...left to their own devices, some employers tended to provide little training and were free-riding on the efforts of those that did'. The First World War (1914-1918) presented both problems and opportunities for apprenticeship (*ibid.*, 2013). The introduction of conscription and demands of the war economy prompted government intervention into training, and so half a million training places were made available through temporary training centres (Finegold and Soskice, 1991). However, at the end of the war, the government returned to the pre-war situation which left training in the hands of the employers (Keep and Mayhew, 1991).

The apprenticeship system continued supplying skilled labour (although of varying quality) to British industry up until after the Second World War (Gospel,

⁷ The Livery Companies were reluctant partners to this venture but were persuaded to participate as a consequence of a long campaign by reformers (Glynn, 1998).

1998). Apprenticeships were criticised as being a source of cheap labour during the inter-war years, which further damaged their reputation as a method of vocational training and lessened its appeal to prospective apprentices. However, despite the skill shortages highlighted during both World Wars, post-war governments still refused to interfere in apprenticeship provision, and instead concentrated on general education, culminating in the 1944 Education Act (see next subsection for further discussion).

Without governments providing any legal obligation to train and in the absence of an accepted social duty to do so either, industry continued to carry the responsibility of improving the country's technical training unaided (Fuller and Unwin, 1998; Vickerstaff, 1992). But driven by the country's thriving post-war economy, apprenticeship numbers actually increased over a 20-year period from the late 1940s, (Fuller and Unwin, 1998). This expansion was led by the newly nationalised industries and restored some of apprenticeship's previously lost status (Fuller and Unwin, 2009). Nevertheless, the government policy of non-intervention continued in the face of rising concerns from employers and policy makers, that apprenticeships continued to be gendered, restrictive and time-bound (Gospel, 1998; Gospel and Fuller, 1998).

A growing pressure for reform eventually produced the Industrial Training Act of 1964, which created statutory industrial training boards (ITBs) for key industries. The ITBs were funded by the levy-grant mechanism, which allowed companies providing apprenticeships to offset their training costs through receiving grants funded by a levy on all firms over a certain size (Evans, B, 1992; Brockmann, *et al*, 2010). This sought to spread the cost more equitably across industries and improve standards of training (Evans, B. 1992; Gospel, 1995). The passing of this Act also marked the state's re-engagement with technical education and

apprenticeships (Fuller & Unwin, 1998).

The levy-grant system was essential to the operation of the ITBs, but was unpopular with small companies who came to regard the levy as a tax, and the activities of the ITBs as interference. Although some complaints may have had substance, Evans (1992) claims that many employers' objections were a symptom of the ideological short-termism that had continually afflicted the development of training in Britain. Consequently, despite the high quality of the training offered and the growth of apprenticeships under the ITBs, they were fatally weakened when the levy-grant system supporting them was effectively ended by the 1973 Employment and Training Act. This Act marked an unusual interventionist approach by Edward Heath's Conservative government, but made participation in the levy-grant system almost voluntary by making it easier for individual companies to opt-out.

The remaining devalued ITBs were subsumed into the Manpower Services Commission (MSC)⁸ brought into operation by the 1973 Act (Evans, B., 1992), which now took responsibility for managing training. In addition to weakening the ITBs through their funding, a later Conservative government under Margaret Thatcher announced in 1981, that around 70 per cent of the ITBs were to be abolished as part of the cuts to government spending, which included cuts to state subsidies for apprenticeship (*inter alia*, Evans, B., 1992; Finegold and Soskice, 1991). The financial rationale for these cuts were underpinned by the Conservative government's philosophy that training decisions were best left to market forces (Finegold and Soskice, 1991). Consequently, the ITBs gradually ceased to exist, with the notable exceptions of the Construction Industry

⁸ The MSC was a non-government agency originally established by the 1973 Employment and Training Act to modernise and rationalise existing training provision.

Training Board (CITB) and Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB), retained as a consequence of concerns over health and safety.

The Thatcher government's changes to the MSC meant that it began bypass local government to alter educational provision (Finn, D., 1991). Fullick (1986) suggests that the MSC was at this time politically manipulated by the government to promote its ideological project of introducing market capitalism into the labour market, undermine local government, and to influence society's values concerning work and education. However, Evans (1992) contends that urgent action was needed to challenge Britain's skills shortages, and that the government's aim to improve international competitiveness received cross-party support in parliament.

Despite some reforms continuing to be implemented, apprenticeships again entered another period of uncertainty (Gospel, 1998). Against the background of a now faltering economy (see subsection three below for discussion), rising unemployment and an associated collapse of the youth labour market, from the late 1970s apprenticeship participation sharply declined (Gospel, 1995). As an example, Ryan and Unwin (2001) estimate that during the period 1965-90, the numbers of apprenticeships fell from three per cent of manufacturing employment, to one per cent.

Primarily to address the problem of youth unemployment, governments began intervening in training as an instrument of policy and introduced state sponsored training schemes. However, for reasons discussed below, these all failed to reclaim apprenticeship's prestige and standing within industry (Fuller and Unwin, 1998), or to gain currency as a meaningful qualification with young people and their families (Parker, 2006). The Youth Training Scheme (YTS)

introduced in 1983 and renamed Youth Training (YT) in 1990, provides a typical example of these interventions.

Under the auspices of the MSC, the YTS replaced the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP) previously established in 1978, which had provided work experience for unemployed 16-18 year olds (Raffe, 1981), but like its predecessor, the YTS similarly failed to address underlying structural youth unemployment. YTS offered school leavers government funded training with employers or other training providers, initially for one year, but was later extended to two years in 1986 (Unwin and Wellington, 2001).

However, although some companies renamed their existing apprenticeship schemes as YTS to enable them to draw down government funding (Fuller & Unwin, 2009), most of these initiatives broke with one of the longstanding principles of apprenticeship: the young people on these schemes did not have an employed status as apprentices, but were instead trainees being paid a government training allowance. Significantly, it also marked a point in which apprenticeships became diluted, and many of the socialisation and maturation features of the traditional model were removed (*ibid.*, 2009), leaving a narrow framework of training and skills acquisition in its place as an instrument of youth unemployment policy. As a consequence of this state sponsored intervention into training, many companies ended their established apprenticeship schemes.

Because the YTS/YT programmes were primarily a mechanism to alleviate youth unemployment rather than an attempt to strengthen apprenticeships, the training offered by many providers was often of low value. The schemes were criticised by training inspectors for lack of quality, and troubled by allegations of their use by employers as cheap labour. Consequently, the schemes damaged

the reputation of state sponsored training with both employers and young people (*inter alia*, Evans, B., 1992; Gospel, 1998; Gospel and Fuller, 1998; Unwin and Wellington, 2001; Furlong and Cartmel, 2007). Nevertheless, despite their poor reputation, some companies used these programmes to screen potential apprentices for their surviving apprenticeship schemes, and some individuals succeeded in finding decent employment through them (Fuller and Unwin, 2001).

The reintroduction of state intervention in the form of YTS/YT concludes the brief exploration of the long history of apprenticeship in England in this section, and marks the end of this discussion because the final participant in this study spent some time on a YTS programme before securing his bricklaying apprenticeship (see Chapter Six). Despite many changes, apprenticeship retained many of its enduring characteristics and its social relationship with society as a method of adult identity formation and status. But the training schemes introduced by successive governments from the 1970s diluted the apprenticeship brand sufficiently to render it a shadow of its former self, lacking its important social elements.

A range of explanations can be offered for apprenticeship's decline, although each fails to completely explain the trend. Structural factors such as adolescents remaining longer in formal education, the effects of globalisation, and rapid technological change destroying many skilled jobs, may have had an effect on the desirability of an apprenticeship for both young people and employers. However, Gospel (1995) points out that these were not a barrier to the continuing success of the model elsewhere, as in Germany for instance. Nor do they fully explain apprenticeship's earlier decline beginning in the 1960s (Gospel, 1998).

Instead, it is suggested that government interventions failed to improve the standing of apprenticeships and often had a negative effect by undermining the system (Gospel, 1998). This is particularly true for those schemes introduced by the Conservative governments of the 1980s, which mistrusted apprenticeship because of its association with trade unions (Steedman, Gospel, and Ryan, 1998). Correspondingly, the loss of the trade unions' collective bargaining power undermined their important support for the system (Gospel, 1998).

Another suggestion is that schemes such as YTS/YT permitted a shift from state-led systems of the 1960s to employer-led schemes, with the attendant problems of lack of employer engagement due to industry's entrenched short-termist outlook regarding training (Keep, 2005). This coupled with relatively high apprentice wages (Gospel, 1998) and market forces, which required greater productivity and flexibility of labour, led employers to look for quicker, more cost effective solutions to labour needs.

The effect of apprenticeship's continuing decline on the young workforce was that they began to look for work in '...a highly instrumental and short-term manner' (Strangleman, 2012: 413), which negated the investment in human capital required by an apprenticeship. Also, the growing commodification of education and training during the latter years of this period diminished the exchange value of qualifications in the labour market, and therefore their desirability (Brown and Lauder, 1992). These factors, when aligned with the encouragement of self-employment within some sectors of the workforce, made apprenticeships an expensive form of training, especially when years of unemployment and underemployment had created a surplus pool of skilled labour.

All these features have had a cumulative impact on the apprenticeship system, but none more so than a failure to conduct a thorough reform and so produce a modern system which ensured training in a broad range of skills (Gospel, 1995). Considering the lack of labour market regulation in Britain in comparison to that in other developed countries, there seemed little compulsion for either employers, or prospective apprentices, to expend considerable human and financial resources on training.

This subsection has illustrated the central position that apprenticeships held as a cultural institution from early times, by establishing their role as an integrative vehicle linking occupational training, the attainment of a skilled status, and the socialisation into maturity, with legal concepts of adulthood. The next subsection discusses the system of education in England, to provide context for the participants' occupational choices.

2.2.2 Post-Second World War to late 20th century: compulsory education in England and Wales

Having described the evolution of apprenticeships and their role in socialising adolescents into adulthood, this chapter moves on to provide further context for the participants' evidence. This subsection examines the system of mass compulsory schooling in England and Wales during the research time period, 1959-1989. Consequently, the discussion centres on the background to the 1944 Education Act and the subsequent impact on the participants' education of the tripartite system, grammar school selection, and comprehensive schools.

In late 1940s Britain, there was a demand for general reform arising from the wartime coalition government's commitment to peacetime full employment, and from a desire for a range of general improvements to the population's social and

economic welfare. This was in part, a reflection of a ‘...war-engendered spirit of egalitarianism’ (Wallace, 1981: 285) and the emergence of the post-war settlement. A consensus of social democratic opinion prevailed in the country in which the principles of the welfare state, most predominantly full employment and free at the point of delivery healthcare and education, were widely accepted, along with a popular determination to avoid a repeat of the inter-war experience and economic downturn of the 1920s and 1930s (Hobsbawm, 2013). This, coupled with other social changes, such as the increasing participation of women in a wider range of full-time work (especially that of middle-class and married women) (*inter alia*, Lehmberg and Heyck, 2002; Grint, 2005; Hobsbawm, 2013), and burgeoning social equality, had transformed society. As a consequence, the country’s population had raised their aspirations in life and education was perceived to be the key factor that would lead to an increase in opportunities to meet this widespread need (Rubenstein and Simon, 1973).

To understand the education policy of the post-war period, it is first necessary to briefly explore its context. The 1944 Education Act was conceived against a background of an existing school system that had consistently failed to provide a sufficiently educated workforce, and that was discriminatory and elitist (*inter alia*, Blackman, 1992; Green, 2013). This state of affairs had arisen because of some peculiarities that can be ascribed to the nature of the British state. Since the 17th century, the development of the state had been secondary to the development of private interests and private exchange (*inter alia*, Judge and Dickson, 1991; Green, 2013). Consequently the state had developed along the liberal lines of free trade and the laws of the market to allow for the expansion of commerce, and this stance was also reflected in the state’s fundamental

relationship to the individual in which the state adopted a non-interventionist role. The educational system had been historically impeded by a voluntary approach which had been fostered by this relationship. Without state involvement in education, Britain lacked the centralised control that had been successfully developed much earlier by some European countries and in America (Gillard, 2011; Green, 2013).

Aimed overwhelmingly at boys, English education policy followed the liberal political economy ethos of *laissez-faire*. Following this philosophy, education was heavily dependent on private initiative and independent control. Its governance was designed to protect the interests of the Anglican Church, who as the Established Church considered education to be their natural prerogative, and of the land-owning aristocracy, who as education's beneficiaries, were amateur in outlook and promoted an anti-industrial culture (Green, 2013). Schools vigorously resisted any suggestions of educational reform as an assault on their freedom, and as a consequence they remained classicist in their curricula, eschewing scientific and technical training as unsuitable for their needs. Instead, it relied on producing a small academic elite to fill the upper ranks of the civil service and the military (*inter alia*, Keep and Mayhew, 1991; Green, 2013). Consequently, a system of education was created that imposed class barriers and restricted social mobility (*inter alia*, Judge and Dickson, 1991; Green, 2013).

During the 19th century, and as a consequence of Britain's Industrial Revolution, aristocratic domination of education became increasingly challenged by middle class economic interests, as well as the nation's industrial needs, which both required specific education to meet them (*inter alia*, Green, 2013; McCulloch, 2016). As part of the middle class economic imperative, working class education

was also needed to ‘...produce a more productive and willing class of workers in their mills, factories and foundries’ (Green, 2013: 241).

The involvement of the state in education was slowly and reluctantly accepted however, but the eventual introduction of mass education for children aged 5 to 13 by the 1870 Elementary Education Act laid the foundations for a national system of education in England and Wales. This Act created local school boards to establish and administer elementary schools where they were needed, but allowed voluntary schools to continue unrestrained (About Parliament: Living Heritage, 2017). In 1902, a new Education Act, also known as the Balfour Act, created Local Education Authorities (LEAs) based on the existing boroughs and county councils to replace the existing school boards set up by the 1870 statute. It also made provision for secondary and technical education through encouraging councils to support existing grammar schools and to establish new ones, although these mostly remained the preserve of the middle classes.

The Balfour Act provided for a state funded ‘all age’ elementary education from five years of age to the statutory school leaving age of 12, later raised to 14 in 1921. This legislation finally emulated the publicly financed educational systems that provided an educated workforce for the emerging industries, developed previously throughout parts of Europe and the United States (Gillard, 2011; Green, 2013). However, the continental and American systems’ curricula prioritised science and engineering, whereas the 1902 Act still preferred instead give precedence to the ‘...classical model of education, the one preferred by gentlemen’ (Benn and Chitty, 1996: 4).

Education still continued to be divided by social class during the inter-war

period, with secondary education still the preserve of the middle and upper classes who had the ability to pay maintained grammar school fees, or for a small group of working class pupils that passed an entrance examination to gain a Scholarship. The grammar school curriculum heavily favoured academic subjects and prepared its learners for university, whereas the established elementary, central and trade schools' curricula prepared their pupils for work or domestic life (Brown and Lauder, 1992). Pupils in grammar schools were able to enter for the School Certificate, which along with the Scholarship it is claimed, maintained class privilege and forced the elementary schools to act as a mechanism for grading pupils for identifiable occupational destinations (Blackman, 1992; Ashton, 1992).

The Beveridge Report published in 1942, included plans to transform the education system into a more democratic and egalitarian model, and the incoming Labour government, elected on a tide of popular support in 1945, introduced these reforms, by passing into law the 1944 Education Act.

Education would now be organised into three stages: primary, secondary and further education. Children would remain in primary education until the age of 11, and then enter a discrete form of secondary education until the newly established leaving age of 15.

The previously established LEAs were given powers to set local policies and to allocate resources to schools, but importantly, the 1944 Act did not stipulate their type. This led most LEAs to create the 'tripartite system' recommended by the Spens Report (1938) (*inter alia*, Rubenstein and Simon, 1973; McCulloch, 1998; 2016), which organised secondary schools into three types; grammar, technical and modern. Pupils were allocated to each type of secondary school

through a selective examination commonly known as the 11 plus⁹. Other models such as multilateral and bipartite school systems were adopted by some LEAs, mostly in metropolitan areas. It was anticipated that a ‘...parity of esteem’ (McCulloch, 1998: 44) would exist between these different types of schools, but problems were quickly identified that would prove difficult to resolve. In particular was the problem of convincing parents that the technical and modern schools, with their vocational focus, were of equal value to grammar schools and their academic curricula (Blackman, 1992).

Opposition to the tripartite system came from many quarters, and was quite robust at local level. It was argued that as selection through the 11 plus examination was an entry criterion to grammar schools, this contradicted the socialist principles of the government (McCulloch, 1998; 2016; Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1982). In reply to this allegation, it was claimed that by abolishing maintained grammar schools, tripartism ensured selection on merit only (Rubenstein and Simon, 1973) and so did not present an ideological paradox. However, it was claimed that the tripartite system continued to influence destinations, with Banks (1963: 240) noting that ‘The choice of school at eleven plus may well imply the choice of occupation’.

The deliberations over the tripartite system however, were eventually resolved by public opinion. As some critics had predicted, the problem of ‘parity of esteem’ proved insurmountable and some types of schools failed. This was clearly evident when it was found that Secondary Technical schools were being

⁹ The 11 plus examination was introduced by the 1944 Education Act, and was enthusiastically maintained by the incoming Conservative government after the 1951 general election. It is so called because it is taken by pupils aged 11. It was officially abolished in 1976 when the comprehensive system was introduced, but still remains in use as an entrance examination for the remaining grammar schools in some parts of the country.

avoided by parents of high ability children as a destination (Banks, 1963).

Originally expected to accommodate 10-15 per cent of the school population, they eventually provided less than four per cent of school places (McCulloch, 1998). Consequently, LEAs were modifying their mix of schools, with some adopting a bipartite system due to this low demand. Some areas, most notably the London County Council, had previously preferred to develop multilateral, or comprehensive schools which provided education to children of all aptitudes, but retained the existing grammar schools and their selection processes.

Ostensibly, selection's purpose was to provide desirable grammar school places for academically bright children, but Simon (1953) suggests that its purpose was instead to regulate the intake of children to these schools, as they only had the resources to provide for a fifth of the school population. Simon (1953; 1991) further argues that selection's purpose was really a form social control which provided support for the existing social and economic order. But by the 1950s, a growing body of opinion considered the selection process to not only be inefficient but unfair, due to inherent cultural, racial and gender biases (Brown and Lauder, 1992), and perceived it to be invalid as a method of evaluating intelligence (Simon, 1953; 1991; Rubenstein & Simon, 1973; Thom, 2004). Later research in the 1960s, found that testing had more use as an administrative tool because intelligence was '...immensely useful' for bureaucracy, but '...vastly simplified' human circumstances (Jones, K., 2003: 60).

Statistically, selective testing was failing also, with a growing disparity of success rates between schools and pupils (Blackman, 1992). Some secondary modern schools were found to be out-performing grammar schools, an achievement excused by supporters of the grammar schools by the fact that

some of their pupils had been coached for the 11 plus exam (Thom, 2004). It was contended that if coaching could improve performance in these examinations, by as much as 16 points as was claimed, then this brought into question the validity of the innate intelligence argument used to support the continuation of grammar schools. Thom (2004: 517) maintains that if such improvements were possible, then ‘...serious injustices were being perpetuated in the guise of extreme fairness’.

The Labour Party campaigned in the 1959 general election with the slogan ‘...a grammar school education for all’, a phrase reputedly coined by its leader Hugh Gaitskell (McCulloch, 2016: 241), in which it claimed that a grammar school standard education would be provided in the form of higher quality education for all children. Despite losing this election, a new Labour government was returned to power in 1964 under Harold Wilson, and a year after election introduced Circular 10/65 to LEAs requiring that they all make plans to introduce comprehensive education (*ibid.*, 2016). By 1966, 77 London comprehensives existed, offering General Certificate of Education (GCE) examinations for their pupils at both ‘O’ and ‘A’ levels, along with the Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE)¹⁰, with encouraging levels of success, which was partly due to the growing tendency for pupils to remain beyond the minimum school leaving age (Maclure, 1990). By 1976 comprehensives accounted for 76% of all schools in England and Wales (Halsey, et al., 1980).

Eventually, the comprehensive system became accepted, even if grudgingly, by

¹⁰ These were subject specific qualifications used in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. GCEs were examination based school leaving qualifications introduced in 1951 to replace the School Certificate, and were awarded at ‘O’ (Ordinary) level and ‘A’ (Advanced) level, and were intended for more academically able pupils. The CSEs introduced in 1965, used both examination and a controlled assessment of course work and so were suitable for a broader range of students. Both were replaced in 1988 by the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE).

successive governments. Subsequent Conservative governments were apprehensive about continuing with the comprehensive experiment as a consequence of growing media criticism of standards (Rubenstein and Simon, 1973; Brown and Lauder, 1992). However, during the period of this research, they tolerated the development of comprehensives, providing they did not interfere with existing grammar schools, or attract the middle-class pupils that would normally attend those schools.

This section has explained how the school system in England and Wales changed since its modern foundations were first laid in 1870. It is in this context that the participants in this research progressed through education, with the majority attending comprehensives either as a consequence of failing their 11 plus examinations or due to educational restructuring and the introduction of comprehensive schooling. The literature has indicated that the type of schools attended had an influence on the future employment destinations of their pupils through streaming and choice of curricula (*inter alia*, Banks, 1963; Rubenstein and Simon, 1973; Simon, 1991). The next section examines the prevailing economic conditions during the research timeframe, and considers their impact on the youth labour market and apprenticeships.

2.2.3 The Economy and the Youth Labour Market

The previous subsection provided a brief historical overview of the educational system in which this thesis' participants were schooled. It identified how the liberal political economy adopted in Britain during the 19th century had hindered the state in creating a national education system. This subsection now turns to the British economy during the years 1959-1989, to provide an economic context to the participants' evidence presented later in this thesis, and examines

the effects of liberal political economy and its *laissez-faire* approach on Britain's industry. It will in particular, focus on the impact of the changing economic conditions on the youth labour market and on apprenticeships, to provide a background to the participants' choices of occupation.

The British economy experienced a long period of expansion from the mid-1950s, which lasted with fluctuations, until the early 1970s. But this period was also marked by its continuing competitive deficiencies due to low levels of labour productivity (Rowthorn, 1991). As we have seen in the previous subsection, these were to a great extent, the legacy of the country's liberal political economy *laissez-faire* attitudes which consistently failed to address deficiencies in education and training. The economy's main features were full employment with only a two per cent unemployment rate; a relatively strong broad indicator of economic activity, Gross Domestic Product (GDP)¹¹ growth of 2.7 per cent in the 1950s and three per cent in the 1960s, and as a consequence of rising real wages, a long consumer boom (*inter alia*, Judge and Dickson, 1991; Lehmberg and Heyck, 2002). The new age of consumerism produced the 'affluent society', and with it came a rapidly increasing demand for domestic appliances, cars, televisions and foreign holidays (Offer, 2008).

The post-war economy ran along Keynesian principles of demand management, in which governments intervened in the economy at a macro-economic level, to regulate demand through the levers of tax controls and capital investment. These economic policies, produced low interest rates and a stable economy, which was further bolstered by the post-war reconstruction

¹¹ Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the estimated monetary value of a country's finished products within a specified period. It is used as a broad measurement of that nation's overall economic activity.

programme, and the dominant influence of American economic expansion (Lehmberg & Heyck, 2002). In 1959, a Conservative government was re-elected after a campaign in which the new Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan had told the electorate 'You've never had it so good' (Hobsbawm, 2013: 257), and continued with the Keynesian economic plan.

Politically, a spirit of consensus prevailed and a programme of nationalisation of key industries marked the huge extension of state economic control (Sinclair, Ryan, and Walker, 1996). The government policies of the period addressed such uniform entitlements as healthcare, housing, urban infrastructure and as discussed in the previous subsection, education (Offer, 2008). These are frequently grouped together under the term 'the welfare state'.

The post-war employment boom brought with it a buoyant youth labour market, and an increase in apprenticeship numbers (Fuller and Unwin, 1998), with the newly nationalised industries leading the way. Estimates of just over a third of school leavers entering an apprenticeship meant that demand for places often outstripped their supply (Vickerstaff, 2007). However, it became clear that British workers were still under-skilled in comparison to those in continental Europe, and therefore relatively less productive (*inter alia*, Rowthorn, 1991; Offer, 2008). This long-term problem was partly a consequence of an underlying lack of investment by both government and the private sector, and a continuation of 19th century economic problems which were aggravated by Britain's involvement in two world wars (*inter alia*, Judge & Dickson, 1991; Rowthorn, 1991; Lehmberg and Heyck, 2002).

The consequence of the combination of low productivity and the high demand for goods created by the new consumerism was a series of balance of payment

deficits. The value of imported consumer goods regularly exceeded the income earned from exports, despite the latter's steady growth since the 1950s. This situation was exacerbated by successive governments' preoccupation with efforts to maintain the high value of sterling on the international money markets, and consequently, Britain's international financial position (Judge & Dickson, 1991). Governments of the period consequently reacted by periodically easing or restricting import controls on goods, and introducing phases of tight money and credit control known as 'stop-go' policy, which contributed to periodic bouts of inflation and further discouraged business investment and industrial production (Judge and Dickson, 1991; Lehmberg and Heyck, 2002). As Judge and Dickson note (1991: 10) 'After every crisis, the ability of British industry to 'go' for growth was impaired by the restriction of investment'.

By the 1960s, Britain's recurrent balance of payment crises had become critical, and its companies increasingly uncompetitive. Both Labour and Conservative governments abandoned the demand management economy and experimented with a corporatist approach, in which government, management and trade unions worked together. However, this approach failed as relations between unions and management deteriorated, and because the state lacked the necessary powers to intervene in private companies to ensure sufficient levels of investment. By 1967, the government could no longer resist intensifying calls to devalue the pound, to ease the balance of payments crisis. Devaluation had an adverse effect on domestic price stability and gave an inflationary stimulus to the economy (Sinclair, Ryan, and Walker, 1996).

In addition to the troubles of the national economy, the work process itself had undergone a process of transformation by the growing adoption of new centralised management techniques. It is argued that as an extension of Marx's

analysis of the work process discussed later in Chapter Four, management's monopolisation of knowledge detached conception from the execution of work in order to lower production costs (Strangleman and Warren, 2008). Industry's adoption of Fordist¹² mass production methods through the standardisation of parts, tasks and a growing introduction of mechanisation, transformed sector after sector, and produced goods significantly cheaper than previously possible (Murray, 1991).

Fordism's use of Taylorist¹³ management techniques, which broke each task down to its component parts, and redesigned them on time and motion principles (*ibid.*, 1991), generated a deskilling effect which would transform practices in social and economic activity. It also produced a high turnover of workers, worker resistance and strikes. Strategies introduced to ameliorate the effects of new technology and mass-production methods as a consequence of deskilling failed, particularly at the level of human capital investment, as did attempts to resolve trade union and management disputes, and these all contributed to continued poor economic performance (Broadberry and Crafts, 1996).

Britain was now evolving into a post-industrial society, which is defined by Strangleman and Warren (2008: 127) as one having '...a decreasing dependence on manufacturing industry and a greater reliance on service sector employment'. Edgell (2012) claims that for Braverman, the growth in clerical occupations and the service sector, was a historical consequence of deskilling. As a counterbalance to Braverman, Bell's upskilling thesis, proposed that post-

¹² Fordism describes 20th century economic and social systems based on standardised industrial processes (Murray, 1991).

¹³ Scientific Management or Taylorism is a theory of management whose aim is to improve efficiency and productivity in the workplace.

industrialism produced new opportunities for a high skills, information society. The debate to which of these theories most accurately reflects modern society continues to this day (*ibid.*, 2012). However, the advent of post-industrialism was to have an adverse effect on the number and type of entry level jobs, as well as apprenticeships, available to school leavers in the coming decades.

The early years of the 1970s saw an economic boom fuelled by tax cuts, known as the 'Heath-Barber Boom' (Steele, 2010) after the Conservative Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer of the time. But the resulting consumer bubble brought rampant inflation by mid-decade, and a loosening of monetary and fiscal policies by the government in an attempt to lessen unemployment's relentless rise. This was partly caused by a demographic surge of young people then entering the labour market, and the structural changes in employment brought by post-industrialism. It was also a consequence of global recessionary pressures, over which Britain's governments had little control.

The inflationary cycle between 1972 and 1976 was given a further substantial impetus by the world oil crisis of 1973 (Steele, 2010). Up to then, Britain's productivity had risen quite fast, but not as fast as in many other countries, and therefore any industrial decline was relative rather than absolute. Growth in GDP had to a great extent been supported by North Sea Oil production, but Britain's non-oil GDP actually fell by 2 per cent during the period 1973-1983 (Rowthorn, 1991). Consequently Britain was no longer a first-rank industrial power when the oil crisis broke and its economy was less able to withstand the impact, and so its industrial decline became absolute (*ibid.*, 1991).

The collapse of the Bretton Woods system¹⁴ of international money management (Bordo, 1993), added to this crisis and contributed to the stock market crash of 1973/4 and subsequent recession (Finegold and Soskice, 1991). The 1970s also saw a worsening of the state of labour relations, with strikes a feature throughout the decade. These culminated in the 'winter of discontent' disputes in 1978/9 in which striking workers in a range of industries, tried to ensure that their pay kept pace with inflation. Political debate during this time, increasingly accepted that national decline was a product of British cultural antipathy, obstructive trade unions and the growth of state intervention, and this perspective was enthusiastically embraced by the political right (Brown, 2011). Consequently, a Conservative government elected in 1979, and under the leadership of the new Prime Minister, Margret Thatcher, continued the outgoing Labour government's tighter monetary policy. However, the British economy entered another period of instability and underwent a massive recession during 1980-1.

The 1980s mark the end of the research time period as the final participant's story concludes in 1989. This decade was distinguished by the wholesale return to free market policies and a political *laissez-faire* system of government. A decline in the manufacturing sector, saw jobs rapidly disappearing, and along with those went many apprenticeships (Gospel, 1995). Unemployment had risen steadily during the decade, and for the youth labour market, this was a disaster as younger workers were disproportionately affected. In the mid-80s, the probability of becoming unemployed for the under 18s was 17.6 per cent, whereas it was only 3.9 per cent for the 30-34 year old group (Junankar, 1987:

¹⁴ The Bretton Woods agreement established in 1944 by the United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference, fixed international currencies to the price of gold to prevent competitive devaluations of currency, and to promote international economic growth.

49). Attempts were made to offset youth unemployment with the series of training schemes described earlier in this chapter, and marked a distinct phase of state interventions into training (Keep, 2006).

2.3 Summary

This chapter has considered the historical perspectives of this research to locate its participants on the historical continuum. Its first subsection examined how apprenticeships as a cultural institution, evolved and developed over time. It argued that that originally, apprenticeships' function as an integrative vehicle was an important element in the transitional process from youth to adulthood of the period. It served various social, administrative and occupational purposes by contributing to the sense of place, self and by creating occupational identities. Through a process of evolution over a period of centuries, the apprenticeship system became diluted with its social aspects becoming slowly eroded away. In this thesis, however, I use the findings in Chapters Six and Seven to explore the idea that during the three decades covered by this research, apprenticeships retained at least some of these enduring social characteristics.

The educational and economic backgrounds set out in the subsequent sections, provide a backdrop for the participants' evidence, and set the stage for the presentation of their accounts of apprenticeship. This chapter has provided historical, educational and economic context to the participants' apprenticeship choices, so that their oral histories in this thesis can be understood as the contribution of real people to the social history of this country. The next chapter reviews and discusses the main theoretical concepts and conceptual frameworks used in this thesis.

Chapter 3: Apprenticeship as a social theory of learning and identity formation: A Review of the Literature

Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past (Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, 1852: 5).

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented a contextual backdrop to the participants' accounts, which are revealed later in the findings chapters. My focus in this chapter is on how the participants as adolescents, experienced and made sense of the world around them during their apprenticeships. It concerns the meanings attributed to the events recalled in the research interviews, and how these events shaped transitions to adulthood.

In this thesis, contested concepts such as the self, adulthood and identity are addressed and discussed. To this end, this chapter consists of four sections, which use a range of theories to explore the aims of this study. I utilise two organising concepts (section 3.2: Understanding the self in the social world and section 3.3: Apprenticeship as a social theory of learning) to introduce and discuss a range of topics and theoretical perspectives that are later used to examine and interpret the collected evidence in this thesis. They contain five and six subsections respectively, in which I set out the key theories used in this study.

Section 3.2, draws together a range of theories to examine how the self is socially constructed. Its subsections help to explain how young people construct

adult identities through the conceptual lens of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969) and social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). The role of social class, the effects of bounded agency (Evans and Heinz, 1991;1993; Evans, 2007; Heinz, 2009) and specific aspects of Bourdieu's (1977a; 1977b) social reproduction theory are discussed to discover their impact on the formation of self-identities. The concept of 'standard adulthood' (Lee, 2001; Parsons, 1971) is introduced as a figurative description, to indicate the social goal towards which young people travel. Similarly, the term 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell, 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) is used here to describe a normative model of culturally dominant social attributes and patterns of behaviours current at the time.

In the third section (3.3), I introduce situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991) as the principal theoretical concept underpinning this thesis. Here, I discuss and critically evaluate its major components, communities and constellations of practice (Wenger, 1998), and legitimate peripheral participation, as the theoretical framework for apprenticeship learning. I also present the concept of a nexus of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) to illustrate how complex identities are created during the course of an apprenticeship.

3.2 Understanding the self in the social world

My aim in this section, is to draw together a range of theories used to explain the complex issue of identity formation, and to show how these theories have influenced my approach to collecting and analysing the empirical data. In so doing, I aim to create a theoretical framework for use in this thesis, and to develop a conceptual language with which I am able to describe the

participants' experiences in the findings chapters.

The quotation from Marx at the head of the chapter suggests that individuals are free to construct their own histories, but within existing boundaries, which are in turn, communicated from the past. In this thesis, I propose to take this view of how we as adolescents, construct our own adult self-identities, unconsciously influenced by a diverse range of predispositions, influences and structural boundaries, which are not of our own choosing.

3.2.1 Social theories of identity

This subsection examines the social theories of identity, which collectively, I use in later chapters to describe the participants' apprenticeship experiences. The constructionist ontological position taken in this thesis (see Chapter Five), defines reality as a social construction, determined between actors, and initially I draw upon one of its theories to develop a conceptual language to describe how identities are formed. Symbolic interactionism provides a theoretical frame in which a range of concepts and general assumptions about human social behaviours can be identified (Stryker, 2008). Secondly, I examine social identity theory to illustrate the effects of group membership on the participants' identity formation.

Originating in the Chicago School of Sociology and emerging from the work of Mead (1934) but developed by Blumer (1969), symbolic interactionist theory has at its core the proposition that the meaning that people derive and give to the world, is a social construction which is created through social action (Casey, 1995). From this perspective, reality exists only within given social contexts, which are dynamic, as they are the products of ongoing individual and collective responses to situations (Morrione, 1988).

Symbolic interaction theory regards society as consisting of groups of humans engaged in action, whether individually or collectively (Blumer, 1969). These actions comprise everyday activities conducted as they interact with, and react to each other, and to situations that they encounter. Hence, ‘...society *exists in action* and must be seen in terms of action’ (emphasis as in original, Blumer, 1969: 6). Weber (2002) notes that actions may be oriented towards the past, present or future actions of others, and even concedes that not all actions are social. To illustrate this point, he gives the example of a collision between two cyclists, which he considers to be a natural event. However, the evasive action taken by them in an attempt to prevent such a collision, and any exchange between them after the event, are social actions. As these interactions happen in the present, they are also historically situated.

Blumer (1969: 5) further describes symbolic interactionism as understanding ‘...meanings as social products, as creations that are formed in and through defining activities of people as they interact’. Such interactions may be non-symbolic in which humans react instinctively to gestures or the actions of others, or symbolic in which actions are subject to interpretation by individuals to determine their meaning (Blumer, 1969).

It is proposed by Blumer (2002) that the world in which people interact is composed of ‘objects’ which are the products of symbolic interaction. These include physical objects, for example, mountains, seas, and people; social objects such as friends, teachers, and parents, and abstract objects such as morals, justice or knowledge (Blumer, 1969). The nature attributed to such objects is not intrinsic, but depends on the meaning given to them by an individual. In this way, meaning arises through a formative procedure, in which an object’s significance is determined through an interactive process involving

the individual, and the way that others act towards that object (Blumer, 1969). Using a contemporary issue as an example, the existence of a badger sett is viewed differently by an environmentalist and a dairy farmer. One sees beauty in the natural environment whilst the other sees a threat to their livestock through bovine tuberculosis.

Most importantly for this thesis, symbolic interaction theory may also be used to explore meanings of the self, as concepts such as 'I', 'me', and 'myself' may be comprehended through its understanding of reality as a social construct (Casey, 1995). Cooley (2002: 93) considered that '...the 'I' of common speech has a meaning which includes some sort of reference to other persons'. His view maintains that the self can only be identified through subjective feelings; an idea extended by Mead who proposed that the self-concept arises from social interactions (Casey, 1995). Identities therefore, are considered to exist only in structured social relationships (Stryker, 1968), and are composed of sets of meanings by which people define themselves (Burke, 2004).

Consequently, as with social actions, identities are constructed by individuals in response to the social situations in which they find themselves. Therefore, for Blumer (2002: 252), '...the possession of a self provides the human being with a mechanism of self-interaction with which to meet the world'. So, rather than being a fixed structure, the self is seen as a process which is reflexively formed and reformed, through constant interaction with the world. This interpretation of identity builds on Cooley's earlier work concerning the 'looking-glass self', which posits that individuals create a self-identity based on how they believe others see them (Gecas & Schwalbe, 1983). In this interpretation, individuals constantly form and reform their self-image as a response to the reactions of others towards it. Therefore for Blumer (1969), an individual's sense of self is

connected to their relations with others who as a whole constitute society, which is in itself located in terms of time and space. This last proposition is illustrated by Colley *et al* (2003), who argue that in the case of an apprenticeship, a young person changes identity to fit in with their work colleagues and surroundings, and so becomes the right person for the job. Consequently, from a symbolic interactionist perspective, identity is a symbolic structure that is claimed by individuals for themselves in relation to others, and is also recognised by others (Casey, 1995).

In addition, Lawler (2005) contends that, if identity is a social construction, then class must also play a part in its formation. This she suggests, is because if each society is situated in time and space as suggested by Blumer (1969), then the sense of self is influenced by the history and class structure of that society, and this aspect is examined next in subsection 3.2.2. But before leaving this subsection, I must turn to another important theory of identity formation, which I later use in Chapter Four to illustrate apprenticeship's socialising role: social identity theory (SIT).

Tajfel and Turner's (1986) concept of a social identity posits that identities are linked to the social world through group membership. Humans tend to categorise objects including people, so that the world may be more easily understood. The human classifications consist of self-relevant groups (e.g. nations, football clubs, political parties, etc.) or social categories (ethnicity, class, age, etc.). Using this understanding, individuals are thought to define their group identities through a positive in-group bias, in which they associate themselves with the admirable attributes of their group. Other groups (the out-groups) are denigrated to enhance in-group feelings of superiority and therefore create a feeling of 'them' and 'us'. Indeed, Tajfel (1982) contends that in-groups

cannot exist without the out-groups for comparison. Therefore as humans, we see groups as giving us a social identity, which includes a sense of belonging to the social world. Using this theory, an individual affiliates with others that share similar interests and characteristics, and responds to threats to the group, as a threat to the self. Through group membership, individuals adopt characteristics associated with the group, and create stereotypical identities (Echabe, 2010).

Another aspect of identity concerns the roles that humans assume as these roles correspond to the different positions in society that we occupy (Stryker, 1968). Role identities are self-conceptions which people assign to their structural roles in society, e.g. father or mother in which one role takes on meaning when connected with the other (*inter alia*, Merton, 1957; White & Burke, 1987). As individuals, people self-define as members of the diverse groups to which they belong, and therefore have different roles within each of those groups. From a social interactionist perspective, these are not static but fluid and are negotiated between persons through a dynamic social dialogue. Therefore, the self is not perceived as a fixed autonomous entity, but as ‘...a multifaceted social construct that emerges from people's roles in society’ (Hogg, Terry, and White, 1995).

This subsection has given an overview of the social theories of identity later used to discuss the findings. The next subsection considers the role played by social class in the construction of social identities for the participants.

3.2.2 Social class and identity

As mentioned in the previous subsection, Lawler (2005) claims that as identity is a social construction, and is historically located, then class must also play a part in its formation. Therefore, this subsection seeks to place social class as an

important determinant of the young people's occupational destinations, and consequently their occupational and social identities. It addresses the revival of interest in class analysis, and discusses theories of individualisation in connection with this study's aims.

Interest in class analysis in the social sciences, has declined since the middle of the 1970s (Savage, 2005) from its previously held central position, having been thought to have lost its popular appeal (Pakulski & Waters, 1996). The effects of class on youth transitions have similarly been dismissed as irrelevant by writers such as Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002), who termed it a 'zombie category' as a consequence of the perceived primacy of the individual identity over the collective identity, which post-industrial society has produced.

The waning of social class analysis has its origins in postmodernist thought, and the decline of traditional occupational groups and industries as a consequence of post-industrialism (Strangleman, 2008). During this period, the 'death of class' was proclaimed in both political and theoretical discourse (*inter alia*, Giddens, 1991; Beck, 1992; Pakulski and Waters, 1996) as it was thought to no longer serve as a useful analytical category (Lawler, 2005). In this post-industrial, late modern world, theories of individualisation flourished instead (*inter alia*, Giddens, 1991; Beck, 1992; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). But in more recent times, interest in the function of class and of collective identities in youth transitions, has been rekindled (*inter alia*, Gillies, 2005; MacDonald, *et al.*, 2005; Woodin, 2005).

The individualisation argument claims that due to the process of modernisation and globalisation, the inequalities of wealth distribution have been replaced by inequalities of risk (Beck, 1992). The risk society proposed by Beck, posits that

the modern world has created global risks which cannot be managed by traditional means. As a consequence the old social forms and categories that existed in industrial societies have been destroyed, and individuals displaced from their previous classifications. This position contends that in such a fluid and reflexive phase of modernisation, people must define their own biographies by becoming more engaged in planning and rationalising their choices (Elliott, 2002).

With rising standards of living creating increased levels of consumption and a move away from previous cultural values such as a settled family life and respectability ('zombie categories' include the concept of the household as well as class), the individual's focus is now centred on self-fulfilment and individuality (Atkinson, 2007). A growing market for young adults or 'kidults'¹⁵ participating in pastimes more associated with children, such as computer gaming or adult colouring books, is but one manifestation of this phenomenon. Increasingly large numbers of 'nesters' still living with their parents whether at university, or work is another (Furedi, 2003). An expanding education sector along with a growing commodification of education (*inter alia*, Lyotard, 1984; Lave, 1991), plays its part in this process by replacing traditional ways of thinking and living with 'universalistic' knowledge (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 32). In this new social order it is contended that people now identify themselves more acutely with categorisations of race, gender, sexuality, and consumption rather than as a class (Lyotard, 1984).

In this understanding of society, an individual's success is now their own responsibility and so, forces them to '...take charge of their own life' (Beck and

¹⁵ Kidult is a term originating in the field of television marketing (Brown, 2016) and is used to describe an adult with interests that society considers more suitable for children.

Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 32). Individuals are freed from the constraints of 'structure' to act according to their 'agency' (Adkins, 2003), which are the terms used in the social sciences to describe the effects of the social/political/economic context on the individual, and the individual's freedom to act. Using a structural approach, the individual is considered to be bound by the reproduction of social systems such as relations and interactions, and structure exists as memory traces (Giddens, 1991). Conversely, an agentic perspective portrays social outcomes as the consequence of the aggregation of individual actions, which are '...outcome orientated' (Goldthorpe, 1998:169). Thus, Lyotard (1984) argues, in a postmodern world, it is impossible to predict life chances by using structural variables such as class or gender.

Symbolic interactionist criticism of the individualisation argument comes from a variety of sources and lack of space here, prevents a comprehensive discussion. However, a principal rejection of this position is that Beck's and Giddens' analyses are excessively realist and cognitive. Their position suggests that rather than being social actors living in socially situated worlds, individuals exist outside of social settings, and are able to reflect on their choices without reference to the world (Adkins, 2003). But, it is argued that individuals, in order to see how they should act, need to be able to assess how others are acting (Dawson, 2012). As examples of this 'position taking', Dickens (1999) suggests that mothers refer to what other mothers are doing in order to think of themselves as a 'decent mother', and Stevenson (2009) proposes that masculine identities are determined by reference to male role models.

Furthermore, it has been suggested that the impact of postmodernity has been overstated, with historical epidemics, plagues and wars having a comparably devastating impact on previous societies (*inter alia*, Elliott, 2002;

Furlong, 2009). Additionally, Beck (1992) acknowledges that inequalities still exist, but are now manifest at the level of the individual, rather than as a class. Furlong (2009: 349) however, argues that whilst the perception of increased opportunity exists, inequalities still form in groups that are remarkably like classes and so effectively, social classes still exist, '...irrespective of whether we can identify a set of cultural perspectives that neatly map into such divisions'.

In addition, the developmental-contextual perspective which proposes that career development is a lifelong process influenced by a multitude of factors, is a long established one. Research has shown that diverse interpersonal, social and environmental factors shape career outcomes. For example, Schulenberg, Vondracek, and Crouter (1984: 130) state that 'It has been well documented that background SES [socio-economic status] is positively associated with an individual's occupational status aspirations and expectations'. This is a view supported by Furlong and Cartmel (1997) among others, who suggest that the individualisation thesis is misleading, and that the social world is merely considered to be risky and unpredictable. Structural factors they argue still remain as powerful as ever.

Recent research from the discipline of cognitive and social psychology also casts doubt on the individualisation thesis, by suggesting that the choices made by humans are not the result of a rational thought process, but are often intuitive as a consequence of unconscious social conditioning and experience (Kahnemann, 1982; 2011). This research proposes that decisions made by individuals are influenced by the 'priming effect' (*ibid.*, 2011:52) of previous experiences which predispose them to certain choices.

Priming occurs because the infinite instantaneous decisions that the human mind is required to make are not possible without the use of shortcuts.

Thoughts, emotions and actions are all unconsciously primed by past events in a phenomenon known as the 'ideomotor effect': that is, '...the influencing of an action by the idea' (*ibid.*, 2011:53). Consequently, such involuntary behaviours compromise '...our self-image as conscious and autonomous authors of our judgements and our choices' (*ibid.*, 2011: 55).

The individualisation theory is consequently undermined by the notion that our choices are not rationally made, but affected by structural conditioning.

Therefore as Adkins (2003) contends, the reflexivity required by the modern risk society proposed by Beck (1992) requires reflection on unconscious, as well as conscious actions. Even the distribution of risk, which Beck (1992) argues is a product of technological development in a postmodern society, cannot be adequately assessed by individuals objectively as research contends that 'The world in our heads is not a precise replica of reality' (Kahnemann, 2011: 138).

The degree to which individuals have control over their own destinies has also been called into question by Evans *et al* (Evans and Heinz, 1991; 1993; Evans, *et al*, 2001; Evans, 2007; Heinz, 2009), whose research suggests that agency operates in '...differentiated and complex ways in relation to the individual's subjectively perceived frames for action and decision' (Evans, *et al*, 2001: 17).

Using this understanding of agency, an individual's frame for action has limits which can be changed over time, but is underpinned by structural factors which include their socio-educational legacy. This view bears similarities to the familial social capital suggested by Bourdieu's (1977a; 1977b) reproduction theory discussed in the next subsection, and to the areas of employment to which qualifications lead.

Therefore, if socioeconomic inequalities still manifest themselves in groups of people as proposed by Furlong (2009), something very like 'class' still exists and shows strong indications of still being relevant (Eidlin, 2014). In addition, if decisions made by individuals are primed by structural conditioning as proposed by Kahnemann (1982; 2011), then as Roberts (2009) suggests, class-based reproduction still exists. Therefore, the proposal that postmodern individuals are masters of their own destiny, free from their past, does not entirely provide the answer. Adkins (2003) offers an explanation, using the work of Bourdieu to reconcile the realities of the greater reflexivity required by late-modern societies, and Bourdieu's work is explored below.

3.2.3 The diverse forms of capital

Having previously discussed the relevance of class to identity formation, this subsection now considers the forms of capital available to young people. It examines Bourdieu *et al*'s (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990) concepts of social and cultural capital and their relevance to this study.

Although as discussed later in this subsection, his views on social reproduction have received criticism for being vague, lacking empirical support, contradictory and open to different interpretations (*inter alia*, Woolcock, 2001; Sullivan, 2002; Fine, 2003; Moore, 2008; Tzanakis, 2011), Bourdieu's work continues to provide useful insights into the workings of society.

His work is also helpful as an analytic tool (Tzanakis, 2011), in particular the concepts of cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990) when used to investigate how societies reproduce themselves. For Bourdieu *et al* (*ibid*: 1986: 1990), these two concepts refer to the extent in which cultural activities of the family influence educational success, and how an

individual's social capital contributes to social reproduction. Their inherent value lies in their ability to be converted into other forms of capital. This, Bourdieu (1986) concludes, explains how social inequality is reproduced through the concept of social reproduction in education and life.

For Bourdieu, the concept of capital concerns a range of resources to which, humans as social beings, have access. These include the more familiar economic capital and also includes symbolic capital, of which the latter may be further divided into cultural, social, linguistic, scientific and literary capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu (1986; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990) suggests that these share some of the characteristics of economic capital, proposing that habits and dispositions form a resource that may be transmitted like wealth, through the generations.

It is argued that cultural capital is the embodiment of economic investment (Moore, 2004) and when realised as the values, tastes, beliefs, and behaviours of groups within society, it becomes distributed unequally through the power structures existing within that particular society. Consequently, the cultural capital of the dominant groups within society become valued above those of groups that have lesser influence. Hence it becomes the prevailing culture of a society, and contributes to the reproduction and legitimisation of class inequalities within that society (Sullivan, 2002).

Cultural capital is unequally distributed across social class groups and this Bourdieu claims, manifests itself by providing exclusive advantages for some sections of society, notably in the criteria of assessment in schools (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). This he argues, favours those best equipped to cope with tests and examinations, such as students from higher-class families over those

from a lower-class background. Although some lower-class students will achieve educational success, it is contended that this merely strengthens the system by giving an impression of meritocracy (Sullivan, 2002). The concept of cultural capital also suggests that when societies institutionalise formal education, the certificates produced have an embodied cultural capital which serves a similar function in society to that performed by money.

Correspondingly, an individual's social capital describes the cumulative total of collectively owned resources to which they can access (Bourdieu, 1986), and this idea has achieved much recent public exposure due to the works of Putnam (1995; 2000). Originally a concept developed by Coleman (1988), social capital is not a single entity but a multiplicity which shares two common elements:

‘...they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors-whether persons or corporate actors-within the structure’ (*ibid.* 1988: S98). For Putnam (1995), social capital is recognised as existing in social configurations such as networks and norms, which build the social trust that allows communities to work together for their mutual benefit; a view embraced by policy makers who employ ‘bottom up’ strategies to address poverty in communities (Leonard, 2005).

However, Bourdieu (1986) views social capital as another way to understand class inequality through the inability to convert it to other forms of capital, particularly economic capital. His perspective holds a more negative interpretation than Putnam’s (1995; 2000) in that the individual’s environment may inhibit social capital’s conversion, particularly if they possess low stocks of it, or occupy a relatively lower position to other members of society (Leonard, 2005).

Social capital's resources may consist of material or symbolic exchanges between actors in social spheres, and so this concept is compatible with the symbolic interactionist perspective taken in this thesis, and outlined earlier in this chapter. Access to social capital is dependent on group membership, social ties and networks. Therefore, the amount of social capital available depends on the size of the individual's social network, and of the amount of social capital each member individually owns: human capital (Becker, 1993) is embodied in the individual, whereas social capital exists through relationships. Therefore, the more connections one has, the wider range of social capital becomes accessible (Bourdieu, 1986).

The connections possessed by an individual are social ties which consist of both strong and weak ties (Granovetter, 1973). The former refers to family and close friends whereas the latter describes looser relationships such as with acquaintances, teachers or work colleagues (Tynkkynen, et al., 2010). Gittell and Vidal (1998: 15) take the social capital concept further when they describe 'bonding' and 'bridging' social capital. 'Bonding' capital refers to the '...type that brings closer together people who already know each other', whereas 'bridging' social capital is the '...type that brings together people or groups who previously did not know each other'. The former being that which is accessible from strong ties and the latter is that obtained through weak ties.

Therefore, it is suggested that key sources of social capital include the strong ties of the family, and in particular for adolescents, their parents (Tynkkynen, et al, 2010). This 'bonding' social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998) is essential for the enculturation of norms and attitudes of the family and social group. However, membership of a wide social network has a greater importance, as it provides access to a wider range of 'bridging' social capital (*ibid.*, 1998).

Parental influence as a form of 'bonding' social capital (*ibid.*, 1998) remains relevant to discussions of occupational choice in this thesis as recent longitudinal research reveals (Tynkkynen, *et al*, 2010). Such research indicates that social ties provide resources such as knowledge and support for adolescents during an important developmental phase, which includes joining new societal fields, and so '...constitute the social capital of adolescents' (*ibid* 2010: 449). Therefore important others (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) such as parents, have both a direct and indirect influence on their children's choice of career (Oren, Caduri, and Tziner, 2013), which in turn impacts on the creation of self-identity.

Haller and Woelfel (1972: 595-5) use the term 'significant other', originally created by Sullivan (1997) to describe '...a person who influences the focal individual's conception of himself in relation to educational or occupational roles'. Their importance is demonstrated by Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) theory of reasoned action. This suggests that behavioural intention is predictable through the influence of subjective norms and attitudes. It is posited that subjective norm consists of two factors: normative beliefs that is, the way that important others would expect a person to behave, and the motivation to comply, or how important an individual thinks it is to comply with the expectations of others. Consequently, our attitudes comprise an evaluation of our ability to carry out an action and the strength of that belief.

Additionally, Bourdieu (1977b) proposes that the interaction between structure and agency considered earlier in this chapter, creates dispositions, both in the individual and as a collective consciousness, which conditions people's behaviours and understandings of the world around them. Importantly, this constrains individual action, without controlling it. This structuring of practices

and perceptions Bourdieu (1977b; 1986) terms 'habitus' and he maintains is created through early socialisation into the world by family, culture and education. Bourdieu linked habitus with the different types of capital that each individual possesses. Thus he argues, through the early inculcation of habitus, social inequality is reproduced through social reproduction.

Adkins (2003) suggests that habitus produces enduring orientations to action, which although not fixed, produce individual and collective practices. For the individual, these inclinations are mostly unconscious and taken for granted; a view echoed in Kahnemann's (1982; 2011) work in the field of cognitive and social psychology discussed in the previous sub-section. Therefore, following on from this understanding of practice, Adkins (2003) further argues that the attainment of reflexive meanings are guided by symbolic exchange within communities, which determine the actions of the individual. In these communities, it is the shared practices-the habitus that governs their reflexive practice. Drawing on Bourdieu, Lash (1994) argues that reflexivity has a collective element, which is based in shared habits, and is located within communal practice in which unconscious dispositions shape individual action. The extent to which individuals have total control over their actions is further discussed through the lens of bounded agency (*inter alia*, Evans and Heinz, 1991; 1993; Evans, 2007; Heinz, 2009) in the next section.

Importantly, as noted at the beginning of this subsection, Bourdieu's analysis has received criticism for lacking supporting empirical evidence, particularly for his key concept of cultural capital's role in social reproduction through education. Tzakanakis (2011: 84) contends that '...large-scale quantitative research offers little or no empirical support for the argued significance of cultural capital', arguing that participation in '...highbrow culture or middle-class

pursuits may be related to social class but the relationship could be spurious' (*ibid*: 2011). He concedes nonetheless that cultural capital should be retained as a useful analytic concept.

Goldthorpe (2007: 25-26) however, has cast serious doubts on the veracity of Bourdieu's reproduction theory and states that it '...must by now be adjudged to be quite unsound'. Although the concepts of social and cultural capital are difficult to explicitly distinguish as their boundaries are quite blurred, this thesis concentrates on the operation of the more established concept of social capital, particularly that of the two concepts of 'bonding' and 'bridging' social capital (Gittell and Vidal, 1998) to analyse the data, rather than the more contentious cultural capital.

3.2.4 Bounded agency

This subsection now considers the concept of 'bounded agency' which uses the interplay of both structure and agency to illustrate youth trajectories. This theoretical concept will be used later in Chapter Six, to help to explain young people's entry to apprenticeship.

Originating in an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) research project conducted with young people in England and Germany over a 12 year period, 'bounded agency' is a concept which explains the restrictions and horizons for individual action in determining their transitional trajectories (Evans, 2007). The findings of the ESRC research show that people associate highly structured environments with restricted personal opportunities to act in an anticipatory manner. Consequently, the same external structures are blamed for any individual's failure, whereas in more open systems, individuals tend to blame themselves for their failures in education or the employment market. This

it is contended, has the effect of structured systems such as in the German example, allowing young people to develop a more positive sense of self, by allowing any failings to be attributed to external factors (Evans, 2007). In the less structured transitional environment encountered in England, individuals view any failings or social crises as personal when in reality their impact effects a number of people. These failings and problems are imagined by young people to be beyond the reach of collective action to resolve them, and so they believe that risk operates at an individual level.

This thesis considers entry to work to be a fundamental building block for the construction of an adult identity through joining an adult community of practice (discussed later in section three of this chapter). Therefore, as part of an individual's reflexive process of identity formation, 'bounded agency' (Evans, 2007) can also help to determine future identities. Evans, Rudd, Behrens, Kaluza, and Woolley (2001), suggest that individuals' subjectively perceived frames for action and the decisions taken because of those perceptions, are a consequence of the complex and differential operation of agency. Such frames for action are part of a reflexive process which produces boundaries and limits which change over time. However, Evans *et al.* (2001: 24) propose that these frames have '...structural foundations in ascribed characteristics such as gender and social/educational inheritance, and in acquired characteristics of education and qualification'. These structural foundations will be discussed in reference to forms of social capital possessed by the participants later in this thesis.

Although some aspects of the personal environment can be changed through individual agency or education, 'bounded agency' (Evans, 2007) proposes that some structural aspects are extremely hard to change or overcome. This

particularly includes those concerning ascribed characteristics, and those acquired through education-a view with which I concur in this thesis. Furlong (2009) sees this view as being compatible with ideas of individual choice and social structure, with Hitlin and Elder (2007) suggesting that currently, most theorists accept that both freedom and restraint have a function within society. Such conclusions are backed by comparative research conducted with two British Birth Cohorts; the first from 1958, the second from 1970 by Schoon (2007: 99), in which the findings of her research ‘...suggest that both structure and agency influence patterns of adaptation in the transition to adulthood’.

Schoon *et al's* work here (*inter alia*, Schoon and Parsons, 2002; Schoon, 2006; Schoon, 2007; Schoon, Martin and Ross, 2007) is useful in highlighting the similarities and divergences of two cohorts born 12 years apart, and reflects the life perspective aspect of my research in this thesis. Her claims that aspirations are linked to social background will be returned to in the findings chapters of this thesis.

The concept of ‘bounded agency’ contends that an individual’s actions are ordered by ‘...past and imagined future possibilities’ (Evans, 2007: 92) which shape present and future actions. Bounded agency is defined by Evans (*ibid.* 2007: 93) as being a, ‘...socially situated agency, influenced but not determined by environments and emphasizing internalized frames of reference as well as external actions’. This Evans (2007) claims, allows us to think of people as individual actors, without losing structural context. Thus it is argued, individual aspirations, which are expressions of human agency, are limited by structural factors.

The next subsection introduces the trope of ‘standard adulthood’ (Parsons,

1971) as a goal to which the participants aimed. It contains a discussion of the socially constructed nature of childhood, adulthood and masculinity relative to the aims of this thesis.

3.2.5 Childhood, 'standard adulthood' and 'hegemonic masculinity'

So far, I have drawn on symbolic interactionist theory and SIT to develop the notion of a social self, and also Bourdieu's theories to explain certain aspects of reproduction within communities. By exploring these theories of identity formation, I have demonstrated that my understanding of identity is one that has at its heart, an individual's place in society. This subsection now discusses two normative standards that I use in this thesis when describing the participants' construction of adult self-identities: 'standard adulthood' and 'hegemonic masculinity'.

A crucial concept in comprehending how multiple identities are created through the socialisation aspect of apprenticeship, is that of standard adulthood (Parsons, 1971), the 'journey's end' of adolescent transition (Lee, 2001: 8). This contentious definition (Lee, 2001) of the state of adulthood, as a standardised and stable condition in which the various roles required for individuals to achieve the 'markers of adulthood' (Blatterer, 2007a; 2007b) which existed during the research timeframe, is now explored.

In the latter part of the 20th century, children gained international recognition as being a distinct group that is '...distinguished by the visibility of their low chronological age' (Lee, 2001:1) within societies around the world. The special nature of the child (defined as a person under the age of 18) is recognised by the United Nations (UN) through Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (The United Nations, 1948). This declared that the state of

'...childhood is entitled to special care and assistance'. The basis for this special status is given in the preamble to the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and it is that '...the child, by reason of his [sic] physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth' (UNICEF, 1990:3). Therefore, the special status of people under the age of 18, is recognised in international law, and includes in Article 32 (UNICEF, 1990:10) protection from exploitation at work, with agreed minimum ages set by individual nations for employment. In Britain, this has built on previous legislation which identified children as special cases requiring protection at work from the 19th century onwards, for example the 1833 Factory Act.

The provision of special legal definitions and protections for children as a group, indicates that they are not considered to be full social members of our species. Childhood and adulthood are viewed as two different states of human existence, with adulthood seen as being the culmination of a process of development (Lee, 2001). This division is described by Qvortrup (1994:4) as the difference between 'human beings' and 'human becomings', in which the child as a 'human becoming', is seen as a future adult. The finished article-the 'human being', is believed to be capable of independent thought and action, whereas the child, because of their immaturity is not (Lee, 2001).

From this understanding, childhood can therefore be considered to be a social construction (Prout & James, 2005), and Hendrick (2005) maintains that as such, it has undergone many constructions and reconstructions over the past few centuries, which have been brought about by the influences of intellectual movements and social and economic changes. Contemporary notions of childhood as a dependent state are to a great extent, the consequence of the

Victorian middle-class domestic ideal applied across class barriers, and the effects of a combination of the family, public health and welfare services (*ibid.*, 2005).

Bauman (1987) considers the child's state of dependence to be the consequence of socio-economic changes within society, and the emergence of the nation-state as an economic and political entity. Traditional ways of life were no longer considered acceptable in modern states, as will be further illustrated in Chapter Four. The old ways were considered to be non-productive in a time of population growth and urbanisation. The population it was argued, needed interventions to ensure improved productivity, the most significant of which for this thesis, was that the masses needed education.

Education in this understanding consisted of the modernising states conditioning their populations to conform to generally accepted norms and conventions. These it was alleged, freed them from superstition and ignorance and so, would make them better, more productive citizens acting beneficially for the state (Bauman, 1987). One feature of this was the concept of the child as a special site of investment by the state through education, as '...embodiments of the future' (Lee, 2001: 30). As such, because they were considered to be incomplete and requiring intervention, they were defined as dependent and their status as human 'becomings' (Qvortrup, 1994) was confirmed.

The mid-late 20th century viewed the social constitution of adulthood in Western industrialised societies, as one in which adults had assigned roles. For Parsons (1971), this was located in the heterosexual nuclear family, in which adults had stable, specific and gendered roles. This idea was based on his observations of 'normal' families in America: a concept developed from an earlier middle-class

standard which had accompanied rising prosperity across the United States during the century. This debatable historical and ideological construct serves however, as a useful convenient fiction (Lee, 2001) or trope to describe the goal to which adolescents of the period aimed.

Adulthood, which is the way that societies historically and culturally recognise that a youth has matured into a full and equal participant in society (*inter alia*, Parsons, 1971; Lee, 2001; Blatterer, 2007a; 2007b), was during mid to late 20th century Britain, still profoundly influenced by Victorian values and ideals. The image of the 'Respectable Working Man' (Thompson, 1988) with its associated virtues of independence and self-sufficiency features heavily in working class aspirations of the time, as evidenced in this thesis' research data, and is closely bound to the concept of 'standard adulthood' (Parsons, 1971).

Lee (2001) considers that adulthood is achieved through the process of socialising the child into acquiring and internalising the accepted norms and conventions of prevailing society by their parents and other adults. As an adult, the achievement of full membership of Western society is demonstrated by independence and an assurance of our place as citizens in society (*ibid.*, 2001). Hence it is proposed in this thesis, apprenticeships of this time used their traditional integrative function as discussed in Chapter Two, as a method of socialising adolescents into adulthood.

Lastly in this section on adulthood, the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' is briefly addressed, as it is used later in this thesis to describe culturally dominant forms of masculine behaviour encountered by the participants as apprentices. This concept explores the dynamic social nature of masculinity and describes certain patterns of practice, in which versions of masculinity are identifiable

across time, cultures and individuals. It has origins in the work of Gramsci, Freud and the gay liberation movement (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), and its feminist perspective has influenced gender studies in many fields of academia.

The term hegemony as used in Gramsci's original meaning, refers to how '...the ruling class establishes and maintains domination' (Donaldson, 1993: 644) over other social classes, through their control of social institutions such as the media, education, religion and the family. Through the exercise of cultural hegemony, the dominant social class' ideology is extended, and its norms and values which promote its worldview as lawful and legitimate, are created and represented as common sense. These produce the conditions in which the machinery of the state is able to coerce people through managing their expectations, to act in ways which are against their own self-interest, but favour those of the dominant class instead (Femia, 1987). Its use by Connell (1987) in the term 'hegemonic masculinity' is intended to illustrate the dominant form of masculinity within a culture which maintains its position in relation to women and subordinate masculinities through its legitimate use of power by consent.

Connell's contribution to gender studies literature (*inter alia*, 1987; 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) has identified types of masculine practice which are socially constructed and draw upon differences between the sexes. These configurations of practice are recognisable both as institutionalised structures within society, as well as forming an important feature of identity. In modern Western cultures, it is often portrayed as the way that a 'real man' is identified, and valorises stereotypical attributes such as strength, competitiveness and courage among others, over traits which are considered to be less desirable such as compassion and dependence. It is included in this

study because work forms one of the central pillars in understanding masculinity historically, and acquiring a disciplined work ethic was essential to adult manhood in the role of breadwinner, and the mark of a good citizen (Wills, 2005). In this thesis 'hegemonic masculinity' is used to clarify how concepts such as adulthood and citizenship underpinned effective behavioural norms, based on ideas of acceptable gender identity.

The different types of masculinity discerned in research since the concept's introduction, can be placed in a male gender hierarchy with 'hegemonic masculinity' at its head (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). In this way the local masculine identities formed by the participants during their apprenticeships can be discerned and related to this benchmark. This therefore allows the participants' daily practices and interactions to be understood within their cultural framework (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

In the next section, I return to the focus of this thesis to explore how serving an apprenticeship facilitated entry to the multiple communities of practice that represent 'standard adulthood' (Lee, 2001; Parsons, 1971).

3.3 Apprenticeship as a social theory of learning

The previous section discussed the range of theories which I use to create a conceptual framework in which the evidence can be presented, and also to develop a language with which it can be explained. From this, it can be seen that I take a broadly social interactionist approach. In this section, I turn to the primary theoretical concept used to describe the research participants' construction of adult identities during the years 1959 to 1989: Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning theory. This section considers the main components of this theory as being legitimate peripheral participation in

communities of practice. It is contended in this thesis, that the participants in this research, through participation in multiple communities of practice, created their adult identities.

This section consists of six subsections, and these address various aspects of situated learning and its relevance to the apprenticeship model, such as communities and constellations of practice and legitimate peripheral participation (*ibid.*, 1991; Wenger 1998). Situated learning theory is subjected to a critical analysis to defend its inclusion as the principal underpinning theory for this study.

3.3.1 Apprenticeship as a model of social learning

As indicated in Chapter One of this thesis, the apprenticeship model has attracted interest in recent years, not only from politicians and economists as a method of learning occupational knowledge and skills, but it has also appealed to educationalists as a subject for research into how this model of workplace education can form the basis for an inclusive social theory of learning (Guile & Young, 1998). Apprenticeship remains a globally recognised system of learning whose continuing popularity is, it is suggested, a consequence of being a model, rather than being a specific system of learning (Fuller & Unwin, 2011a).

The apprenticeship model has generally been perceived to contain certain traditional elements of practice which would still be recognised by most people today as defining an apprenticeship. These were that typically, apprenticeships consisted of learning by doing and also had an element of time-serving involved; apprentices specialised in a single craft or trade; entry was controlled and restricted through trade unions, familial social capital or socially constructed ideas of gender specific job roles; indentures were often signed binding all

parties to the apprenticeship agreement, and the type of training offered, based in the workplace, inculcated the apprentice into the 'craft mysteries' and engendered a sense of 'craft pride' (Rikowski, 1999: 65).

On completion of their training, the apprentice would achieve a skilled status as a craftsman (*sic*) and as such, was afforded status and respect in both the work community and wider society. In addition, the new craftsman acquired a measure of long-term job security, called 'trade security' (Ryrie and Weir, 1978: 17) further discussed in Chapter Six, as a contrast to the often more tenuous prospects of the unskilled worker. The respect gained within families and communities, and the potential for secure work prospects, ensured that as Vickerstaff (2007:336) notes, in Britain 'For many working class families in the post-World War II period getting a trade was a key aspiration for their male children'.

Research has also shown that apprenticeships were often closely bound to the local communities in which they were situated with internal labour markets strengthening those bonds by means of a career structure within companies, and using existing employees to source friends and relatives as new apprentices (Fuller & Unwin, 2001). Within these local communities, gaining an apprenticeship, remained a long term goal for generations of young people seeking employment, as well as historically providing the framework for the transition from childhood to adulthood as discussed in Chapter Two. Therefore, the apprenticeship model has a long history of being a socially integrated method of teaching the skills required by local communities and their associated industries, as in the past, these were often closely interlinked.

Before the relatively recent interventions into vocational training by

governments as a consequence of the collapse of the youth labour market (discussed earlier in more detail in Chapter Two), apprenticeships were considered to be inseparable from work; apprentices were employed by individual companies in a dual role as a worker and learner. By way of support for this indivisible relationship, Lave and Wenger confirm that apprenticeship is ‘...a form of education in which work and learning are seamlessly related’ (1991: 86).

As will be further discussed later in Chapter Four, work is itself socially constructed. It consists of ‘...symbolic representations, meanings and interpretations’ (Grint, 2005:46), in which even the acquisition of skills and their very definition, are considered to be contentious concepts (Noon & Blyton, 2007). This position posits that work, even for those engaged in self-employment or working alone, takes place in a network of relations with others, for example other workers, suppliers and customers. Therefore, it is reasonable to extrapolate this idea to encompass the view that learning at work is also a consequence of a set of socially constructed actions, and that the skills and knowledge learned, and the relative values that society places upon them, are also socially constructed. As a theory of learning, Lave and Wenger’s (1991) idea still has considerable influence in promoting an understanding of how learning happens in social spheres such as the workplace, and is introduced in the next subsection as the principal theory underpinning this thesis.

3.3.2 Situated learning theory

Before Lave and Wenger’s (1991) ground-breaking work set out to present learning as part of a social theory of practice, conventional approaches to learning, known as the standard paradigm, inclined towards behaviourist or

individualistic cognitivist theories (Beckett and Hager, 2002). Both these theoretical approaches conceptualised vocational learning as dependent on transmission pedagogies, in which a transferral of ‘...decontextualized knowledge to vocationally specific contexts’ took place (Guile and Young, 1998:174). This approach placed great emphasis on the acquisition of skills, both job-specific and transferrable, in addition to the underpinning theoretical knowledge required to acquire occupational competence.

Situated learning theory (Lave and Wenger, 1991), has its origins in theories of social-culturalism and symbolic interactionism, in which learning is understood as a social process; knowledge and meaning are considered to be created between individuals, rather than within them (Bloomer, 2001). Viewed through this theoretical lens, learners are considered to enter a ‘community of practice’ (discussed in more detail in subsection 3.3.3 of this chapter) as a ‘newcomer’ and within it, progress through a process of ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ centripetally towards the status of an ‘old-timer’. Lave and Wenger (1991:29) propose that the concept of legitimate peripheral participation provides the context in which the ‘...relations between newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artefacts, and communities of knowledge and practice’ may be discussed. Within this social space, knowledge is created and shared by an interaction between participants.

Being a participant of a community of practice also has considerable influence on the formation of identities. Wenger (1998: 153) proposes that identity in practice, ‘...arises out of an interplay of participation and reification’ and because identity is temporal, it is constantly being negotiated through social action. He describes the journey through the community of practice as a ‘trajectory’ which possesses ‘...a momentum of its own’ (*ibid*, 1998: 154).

However, Wenger (1998) also suggests that individual trajectories through the community of practice are not identical. He describes various forms of trajectory which comprise different aspects of the process of participation. These forms consist of: peripheral trajectories in which the participant never becomes a full member; inbound trajectories which describe a 'newcomer' entering a community of practice with the intention of achieving full participation; outbound trajectories which explain the process of leaving it; insider trajectories concerning the continuing evolution of practice which requires renegotiation of identity, and boundary trajectories which involve linking communities of practice together.

Despite the central role that it has played in exposing the mechanisms of apprenticeship learning for examination, situated learning theory has been challenged by academics as being an incomplete account of how learning takes place in socially constructed situations (*inter alia* Fuller and Unwin 1999, 2003a; Fuller, Hodkinson, Hodkinson and Unwin, 2005; Jewson, 2007). Some notable omissions have been detected when analysing this theory, which include lack of societal context and a failure to examine power relationships that exist between newcomer and old-timer in the workplace, and these are discussed later in subsection 3.3.4 of this chapter.

A particular criticism is that it undervalues the roles played by a knowledgeable teacher and formal instruction within communities of practice (Guile and Young, 1998), as these are seemingly considered to be unnecessary for learning to happen in the workplace. Therefore, whilst providing an important window on the world of learning at work, situated learning theory alone, cannot fully explain how apprentices learn, and for a fuller understanding, a more in depth examination of social theories of learning at work is required.

Before proceeding to examine communities of practice, it will be necessary to understand the role played by the learner in them. The next subsection therefore considers an important concept of situated learning theory, which this study uses to explain the position of the research participants as apprentices. Legitimate peripheral participation as newcomers (Lave and Wenger, 1991) in both occupational and social fields, is used to describe how identities are created through a 'nexus of multimembership' (Wenger, 1998:158) of a range of communities of practice.

3.3.3 Legitimate peripheral participation

With their background originally in the field of social anthropology, Lave and Wenger's (1991) research using ethnographic studies of apprenticeships in a range of occupations, including some in traditional societies, suggested that learning was a natural process, occurring whenever individuals co-participate in the shared practices of a community of practice. They argue that the key to understanding learning is the relational network of the workplace, with the collective as the site of learning, rather than the individual (Fuller, 2007). In this understanding of learning, the individual learner is considered to be a legitimate participant on the periphery of a community of practice. In this way, with learning occurring through social practice and interaction, rather than transmission of knowledge, the individual undergoes a process of change from newcomer to old-timer.

Learning is demonstrated by the formation of an identity as a knowledgeable practitioner within that community, as opposed to the acquisition of knowledge products as a consequence of socially shared cognition in the transmission model (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Fuller, 2007). It is therefore considered to be

bound up with social relations and changing identities of mastery and as such, is neither cognitive or constructionist, nor wholly immersed in social interaction. This concept requires learning to be reconsidered in '...social, cultural and historical terms' (Lave, 1991:64) that reflect its position as a social phenomenon in the real world.

In this understanding, learning is believed to be a product of participation and is recognised as a broad transformational process in which it is brought about by the action of becoming, which involves changing identities; in this case from novice to master. Lave explains that the process of changing identities is closely connected to learning because,

'... the process of changing knowledgeable skill is subsumed in processes of changing identity in and through membership in a community of practitioners; and mastery is an organizational, relational characteristic of communities of practice' (1991:64).

In developing their view that learning is a socially constructed phenomenon, Lave and Wenger (1991) propose that learning takes place in the work environment through the social relations of production. It is this interaction that they refer to as legitimate peripheral participation which takes place in socially and historically constructed communities of practice, and reflects its social interactionist origins.

Lave reinforces this idea by stressing that learning, and consequently thinking and knowing, are relations among those engaging in activity '*...in, with, and arising from the socially and culturally structured world*' (1991:68, emphasis as in original). By highlighting the social structure of the world in which learning takes place, socially constructed abstract objects such as knowledge (Blumer, 2002), which may have different values placed upon them by individuals and

societies, are now conceived of as outcomes of dialectical relations between the social world and those engaged in activity within it. The social world and its actors are therefore, constantly being produced and re-produced as a consequence of dialectical activity (Lave, 1991). Thus, the concept of legitimate peripheral participation suggests that knowledge making is a reciprocal process, between the development of a knowledgeable skill and identity, and the continual production and reproduction of the communities of practice that give meaning to that knowledgeable skill: in other words, that they shape each other.

The relationship between newcomers and old-timers, and of legitimate peripheral participation, has always been an essential feature of the apprenticeship model. Situated learning theory positions the site of this learning within communities of practice, which are represented by various trades and industries in the conventional apprenticeship model of learning. This has generally involved placing a young person with one or more experienced workers (a community of practice), from whom the apprentice learns the vocational knowledge and skills necessary to achieve competence in their chosen trade or profession, through a range of socially constructed processes (*inter alia* Lave and Wenger, 1991; Lave, 1991; Fuller and Unwin, 1999). As stated in the introduction to this section, in this thesis, I use situated learning theory to explain the changes undergone by apprentices when constructing adult identities in a 'nexus of multimembership' (Wenger, 1998:158) of communities of practice and these are discussed in the next subsection.

3.3.4 Communities of practice

Situated learning theory proposes that the location in which learning takes place is the community of practice. This can be thought of as a socially constructed

group, activity system or network, in which humans act and react to each other and artefacts, such as tools, skills, knowledge, objects, shared objectives and practice. In this environment, common goals and values are shared, negotiated and changed over time (Wenger, 1998). The actors negotiate their learning pathways within in it, and position themselves within the existing hierarchical power structures, changing roles and identities as their careers evolve. As such, communities of practice can be any socially constructed situation including schools, work or even leisure activities such as sports clubs or amateur dramatic societies, and is a term that has been widely adopted for use in business management practice.

Lave and Wenger describe the community of practice as ‘...a set of relations among persons, activity and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice’ (1991: 98). Wenger (1998) further suggests that individuals simultaneously belong to multiple communities of practice, and may be located in overlapping areas of practice or a ‘nexus of multimembership’ (*ibid.*, 1998: 158). Participation in linked communities of practice may follow any of the trajectories previously described in subsection 3.3.2, and this Wenger (1998) proposes, constitutes our identities.

Moreover, as these communities are continually produced and reproduced, they are not constant and so, can be regarded as dynamic structures that occur over time. By participating in socially situated activities, it is argued that the learner becomes a member of a community, and because membership is achieved and a relational process is initiated, learning takes place (Fuller, *et al.*, 2005); a process described as ‘...increasing participation in communities of practice’ by ‘...the whole person acting in the world’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991:49).

It is suggested that in this social learning process, a young person's motivation to learn is activated and maintained by creating relationships with older, more experienced people and the subject matter (Fuller and Unwin, 1999). It is also believed that the apprentice is motivated to learn by an awareness that learning brings them the benefits of acquiring an adult identity at the same time as gaining an occupational status, and that this occurs when '...a relationship is established between what they learn, its application and the development of adult identities' (Fuller and Unwin, 1998:160). In addition, learning is also stimulated by the gap between their own knowledge and that of the expert. This concept builds on work on cultural-historical activity theory by the Russian theorists Vygotsky (1978; 1986) and Leontiev (1981), particularly Vygotsky's 'zone of proximal development' which he described as:

...the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers (1978: 86).

Most significantly for this thesis, the situated learning concept, also lends itself to provide an explanation of how participants learn the range of social skills and knowledge that lie outside the narrow confines of occupation and the workplace and so, provides an understanding of maturation into the adult social world (Goodwin, 2007). Through becoming legitimate peripheral participants in a 'nexus of multimembership' (Wenger, 1998: 158), it is proposed in this thesis that apprentices learned the range of skills and knowledge required to achieve adulthood during the research timeframe. It can therefore, be considered to position apprenticeships and their role in the maturation process, firmly within wider societal, as well as occupational contexts.

Because some social alignments are too diverse, too broad or too sparsely composed to be described as a single community of practice, Wenger (1998) proposes that they are better regarded as constellations of practice. This is true for ‘...large configurations (the global economy, speakers of a language, a city, a social movement) but also of some smaller ones (a factory, an office or a school)’ (*ibid.*:1998: 127). A constellation of practice is a means to understand how communities of practice may be grouped together for some purposes because they are interrelated, although dissimilar in structure.

As such, a constellation of practice is concerned with communities which share commonalities and boundaries which define two different types of diversity: ‘*Diversity internal to practice and defined through mutual engagement*’, and ‘*Diversity caused by boundaries and stemming from the lack of mutual engagement*’ (Wenger 1998: 128-9, emphasis as in original). The members of the first type share perspectives and identities through situation, but not necessarily a homogeneity of practice. To use one of Wenger’s (*ibid.* 1998) examples above as an illustration, this may be different departments of a factory as they share histories, consist of related enterprises, and serve a common cause. Therefore the community of practice consisting of workers spraying car bodies in a car production plant, belongs to the same constellation of practice as those communities working in the offices of the payroll department, or the car assembly line of the same company.

This concludes the presentation of situated learning theory as this thesis’ principal underpinning theory. However, as was noted in the introduction to this chapter, this theory is not without criticism. The next subsection addresses some of this analysis, and provides a defence of its use in this study.

3.3.5 A critical analysis of situated learning theory

As was previously suggested in this section, the concept of 'communities of practice' is a contentious one, with claims that Lave and Wenger use an uncritical interpretation of the idea of community as a '...symbolically constructed sense of belonging' (Jewson, 2007:70) and that they fail to provide a clear and precise definition of the term. With its overtones of nostalgic reminiscences of a 'golden age', the term also implies by the use of the word community, connotations of unity within it, whereas the realities of the workplace are often anything but unified. The word 'community' suggests that those within a workplace, whether they are the employees (both newcomers and old-timers), management and shareholders of the company, all share a common interest, which as Fuller (2007:20) notes, '...the history of industrial disputes and conflicts as well as Marxist and neo-Marxist theorizations of workplace relations would clearly contradict'.

Although the intrinsic tensions of the newcomer/old-timer relationship, in which the old-timers are to be inevitably replaced by the newcomers, are identified by Lave (1991), little deliberation has been devoted to the negative impact that various conflicts of interest which exist in the workplace, have upon work communities and the natural disparities that emerge when humans participate together in any social practice. For example, situated learning theory assumes that an experienced and skilled worker will happily train the learner, in addition to carrying out their own set work tasks. Whereas in reality, the training aspect of work is occasionally resented by the more experienced worker, and the apprentice is considered to be an impediment that hinders the swift completion of work tasks and may even have a detrimental financial impact through a loss of bonuses (Vickerstaff, 2007).

Jewson, (2007) further argues that Lave and Wenger (1991) similarly fail to adequately explain how communities of practice exist within a societal context as the studies within their book encompass a range of societies and are presented without comment on their contrasting settings. No explanation is offered in their analysis, of the disparity of structural differentiation that existed between the societies in their research and the effect that this had on their communities of practice. In broad terms, structural differentiation can be thought of as the relative complexity of individual societies, and those researched were as diverse as those in developing South America and the advanced society of the industrialised United States. Some of these societies had lower levels of structural differentiation than others, which gave the individual little choice of which community of practice to belong. In societies with a higher level of structural differentiation, providing a greater degree of choice of career paths to the individual, a range of communities of practice become available, to which multiple membership is common. Yet situated learning theory and its associated communities of practice are presented by Lave and Wenger as applicable to all societies without any further reference to context.

It is further suggested by Jewson (2007), that a range of alternative analyses of the concept of communities of practice such as network analysis and actor-network theory, help to provide clearer understandings of relations within socially constructed organisations. He contends that Lave and Wenger fail to address the organisation of the communities of practice, in which a greater range of varied roles are required, other than just 'newcomer' and 'old-timer'. In this reading, participants are required to move between different roles subject to development trajectories as their careers evolve and develop over time, for instance as insider trajectories (Wenger, 1998).

Fuller and Unwin (2002) address this concept of changing roles when they propose that an individual can have multiple roles according to circumstance. They suggest that '...the same worker can be seen as novice, competent or expert (and therefore also as a 'teacher') depending on the situation and task under consideration' (*ibid.*, 2002:100), an idea that clearly demonstrates the fluid nature of communities of practice.

While retaining the concept of learning as a social practice, additional interpretations of how people learn in social situations are possible. For example, Engeström's activity theory (1994) supports the view that people learn through interaction in social situations, but contends that their learning is also advanced through incorporating elements of structured teaching and learning. Engeström (1994) proposes that neither the traditional methods of education, or learning by imitation and practice, provide an adequate explanation of learning in dynamic workplaces. He argues that an essential function is still performed by purposeful training in the workplace as 'Investigative deep level learning is relatively rare without instruction or intentional self-instruction' (*ibid.*, 1994: 48). Accordingly, by restating the importance of additional directed instruction, he reclaims the central role played by a knowledgeable teacher in the workplace learning process, which Guile and Young (1998) claim that situated learning theory fails to address.

Situated learning theory has been shown to be in itself, an imperfect theory. But later work by both Lave (1991) and Wenger (1998) has gone some way to clarify their original theory, as has the critical analysis undertaken by academics (*inter alia* Fuller and Unwin 1999, 2003a; Fuller, Hodkinson, Hodkinson and Unwin, 2005; Jewson, 2007). However, in this thesis, I argue that Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning theory is the concept that most accurately

reflects the apprenticeship learning process. Fuller and Unwin (2003a: 407) suggest that it offers a perspective of learning, as participation, and describe it as providing ‘... a rich conceptual framework for analysing the processes by which apprentices become (full) participants in a community of practice’. I also consider it to be an explanation of how the socialisation of apprentices into adulthood occurs through a ‘nexus of multimembership’ (Wenger, 1998: 158) discussed in the earlier subsection on communities of practice in this chapter. It is to this idea that I return to in the next subsection.

3.3.6 Entry to multiple communities of practice as a legitimate peripheral participant

Earlier in this chapter, I suggested that the concept of legitimate peripheral participation can also be drawn upon to describe the construction of identity by the apprentice through a ‘nexus of multimembership’ (Wenger, 1998: 158) of communities of practice, and this interpretation is an essential theoretical concept for this thesis. In this section, I develop this concept to explain how apprenticeships provided a social arena in which this could take place.

Vickerstaff (2007: 341) describes an apprenticeship as providing ‘...a sheltered transition into adulthood’ and refers to post-war apprenticeships as an ‘...apprenticeship in masculinity’ (2007: 339). Goodwin (2007) in his critique of Lave and Wenger’s theory, argues that it merely lays the foundations for extending their concepts of situated learning and communities of practice, and if further developed, would contribute to a better understanding of the transition from childhood to maturity. Lave and Wenger (1991: 32) refer to this broader social dimension to their theory with the suggestion that children are ‘...quintessentially legitimate peripheral participants in adult social worlds’ which

suggests that full participation in society as an adult requires joining a constellation of communities of practice.

In his interpretation of situated learning theory, which I support and use in this thesis, Goodwin (2007) maintains that by gradually acquiring the norms of adult behaviour, adolescents move from the edge of various adult communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation as novices or newcomers, towards full participation in adult society. The newcomer cannot participate fully, neither in adult society nor in the occupational community of practice at work, until these norms have been assimilated during the learning process.

These are considered to be a difficult progressions because the attitudes and behaviours of the adults encountered in these new communities of practice, are considered to be different from those displayed by the adults previously met by the novice in the family or at school (Goodwin, 2007). Additionally, a young person may experience a disparity between the realities of adult roles and the work experience, and preconceived ideas of adult life, which Goodwin maintains can lead to a 'reality shock' (2007:98).

As discussed previously in this chapter, in contemporary Western society, adolescents are bound by both convention and legislation as they are often considered to be neither children nor adults, both in their own minds and in the view of society. Presently in England, the earliest age that an adolescent can leave school is 16, with the stipulation that they enter an officially recognised training programme or a job with training, or some form of work combined with part-time education until the age of 18. At 16, they cannot marry or enlist in the armed forces without parental permission; they cannot legally purchase alcohol, drive a car, get a mortgage, vote in local or parliamentary elections or even see

a film rated as '18' by the British Board of Film Classification (British Board of Film Classification, 2013). All these can be considered normal adult activities in contemporary society, but not for the adolescent as they are not yet full participants in the adult world. Yet they are able to partially engage in the adult world through legitimate peripheral participation in a community of practice at work, and as argued in this thesis, to participate in other adult communities of practice through it.

It is also suggested (Leszczynski & Strough, 2008) that an important area of identity formation, that is gender specific identities and behaviours, can be learned or intensified, during this school to work process. As discussed in Chapter Two, historically boys entered apprenticeships in their early to mid-teens and finished or 'came out', after six or seven years when they reached maturity (Hanawalt, 1993). From this timing, it can be reasoned that a male youth would be bound in apprenticeship during that period of life when establishing an adult identity is considered to be of crucial importance.

Leszczynski and Strough (2008) argue that the gender intensification during this crucial formative period may have a variety of causes such as the effects of puberty, socialisation by parents and peers as well as cognitive maturation. However, the importance of peers, particularly in homosocial environments, is emphasised as key in a social-cognitive understanding of gender identity as they may '...cue gender-typed aspects of identity in specific situations' (*ibid.*, 2008: 721), such as those experienced in close personal situations afforded by apprenticeships. As will be revealed in the next chapter, this form of self-stereotyping is also an aspect of social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), where individuals assume what they see as the positive aspects of a group's identity.

In conclusion, by participating in the adult occupational community of practice of work, the apprentice also participates in multiple communities of practice in which they follow separate trajectories (Wenger, 1998). Therefore, work can be seen as providing a social environment that allows a youth a degree of engagement with the adult social world. Through legitimate peripheral participation in the community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) provided by work, apprenticeships can be perceived as granting access to multiple communities of practice, or rather a constellation of practice in which adult identities can be constructed as a 'nexus of multimembership' (Wenger, 1998: 158).

3.4 Summary

In this chapter, I have identified a range of theories which will be used throughout this thesis to examine my contention that serving an apprenticeship during the mid to late 20th century, contributed to the participants' induction into adulthood, and the creation of an adult identity through a nexus of multimembership in a constellation of practice. I have used the framework of symbolic interactionism to conceptualise individuals as reflective beings who shape, and are shaped by social interaction with others around them. Therefore, the negotiation and renegotiation of identities has been revealed as an ongoing process. I have described by using Bourdieu's theories, how communities reproduce themselves through the use of social capital, by sharing views and dispositions: that is, their habitus. I have also contended that the lens of bounded agency allows us to understand how individuals make choices in the light of their structural circumstances and of their own ability to exercise personal agency.

The concept of 'standard adulthood' was introduced as a 'convenient fiction' (Lee, 2001) or a trope, to describe a collection of personal goals, and a recognised status to which young people aspired during the research timeframe. Similarly, the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' was used to describe a standard against which locally constructed types of masculinity were measured. From this discussion of situated learning theory and most significantly the concept of legitimate peripheral participation, the relevance of these terms to the maturation process undergone by a youth during an apprenticeship has been clarified. Whilst not providing a complete explanation of the maturation process, situated learning theory provides a starting point for a greater understanding of youth transitions. The next chapter examines the place of work in society and investigates how it impacts on young people's identity formation.

Chapter 4: Work and Society

There ain't no short-handled shovels,
No axes, saws nor picks,
I'm bound to stay
Where you sleep all day,
Where they hung the jerk
That invented work
In the Big Rock Candy Mountains.
(Harry McClintock, 1928, *In the Big Rock Candy Mountain*, Chicago, Calumet Music Co.)

Work is the curse of the drinking classes.
(Attributed to Oscar Wilde in *The Life of Oscar Wilde*, H. Pearson, 1946)

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I examined the range of theories used to interpret the findings of this research. In this chapter I seek to position within this thesis, the important social significance of work and by association, its historical fundamental symbiotic relationship with apprenticeship: that is the interdependence of vocational learning, identity formation and work. Through a discussion of the meaning and function of work, its relationship with society, and the identification of individuals as workers within the modern world, this chapter examines work as an important site in which both individual and collective identities are created. It illustrates how industrialisation, through the division of labour, contributed to the creation of self-identities, and how social closure produces group identities. Consequently, it explores and identifies, why the individual replaced the family unit as the primary unit of labour, which created an occupationally defined identity.

The significance of the quotations at the beginning of this chapter will be

examined later, but they hint at the idea that defining work's purpose in society is not a simple task. Instead they infer that work is a complex, socially constructed activity that is viewed differently by various sectors of society, and whose meanings have changed throughout history.

The chapter is divided into four sections. Following this introduction, the second section, examines the function of work as a '... primary element in social organization' (Casey, 1995: 21). Its subsections discuss the interconnection of work and identity: work's definition and relationship with society, and go on to describe work's social purpose by referring to classical theories, principally those by the 'gang of three' (Grint, 2005:85), Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber.

The third section of this chapter discusses work's important role in the formation of a masculine adult identity, and so links to this thesis' main question: 'In what ways did serving an apprenticeship influence the apprentices' transition to adulthood in London during the period 1959-1989?' This section uses social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) to illustrate how the workplace shapes and influences the formation of a gendered occupational and individual identity for adolescent male apprentices, through the processes of socialisation and social closure at work (Parkin, 2001). The final section provides a summary of the themes discussed in this chapter.

4.2 The relationship between work and society

As a significant proportion of our lives are spent working, travelling to and from work, or thinking about work (Edgell, 2012), it is reasonable to conclude that our identities are to some extent defined by it as a social institution (*inter alia*, Ashton and Field, 1976; Willis, 1979). Work itself, is considered to be a rich and

diverse field of human social activity (Noon and Blyton, 2007) and provided the setting in which apprenticeships were traditionally located. Therefore, this section seeks to explain how work presents an important site for adolescents to learn not only the skills necessary to achieve occupational competence, but also presents a social arena in which an adult status can be attained by a youth, through joining other communities of practice in an adult constellation of practice (*inter alia.*, Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Goodwin, 2007).

It is divided into three subsections, each of which deal with different aspects of work. The first subsection seeks a definition for work. The next subsection 4.2.2, analyses work from a classical sociological viewpoint, drawing on the work of Marx, Durkheim and Weber. The final subsection describes the changes to work's relationship with society.

4.2.1 The meaning of work

The two quotations at the opening of this chapter originate from widely disparate genres, but both have something pertinent to say about the purpose of work in human society. McClintock's song, about the imaginings of 1920s American itinerant workers, hints at an ideal of a life without the necessity to work-a fabled land of ease and plenty, a wish that is founded on an idea which appears to have a long history in human societies. In medieval Europe the concept of a work-free life, was expressed figuratively by the ideal of The Land of Cockaigne, a Utopian state in which people lived without the need to work (Pleij, 2003). This notion was anticipated by other fanciful places of perfection including, Cloud-cuckoo-land, in the play *The Birds* by Aristophanes, written in 4th Century BC Classical Greece, which in turn may even have had an antecedent in Biblical tales of lands flowing with milk and honey. But Wilde's

attributed epigram, parodying a widely held 19th century moral opinion (attributed to Marx) that 'Drink is the curse of the working class', suggests that the concept of work has not always been embraced with the same degree of enthusiasm by all members of society throughout history, or even between cultures and so, is socially constructed. Therefore, as a social construct, the sociological meanings of work are now considered.

It has been suggested that it is often difficult to identify the purpose and meaning of work (*inter alia*, Grint, 2005, Noon and Blyton, 2007, Strangleman and Warren, 2008, Humphries, 2010), because societies have struggled over time to decide whether its purpose lies in its value as an economic imperative, or in the variety of social functions that it serves. In the industrialised West, a range of diverse writers from John Ruskin (2004) to Richard Sennett (2008), have found a type of romanticism about the concept of work and in particular, craftsmanship. This tends to idealise it and elevate it to an art form, in which the fulfilment of an innate desire to create for its own sake is possible.

Such romantic idealism portrayed work as both dignified, necessary, and an honourable and useful endeavour for humankind. During the 18th and 19th centuries, work's admirable qualities were often proclaimed in the form of idealised paintings (for examples see Figures 1 and 2 on page 108), and reflected the contemporary debates surrounding morals and values, which includes the concepts of duty and calling (Strangleman and Warren, 2008). In Figure 1 '*Work*', a painting by Ford Madox Brown (1852-65) described by Curtis (1992) as full of symbolism, the artist depicts the central nature of work in Victorian society and in its collective consciousness. In this picture, the artist



Figure 1 Work, by Ford Madox Brown 1852-65 ©Manchester Art Gallery.



Figure 2 An Iron Forge, by Joseph Wright of Derby 1772 @ Tate Gallery
Image released under Creative Commons CC BY-NC-ND 3.0 (Unported).

has created a social panorama in which the central position in the painting occupied by the labourers, exemplifies work's vital role in Victorian society (Barringer, 2012). All around them ranges the rest of society: the aristocratic horse riders in the background, aloof from work; middle class intellectuals on the right (the man in the hat is Thomas Carlyle, the other is Fredrick Denison Maurice, both prominent thinkers of the time); the ragged street children in the foreground (the black ribbons indicating that they are orphans); middle class women on the left (one of whom is attempting to distribute religious tracts to the labourers-an accepted type of 'work' for someone in her social position) and the seller of weeds, herbs, flowers and grasses who occupies one of the lower rungs of society (Curtis, 1992). One version of the painting even includes biblical quotations on its original frame to reinforce the religious and moral aspects of work discussed later in this chapter.

The labourers are engaged in the construction of a water main in Hampstead, at that time a village on the edge of London, as part of the New River Company's water supply. The workmen themselves are shown in heroic poses, with strong muscles and appear unfeasibly clean for the work that they are engaged in. Water and cleanliness were important themes during this period as frequent outbreaks of cholera were common, particularly in London, and the provision of a water main is symbolic of the cleansing power of work on the soul (Curtis, 1992).

The second painting, *An Iron Forge* by Joseph Wright of Derby (1772), although dating earlier from the 18th century, is another heroic portrayal of everyday work (Perkins, 2001). This forms part of a collection of paintings concerning blacksmiths and their forges, which concerned '...contemporary ideas about labor' (Siegrfried, 1999: 39) that later influenced Victorian values. In this

painting the forgemaster stands with his arms crossed, contemplating his family. Once again, the main figure is healthy and well-muscled and his position in the midst of his family reinforces the virtues of work. The relative prosperity of the family is demonstrated by the quality of their clothes and illustrates the ability of this man to act as a provider for his family. It embodies a '...new masculine ideal' (Solkin, 2003:181), with the female figures depicted in a state of vulnerability and dependence. The composition of the painting, with the family scene bathed in the light from the forge, also gives an almost religious feel to the subject (Perkins, 2001), further demonstrating work's elevated role in society.

During the Victorian era, and its rapid industrialisation of the economy, these values became conceptualised by the image of the 'Respectable Working Man' (a theme that I shall return to later in this chapter), whose independence and self-sufficiency marked him as a paradigm of working class respectability to which all Victorian workers were encouraged to aspire. This is an ideal which still resonates within modern British society (Thompson, F., 1988). But as shall be explored later in this chapter, other feelings such as alienation, were generated by the advent of industrialised society, in which individuals experienced a separation from the activity of work and eventually, even from their fellow human beings (Marx, 1970).

However, sociologists have struggled to provide a definition of what exactly is meant by the term 'work'. For example, is a Painter and Decorator working when wallpapering a room in his/her own home? Are undertaking domestic housekeeping tasks and even parenting forms of work? How can some activities be considered to be both work and leisure? For instance playing a sport, or gardening, may be work for professional sportspersons and gardeners,

but are performed as a leisure activity by many others. Such examples as these demonstrate that the very concept of work can be ambiguous and difficult to define in simple terms. Clearly, a universal definition of work is lacking.

Grint (2005) suggests that governments in developed industrialised countries have formed a definition of work in which people are considered to be economically active or economically inactive according to their employment status. On closer examination, he suggests, this definition actually means that the people defined as in work, are those in formal employment and paying Income Tax and National Insurance contributions, or their local equivalents. However, he argues such a narrow description of working is shown to be inadequate when some people ‘...especially women with domestic responsibilities, appear by this definition to spend so long doing nothing’ (*ibid.*2005: 8).

Consequently, work can have many meanings and purposes; work, or at least paid employment in developed capitalist economies, provides amongst other things, the means in the form of money, to subsist in terms of housing, food and so on (Noon and Blyton, 2007). It also presents a means of achieving consumer power by enabling commodities to be purchased, and it offers intrinsic rewards. Furthermore, work has at various times, fulfilled a moral and sometimes religious, obligation within society with the work ethic embraced by a range of cultures. This can be expressed not only as the more familiar Protestant work ethic, in which hard work signified membership of a select group to be saved on Judgement Day (Strangleman and Warren, 2008), but also in that of Catholic, Islamic and Buddhist work ethics too (Noon and Blyton, 2007). This spiritual dimension illustrates the way a person can achieve a state of grace through work, and declares it to be a suitable application of human endeavour.

Similarly, a moral obligation to work suggests that work is universally regarded as a virtuous, dignified activity. As such, it is associated with characteristics such as ‘...diligence, punctuality, obedience, honesty and sobriety’ (Noon and Blyton, 2007: 58). This reading of work as an obligation, lends itself to notions of self-sufficiency and of being a good provider, with the added implication that these are the values that define masculinity within the paternalistic, male dominated, advanced industrialised societies that developed during the 18th and 19th centuries. During this period of industrialisation, notions of the ‘proper’ role of both men and women’s work, led to an ideology that placed men in the breadwinner role as the primary if not only, source of family income in respectable families (Grint, 2005).

The number of different ways that industrial and post-industrial societies classify work also allows distinctions to be made between occupational activities and different groups of employees. Work may be defined by status for example, white collar/blue collar, or how it is performed, manual/non-manual; skilled/semi-skilled/unskilled. The distinction may also be temporal: part-time; full-time; permanent; temporary, or even by location: at home or in a place of work (Noon and Blyton, 2007).

The importance placed by a society on the type of work itself, can also be a contentious issue, with categories of work being assigned differing levels of respect according to established cultural standards and definitions of skill. As an example, Claxton, Lucas and Webster (2010:2) note that societies place ‘...strange judgements of value on practical accomplishments’. They argue that ‘Cellists, surgeons and architects are esteemed, while folk singers, occupational therapists and civil engineers get less recognition’ (*ibid*: 2010: 2).

The distinctions between different types of work and the value judgements placed on them by society, are varied, but most have origins in Classical Greek thought, in which the philosophical ideas of *episteme* and *techne* defined knowledge and craft as different types of human learning. Work was considered to be a necessary evil within this ancient culture, and an activity from which society's elite exempted themselves, leaving work to be the sole preserve of slaves and the lower strata of society. The elite were concerned instead, with the pursuit of pure thought that they considered to be essential to engage in the more important matters of politics and war.

Grint (2005) argues that Aristotle and Plato shared a dislike of the labouring classes because they were dependent on others to earn a living, and therefore, they lacked the time required to engage in politics. This he contends, led them to believe that labour '...became conceived not as the foundation of the realm of politics, but as its underminer' (*ibid.*, 2005: 14). Work therefore, was an ignoble activity and anyone that had to work by necessity, was by association also considered ignoble. Edgell (2012:6) describes this as the '...moral indignity of manual work' and describes its historical persistence through time as 'cultural lag'.

This ancient pre-eminence of thought and dislike of manual labour, was founded on the idea that mind and body operate on different levels, with the mind regarded as being pure and capable of knowing God and as such, existing on a higher level, whereas the body was considered to be degenerate and corruptible and thus deserving an inferior status (Claxton, *et al*, 2010). The notion of primacy of the mind was further reinforced by early Christian beliefs in which work was,

...imposed upon humanity as a direct result of original sin and was a means therefore, to avoid the temptations of the devil and the flesh, as well as a penance (Grint, 2005: 16).

Casey (1995) suggests that the Protestant Reformation refined this view of work by promoting Martin Luther's idea that work was natural to the 'fallen man' and that to maintain oneself by work, was to be seen as a way of serving God. In so doing, work was raised to being a calling and hard work was now seen as a way of easing guilt and became essential to leading a good, pious, Christian life. This view was further reaffirmed by the philosophers of the Enlightenment in Europe, who lacking modern medical knowledge, were unable to attribute the complex processes of thought as being merely a function of an organ of the body (Claxton, *et al*, 2010). As a consequence, modern Western societies whilst understanding the necessity to work, still place a higher value on work that is considered to require abstract thought rather than manual labour.

Within work's classifications, occupational groups declare their distinctive and separate natures by emphasising the difference in knowledge and skills employed in their work activities, a process described as social closure (Parkin, 2001). Originating from the Weberian concept of open and closed social relations, this is a mechanism in which individuals that share a common interest, act collectively to form groups, and so legitimise their status. By excluding others from the group, they can create a distinctive identity (Noon and Blyton, 2007) and limit any benefits accruing from membership to its own members, and this is a premise shared by SIT (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) discussed in Chapter Three.

For social closure to take place, three sub-processes must simultaneously occur (Noon and Blyton, 2007). The first is an ideological process in which

individuals recognise shared values and ideas. This is how a sense of 'craft pride' (Rikowski, 1999) is engendered in a person and is usually reinforced symbolically, with the use of distinctive trade specific language and ceremonies such as the apprenticeship indentures and 'coming out' rituals, discussed later in this thesis. The next sub-process is political, whereby members of the group act in a collective manner, to pursue mutual interests. Examples of such activities would be membership of a trade union, or of a professional body. The last process is material where the tools and technology of the work activity are appropriated by the group membership, and some degree of control over the work process and task allocation is achieved by the group.

Through social closure, the members of the group restrict and control entry to the trade or profession by setting entry criteria, and in so doing, gain some protection from the forces of the free market (Noon and Blyton, 2007). In this way, apprenticeship and other associated systems, previously served as a means of controlling entry to a wide range of occupations and professions, and simultaneously created strong occupational identities for those within them.

In conclusion, as a social construct, work is not a solitary activity but a social activity, which consists of '...symbolic representations, meanings and interpretations' (Grint, 2005:46). In a study of over six hundred autobiographical accounts of apprenticeship during the British Industrial Revolution, Humphries (2010) confirms the socially classified nature of work. For her authors as children, whether various domestic tasks such as childminding were defined as work, depended on the task's social situation. Humphries' analysis reveals that tasks undertaken within the family were not considered to be work, but became work when performed for outsiders and so '...it was not the type of task but the social relations within which it occurred that signalled work' (2010: 174).

Therefore, what defines work, and how it is perceived, appears to be dependent upon social context (Noon and Blyton, 2007).

Grint (2005:6) supports this opinion and expands it further by suggesting that work,

...tends to be an activity that transforms nature and is usually undertaken in social situations, but exactly what counts as work is dependent on the specific social circumstances under which such activities are undertaken and, critically, how these circumstances and activities are interpreted by those involved.

From the preceding definitions, it can be understood that the social nature and meaning of an activity, is what classifies it as work or non-work to the individual. Consequently, work is located within wider society as a worthwhile use of human effort by relating it to the society's temporal, spatial, spiritual and cultural conditions. Therefore, it can serve a variety of functions within a society, ranging from providing a means of existence, to being a religious obligation and a means of serving God.

The discipline imposed upon the individual by taking part in work, also has direct moral implications within society. Due to works' primary status in society, this accordingly leads on to values such as duty, honesty, diligence and punctuality to also become highly regarded by that society as decent, desirable and virtuous qualities. These qualities later become assimilated and idealised to reflect that which society requires of its members, and are learned both implicitly and explicitly, by apprentices as a part of the 'hidden curriculum' of work (Casey, 1995). Additionally, the manner in which different types of work are arranged in hierarchies to reflect the degree of importance placed upon them by each society, provides a social structure within which, individuals may

define their identities.

This subsection has sought to provide a definition of what actually constitutes work. The distinctions drawn between different forms of work have been shown to originate in Classical Greek thought, and work's social, religious and moral aspects have been considered alongside that of its necessity as a means of existence. A discussion of romanticised ideals of work have identified it as a deeply embedded concept within society. This subsection has concluded that it is a socially situated activity which relies on its social context for classification. In the next section, the function of work is further considered through the lens of classical theories of sociology, to illustrate how the division of labour contributed to notions of identity.

4.2.2 Classical approaches to work and the division of labour

Over time, attempts have been made to create an understanding of work's meaning and purpose by sociologists and others concerned with work's role in society. Here, by discussing in broad terms the impact of the division of labour on societies, and its associated creation of occupational identities, the classical approaches to work predominantly developed by what Grint terms the 'gang of three' (2005:85); Marx, Weber and Durkheim are discussed. Later in this thesis, I use aspects of their work in the analysis of the findings.

The work of these three prominent thinkers have provided the foundations for the way that work is analysed in sociology (Strangleman and Warren, 2008), with each of their contributions offering a different perspective. They all were concerned to some degree with the division of labour: that is the way that a society allocates and organises work for its members (*ibid.*, 2008). The division of labour is important for this thesis because it by this fundamental action, that

the creation of distinct occupations and their associated identities was made possible, and through the process of social closure (Parkin, 2001), shaped the social relationships encountered at the workplace and influenced identity formation in apprentices.

Marx's interest in work arose from the social fragmentation, disintegration and conflict caused by the capitalist industrial society as it developed around him. Durkheim concentrated on the social solidarity, control and integration aspects of work. Whereas Weber concerned himself with developing a theory of rationality and bureaucracy caused by industrial society's version of work (Grint, 2005).

Marx's ideas (1970; Marx and Engels, 2002) had their origins in French socialist theory, the German philosophy of Hegel, and British political economy including the work of Adam Smith (Strangleman & Warren, 2008), in particular Smith's ideas on the division of labour. For Marx, work had a fundamental function in human society, both essential and relational. Therefore, any understanding of society had to include an understanding of the meaning of work within it. He suggested that work was fundamental to the human condition as it distinguishes the human species from animals. Humans alone he argued, have the capacity to produce their own means of subsistence by acting on the world in order to live, whereas animals merely live off of the world. Work and the sphere of production, provided humanity with the medium through which its self-realisation may be achieved and so in essence for Marx, it contained the secret of humanity (Grint, 2005, Strangleman and Warren, 2008).

For Marx, modern industrialised capitalist societies were just a stage in the evolutionary process, from primitive societies through feudalism, to eventually

form a socialist model (Strangleman & Warren, 2008). During its capitalist phase, society had produced a polarisation within itself between the owners of the means of production, and those reliant upon work for cash wages, as a consequence of a conflict of interests (Marx, 1970). Such a divergence arose Marx argued, because work would become increasingly specialised through the division of labour, in order to meet the growing demands of the industrialised capitalist society. In turn, this would produce a de-humanising effect which he termed alienation, which he expressed as having four forms: product; activity; species and social (*ibid.*, 1970).

Through the process of alienation, the worker first loses control of the production and ownership of their produce. Through increased specialisation they also become detached from the act of working, and work becomes an instrumental activity-a means to an end, which is to earn wages to support the worker's lifestyle (Noon & Blyton, 2007). Next as an outcome of the previous processes, they become alienated from humanity as it is work that separates humans from animals (Marx, 1970). Lastly, the worker having lost their sense of identity and humanity, becomes estranged from society.

Durkheim's interest also lay in society's transition from feudalism to capitalism and the impact which it had on the people within it, and he analysed traditional and modern societies to contrast their organisation. Like Marx (1970), he was interested in the effect that the division of labour had on society, but instead Durkheim argued that the division of labour, far from having a negative impact on society, provided it with a foundation on which individual freedom could be established (Grint, 2005). Indeed, with reference to the aims of this thesis, Durkheim contends that the individual's identity was a consequence of industrialisation, with the associated development of the occupational identities

that defined the division of labour, and the subsequent changes that industrialisation has brought about (Casey, 1995).

Durkheim reasoned that through the increasing division of labour, communities would become more interdependent and that their differences, rather than their similarities, would unite them (Casey, 1995, Edgell, 2012). Durkheim's ideal society was essentially a meritocracy, where individuals' abilities and qualifications would ensure that they found appropriate work. In this society, occupation would be key to locating and identifying individuals within it (Casey, 1995). However, he conceded that as contemporary society was unable to sustain that meritocratic aspiration, people could be forced by social inequality and what he termed an abnormal division of labour, into unsuitable positions. This Durkheim argued, would cause a lack of moral authority through loss of attachment to work, or a meaningless of work he called *anomie* (Grint, 2005). It was a lack of cohesion, he argued, that was the cause of tensions and conflicts in society (Edgell, 2012), rather than alienation as argued by Marx.

Another consequence of the imperfect division of labour within society would be that people would become to feel socially isolated and that a greater gap between individuals, their families and the state would be created. Durkheim anticipated that this detachment would be overcome by the creation of occupational and professional groups, perhaps in the image of a dynamic version of the trade guilds (Edgell, 2012), to intercede between the needs of the state and individual, which suggests that without such mediation, he thought that *anomie* would triumph (Grint, 2005).

As the last of the 'gang of three' (Grint, 2005: 85), Max Weber's views can now be considered. Like Marx and Durkheim, Weber was interested in the impact of

the division of labour on society, but also in its relationship to the rationalism that capitalist industrial societies produced in the West. He contended that as industrialised societies developed, they became increasingly rationalised, which produces specialisations and classes, and these actions were a consequence of calculated behaviours within those societies (*ibid.* 2005). Weber saw the increasing specialisation and stratification that the mass production of goods produced in society, as a sign of society's efficiency (Casey, 1995, Strangleman and Warren, 2008). The creation of a bureaucratic class was a logical outcome of this process and was necessary to oversee the complex processes that were involved in the mass production of consumer goods.

The creation of different classes within society Weber believed, was achieved whenever a number of individuals had a sizeable portion of their life chances determined by their economic power within society and so in theory, there could exist as many classes as there are occupations (Grint, 2005). Weber suggests that these classes are a product of the economic situation and are closely related to market forces, and as previously discussed, that they identify themselves through the process of social closure (Parkin, 2001).

The theories of the 'gang of three' (Grint, 2005: 85) contain different perspectives on the effects of the allocation of work within a society and the identities and class structures that are thus formed. For Marx, the class structure of society was a direct consequence of the tensions within it, caused by the division of labour polarising the interests of society's members. Durkheim considered the division of labour to be a unifying opportunity for a meritocratic society, with increasing levels of work specialisation leading to a greater degree of interdependence, but he conceded that this could only happen under the auspices of professional groups to prevent social isolation. Crucially, he saw the

creation of individual identities to be a consequence of industrialisation and its creation of occupational identities. Lastly, Weber saw the increasing specialisation of work creating a stratified society as an outcome of a rationalised, calculated, efficient economic system. For him, classes were created as products of the economic system and directly linked to market forces. But for ‘the gang of three’, the division of labour and its implied occupational identities, was the catalyst for change within societies.

In this subsection, the theories of Marx, Durkheim and Weber have been very briefly outlined to present the division of labour as an important development in the construction of individual identity, and of how individuals that were similarly effected by life chances, formed social classes. These ideas will be returned to later in this thesis, to help to explain how the research participants formed their own identities. How societies and their relationship to work changed over time, will be addressed next in this section.

4.2.3 Work’s changing relationship to society and the formation of self

Work was identified in 4.2.1 of this section as a socially constructed activity, which could be classified by the social context in which it took place. As a social action, it is dynamic and consequently, its relationship to society and people has changed throughout history depending on varying social norms and changes to economic structure. This subsection offers a brief exploration of how the relationship between work, society and the individual and its influence on the formation of self, has changed over time. Importantly for this study, it proposes that the basic unit of production has changed from the family unit to the individual, and illustrates how that shift has contributed to the creation of individual identities.

Historically, work's meanings have varied as a consequence of the societies in which it was situated. From the time of human society's earliest beginnings, estimated to be around 40,000 years ago (Edgell, 2012), when work consisted solely of activities which provided a means of existence, it has undergone changes which have altered its relations to the people within those societies. However, as I will explore in this subsection, the relevance of work to this thesis, due to the position of primacy which it now holds in developed societies and its impact on identity formation, is the consequence of industrialisation during the 18th and 19th centuries.

In the early hunter-gatherer societies, the extended family of kinship groups provided the basic productive unit of labour, or family economy in which all its members contributed to the best of their ability to its survival (Edgell, 2012). They used rudimentary wood, stone, antler and bone tools, and work's power source was entirely provided by humans. The distinctions between work, religious observation and leisure were thought to be fluid with activities seamlessly combined and flowing from one to another.

Even in the horticultural and agrarian societies that succeeded the hunter-gatherers, which in the later period saw new technologies such as metalworking beginning to have an impact, the family or clan group is thought to have remained as the primary productive unit (Edgell, 2012). Advances in the specialised breeding of livestock meant that animals were now bred for purpose, and their power along with that of water and wind, were exploited to assist in the conduct of work and transport. The new technologies permitted small scale industrial production which led to a refinement of tools, for example improved ploughs, which subsequently allowed land previously thought to be unsuitable, to be farmed. This in turn produced crop surpluses, which led

directly to an increase in population and the establishment of small urban centres, and made possible the creation of organised, socially hierarchical societies that were unprecedented in their complexity (Edgell, 2012).

The new, more complex societies produced a greater demand for goods and services, and because it was no longer necessary for everyone to work the land full time, around the late Neolithic and early Bronze Ages, some groups began to specialise in other areas of production. Also for some other groups, work had now become optional with sections of society withdrawing from work altogether and instead, focussed on governance, warfare, or due to the rise of the priestly class, religion. It is from this time that the first laws concerning apprenticeships can be found in the Babylonian text known as the Code of Hammurabi (Johns, 1915), after the Bronze Age king who reigned from around 1795-1750 BC in what is now modern day Iraq.

In later European societies during the feudal period, this dynamic allowed the creation of a '...parasitic leisure class' (Edgell, 2012: 4) who were actively excluded by strict custom from engaging in any productive activity. Work had become the responsibility of only those who lacked the privilege of owning disproportionate quantities of land or wealth. As discussed earlier in this section, for many, it was deemed to be an atonement for their sins (*inter alia*, Casey, 1995, Edgell, 2012), a belief that the priestly class encouraged, and consequently, work became a debased activity.

Throughout the pre-industrial period, the basic unit of production remained the family economy or rather more specifically, the household, with members participating in production according to their abilities and their socially permitted and often gendered, allocations of work. The household unit consisted of a

small group of individuals who were related either by kinship or service, living and working together in the same house under the authority of the householder (Tadmore, 1996). Therefore, the family would at times, include a mixture of servants, journeyman workers, apprentices and boarders in addition to the householder's close relations and extended family. The household-family was a contractual relationship based on reciprocal exchange of work and material benefits (Humphries, 2010) and as a consequence, some of the relationships within it were instrumental, rather than emotional.

Prior to the middle ages, in Europe the notion of occupational identity remained some way off and individuals usually identified themselves by their social relationships, for example as a wife, servant or master, as these titles also carried economic responsibilities as well as familial ones (Casey, 1995). But around the medieval period, the concept of an occupational identity being used as a way of defining an individual had slowly begun to gain in importance. In cities, people began to be identified by their occupation and were increasingly known by names that reflected it. Names such as Fisher, Barker, Smith, Fuller or Parker, denoted workers in fishing, leather tanning, blacksmithing, cloth making and game keeping respectively, and remain in common usage even today (Powell, 2013), serving as examples of the enduring power of working identities over many generations. The shift to occupation as a form of identity was a direct product of the extended division of labour which created these distinct categories of worker, allied to the concept of vocation promoted by John Calvin and later Protestant thinkers (Casey, 1995), and to the process of social closure discussed earlier (Parkin, 2001).

A period of radical change known as the Industrial Revolution, took place in the later part of the 18th, and early 19th century Britain. During this period, Adam

Smith's views on the division of labour, discussed in *The Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776, were first fully put into practice. Working tasks became increasingly deskilled and separated into individual groups of actions, with each worker completing a portion of the whole product as part of a large-scale system of industrial manufacture. Smith argued that an exchange market economy would be based on work and capital (Casey, 1995), and this idea contributed to the creation of the capitalist industrial society, in which a person's labour became merely another commodity to be bought and sold.

Thompson (2013) suggests that the transition from the old ways of working was gradual rather than sudden, a view borne out by Levine (1985) who suggests that it occurred in two phases; the first from around 1700 to the middle of the 19th century, the second from the start of the railway building boom of 1845-7 onwards. Demographic and other social changes during the later industrialisation period produced a change in the nature of economic production. Rather than the traditional family economy remaining the basic productive unit, the focus shifted to the individual, and their labour earned wages rather than a share of the produce. This economic reorientation, led to the women and children in the family to be recognised as independent wage earners, albeit low paid ones. However, these wages were usually subsumed into a family income, paid to the family's male 'head'.

Importantly, the share of family income now changed dramatically. In the first phase of industrialisation, the male head's labour accounted for around one quarter of the family income. During the latter decades of the 19th century, it represented more than two thirds (Levine, 1985). The age of the family breadwinner had arrived, and was embodied in the image of the 'Respectable Working Man' (Thompson, 1988).

In this new age, respectable working class families aspired to a lifestyle suitable to their status as an independent and self-sufficient economic unit (Thompson, 1988). A campaign for a living wage also underpinned the division of labour along gender and age lines by emphasising the male breadwinning role. Since the family's role as an economic base had been removed, work became increasingly more gendered, and the role of women in respectable families and their place of work, was now to be located in the home. Also, the introduction of various factory and education acts mentioned elsewhere in this thesis, particularly the 1833 Factory Act, acted to discourage long hours of child labour (Levine, 1985). But the industrialised workers increasingly saw themselves as sharing a common identity of interests as the working class (Thompson E. P., 2013).

Although the concept of work identity and its social bond has been criticised as abstract and weak in recent times (*inter alia*, Bauman, 1998; Beck, 2000; Gorz, 1999; Giddens, 1991), work nevertheless still provides a point of reference for many people. It offers a set of values, feelings of worth, self-respect and belonging which greatly affect a person's self-identity and status within society (Strangleman, 2012), and are partly a consequence of work's various historical moral and religious functions.

In conclusion, this subsection has clarified the transition of the primary unit of labour from the kinship group, or household, to that of the individual. In so doing, it has contributed to this section's understanding of how work and identity are intertwined. Furthermore, this section has illustrated how work is defined by its social context, and has revealed how the division of labour contributed towards modern conceptions of identity by creating occupational, and group identities. In the next section, the role played by work in producing adult male

identities will be examined.

4.3 The workplace as a crucible of working class masculinity

Discussions in the previous section of this chapter demonstrated the difficulties experienced when attempting to explain work's purpose within society, and even when defining what constitutes work. This is especially problematic as it revealed that work's meaning and purpose has continually shifted due to the diverse economic, social, political, moral and spiritual factors prevailing within each society over time.

However, throughout the discussion it has been evident that since the creation of a greater division of labour as a consequence of the industrial age, work has been an influential site for defining identities by creating an individual's occupational identity, and by establishing a group identity through the process of social closure (Parkin, 2001; Noon and Blyton, 2007) and social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). As will be discussed below, this is particularly pertinent for young men entering an adult community of practice at an important stage of their life course. As this thesis concerns itself with the role played by apprenticeship in facilitating the entry of working class boys into the variety of communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) which mark adulthood, one feature of identity formation has yet to be discussed; the function of the workplace in defining a masculine identity for the apprentice.

For most apprentices up until recent times, as a consequence of the gendered division of labour, work was a male dominated environment with few female colleagues. This homosocial work environment provided apprentices with the opportunity to engage in inter-generational relationships as legitimate peripheral

participants in a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991), with adult males that were neither family members nor teachers, quite possibly for the first time (Goodwin, 2007). The effect that these relationships had on the apprentices' formation of a masculine adult identity will now be explored.

In modern multi-cultural Britain, the concept of a single homogenous working class masculinity and culture is outmoded, and as we have seen, a generalisation in terms of class is also now held to be contentious. In our diverse society, many cultures co-exist along with equally diverse ideals of masculinity. But in Western societies, the concept of masculinity has often been mythologised, and has presented a diversity of incarnations over time. These have placed varying emphasis on a range of attributes such as strength, intelligence, moral courage, athleticism and stoicism as suited the demands and cultural *mores* of each historical period (Roper and Tosh, 1991).

However, as was discussed previously in this chapter, the traditionally accepted model of working class masculinity which has been idealised by both the media and in political discourse in Britain as the 'Respectable Working Man' (Thompson, 1988) and the associated role of the male breadwinner, has only existed since industrialisation during the 18th and 19th centuries. As previously noted, this model arose as a consequence of an emerging awareness of class divisions and class consciousness through the division of labour, and society's emerging notions of respectability (*ibid.*, 1988).

The way that working class masculinity is made evident, is by social groups processing the '...raw material of their social and material existence' (Clarke, Hall, Jefferson and Roberts, 1982: 10) through their culture. It is the unique 'way of life' of a group or class that embodies its values, social institutions, moral

standards, beliefs and customs. It is through interactions within the group that a person becomes a social individual (*ibid.*, 1982). Culture shapes the social relations within a group and determines how those relations are ‘...experienced, understood and interpreted’ (*ibid.*, 1982:11). It is within this discrete working class culture that the figure of the ‘Respectable Working Man’ (Thompson, 1988) is situated and formed, as well as transferred from generation to generation through the exercise of social capital, and its subsequent cultural and social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1977a) discussed in Chapter Three.

Historically, boys entered an apprenticeship after leaving school in their early to mid-teenage years (Hanawalt, 1993), and this timing is key to apprenticeship’s influence on identity formation. As we have seen, Leszczynski and Strough (2008) argue that the gender intensification experienced during this crucial formative period may have a variety of causes such as the effects of puberty, socialisation by parents and peers, as well as cognitive maturation. However, the importance of peers, particularly in homosocial environments such as those afforded by those apprenticeships referred to in this thesis, is emphasised in a social-cognitive understanding of gender identity, as they may ‘...cue gender-typed aspects of identity in specific situations’ (*ibid.*, 2008: 721). It is reasonable to conclude that this influence is not restricted to peer groups, but extends to other important others (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) such as respected work colleagues, and significant others (Haller and Woelfel, 1972) used as role models.

In the occupational communities of practice provided by work, a moral order exists in which individual freedoms and identity are produced from the shared values of that group (Strangleman and Warren, 2008). These values are in turn, learned by the apprentices through legitimate participation within that

community of practice (Wenger, 1998) and are discernible in the form of social and role identities. Echabe (2010) suggests that social identities emerge as a consequence of individuals self-identifying with a particular group, in this case an occupational group. Through the process of self-stereotyping, individuals assume stereotypical characteristics associated to that group. In contrast, the closely related role identities are derived from the internalisation of socially shared forms of behaviour appropriate to the individual's status within the group (Echabe, 2010).

Accordingly, suitable behaviours for the particular social context are prescribed by the mental image that we hold of our social identity, as suggested by SIT (Tajfel and Turner, 1979; 1986). This theory posits that humans categorise objects so that we can better understand them. Objects also include people, who are categorised into social groupings to which they belong, as 'in-groups' and 'out-groups'. Therefore, group membership informs a significant part of our self-concept, and that rather than having a singular identity, we have several selves which correspond to the social groups to which we belong, including social, personal and implicit identities (Echabe, 2010). Therefore, SIT maintains that as humans belong to more than one social grouping (considered here in this thesis as communities, or constellations of practice), the '...self is conceptualised as a collection of social identities' (Sherriff, 2007: 351). For young males serving an apprenticeship during a life phase in which they were particularly receptive to these social influences, these also consist of constructing the masculine identities required to meet the markers of adulthood (Blatterer, 2007a; 2007b) necessary for achieving the status of standard adulthood (Parsons, 1971) as described in Chapter Three.

By drawing on theories of social interactionism (Blumer, 1969), situated learning

(Lave and Wenger, 1991) and social identity (Tajfel and Turner, 1986), serving a post-war apprenticeship can be interpreted as ‘...an apprenticeship in masculinity’ (Vickerstaff, 2007: 339), in which male social and role identities were learned. These identities were comprised of the assimilation of values, habits and behaviours consistent with the culture of the workplace of the time, and those of the standard paradigm of adulthood (Parsons, 1971). As a major site of inter-generational social interaction and discourse, the workplace, alongside the family, enculturated the youth into a range of working class masculine identities through the application of cultural and social capital as described by Bourdieu (1977a). Therefore, apprenticeship during the years 1959 to 1989, may be regarded as continuing to serve its traditional role as a cultural institution, integrating young people into adulthood as discussed in Chapter Two.

4.4 Summary

This chapter has considered the problem of defining work and has described some of its many functions. It has indicated that work has various purposes, from being a means of existence, to meeting a society’s moral and religious obligations. It has also revealed that these meanings are dynamic and change over time in accordance with changes in each society.

This chapter has also established through a discussion of classical sociological perspectives, that different interpretations of work, the effects of industrialisation and the division of labour are possible. The different ways that the ‘gang of three’ (Grint, 2005) described the effects of the division of labour on society, has emphasised its importance on the creation of identity and modern society.

Although modern conceptions of a work identity no longer carry the certainties

that they once did since the demise of the 'jobs for life' culture, ideas of respectability drawn from a previous age, with their emphasis on self-reliance and self-sufficiency, continue to help define modern identities. This fact is reflected in the rhetoric of contemporary politicians' professed concerns and support for 'hard working families' (Cameron, 2014). This patronising glittering generality, evokes the Victorian concept of the 'dignity of labour' and its associated respectability discussed earlier in this chapter. Therefore, it can be concluded that ingrained ideals and beliefs about the value of work, passed from generation to generation as social capital (Bourdieu, 1977b), continue to influence contemporary thought and behaviour.

This chapter has illustrated how the social changes during the Industrial Revolution shaped modern ideas of identity, and through a division of labour along gender lines, created the image of the male breadwinner so prevalent until recent times. It has also revealed how identity has historically been bound up with an individual's work, and that through using the lenses of symbolic interaction and social identity theories, membership of a group can be seen to have an important function in the formation of a self-identity. Consequently, work as a social activity, provides a social arena in which adolescents can learn adult behaviours which encompass the range of experiences necessary to participate in the multiple communities of practice which define adulthood. The next chapter examines the methodology used in this thesis.

Chapter 5: Methodology

The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.

L.P. Hartley, *The Go-Between*, (1997) First published 1958. London; Penguin Books.

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present and discuss the methodology and the methods used to conduct the research. With some notable exceptions (*inter alia*, Goodwin and O'Connor, 2005a; 2005b; 2007a; 2007b; 2009; Fuller and Unwin, 2003a; 2011a; 2013; Vickerstaff, 2003; 2007), researchers have often overlooked the wealth of rich, biographical data about apprenticeships that is directly available from people who have served an apprenticeship. Ex-apprentices from the mid to late 20th century are now nearing the later phases of their working life, or have in some cases, already retired from work. First hand recollections of an apprenticeship from a life-retrospective viewpoint as used in this study, allows participants a mature consideration of its value over the life-course. A re-construction of the interviewees' biographies, in which their early work experiences may be evaluated, can therefore be created in the light of subsequent life events.

Following this introduction, this chapter consists of three more sections. In the second section, I discuss the ontological and epistemological approach taken in this thesis. Section three describes the research sampling plan, discusses the choice of research design for this thesis, and the method used to select the participants to this research. This section also contains biographical details of the research sample. In section four, I present the primary data collection method selected, oral history. In its three subsections, I discuss its use in detail for recording social history. Oral history's subcategories, single-issue testimony,

and insider research, and the use of a little used research instrument, 'intimate insider research' (Taylor, 2011: 5) are explored. Section 5.5, contains a discussion of the structure and method of the interviews used to gather the data, and gives a rationale for using semi-structured qualitative interviews for data collection. The final section consists of a discussion of the particular ethical considerations presented by this research project. It highlights some specific ethical problems posed by the research design, sampling plan, and research method, and describes how these were resolved.

5.2 Ontological and epistemological approach

In this thesis I use a constructionist ontological perspective, which contends that rather than being objective, social phenomena such as the constitution of knowledge are the outcome of the constructions of social actors (Bryman, 2004). From this position, social action is understood through a process of interpretation of meaning. Consequently, this thesis employs an interpretivist epistemology that views the world as an aggregation of the meanings that individuals attribute to their experiences within it (Henn, Weinstein, and Foard, 2009) and so, considers that truth is negotiated through dialogue between persons (Robson, 2002). In addition, it uses aspects of critical social research to challenge the meaning of history (Henn, *et al*, 2009), as orthodox approaches of studying the past rarely represent the history of people such as my selected survey sample. Hartley's quotation before this introduction, hints at the way that society perceives history over time, and this issue is discussed later in the chapter.

A sequential research model, using a staged approach to research design, was first applied to identify my broad area of interest. Next, I established the topic,

and a suitable method for collecting data from a sample. Lastly a plan was formed to collect and analyse the empirical data. Consistent with qualitative research practice (Greener, 2011), an inductive method was then used to determine whether the primary data gathered in this research could be used to explore whether and how, the experience of serving an apprenticeship during the research timeframe, facilitated entry to the multiple communities (Lave and Wenger, 1991) or constellations of practice (Wenger, 1998) that constitute standard adulthood (*inter alia*, Parsons, 1971; Lee, 2001; Blatterer, 2007a; 2007b).

The research design for this thesis has been essentially dictated by the nature of this research, which investigates the formation of the self. Therefore, in keeping with the ontological and epistemological positions of this thesis, I decided to use a qualitative research method, oral history, to collect primary data from a group of ex-apprentices. The oral history method is discussed in more detail later in section 5.4, but briefly, it readily lends itself to the telling of stories (Portelli, 2006), and as Gardner notes, philosophically and methodologically, ‘...oral history turns easily and naturally towards the concept of the self’ (2003: 175). This therefore, broadly reflects the constructionist ontological position of this research.

Data was collected in recorded face-to-face interviews (also discussed in more detail in section 5.5), as non-positivist stances such as constructionism, use approaches in which the research participants play an active role with the researcher to construct the realities of their experience in the form of a dialogue (Karnieli-Miller, Strier, and Pessach, 2009), and so reflects the interpretivist epistemology chosen for this thesis. The interview design used with this technique, was flexible and not pre-determined, and consequently allowed the

researcher and the interview participants, time and space to explore the multiple realities of the research questions (Robson, 2002).

This section has revealed the ontological and epistemological standpoint of this thesis, outlined its design, and has described how the research was formulated. In the next section, I introduce the research sample and explain how they were selected.

5.3 The research sample

The previous section identified the ontological and epistemological positions of this study. As was discussed, the constructionist and interpretivist stances taken in this thesis regard knowledge as being created through social action and a consequence of socially constructed reality. In this section, I introduce the research sample and explain how this was formed of 'friend-informants' (Taylor, 2011: 5) for the selected research method.

Selecting the research sample was problematic in a variety of ways. Initially during the research planning stage, I envisaged advertising in trade magazines for volunteers to take part in the project. In this way, a sufficiently large random sampling frame could be produced from the ex-apprentice population of the years 1959 to 1989, to ensure greater accuracy and reliability of the collected data, and would have allowed an appropriate distance between myself as researcher and the participants to be achieved. It was then planned to distribute a self-administered postal or electronic survey to the advertisements' respondents, to collect initial quantitative data. Participants selected on the basis of their responses would then have formed the survey sample, and follow-up one-to-one interviews were planned to gather data in the form of oral histories.

However, after discussion with my supervisors, I dismissed this idea early in the research design planning stage. As previously stated, this research project is qualitative in essence, and the extensive use of questionnaires, is more appropriate for collecting quantitative data, and would not be suitable to collect the depth of personal experiences required. It would also have incurred extra work and expense that this part-time, self-funded study could not sustain. Additionally, the sampling frame would have been self-selecting and possibly unrepresentative, and it was also not guaranteed to be large enough to improve the accuracy of the research findings. Furthermore, the self-administered survey method was rejected as a principal method of data collection, because it has been criticised for having a low response rate, and for its inability to detect ambiguities or misunderstandings (Bryman, 2004).

Therefore, with a view to keeping the time and cost elements of this project under control, my supervisors and I determined that a small scale, non-probability sample would be used instead, as in circumstances such as this 'It is often preferable to trade down to a *different* and cheaper type of study' (emphasis as in original, Hakim, 1987: 121). Whilst acknowledging the fact that a larger sample often gives greater precision (Bryman, 2004), the practicalities of conducting this research determined the sampling plan actually used.

Although an inherent weakness when using small samples is that a smaller number of participants leads to an increase in sampling error (Henn, *et al*, 2009), it is also recognised in social research that a greater sample size cannot necessarily guarantee a greater amount of accuracy in the research findings (Bryman, 2004). Consequently, the sample size for this thesis is a compromise reached between the ideal and the practical.

Part of the focus of this research revealed in Chapter One, was to discover if other apprenticeships of the time bore any similarities to my own. I was able therefore, to set some limits for the sample's selection, which matched my apprenticeship and subsequent career path. The sample was consequently limited by gender, occupation, geography and time.

Consistent with the scale of this project, with its limitations on finance and time, I decided to use a convenience sampling method. Robson describes convenience sampling as an unsatisfactory, 'cheap and dirty' (2002: 265) method of conducting a sample survey, but conversely, also acknowledges that as a survey method, it is one of the most widely used. Sometimes referred to as 'accessibility sampling', these can have '...cost and administrative benefits and are common in some fields of research' (Greenfield, 2002: 189).

To this end, I contacted 21 recent work colleagues in a Further Education (FE) college construction department in London, previous work colleagues in the telecommunications industry, and friends and acquaintances in those occupations to form a sampling frame. Although this sampling frame poses ethical questions which are addressed later in section 5.6 of this chapter, this allowed me to use the seldom applied 'intimate insider research' (Taylor, 2011: 5) technique that will be discussed in more detail in the following section. Consequently the participants to this research reflect the apprenticeship demographic of the time, but are drawn from a limited sampling frame. Therefore, the sample is comprised of all white males from occupations traditionally associated with apprenticeships. Additionally, they served apprenticeships in the London area, during the period from the late 1950s to the end of the 1980s. This framework reflects my own experiences, both historically and geographically, as an apprentice, and permits the use of my own evidence

as part of the research.

An information guide giving an overview of my research aims was then sent out to inform prospective participants of its purpose, and the intended future use of the data (Appendix One). However, this initial approach produced a low response rate. Some of the sampling frame did not reply to e-mail or verbal requests to participate in the research, and others declined to take part.

In some cases, this can certainly be attributed to preconceived views of what constitutes history, a question also discussed in more detail in the next section. As one example of the rigidity of standard historical viewpoints, the problem proved to be an insurmountable obstacle for an ex-colleague from the telecommunications industry, identified here as 'John'. Despite explaining the purpose of this thesis to him at some length over several meetings, I was unable to convince John of the historical value of his life experiences, and so was unable to shake his firm belief that no one would be interested in his story, because he was just an ordinary working man.

Eventually, nine volunteers agreed to be interviewed as part of this research and with the addition of myself form the research sample, 10 in total. They are drawn from four different trades: five participants each from the telecommunication industry (mostly from the state-owned GPO/PO/BT); and from the construction industry (three Painters and Decorators, one electrician and one bricklayer).

To comply with current British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines, voluntary informed consent was obtained from respondents before data collection commenced (Appendix Two). Next, a short electronic questionnaire was sent to the participants to collect contextual biographical data

for later use in interviews (Appendix Three). Information was gathered on such topics as: as the area of London in which they lived when they first entered an apprenticeship; their education; father and mother's education and employment; early career choices and work experience; details about apprenticeship employer and type of school attended (see Table 1, page 142).

The questionnaire data shows that the participants were all born into families with parents' occupations ranging from lower managerial to unskilled, which can be broadly interpreted as 'working class families'. These are all within the C1-D social grade as defined by the National Readership Survey (NRS) (National Readership Survey, 2015), used here for clarity rather than the more complex government grading of social class, the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification, (NS-SEC) (Office for National Statistics, 2016). In two instances, the mothers' occupations are referred to as 'Housewife', which have been omitted from this social classification, as they were not receiving state benefits and therefore cannot be classified as group 'E' in the NRS classification: casual or lowest grade workers, or those dependent on the state.

However, because of the practical constraints of this research previously mentioned, this sampling plan contains several inherent problems. Since the participants form a convenience sample, and are self-selecting volunteers all well known to me, they may have as a consequence, provided biased responses. Also, the sample is geographically limited, numerically small and therefore cannot be regarded as representative of the country's apprentice population of the time. These considerations pose questions about the ability of the findings of this research to be generalised, as small-scale, non-probability sampling is not conducive to producing inferences applicable to a wider population (Bryman, 2004). However, this may be an inevitable consequence of

Code name	Where born/lived	Education	School qualifications	Parents employment/apprenticeship	Trade	Employer	Time period
Alec	Clerkenwell, London	Single-sex Grammar School	3x GCE 'O' levels	F-Smithfield Meat Market porter M-Housewife	Telecommunications technician	General Post Office	1959-1961 (2 years)
Barry	Galashiels, Scotland/ London (from age 10)	Single-sex Grammar School	None	F-* Tweed manufacturing industry/Engineering M-Office/Shop worker	Telecommunications technician	General Post Office	1962-1964 (2 years)
Charlie	Stepney Green, London	Mixed Comprehensive	2x GCE 'O' levels	F-Warehouseman M-Presser (clothing manufacture)	Electrician	Albert Smith & Son	1963-1968 (4.5 years)
Bob	Stepney/Hackney, London	Mixed Comprehensive	2x GCE 'O' levels 4x CSEs	F-Cabinet maker/Coiner, Royal Mint M-Factory worker/Shop worker	Telecommunications technician	Telephone Rentals Ltd	1971-1975 (4 years)
Dave	Tottenham, London	Mixed Comprehensive	2x GCE 'O' level & 5 CSEs	F-Painter & Decorator/School caretaker M-Factory worker	Painter & Decorator	London Transport	1974-1977 (3 years)
Eric	Hackney, London	Single-sex Comprehensive	6x CSEs	F-Warehouseman M-School dinner lady	Painter & Decorator	Joseph Franks Construction Ltd	1975-1978 (3 years)
Frank	Erith, Kent	Mixed Comprehensive	1x GCE 'O' level 7x CSEs	F-Dock worker M-Hoffman presser (clothing manufacture)	Painter & Decorator	Greater London Council	1977-1980 (3 years)
Graham	Barking, Essex	Mixed Comprehensive	1x GCE 'O' level 4x CSEs	F-* Motor body builder M-* Hairdresser	Telecommunications technician	Post Office Telecommunications	1977-1980 (3 years)
Harry	Canning Town, London	Mixed Comprehensive	2x GCE 'O' levels 5x CSEs	F-Dock worker M-Cleaner	Telecommunications technician	British Telecom	1981-1984 (3 years)
Ian	Barking, Essex	Mixed Comprehensive	3x GCE 'O' levels 3x CSEs	F-Manager for BT M-Housewife	Bricklayer	Kerry and Roberts, builders	1986-1989 (3 years)

Key: F-father, M-mother, *-served an apprenticeship

Table 1 Participants' biographical details

using qualitative research methods as it is suggested that 'Generally speaking, qualitative researchers are prepared to sacrifice scope for detail' (Silverman, 2013: 104).

Thompson (2006: 30) notes that '...the self-selecting group will rarely be fully representative of a community', adding that they often represent the central groups of a society, including those from a skilled working class background, as in this research. This he claims can present a complacent view of history by renewing community myth. However, whilst lacking a broad spectrum of participants, this research still has value in recording the oral histories of its individual participants. Therefore, at this level, the findings of this research cannot be considered to be representative of the experiences of the apprenticeship population of the time, but are applicable only to the sample itself. It is hoped however, that this project will inspire further research into the socialisation aspects of apprenticeship.

Conversely, Williams (2000; 2003) claims that a degree of generalisation does in fact take place by researchers using what he terms 'moderatum generalisations', that is ones in which certain aspects of the research's focus can be understood as identifiable characteristics. Moderatum generalisations, Williams (2000; 2003) maintains, permit a moderate amount of generalisation and allow comparisons and links with other samples to be made. They can also be used to '...generalize to theory, rather than to populations' (Bryman, 2004: 285). Used here as a moderatum generalisation, the findings are suitable for supporting the aims of this research. In addition, it was always a key intention of this research to use the oral histories as a record of the participants' personal experiences, and after donation to the British Library's sounds collection, for them to serve as a resource for posterity, in a greatly under-researched area of

vocational training and of the maturation process.

5.4 Principal data collection method

This section explores the principal data collection method used in this thesis. It has three subsections, which describe aspects of the specific oral history method used. A single-issue testimony method was used to gather evidence of a precise area of the participants' lives, which is their apprenticeships. This was achieved through interviews conducted from an insider researcher perspective, which is explained in more detail in subsection 5.4.2, but mainly concerns my insider knowledge of apprenticeships. This subsection also examines the specific 'intimate insider research' (Taylor, 2011: 5) method used, as referred to in this chapter's introduction. Firstly, I turn to the principal research method, oral history.

5.4.1 Oral history

This subsection discusses in detail, the oral history method used to collect the data for this research, and provides reasons for its use. With the exception of contextual biographical details, the primary data gathered for this research used this method, and this was chosen for several reasons. Oral histories produce unique first hand qualitative research data from informants whose stories tend to be untold, reflecting its suitability when researching 'history from below' (Portelli, 2006). Thompson (2006) also considers it to be the most appropriate method for providing an insight into work, family and the personal lives of a research sample because oral histories collect data from a specific group of people in a specific time period. Also the method is appropriate for small-scale research, such as this, and oral history provides an opportunity for my own experiences to be presented and evaluated alongside those of the research

sample.

As one of the world's oldest historical methods, oral history predates the written word, with storytelling being an ancient method of recording events (Roberts B., 2011). Data gathered using this method consists of interpretations of people's recollections, which are naturally ephemeral, and so, are unavailable in other forms. As part of the movement to record 'history from below', it gives 'voice' to people or groups, that rarely leave records or biographies or that even have their stories suppressed, and consequently such accounts are usually missing from official records (Peniston-Bird, 2009).

In line with the ontological and epistemological perspectives adopted for this thesis, a post-positive view such as that offered by critical social research, is taken in this study. This perspective considers that the partiality of official records means that even when they are recorded, such accounts are often misrepresented, and so reflects the concealed imbalance of power inherent with them (Greener, 2011). These missing voices include those of the working-class, women, and ethnic, religious and other minorities because as the critical social research paradigm suggests, the focus of history, at least up to the emergence of oral historical research, was primarily concerned with documenting the struggle for power, and was measured in terms of reigns or dynasties (Thompson P., 2006). By focussing on the 'Great Men of History'-a theory popularised by the historian, critic and writer Thomas Carlyle in the 19th century (pictured earlier in the painting 'Work' by Ford Madox Brown on page 108), conventional historical research ignored the experiences of the majority of people living at the time (Greener, 2011). In keeping with more orthodox views of what is considered to be history, the recollections are often deemed worthless by the participants themselves. As we have seen, this is ably

demonstrated by my unsuccessful attempts to recruit 'John' as a research participant, as his belief that no one would be interested in his story proved to be insurmountable.

The increase in the use of biographical research methods since the 1940s may be attributed to the growth of interest in everyday experiences as an historical resource, and the development of portable recording devices which are used to record interviews (Peniston-Bird, 2009). The growing establishment of subjectivist research within the social sciences (Roberts, 2011), stems from the post-war revival of memory as a resource for 'people's history'. Also, the reappraisal of how knowledge is constructed during the development of post-positivist approaches in the late 1970s (Perks and Thomson, 2006), has led to its greater use. International acceptance of biographical data as a valid and respected method of historical research, complete with its own societies, journals and conferences later in the 20th century, has also given its use in social science research projects an added stimulus. Consequently, as a method of biographical data collection, oral history is now accepted within the social sciences as an established research technique.

The results of this type of historical research are currently extensively used to provide context for public exhibitions in museums and historic sites, alongside artefacts, photographs and written sources (Green, 2006). They have also become associated with multimedia presentations, and personal narratives are now a stock feature of many historical documentary television programmes (Roberts, B., 2011), and I believe, are partly responsible for the development of the public's interest in popular history.

However as suggested earlier in this section, this growing acceptance has been

perceived as a challenge by the wider historical academic community (Portelli, 2006). Critics of this method believe that the use of memory provides an unreliable historical resource and consequently, research using these methods lacks reliability and validity (Nilsen, 2008).

The understanding of oral history as a method within historical research, has been hampered by the use of a variety of terms to describe its data and method, such as memoirs, personal stories, life stories or in-depth interviews. In all these diverse understandings of oral history, the central method employed, entails using a direct personal contact to collect and document spoken first-hand accounts of historical occurrences, retold by real flesh-and-blood individuals whose life experiences are being researched (Gardner, 2003).

These are later transcribed, analysed and interpreted, subsequently summarised and presented as research findings in written form, and then used to illustrate the themes that a researcher wishes to develop (Bell, 2005).

In keeping with the somewhat hazy comprehension of the method within accepted historical research, other terms apart from respondents are also used to describe the originators of the data. These designations include narrators, participators, subjects, tellers, interpreters and interviewees, although the latter term is not universally liked by oral historians because it implies a passive relationship, rather than the active role that is crucial to this method (Robson, 2002). Contributors are now increasingly accepted as more than just a data source; they play an active role in the understanding of historical data. The interview is seen as a collaborative project, with both the researcher and narrator interacting with the content (Yow, 2006), and as such, is in accordance with the constructionist paradigm chosen for this research. In this thesis, the term 'participant' is favoured, although other terms are used interchangeably.

Portelli (2006) argues that oral history provides historians with new ways to understand the past, using personal recollections to appreciate the changing meanings of events over time. As noted in the quotation at the beginning of this chapter, to those living today, the past is a foreign country, because as Thompson (2006: 25) comments, 'All history depends ultimately on its social purpose' and therefore, is subjective. What is regarded today as valid history, is culturally dependent on the ethnicity, class, gender and political standpoint of the historian, and of their audience. Therefore, oral history seeks to challenge this '...essential and social purpose of history' (*ibid.*, 2006:26).

However, a frequent criticism of this method made by historians is that it is not as reliable as the more conventional documentary methods used, because of its integral dependence on personal reminiscences, which can be affected by time and external influences (Bulmer, 1984). This evaluation argues that the factual credibility of oral material can be called into question, as during the process of recounting memories the content is often influenced by the researcher, the audience it is intended for, or is rendered invalid due to other reasons such as the passage of time, vagaries of reminiscence, or the effects of nostalgia (Bryman, 2004). Furthermore, the interview content may also be rehearsed by the participant to provide data that provides a one-sided viewpoint which could possibly reflect the participant's hidden agendas.

Nostalgia can be viewed as a longing for the past, as a consequence of a divergence of experience and expectation produced by modernity. As such, it is portrayed as the conceptual opposite of progress, but it can also be argued that it has multiple meanings and significance (Pickering & Keightley, 2006). Its popular depiction as a backward looking, defeatist stance has enabled versions of the past, reflecting conventional beliefs and often of the sentimental kind, to

be constructed without challenge. These versions of history are used politically as supportive symbols, with '...imperial victories, martyrs, Victorian values, hunger marches' (Thompson, P., 2006: 26) used to justify political ends, and that it '...exploits the past as if it were another foreign country to escape to' (*ibid*: 2006:25). Such negative views of nostalgia leave questions of how the past engages with the present and the future unanswered, and reaffirms previously discussed aspects of history's social purpose (*ibid*: 2006.).

Conversely, Pickering and Keightley (2006: 921) argue that nostalgia should not be dismissed as a negative concept, but reconceptualised in terms of:

...a distinction between the desire to return to an earlier state or idealized past, and the desire not to return but to recognize aspects of the past as the basis for renewal and satisfaction in the future.

In this understanding, nostalgia can be seen as a positive re-engagement with the past which informs and challenges actions in both the present and the future. In this thesis, I use this positive interpretation of nostalgic reminiscences to evaluate the experiences of the participants, and to search for evidence of the function of apprenticeship in their transitional process, which may then be related to future practice.

Other claims concerning the method's unreliability may be refuted from a critical social research perspective by reminding critics that documentary evidence can also be fallible (Peniston-Bird, 2009). Originally compiled from statements from eyewitnesses or even non-participants, removed at some distance in time from the event, this evidence often only reflects the '...uncontrolled transmission of unidentified oral sources' (Portelli, 2006: 37). These can equally lack scientific integrity, as they may be incomplete or deliberately designed to mislead (Ritchie, 2015). As an example, Portelli (2006) argues that shorthand notes of

parliamentary proceedings, and the minutes of various meetings are commonly accepted as true accounts without question, but are in fact transcriptions of aural data.

Portelli further argues that oral sources have a '*different* credibility' (2006:37, emphasis as in original), with their importance lying in their departure from fact and the emergence of '...imagination, symbolism, and desire'. Ritchie notes that 'People remember what *they* think is important' (2015: 16, emphasis as in original). This argument contends that the reliability of oral history lies not in what is remembered, but in how the memories are interpreted, and therefore the skill of the oral historian resides in interpreting its meaning (Peniston-Bird, 2009). Gardner (2003: 180) adds to the rebuttal of these evaluations of oral history's reliability and credibility by concluding that if such a criticism were true, then it '...would seek to invoke a fundamental epistemological distinction between life story and history'. Therefore it would in my opinion, mean the exclusion from the historical record of eyewitness versions of events, and an uncritical reliance on official accounts instead.

As for the interview data itself, Portelli (2006) notes that because of their unstructured nature, literal transcriptions of interviews do not provide the best accounts. During the process in which the spoken story is related and transcribed, the tale implicitly undergoes a transformation to make it readable, and therefore becomes an interpretation of the interview data. Consequently, oral histories are criticised for being subjective.

However, this criticism is also not convincing, since it can be claimed that the study of history cannot be entirely objective, as all historians argue from a historical standpoint, selecting, interpreting and apportioning weight to evidence

to suit a particular stance (Yow, 2006). Furthermore, documentary evidence can also be subjective, with feminist researchers among others, suggesting that written documents contain racial, class or gender bias (*inter alia* Stanley and Wise, 1983; Mies, 1993). Feminist research goes on to effectively challenge the belief that historical objectivity is possible at all, by claiming that it is androcentric because of the inherent gender bias that is present in the research relationship (Yow, 2006). Thompson (2006) endorses this perspective by declaring that documentary evidence is essentially prejudiced, because those originally responsible for selecting, recording, retaining or destroying raw historical evidence were a part of the administration of the governing classes, and had little interest in preserving life documents of other communities and groups. Consequently, it is contended that research is a moral-political activity in which all researchers take a value position (Henn, *et al*, 2009).

The oral history research method also presents the researcher with a specific set of ethical considerations. The teller's memories are an integral part of their own identity and are indivisibly bound to their current life, and whilst they may provide material for the researcher, these memories can be simultaneously disturbing to the individual. Memories of a particular theme or time, may cause associated memories unrelated to the research such as the death of loved ones, to surface in the mind of the informant, and may consequently prove upsetting (Roberts, 2011). After the research ends, the researcher may not be there as Thomson, Frisch and Hamilton (1994:34) note '... to put together the pieces of memories that have deconstructed and are no longer safe'.

Conversely, the act of telling a story can also be therapeutic, giving the narrator a feeling of empowerment, a sense of importance and of purpose, or even have

a cathartic effect enabling the person to put certain memories behind them (Thompson P., 2006).

Furthermore it is possible that the participant may feel that they have developed a relationship with the researcher which goes beyond the limits of research and into the realms of friendship, and this is considered in more detail in subsection 5.4.3. The participants may experience a sense of loss when the research is concluded, with their newfound sense of importance and purpose disappearing along with the relationship formed with the researcher. This concern is particularly relevant when researching young, elderly or vulnerable people where it may constitute a safeguarding issue as well as being unethical. Therefore when using this method, it is important that the parameters of the research relationship are clearly defined and agreed at the onset of the research, and that the interview relationship is not allowed to exceed those limits.

Having defined the oral history method and offered a justification for its selection, I now move on to further examine how it was used in this thesis. The following two subsections describe the specific methods used to collect evidence for this research.

5.4.2 Single-issue testimony

Oral history is sometimes described as a complex practice, in which various discrete styles are observable (Gluck, 1996; Roberts, 2011). Amongst those used is the topical interview, in which a particular subject is researched, the biographical oral history, which records the experience of an individual, and the autobiographical interview, recording a person's life course. This variety of styles gives this research method flexibility, enabling a wide range of uses and

different purposes, not only recording the stories of people, but also those of communities, towns and organisations. This thesis uses a single-issue method of enquiry to collect the participants' stories, and this is now discussed.

Single-issue interviews differ from other types of oral history in that they focus on a specific aspect of participants' lives (Gluck, 1996). They may be carried out either on a one-to-one or a group basis, and because of their particular focus, they can be shorter than a life story, but usually offer more detail. They are often used as the main method of learning about a particular historical event, such as a person's experience of war, or for an investigation into a particular area of knowledge or experience (Portelli, 2006). Because of the specificity of the enquiry, they require the interviewer to have a more '...detailed background or technical knowledge of the subject matter than is necessary for a more wide-ranging life story' (Slim, Thompson, Bennett, and Cross, 2006: 146).

Accordingly, with my background as an ex-apprentice in one of the trades researched here, this method immediately presented itself as the most appropriate to my research.

5.4.3 Insider research

This subsection considers an important research method used in this project, which I believe contributes to knowledge of research techniques. It describes how generally, insider research can give a greater insight into the contributors' testimonies, but more significantly for this study, also considers and critiques the relatively rarely used method of 'intimate insider research' (Taylor, 2011: 5) specifically used here to collect their evidence. Firstly, I turn to the insider research technique to discuss its beginnings and use.

With origins in the Chicago School of sociological thought, this approach seeks

to confront issues of trust within the researcher/researched relationship (Brewer, 2000). The presence of someone perceived as an outsider, may erect barriers between the research participants and the researcher in interviews which restrict openness, and may adversely affect the quality of evidence gathered.

Conversely, insider research enables the researcher to draw on collective concepts that are shared with the research participants, enabling a greater degree of trust and understanding to be developed between them. Bozzoli (2006:159) lists these as consisting of common perceptions of '...space, community, boundary, property, history, hierarchy and culture'. These common concepts she contends, are shared at both broad and local levels, where issues of class and local knowledge enable the participants and researcher to create an empathetic and intimate environment during interviews, which is conducive to sociological research. In such an intimate setting, what is taken for granted between the two parties is frequently considered to be as important as what is regarded as unusual (Bozzoli, 2006).

The data collected using this method can also possess a richer quality, and have a greater depth than otherwise possible (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). But the very concept of insider research is a contentious one, because the term is used to describe projects where the researcher has a direct involvement or connection within the research setting. This involvement is described by Adler and Adler (1987) as consisting of three insider researcher roles: peripheral members; active members and complete members, in each of which the researcher participates to varying extents in the research setting. Consequently, the position in which this places the researcher, has been subject to criticism for lacking neutrality, creating ethical issues, and also because the insider

researcher's greater familiarity can lead to a loss of objectivity (Unluer, 2012).

Another difficulty arising from being too close to the research is that it can prevent the researcher from seeing the broader, overall view of the research project. Similarly, due to familiarity with the area of research, the insider researcher may make assumptions regarding the meaning of events, and not seek clarification during the interviews. He/she may also assume that they already know the participants' opinions on the issues being discussed (Unluer, 2012). One specific problem that I encountered was that because the narrators assumed that as I had prior knowledge of what they were recalling, they occasionally gave superficial responses in interviews.

To offset these disadvantages, I adopted a responsive approach. Whenever assumptions of knowledge or of events arose during the interviews, I placed myself in the position of an 'outsider', and questioned whether someone without my specialist knowledge of the incident being recalled would be able to understand its meaning, and prompted the participant for clarification. Where participants recalled events that I had witnessed first-hand, or related stories that I had heard told many times before, I asked the participants to explain not to me, but as if to an unseen audience.

My role as an insider researcher also requires some explanation, because it does not fit conveniently within current understandings of the method, as in this thesis I have researched a series of historical recollections rather than actively participating in the research setting. Therefore, my role does not easily correspond to Adler and Adler's (1987) recognised categories for this research method, as my research focus is on the past and not the present. Also, definitive delineations of the insider/outsider researcher construct are difficult to

find in the literature, and debate often centres on issues of power (Horn, 1997). The role has even been described as not static, but ‘...fluid and changing’ (Adler and Adler, 1987: 10), with ‘outsiders’ becoming ‘insiders’ due to frequent exposure over the research timeframe, or dependent on which aspects of life, work or social, are being researched (Rabe, 2003).

However, the participants in this research are drawn from my personal circle of friends and work colleagues in recent, or previous employment, and I have actively worked alongside them all at various times. Under these particular circumstances, the construct of insider research can be better understood in the context of knowledge, in which the researcher is perceived as possessing insider knowledge which outsiders do not have (Rabe, 2003). This creates a shared commonality between the researcher and the researched, from which the research can begin, and so affords entry to otherwise closed groups (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). Therefore, from this understanding in this research, as an ex-apprentice, I consider that I can definitely be identified as a type of insider researcher

However, the problematic issue of my role failing to conveniently fit any of those identified by Adler and Adler (1987) still remained because I was specifically using as a research sample, my own former work colleagues and circle of friends to recall past events. During my research into suitable methods for use for this study, I discovered a particular type of research technique which offered a solution to this predicament. This little used method originated in feminist research and research into ‘queer culture’, and is known as ‘intimate insider research’ (Taylor, 2011: 5).

Being an intimate insider researcher entails using pre-existing personal contacts

as 'friend-informants' (*ibid.*, 2011: 5). Because of its novelty, little is written about this method in the literature as noted by McDermid, Peters, Jackson, and Daley (2014), and so its use in this thesis adds to our knowledge of it as a research method. Consequently, Taylor's (2011) article is mainly cited here, because it is the most informative and provides the most relevant discussion of the method's use.

Whilst some friendships may arise during the course of the research project as informant-friendships, Taylor (2011) makes explicit the difference between this term, and that of friend-informants. She describes the latter as pre-existing friendships, and the former as friendships made in the field, which are subject to problems such as power imbalance, professional motivation and personal gain. The 'intimate insider researcher' (Taylor, 2011) role has some distinct positive advantages over other methods of insider research, but naturally also has some disadvantages, and these are now discussed.

As a positive, Taylor (2011) observes that it makes access to, and selection of the research sample easier. Another welcome aspect of intimate insider research, is that any perceived inequalities between the researcher and researched are reduced, although as Taylor (2011) concedes they are never really absent in the research context. The greater equality between researcher and informant is a consequence of them sharing a culture, identity and most importantly, '...a personal history that pre-dates the research engagement' (*ibid.*, 2011: 8) which distinguishes this method from other types of insider research. This is certainly true for my participants as we have shared many years of friendship. We have worked together, socialised together, been to union meetings and on picket lines during strikes together, and as Taylor (2011) argues, the sharing of experiences cultivates varying degrees of intimacy.

Such levels of intimacy I believe, were greatly beneficial to this research, and enabled interviews to be conducted in a conversational manner. Because of our friendships, I am familiar with the respondents' gestures, body language, non-verbal language, self-image, and intended meanings. The last point is most useful, because meanings in interviews may be obscured by difficult, technical language or trade jargon, or by unspoken shared understandings and knowledge. As an example, in this research humour was very much evident in the interviews. Knowledge of the contributors' personalities and sense of humour allowed me to decide whether the participants' answers were ironic or sincere, and greatly improved analysis and understanding of their evidence.

The intimate insider researcher method is also subject to specific disadvantages other than those posed by ethics, or the lack of neutrality and objectivity previously mentioned (Unluer, 2012). I, like Taylor have questioned whether I may have '...given away too much regarding my argument or hypothesis' (2011: 15) during careless moments, and wondered if this has influenced my participants' evidence. Also, when the narrative of the researched and the researcher are interlinked, the researcher is '...forced to look both inward and outward...and to acknowledge the intertextuality that is part of both the data gathering and writing process' (*ibid*: 2011: 9). Thus, because the research was into a social field in which I still have occasional contact, it contains a degree of uncomfortable self-interpretation.

Additionally, along with questions of objectivity, the 'friend-informant's' natural empathy with the 'intimate insider researcher' (Taylor, 2011: 5) may produce results of the kind meant to please them, and so creates a 'cosy' research relationship. Taylor (2011) offers some advice to counter this by not exclusively relying on familiar informants for her evidence, and using a mix of both friends

and unacquainted informants to provide balance instead. This is partly because informants that '...originate from and act within the same culture-are likely to share opinions, values and logics of taste' (2011: 15), and so will not provide a wide range of evidence.

Allegations of a 'cosy' research relationship in which the evidence recorded is consequently unreliable, are able to be dealt with from a critical social research perspective (Henn, *et al*, 2009). Yow (2006) contends that all historians view history from a personal perspective, with much that is commonly accepted as being objectively true merely being unchallenged opinions. The ontological and epistemological perspectives of this thesis position knowledge as not being objective, but as being constructed by persons within a social dialogue instead (Robson, 2002; Bryman, 2004), and the evidence collected for this research created knowledge in this way. Therefore, the ontological and epistemological positions selected for this thesis, suggest that the evidence gathered in the interviews from my 'friend-informants' (Taylor, 2011: 5) has as much validity as that collected by any other research method.

Difficulties are also acknowledged with the ability of the intimate insider researcher to create sufficient intellectual, emotional and physical distance between themselves and the 'friend-informants' to objectively analyse the research evidence. However Taylor (2011) recommends as coping strategies, that the researcher periodically physically removes themselves from the field, and uses Bennett's (2003) view that the researcher needs to 'unlearn' insider knowledge, attitudes and values to achieve the required distance.

But, most significantly, Taylor's (2011: 5) research into 'queer culture' is of an extremely personal nature, and includes continuing intimate contact with her

friend-informants, whereas my research is unequivocally with friends and colleagues that I only see on occasion. Nevertheless, despite these misgivings, in common with Taylor (2011: 15), I share the opinion that ‘...I believe I have still managed to achieve clarity of vision’ within this research. My belief is based on my directness of purpose during this research, which genuinely sought knowledge with which I could clarify some long-held personal contemplations that are reflected in the research questions.

Lastly in this subsection, I reveal a singular aspect of this study; that is as part of the data gathered for this research, my own experiences were recorded in an interview conducted by one of the participants, codenamed Alec. This positions me as both researcher, and researched. Clough and Nutbrown (2007:70) provide a justification for this position by arguing that the research and researcher are inseparable and go as far as observing that ‘...*our identity*’ (emphasis as in original) provides ‘...a driving force in our research foci’. They give further support for this dual position by declaring that we can all be viewed as the blueprints for our own research methodology and as such, that it can even be intellectually dishonest to separate ourselves and our ‘voices’ from the research.

This subsection has described at length the insider research technique, most specifically the ‘intimate insider research’ method used in this thesis. It has examined and critiqued the process used in this research, and has provided a justification for its use through the quality of evidence obtained from my ‘friend-informants’ (Taylor, 2011). The next section moves on to examine the interview structure and data analysis.

5.5 Interview structure and analysis of data

In the previous section, I discussed the intimate insider research (Taylor, 2011) method employed, and went on to suggest that it enabled the interviews to be conducted in a relaxed, conversational manner. In this section, I discuss the composition of the interviews used for this research, and how the data gathered was analysed and presented.

Interviews are a widely used qualitative research method in the field of social science and humanities, and comprise several different types (Bryman, 2004). I chose face-to-face, semi-structured interviews as the principal means of collecting the oral histories for this project because they are flexible, give the participants freedom to reveal memories that they think are of importance to their own lives and so generate plausible accounts of their experiences (Silverman, 2013), as well as providing answers to some more general questions.

The face-to-face interview method is also a valuable technique because not only is it possible to collect verbal data, but through observation and listening, other non-verbal information such as hesitancy, facial expressions and tone of voice, that would otherwise be lost when using other methods, are captured (Bell, 2005). Such nuances and visual cues are essential in helping the interviewer to understand verbal responses, as observing them during the interview can change, or even reverse the response's meaning (Roberts, 2011). As previously noted in subsection 5.4.3, the research method chosen for this study, allowed pre-existing knowledge of the participants' gestures and body language to be used to interpret the meanings of their responses.

Semi-structured interviews also allow for deep investigation of responses from

the respondents that consequently enable a researcher to ascertain information of a personal nature. This type of interview, along with the unstructured variety, are increasingly referred to in the social sciences as in-depth or qualitative interviews (Bryman, 2004). These are particularly suited to research in which the intention is to share control of the data collection with the participants and permits the respondents to construct their own accounts of their experiences (Henn, *et al*, 2009).

However, qualitative interviews have their own inherent problems. Because qualitative research requires the researcher to permit the participant to structure the conversation, interviews need to be broad and open-ended and so, may even take the form of a series of interviews with each individual subject. This is time-consuming, but allows sufficient time for a relationship to be formed (Bryman, 2004). The researcher is therefore able to gain the trust of the narrators, allowing them to freely express their stories. Once trust is established the issue of reactivity, in which participants either consciously or subconsciously alter their behaviours or stories, is to some degree negated (Henn, *et al*, 2009). These concerns did not pose a problem for this research project however, because of the intimate insider research (Taylor, 2011) method used and described earlier.

Other interview methods were considered during the research planning phase, for example using telephone interviews, as these can considerably reduce the time and expense incurred travelling to record face-to-face interviews. But this method was quickly rejected because the significant loss of subtle information as previously described, would adversely affect the quality of the data.

Additionally, for this research, participants were asked to bring along to the interview any items or memorabilia from their apprenticeship that they still

possess, for example apprenticeship indentures, photographs, certificates or even old examination papers. Whenever such items were produced, they were used in the interview to further probe respondents about their significance in their stories. This technique, whilst usually associated with the life history method (Bryman, 2004), is useful, as I have found through personal experience that artefacts can evoke memories.

Because of the often protracted nature of interviewing, the timescale required for data collection and recording necessary to produce a study of sufficiently adequate rigour to answer research questions, is unlikely to satisfy some research sponsors, and therefore, this method is not considered suitable for large survey populations. However, these observations whilst valid, do not hold true for this research project, because the research questions are mainly posed to satisfy my own curiosity as well as fulfilling the demands of writing a PhD thesis, and so the research is self-funded.

Additionally, the data collection phase for a small-scale project such as this was not great, taking place over a period of nine months, commencing in October 2012 and finishing in July 2013. Each interview lasted from 45 minutes, to 90 minutes in length. Respondents were asked for permission to record the interview before its commencement, and the interviews were digitally recorded. Notes were taken throughout to ensure that a full record of the interview was made, and to act as an alternative method of documentation in the case of recording failure, or the accidental deletion of the audio files (Bryman, 2004).

In keeping with this interview method, an interview schedule was prepared as an *aide-mémoire*, to allow me to keep the interview focussed if required (Appendix Four). I discarded, modified or explained questions as the interview

developed, so that the participants could lead the conversation (Bryman, 2004). These questions were designed in such a way as to eliminate cues, such as leading or biased questions, which would have indicated a desirable answer. Open-ended prompts such as, 'Tell me about your apprenticeship', were used in the interviews for this research. This type of questioning can promote a rapport with the interviewee which encourages honest responses, as well as allowing their greater exploration. These questions can also produce unexpected answers which can provide further avenues of enquiry, and therefore allows the participant a degree of guidance over the sequence of subsequent questions, rather than just being a passive source of information (Robson, 2002).

Participants were interviewed in a variety of locations and times, which were chosen by mutual agreement. These locations were either at work, at the participants' homes, at my home and even one in a public house. All the sessions began with a formal introduction, read verbatim to the participants which described the purpose of the interview, and explained the ethical considerations of the research. This took the form of a script used in each interview to ensure a continuity of understanding regarding the data's purpose and use, and a provided a level of consistency between interviews over a period of time. This script forms part of the interview schedule along with the *aide-mémoire* questions and can be found in Appendix Four.

The recorded interview data were later transcribed, and an exploratory approach was taken towards their analysis. The transcribed data were read and re-read many times during the analytic phase, to identify emerging trends, themes, key words and phrases (Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2012), and

coded using qualitative data analysis (QDA) software (NVivo). This software allowed themes emerging from the data to be identified, collated, colour coded and filed according to relevance, to be later compared to my own recollections of my apprenticeship experiences, which were used as a framework for the analysis.

A thematic approach to the analysis and presentation of the research findings was chosen for this thesis as it focusses ‘...on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data’ (Guest, *et al*, 2012:10). Furthermore, as Guest *et al* (2012: 11) observe,

‘...a thematic analysis is still the most useful in capturing the complexities of meaning within a textual data set. It is also the most commonly used method of analysis in qualitative research’.

Presenting the evidence in this way also allows the participants’ collective experiences to be more easily compared, contrasted and analysed, without recourse to re-reading individual oral histories.

However, the time taken for the interview and transcription process greatly exceeded my expectations, and some observations on this procedure may be made from this study. Firstly, difficulties arranging for a mutually convenient time and place to conduct the interviews became rapidly apparent. This is no doubt because the participants have busy work and social lives which naturally take precedence over my research, but also because of the implicit existence of a power imbalance within the interview relationship.

Feminist scholarship (*inter alia*, Maguire, 1987; Wolf, 1996) has emphasised the existence of power relationships within the interview structure, in which the researcher is usually seen as being in control. It has as its basis, the exercise of

dominant roles, which can be along lines of gender, ethnicity, age, class, knowledge, or even status within the interview. Researchers need to consider how these power relations manifest themselves, and how they influence the relationship between researcher and participant (Elwood and Martin, 2000).

Despite the research method chosen, 'intimate insider research' (Taylor, 2011), this was not entirely able to eliminate the inherent power relations that exist in society. Pini notes that participants to her research positioned themselves as '...busy, powerful and important men' (2005: 208), and gives examples of the difficulties she encountered when making interview appointments as an overt display of their importance. In my research, one example of this behaviour was apparent when over a period of some weeks, a senior work colleague cancelled at short notice, several appointments in succession, stating that he was too busy to be interviewed.

Secondly, the recording process required the purchase of equipment in the form of a new digital recorder and computer headphones. The former required a little experimentation to familiarise myself with its capabilities, including positioning and operation. Indeed, the effect of positioning the digital recorder on the same desk as I was using to write interview notes during the first interview caused some difficulties when listening to the playback due to the volume of sound produced by my note taking. The impact of the environment in which the interviews were recorded also produced a range of problems for transcription. The size of the room and the nature of its acoustics and level of background noise were made evident during the interview transcription process. But the purchase of headphones greatly improved the quality of the sound of the recordings and made transcription easier.

Lastly, the problem of poor sound quality and the subsequent lengthening of the transcription process was particularly noticeable in one session, which was conducted in a public house in Holborn, London. This venue was agreed on the recommendation of my respondent as it was mutually convenient. Although I at first expressed reservations concerning the quality of sound recording that it would produce, it was nevertheless arranged, because allowing the participant to choose the interview location is considered to be empowering (Elwood and Martin, 2000). As I initially feared, on playback, the background noise and chatter made it very difficult to hear the interview and consequently lengthened the transcription process considerably. Therefore, the advisability of conducting interviews in such enclosed public places will be considered in any future research.

Having discussed the interview structure, the following section discusses the ethical considerations for this study. As reported throughout this chapter, the methods used produced some specific ethical problems. These are now discussed below.

5.6 Ethical considerations

This final section of this chapter, discusses the ethical aspects of this research, and draws attention to some specific areas of concern. This research project was conducted in accordance with current British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines. Standard agreements on confidentiality were produced and were given to participants before commencement of data collection. These agreements included the participants' voluntary informed consent in a signed declaration before the biographical survey questionnaires were sent out and the subsequent interviews commenced (copy in Appendix

Three). The hardcopies of these are retained by myself. As all the participants in this research project are over 18 years of age, issues concerning parental consent and safeguarding did not present themselves.

Research participants were informed that in the event that they did not wish to have certain information or sentiments shared in a public discourse, they had the right to edit or censor information up to the final draft, or to withdraw completely from the research. To this end, draft electronic copies of the research findings chapters were sent to the participants for approval.

A related ethical problem may have arisen due to the personal involvement aspect of this research. With intimate insider relationships (Taylor, 2011) integral to the quality of this thesis' data, interviewees may have felt that they have revealed more of their personal feelings and experiences than they previously intended. Alternatively as Yow (2006) suggests, as the researcher, I may have failed to follow through interesting, but delicate topics with the subject as a consequence of concerns for them as friend-informants and not wanting to cause them distress.

Although some personal details were revealed by the participants which were previously unknown to me during the interviews, these were not of a sensitive nature. It was an area of concern for me though, both as a researcher and as a friend, that some such aspects of the participants' evidence may have had an effect on them and our friendships. Fortunately, the risk taken by using friend-informants (Taylor, 2011) as sources in this case was justified by the quality of rich data obtained from the interviews.

The participants' identities and those of the smaller firms were anonymised to comply with current BERA guidelines, and to ensure privacy. The names of the

major companies such as the GPO, GLC, or London Transport were not changed, however, as they would have been clearly evident to any reader with knowledge of these firms or their industries. In these cases, the large size of their workforces and judicious use of specific locations serves to anonymise the participants instead.

The only person identified by name and company is myself, who appears in the data as Bob. The other research participants were assigned a code letter, and were arranged alphabetically from the earliest 'A' (1959) to the latest, 'I' (1989). To retain a sense of real people telling real life stories, each of the letters were allocated a common male English forename of the period beginning with that letter. Only my thesis supervisors and I have access to their identities and data.

In conclusion, this chapter has examined the research design selected for this PhD thesis. The strengths and weaknesses of the research instruments have been evaluated and discussed, as have the choices available and their reasons for selection. It has highlighted areas in which problems were encountered and described the solutions found to resolve them. The next chapter is the first of two research findings chapters, and discusses the position of the participants' stories within the field of youth studies, in a period generally considered to be a 'golden age' of apprenticeships, and reveals how they chose their particular apprenticeships.

Chapter 6: Getting a trade: first steps

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

Lau Tzu, 6th Century B.C.

6.1 Introduction

This chapter is the first of two findings chapters, in which the empirical evidence is used to reveal how the participants recall diverse aspects of their apprenticeships. This chapter focusses on the participants' choice of apprenticeship and their associated transitional aspects. It describes their experiences of securing and entering an apprenticeship, considered in this study as taking their first steps towards entering the adult community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) represented by work. It discovers the difficulties they experienced, and discloses the external factors which guided their choices of occupation. As discussed in Chapter Five, the methodology chapter, the research sample includes myself and the participants are all white, working class males and are all personally known to me as a consequence of being work colleagues at various times either in the trade, or as lecturers in the FE Sector¹⁶.

This chapter is organised into four sections. After this Introduction, the next section discusses how the participants chose their particular apprenticeships, and so makes a contribution to an area considered to be much under researched (Vickerstaff, 2003). Its subsections address issues concerning their social capital, and the influence of important others (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) and significant others (Haller and Woelfel, 1972) on their decisions. Concepts

¹⁶ Further Education Sector-see footnote 4 for explanation.

such as social reproduction (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990), horizons for action (Hodkinson, Sparkes, and Hodkinson, 1996; Hodkinson, 2009), vocational habitus (Colley, *et al*, 2003) and bounded agency (Evans and Heinz, 1991;1993; Evans, 2007; Heinz, 2009) discussed in Chapter Three, are used to interpret the findings, and to examine the effects of how both structure and agency impacted on the participants as they negotiated their sociocultural landscapes.

The third section uses the research evidence to illuminate another under-researched period of British vocational training history; that of school to work transitions during the years 1959-1989. In its two subsections, the participants' recollections are used to reveal factors which impacted on their occupational choices, and also includes accounts of 'critical moments' (Thomson, Bell, Holland, McGrellis and Sharpe, 2002) which altered their course. The final section summarises this chapter, and also reflects on the extent to which family influence or external agencies affected the interviewees' choice of apprenticeships.

The next section describes how the respondents chose their apprenticeships, and examines the influences affecting their selections. It describes how the participants secured their apprenticeships, and how the interaction between structure, agency, social capital (Coleman, 1988) and role models directed their choice of particular trade.

6.2 Becoming an apprentice

This section concerns the participants' pre-apprenticeship period, and how they selected an apprenticeship. Its sub-sections focus on the effects of structural and relational influences in early choices of career, and uses the concepts of

habitus (Bourdieu, 1977b), bounded agency (Evans and Heinz, 1991; 1993; Evans, 2007; Heinz, 2009), horizons for action (Hodkinson *et al*, 1996; Hodkinson, 2009), vocational habitus (Colley, *et al*, 2003), anticipatory socialisation (Merton and Rossi, 1950) and social reproduction (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990) to interpret the evidence.

The research evidence collected for this thesis and discussed here, helps to understand how the participants' individual choices of occupation were made, and how the effects of societal context acted on those decisions. Cases of social reproduction, individual agency, instrumentality and chance are disclosed through the participants' evidence. The effects of the participants' educational attainment and that of significant others (Haller and Woelfel, 1972) as role models are also discussed. The first subsection reveals how the participants made their choices of occupation.

6.2.1 Securing an apprenticeship

In this subsection, the participants describe how they selected their apprenticeships, and so offers an insight into the complexity of internal and external pressures driving those choices. One of these contributory factors included examination success at school (see Table 1, page 142). All but two participants attended comprehensive schools, the others attending Grammar schools, in London. The majority of the research participants achieved moderate success at school. Just one left school (Grammar School) without any qualifications. The rest achieved what would be currently seen as fairly low levels of examination results, that would not meet the benchmarks for success used in government school performance data of 5 GCSEs at grade C or above (Department for Education, 2015), and none achieving 'A' level standard.

However, these qualifications must be understood in the context of different curricula and examination assessment standards due to changes from GCE and CSE, to GCSE.

The interviews for this research were mostly spontaneously chronologically structured by the participants, and frequently began with an account of how their apprenticeships were obtained. Ryrie and Weir in their study of 1960s apprenticeship experiences caution that we should ‘...[bear] in mind that ‘choice’ of trade may be either deliberate and purposeful or haphazard and adventitious’ (1978: 13). Therefore, how the participants in this research selected their particular trades, provides an insight in to what extent their choices were planned, or influenced by external factors, or even happened by chance.

Some of the participants, like Alec (Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1959-61), said that they ‘...had no idea what I wanted to do to make a living or anything like that’ when they left school. Others like Graham (Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1977-80), expressed a similarly vague ambition; ‘I didn’t really know exactly what I wanted to do when I left school’. However, they often had a strong opinion about what work they didn’t want to do; ‘I don’t want to work in an office, in a factory’ (Alec). Charlie (Apprentice Electrician, 1963-68) similarly recalls that when asked by a Youth Employment Service¹⁷ advisor if he would like to work in a factory, he replied ‘No, not really...I think I am probably better than that’.

The interview evidence shows that the participants’ apprenticeships were

¹⁷ The Youth Employment Service was initially created in England and Wales through the Employment and Training Act 1948. Its purpose was to advise school pupils under the age of 18 on choice of career, and also to provide a placement service.

secured by various methods, including the Youth Employment Service (Alec, Dave, Barry and myself), family and friends (Charlie and Ian), college recommendation (Eric), and also by writing letters of application. Frank, Graham and Harry, all sent letters to prospective employers requesting an apprenticeship. Frank remembers that he,

...was already working... so I could afford envelopes and stamps, I looked in the Yellow Pages and got all the Painters and Decorators in my local area, and wrote a letter to them. Because in those days there was obviously no computers, I had to write, I think, about twenty letters exactly the same...to different firms, put a stamp on them, posted them off (Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1977-80).

Ian, who as we will see in the next section, began his working life as an apprentice draughtsman, also acquired this first position by ‘...writing forty-fifty letters...just out of the Yellow Pages’. Later, after an extended period of transition (discussed below), Ian eventually secured his second apprenticeship, as a bricklayer, through family influence, as a consequence of a personal recommendation by his bricklayer uncle to a previous employer.

The interview evidence showed that only four participants entered a trade associated with their family. However, as can be seen from Table 1 (page 142), only one of the research participants clearly followed this pattern; another followed his father’s secondary job, a third was influenced by his brother-in-law’s trade, and another by his uncle. Therefore, simple social reproduction theory (*inter alia* Bourdieu, 1977a; 1977b; 1986; 1993; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977d) in which attitudes towards suitable work are inter-generationally transmitted, cannot completely explain all the occupational choices of this group.

As a precondition for gaining an apprenticeship, the entry requirements required

certain school qualifications, and these form part of the capital possessed by the participants (Bourdieu, 1986). These varied according to trade, and for my apprenticeship, I needed to have at least a GCE 'O' level or grade1 CSE equivalent, in English, maths and a science subject for my application to be considered. However, Barry secured his telecommunications technician apprenticeship on his projected GCE results, as his employer (the state owned GPO¹⁸) often recruited apprentices before they had taken their final examinations. When he failed to pass any of those examinations, he successfully passed GPO tests in maths, English and technical aptitude instead.

The connection between educational attainment in compulsory education, social class and career destination has been the subject of much research (*inter alia*, Sime, Pattie, and Gray, 1990; Penn and Scattergood, 1992; Furlong and Cartmel, 1995; Drew, 1995). A strong correlation has been shown to exist between features of an individual's social class and their destinations aged 16 due to their educational achievements. Bourdieu (1986) argues that academic qualifications are an objectification of cultural capital and confers upon the holder a standardised, stable and legal status. On leaving school the research participants lacked sufficient quantities of this form of capital to access a wider range of vocational alternatives, which may have guided their occupational choices and ultimately, contributed to their adult identities.

To conclude, this subsection has indicated how the participants used a combination of external agencies (The Youth Employment Service), family, friends, personal recommendation and individual agency to secure an

¹⁸ GPO-General Post Office, providers of the national telecommunications infrastructure at that time.

apprenticeship. It suggests that social reproduction theory (Bourdieu, 1986), through following the family trade cannot alone account for their actions. It has also acknowledged the contribution of examination results as cultural capital in limiting their occupational 'horizons for action' (Hodkinson *et al*, 1996; Hodkinson, 2009). This subsection also gives an indication that the range of work available to the participants at the time, was limited and shown to be highly gendered. The traditional advice to get a trade was limited to those considered suitable for young males, and this is discussed further below. But the inability of social reproduction theory (Bourdieu, 1986) to entirely explain the participants' choice of occupation, does not mean that their families' influence was entirely negated. The family's influence still features heavily in the interview evidence and this will be discussed in the next subsection.

6.2.2 Family social capital

So far, this chapter has focussed on the participants' actions in securing an apprenticeship. This subsection considers the family's contribution towards achieving that goal. The literature suggests that the notion of 'getting a trade' was a common piece of gendered and classed advice amongst British working class families of the time. For example, Vickerstaff (2007: 336) notes that, 'For many working class families in the post-World War II period getting a trade was a key aspiration for their male children' and as the interview evidence in this subsection will show, this viewpoint is supported by the findings in this research.

From the group of participants that followed a family trade, Dave, Eric and Ian described in their interviews how they underwent a period of anticipatory socialisation (Merton & Rossi, 1950) through helping out close relatives during school holidays and at weekends. Some of these direct effects of the family on

the participants' choices of career are recounted in these following interview passages:

....my first experience as an apprentice was probably influenced by my father and also my grandfather, who were both...tradespersons and I was told 'Son, learn a trade and that's the best thing to do', so that set me off on my journey as an apprentice, working...underage ...probably from the age of fourteen, fifteen and then into a formal apprenticeship (Dave, Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1974-77).

Ian discusses his early influences in this next extract. He recalls how a close relative provided him with work experience, which later directed his choice of career:

I mean from the age of about twelve, thirteen-me uncle was a bricklayer. I used to help him in the six weeks holidays. So that's where I...got sort of interested in working in construction (Apprentice Bricklayer, 1986-89).

Eric also recalls that his first experiences of working was with his father whose primary job was as a warehouseman:

I'd done some decorating work with my Dad, who worked part-time as a decorator, 'cos...he normally worked permanent nights, so he was always available to work in the afternoons to earn extra money and I used to help him...things like pasting and holding bits while he sawed, mixing Polyfiller, rubbing down-all the basic stuff (Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1975-78).

Although Dave, Eric and Ian's experiences of following a family trade were unusual among the research participants, for others getting a trade-any trade, was seen by their families as an essential step in pursuing a worthwhile career. Another respondent Frank, despite having the talent and ambition to at least follow his dream and attempt to become a professional football player, recalls

that his parents had made some assumptions about his future occupational field, deciding that: '...maybe because of their background or our working class, that I was gonna be in the building game of some sort'. In this passage, he describes his family's advice:

...my Mum and Dad, had conflicting ideas about employment. They both said 'Get a trade'...but my Dad always said 'Go where the money is, boy, so you've got loads of money'. But my Mum said 'Go where you're happy'. And I sort of hit a compromise with that, because I thought 'I like Painting and Decorating, and...it's not badly paid'. If I took my Dad's advice, I might have been a plumber, or an electrician. If I'd have really took my Mum's advice, I'd have probably stuck out and tried being a footballer (laughs) (Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1977-80).

Frank's preference of trade, shows a degree of compromise and choice, and demonstrates the ability of actors to make individual meaning in the context of their horizons for action, described as the complex interplay between personal dispositions and external forces such as the labour market (Hodkinson *et al*, 1996; Hodkinson, 2009). In Frank's case, choices were mediated by guidance offered by his immediate family, and limited by his lack of capital in the form of examination success. Nevertheless, a choice was made that satisfied all parties. Here in this extract, he describes the reasoning behind his decision to abandon his first choice to pursue a career as a professional footballer and choose to 'get a trade':

...I was a good footballer. But then, I think, as you get to sort of fourteen, you sort of realise 'Well that ain't going to happen'. You start-even in... those dark and distant days, you actually realise...'No I'm not really cut out to be a footballer'. So I thought, I'd better take my Mum and Dad's advice about getting a trade (Frank, Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1977-80).

Getting a trade through a recognised apprenticeship appealed to Frank (and the other participants) because during this time, it was still considered to have some value and status within society. Reflecting its historic function in society as a respected method of both learning a trade and as an entry to adulthood, Vickerstaff (2007: 342) claims, 'It meant something to be an apprentice...' Interview evidence suggests that this perception still applied because the participants as apprentices, considered themselves to be part of a select few, chosen because they possessed learning potential and some degree of intelligence, and that this gave them a special status within society. Charlie recalls that for him:

...there was a certain amount of...kudos to being an apprentice, I think at the time. Especially in the area where I was, there weren't that many apprentices about. A lot of people just went into shops or warehouses (Apprentice Electrician, 1963-68).

This belief finds support in Frank's recollections:

I think...in those days-the world's a totally different place now, but when I came home from work, and I might see the neighbours...all the neighbours would know 'That's Frank. He's an apprentice'. So that meant: he's an apprentice; he's being taught and learning a trade and he goes to college, so he must be quite clever. So I think, the very fact that you're an apprentice...raised your status and I really firmly believe that (Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1977-80).

The findings also reveal how the participants' families felt about their apprenticeships which further shows the prestige that they still carried. Frank's evidence discloses his family's pride at his achievements; 'Mum was proud of me and...I heard later in life dad was extremely proud of me-he never said anything at the time' (Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1977-80). Similarly,

Dave's evidence reveals that '...it was good to see, that the family were very proud-my mum and dad were especially proud of me' (Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1974-77). One reason for the participants' satisfaction in securing an apprenticeship is that they wished to please their parents. Frank said 'I think that in those days, we did-most kids, wanna make their parents proud-wanna make their parents happy' (Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1977-80). This reflects the influence of subjective norm-the wish to make happy those people who are considered to be important to an individual (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). This will be discussed further in Chapter Eight.

This newfound status did not always work for the apprentice's benefit though. Charlie remembers one particular disadvantage brought about by the prestige of his position:

I remember one girl packed me up once she found out that I was an apprentice. She said (laughs) 'Do you go to college for that?' I said 'Yeah'. She said 'No, no, no'. She said 'You're too intelligent to go out with me' (laughing) (Apprentice Electrician, 1963-68).

Obtaining a recognised trade was considered desirable because it conferred a particular type of security upon its practitioner, described as 'trade-security' by Ryrie and Weir (1978). They claim that this differs from job-security in that the job itself may not be permanent as a consequence of economic fluctuations, but trade-security greatly improves the prospects of finding another job due to the transferrable and specialist job skills associated with it.

For the participants' families, and in their sociocultural landscapes, work was still a fundamentally human activity that was essential to an independent life as suggested by Marxist thought and discussed in Chapter Four. As an action which separated humanity from animality, the necessity to work was

fundamental to being human. It also provided a sense of Durkheimian meritocracy, self-worth and self-identity, also discussed the same chapter. Furthermore, work outside one's original trade is always another possibility, with the reassurance of knowing that in hard times, they can always '...fall back on the trade' (Ryrie and Weir, 1978: 17) and so maintains ideas of self-sufficiency, as is disclosed through interview evidence next.

The security premium that apprenticeships produced through learning a trade was clearly evident to the respondents, and enabled them as apprentices, to plan for the future, and for anticipated future events. Charlie recalls that 'I thought that if I'm gonna work...I'm gonna have to be responsible for myself- and family if that comes later...' (Apprentice Electrician, 1963-68), and he thought an apprenticeship would provide a secure way of doing that.

Once I get qualified, then I can-if I want to-look around and, maybe branch out into something else-but I'll always have...a skill-a trade to fall back on-if I tried something else and didn't like it (Charlie, Apprentice Electrician, 1963-68).

The resilience of the dominant cultural model of self-sufficiency in preparation for adulthood, and the working class work ethic is still discernible within the family, even at the end of this research project's timeframe. During his childhood in the 1970s and 1980s, the most recent participant Ian, recalls that the work ethic was still instilled at an early age in his family:

[We]...were brought up...right from a little age...you don't get nothing for nothing. You don't get no pocket money unless you do something; wash up, cut the grass, wash the car, so from a young age we knew that (Apprentice Bricklayer, 1986-89).

This desire to earn a wage illustrates an element of social reproduction through family socialisation and acculturation into the dominant cultural patterns of their

social landscape, in which a direct transition from school to work, and providing for yourself was expected, even if it was not always achieved. However, the horizons for action (Hodkinson *et al*, 1996; Hodkinson, 2009) for this group were limited during this time by structural and relational factors, and by local opportunity structures (Roberts K., 1977; 1984; 2009), which depended on the prevailing economic situation.

This subsection has illustrated how the participants embraced the working class work ethic as part of their habitus, discussed in Chapter Three. Dispositions, values and practices were imparted through family socialisation and acculturation during their childhood in the forms of social and cultural capital. In response to a dynamic interaction of structure and agency, an unconscious transmission of habitus therefore determined the social norms and tendencies which supported the participants' thoughts and actions.

The concept of vocational habitus further develops this theme (Colley, *et al*, 2003). This concept also suggests that sets of dispositions, values and motivations are formed by families, and shapes their social backgrounds. When these dispositions are combined with the participants' individual preferences, they produce an identity which fits a vocational culture. Vocational habitus therefore, prescribes how the participants should look and feel, what values and beliefs to hold, and so they adopt a vocational identity which makes them '...the right person for the job' (*ibid.*, 2003: 477). The next subsection considers how individual preferences, subjective norm (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975), and the influence of significant others (Haller and Woelfel, 1972) contributed to the participants' occupational choices.

6.2.3 Significant others as role models

The impact of the closely related concepts of important others (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) and significant others (Haller and Woelfel, 1972) in developing the occupational choices of the participants is considered in this subsection. Here, the influences of parents, peers, and close family on the choice of apprenticeship is explored through the evidence. Other influences impacting on the respondents' choice of career such as personal interests, are also revealed, and a degree of instrumentality is uncovered in their choices.

The following three examples provide evidence of how family and friends acting as important others (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) and significant others (Haller and Woelfel, 1972) influenced, through giving advice, or by facilitating the choice of a career. For my part, at the time of leaving school in 1971, I had an older cousin who had a very good job for the time as a computer programmer and my father thought that this type of career offered trade-security (Ryrie and Weir, 1978) because it was part of the new age of technology. My first choice was for a career in the Royal Navy, which because of my youth, required parental consent. But my father withheld his consent unless I joined as an Artificer Apprentice, which offered the prospect of working with advanced technology and so in his opinion, provided for a similarly suitable, safe career as my cousin's.

To be considered by the Royal Navy for selection as an Artificer Apprentice required 5 GCE 'O' levels or their CSE grade 1 equivalents, but unfortunately, I only gained 2 'O' levels and 2 CSE grade 1s at school, despite staying on an extra year to retake some examinations, and therefore, had to look for alternative employment. An apprenticeship in the relatively modern, high-tech world of telecommunications was agreed with my father, again as a

compromise. However, I feel that my father's influence and advice as an important other (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975), merely gave my career a direction as I already had a career in telecommunications in mind as a second choice. This was as a consequence of information that I had received from several of my school friends who had made that their first choice of apprenticeship. However, in the following extracts, a more direct influence of family and friends, or significant others (Haller and Woelfel, 1972) as role models can be detected.

As we saw earlier in this section, Frank's dream was to be a professional footballer, but, at the age when he appraised the likelihood of achieving his ambition, he was influenced by his older brother's friends, both Painters and Decorators:

...I really admired them both-two of his friends I really admired-they was great people. And they used to come home with stories of about 'Oh yeah, I've been doing this today' or 'I've been doing that today' and I thought that was a really good way of earning a living-because they was obviously earning money, and they used to come home with stories about 'Oh, you should see these girls, they're really nice girls and we chat to them at dinner times as well'. And being a fourteen year old kid that pricked me ears up as well! (Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1977-80).

Such influences are recalled in other interviews. Harry, provides a striking example in this respect. He had a brother-in-law who worked for the state owned telecommunications company British Telecom in the early 1980s, and who later helped him apply for his apprenticeship. Coming from Canning Town, an impoverished area of east London, where '...nobody had any *real* qualifications, nobody had any *real* start in their life', Harry goes on to describe his brother-in-law as:

...probably the only (laughing) role model I had in my family that had...any kind of a...decent-in inverted commas, job (Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1981-84).

The extent to which his brother-in-law as a 'significant other' (Haller and Woelfel, 1972), influenced his career choice can be judged by this passage:

...if my brother-in-law would have been working (laughing) on a building site or...if he'd have been doing something else...say he was a plumber or an electrician-I might have gone and done that. I didn't have any inclination to become a telephone engineer, it was just that he was the only role model that I had in the family (Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1981-84).

Harry's evidence demonstrates the respect, and even the admiration, that society at the time attached to 'getting a trade'. His description of his brother-in-law's job as 'decent', reflects the effect that 'trade-security' (Ryrie and Weir, 1978) had on an occupation, particularly as he favourably compares it to other family members' employment, which were of a more manual and insecure nature:

My Dad worked down the docks, until he got made redundant. Mum was a part-time cleaner. Me uncle was a long-distance lorry (laughing) driver (Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1981-84).

The range of role models available revealed in the evidence is noticeable for its lack of females. This reinforces the gendered division of labour during this period, in that all the participants' options for employment were in male dominated industries. But for some, the influence of family and role models had a much lesser impact, and personal interests or external agencies had a much greater influence instead. As we have seen, some participants had no idea of what job they wanted, but a few respondents remembered that even before they

left school, they had a vague idea of which type of career they would like to pursue. However, these choices were still mediated by their sociocultural backgrounds and habitus which included their school qualifications, as well as the local opportunity structures available (Roberts K., 1977; 1984; 2009). The following extracts from another three participants describe some different approaches towards securing an apprenticeship:

I was quite interested in practical crafts. I was reasonably clever at school-I was always towards the top of the stream, but I never really enjoyed much writing, or reading-apart from what I really had to. I don't do much reading of novels or anything like that-I quite like factual...information, but practical work really... interested me (Eric, Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1975-78).

Eric's clear inclination for practical work reveals a personal preference, which due to the action of bounded agency (Evans and Heinz, 1991; 1993; Evans, 2007), restricted his horizons for action (Hodkinson *et al*, 1996; Hodkinson, 2009). A similar preference is disclosed in the following interview excerpt, in which a hobby is used as a base for an occupational choice:

I kinda liked fiddling around with circuits and transistors and I made a few gadgets in me time...before I left school, so I thought I wanted to do something in the...electrical industry (Graham, Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1977-80).

Having made his choice of industry, Graham's selection criteria then became more instrumental. After being offered several prospective apprenticeships in the London Electricity Board (LEB)¹⁹, Post Office Telecommunications (PO), and British Rail, he recalls that he was faced with a choice:

I got accepted for all those three posts and I ended up

¹⁹ The London Electricity Board was the regional public sector utility company responsible for electricity generation and electrical infrastructure maintenance in London prior to 1990.

choosing...Post Office Telecommunications because they paid twice as much money (laughs) (Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1977-80).

This approach was not unique in this research and a degree of instrumentality was discernible in several interviews, as demonstrated by Barry in the following passage:

I...went for a couple of presentation things with the different companies... they all looked alright...but the big difference between what I was thinking about and what I ended up doing was based on two things...the other apprenticeships, like the Gas Board²⁰ or the electricity, they were five years...and the wages were something like two or three guineas²¹ a time and then...when I enquired about becoming a telephone engineer, I found that it was only a two year apprenticeship...and the wages were nearly (laughing) a fiver²² a week! So, I thought 'I'll have some of that' (Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1962-64).

To conclude, through examining the evidence provided by the interviews, and remembering Ryrie and Weir's caution that 'choice' of trade '...may be either deliberate and purposeful or haphazard and adventitious' (1978: 13), it can be determined that many factors combined to shape the research participants' choice of apprenticeships. These factors were both structural and relational, with educational achievement, social capital (Coleman, 1988), important others (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and significant others (Haller and Woelfel, 1972) in the form of family and friends, or role models, impacting on the career choices of

²⁰ The Gas Board refers to the collective name for the regional public sector utility companies responsible for the provision and infrastructure maintenance before 1986.

²¹ A guinea was £1 1s 0d in pre-decimalised currency or £1.05-the equivalent, using the economic status indicator, of £53.49 today (<http://www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare/>) 17/9/15.

²² Using the same indicator as the previous footnote, £5 is now the equivalent of £254.70 (<http://www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare/>) 17/9/15.

these individuals. Along with the participants' cultural capital in the form of fewer institutionalised academic qualifications, the participants' horizons for action (Hodkinson *et al*, 1996; Hodkinson, 2009) were limited through the effects of bounded agency (Evans and Heinz, 1991; 1993; Evans, 2007) as described in Chapter Three.

Family influence through social capital (Coleman, 1988) can be seen to have played a significant part in shaping the choices of the participants, to a far greater extent for some, affecting their future career options, with lesser, more subtle and nuanced impacts for others. Structural factors such as the gender, educational and social background of the group were instrumental in all their choices by setting their horizons of action (Hodkinson *et al*, 1996; Hodkinson, 2009) and affected the course of events surrounding their transition from school to work (Colley, *et al*, 2003). This influence was felt by limiting access to areas of employment by filtering the options available, and can be perceived as the effects of bounded agency (Evans and Heinz, 1991; 1993; Evans, 2007). The next section uses interview evidence to consider whether the participants' transitions were fairly simple 'smooth' and 'unproblematic' as traditionally thought (Brown, P., 1991: 90), or more complex as suggested by Vickerstaff (2003).

6.3 School to work transitions in the period 1959 to 1989

This section uses the participants' narratives to record their progression from school to apprenticeship, or into work. Interview evidence is used to discover whether the experiences of the participants differed, or bore similarities to each other over the years 1959-1989. Here, the participants tell how their personal journeys leading towards the creation of their adult identities and entry to

adulthood, first began. Memories include familial expectations of getting suitable work; respondents' non-linear and reversible transitions; their early experiences of work and critical moments (Thomson, *et al.*, 2002). Consequently, it offers a perspective on whether transitions were 'one step' as traditionally thought (Ashton and Lowe, 1991b: 209), or more complex during that time.

6.3.1 Complex or simple 'one step' transitions?

Transitions from school to work during the early part of the research timeframe have traditionally been considered to have been smooth and uncomplicated as a consequence of the thriving youth labour market of the time (Brown, P., 1991), a view which Ashton and Lowe (1991b: 209) have described as 'one step' transitions. This is particularly evident when compared to the range of fragmented, individualised and extended experiences prevailing since the mid-1970s (*inter alia*, Evans and Furlong, 1997; Evans, Hodgkinson and Unwin, 2002; Diepstraten, du Bois-Reymond, and Vinken, 2006 ; Biggart and Walther, 2006; Biggart, Furlong, and Cartmel, 2008). As discussed in Chapter Two, during the research period, opportunities for school leavers were increasingly shaped by the declining numbers of apprenticeships available from the 1960s (Gospel, 1998), a demographic surge in young people entering the labour market, and a later collapse in youth employment (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997).

In response to growing youth unemployment, government instituted structural measures such as youth training schemes were introduced later in the research period. These measures were intended to compensate for the consequent postponement of the transition to work. Vickerstaff (2003: 270) refers to those decades of the 1940s to the early 1960s as being '...an assumed 'golden age' of unproblematic transitions' from school to work and training. The participants'

evidence in this research begins in 1959 and so contributes to an area in which Vickerstaff claims that ‘...relatively little research exists’ (2003: 270). Goodwin and O’Connor’s (2007b) work in which they revisited the participants of Ashton and Field’s (1976) Young Worker Project provides a noticeable exception, and allows an evaluation of their predictions. Goodwin and O’Connor (2007b) demonstrated that individuals’ futures were difficult to forecast because of the unforeseen circumstances which befell the participants during their careers, as well as instances of ‘critical moments’ (Thompson, *et al*, 2002). Interview evidence in this subsection shows how my participants’ individual career transitions were also influenced by specific sets of factors.

Interview evidence shows that for most of this research group, starting an apprenticeship or work was an expected, even an unexceptional event. Alec (Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1959-1961) remarks that in 1959, the buoyant youth labour market meant that ‘...the big difference [compared to today was]...when I left school, we had full employment...It was impossible, I would’ve had to deliberately not get a job, to be unemployed’. Harry’s evidence from over 20 years later in the research timeframe has remarkable similarities considering the depressed nature of the youth labour market of his time.

We’d all left school...and got apprenticeships-and we didn’t think it was a big deal... you’ve got to remember that...back then...it was normal to get a job-it wasn’t like it is today...back then, getting a job was fairly normal (Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1981-84).

Harry’s recollection of a straightforward, and even expected school to work transition during the early 1980s is surprising as it seems at first reading, to follow the traditionally held view of smooth transitions from school to work (Ashton and Lowe, 1991a). This is a period in which a fairly steady increase in

youth unemployment from the late 1970s culminated in the collapse of the youth labour market (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997). But Harry's evidence indicates that not all young people were finding school-to-work transitions difficult.

Progressing into some form of work or an apprenticeship was clearly still regarded as an expected and established life-stage in the transitional process for some working class boys in London during the early 1980s.

However, this continuity of remembered experiences from two participants from the same industry, separated by more than two decades, may perhaps indicate the specific influences of the geographical location of the participants in the capital, and their occupation. It is possible that the evidence illustrates that the effects of the youth labour market's collapse was not universally felt, or did not affect the telecommunications industry in London as much as other industries as BT were still actively recruiting apprentices. The scope of this research limits any conclusions being made regarding this anomaly, and is an area that requires further specific research to determine its causes and effects.

Nevertheless, evidence from the construction industry apprentices also shows certain similarities with those of the telecommunications cohort, with examples from a few years earlier in the 1970s, showing that apprenticeships were equally available. Eric's (Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1975-78) evidence reveals that his transition from school-to-work was similarly straightforward. He took a CSE²³ in Building Studies at his local college during the last two years of compulsory education. He subsequently secured his apprenticeship through the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) New Entrants' Training Scheme after a recommendation by his college tutor, as this provided another alternative

²³ See footnote 10 for explanation of subject specific examinations of the period.

route onto work for young people.

Other construction industry participants achieved their school-to-work or apprenticeship transitions in a similarly straightforward fashion. Dave's (Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1974-77) experience serves as an example. He found his apprenticeship through '...the traditional method of applying via the...careers office²⁴, who then put me in touch with some companies - I went along and had an interview and was taken on as an apprentice'. So despite the decline in the number of apprenticeships from the 1960s onwards (*inter alia*, Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; Gospel, 1998), a number of the participants in this research found entry to work relatively straightforward. However, as the evidence presented later will illustrate, this was not true for all participants.

Each participant's occupational destination in this thesis was naturally shaped by a personal combination of influences, including those of the family and of social capital (Coleman, 1988). But the participants' recollections show that throughout the research period, their families expected a rapid entry to work or an apprenticeship. Frank (Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1977-80) recalls the reaction he got from his family when he discussed leaving school. 'Mum said "You ain't leaving 'til you've got a job"', a view further supported by other participants as recalled in these extracts:

...it was made clear to me, specifically by me mum, but I'm sure that me dad had a lot to do with it, that...because I'd now left school, I couldn't be at home just sitting around (Dave, Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1974-77).

Dave's recollection of family pressure to find work is further echoed in other interview evidence. Here another participant recalls his family's influence during

²⁴ See footnote 17 for description of the Youth Employment Service.

this important transition:

I just knew that when I left school that I had to get work. It's just that my...whole family have never been unemployed or anything. It's just...the way I was brought up. You go to school; you go to work and that was it (Graham, Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1977-80).

These examples indicate that regarding direct entry to work, the attitudes of the participants' families were very similar. Other alternatives to starting work or apprenticeship, such as an extended education or going to university, were rarely mentioned during the interviews. This is to some extent a reflection of the relative lack of structural differentiation (the greater complexity of different roles, norms and specialisations that arise as society evolves) experienced by the participants, and the consequent narrow range of post-school options available to them at the time. The effect of their social status and educational qualifications gained at school (see Table 1, page 142) would have also determined their trajectories. The only mention of university in the interview evidence is from Graham, who remembers that:

...there was no thoughts of university - me parents had split up at the time-me Dad was struggling to keep...the house going (Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1977-80).

The evidence presented in this section has shown that for these participants, the school to work transition was relatively smooth. The next subsection considers the evidence of participants that experienced a more extended and complex transition to work.

6.3.2 Extended transitions

This subsection describes the participants' recollections of complex, non-linear and extended transitions from school to work and their apprenticeships. It

contains evidence of direct entry to work by participants and one instance of extended education, as well as some critical moments (Thomson, *et al*, 2002) that were recalled in the interviews.

Uniquely among the participants in this research, I entered a limited period of extended education. In an attempt to increase my human capital (Becker, 1993) and consequently, my employment opportunities, I stayed on at school for another year to join the Lower Sixth Form. This was primarily to retake my Mathematics GCE 'O' level examination among others, which I had previously failed. As explained earlier in this chapter, this was a prerequisite for both my first and second choices of career. My extended participation in education was achieved in spite of family pressure, as a consequence of their traditional work ethic, for me to start work and contribute to the family finances. After eventually leaving school in 1971, I secured an apprenticeship in the telecommunications industry at my first attempt.

However, for some participants, leaving school was not their first experience of the world of work. Interview evidence shows that across the research timeframe, respondents had informally entered the labour market whilst still at school, and had already started the school to work transitional process as described in the following passages:

I used to work on a paper stall [whilst still] at school, six mornings a week and I used to work at a tube station...four or five nights a week...selling papers (Barry, Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1962-64).

The number of participants unofficially working before leaving school and the range of different jobs undertaken, reveals the opportunities available to them at the time. Dave remembers that:

I got myself like, a Saturday job...working in a...chip shop, down at Tottenham, near the football ground (Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1974-77).

Similarly, this extract from Eric's interview shows him working in a couple of retail jobs:

I worked in two...shops before I was sixteen. I worked as a fishmonger from the age of twelve...as a Saturday boy...and I worked in a wine shop at the age of fifteen, doing deliveries (Eric, Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1975-78).

The opportunities available and the ease of finding casual employment in shops or selling newspapers, gave these participants an initial socialisation into the work environment. But, with particular reference to the traditional 'one step' transitions perspective (Ashton & Lowe, 1991b: 209), the evidence reveals that some instances of formal employment were also apparent before securing an apprenticeship. Consequently, those participants who started work directly from school faced making important decisions when they were later offered an apprenticeship. These following passages demonstrate the non-linear paths into apprenticeship undertaken by some of the interviewees who were in this position:

I had to wait a long time for them [the GPO] to answer, so I took another job in between, working for the London Co-operative Wholesale Society...in an office-not great but it got me employed (Alec, Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1959-61).

Other interviewees faced similar problems. Speculative applications for an apprenticeship needed an additional plan, as described here:

I had to find alternative work until, hopefully this apprenticeship came through...and I ended up working in a quilt factory making...bed linen (Dave, Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1974-77).

Similarly, Frank had already applied for several apprenticeships before eventually leaving school. He had attended some interviews, but had not been informed of their outcomes. He therefore assumed that he had been unsuccessful and looked for alternative employment. He was working in a sheet metal factory when he received two offers of apprenticeship:

...so I had in effect three jobs then, really (laughs). You know (laughs), how lucky am I? (Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1977-80).

However, because of his determination to become an apprentice and to learn a recognised trade, he decided to leave his then current job, which he enjoyed, and take up one of the apprenticeship offers:

...I had to give 'em notice, saying 'I'm sorry, I'm leaving'...and they was pretty gutted really, it seemed. You know, they wanted me to stay there and become part of their team, but...no. (Frank, Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1977-80).

Ian, whose apprenticeship was the most recent starting in 1986, displayed the non-linear pattern more associated with the extended transitions experienced by many young people in recent times:

...construction wasn't me first...choice on leaving school. I was quite interested in...Technical drawing...[that's] what I was aiming for...with the [exam] results and everything...was...[to be a] draughtsman (Apprentice Bricklayer, 1986-89).

However, after a short-lived draughtsman's apprenticeship in an engineering company (discussed further below), Ian subsequently had several short-term jobs and was eventually accepted on a brickwork course through the Youth Training Scheme before finally securing a bricklaying apprenticeship:

So...after I left [my first apprenticeship]...I think I'd done

another...couple of months in...In a company making...patio slabs and...concrete walling (Apprentice Bricklayer, 1986-89).

Ian's experience shows a more fragmented approach to entering an apprenticeship. His non-linear and reversible transition to employment in the 1980s is typical of later, more complex experiences (*inter alia*, Evans and Furlong, 1997; Evans, 2002; Diepstraten, *et al*, 2006; Biggart, *et al*, 2008) following the collapse of the youth labour market (Gospel, 1995), and its timing may provide further evidence for the delayed impact of this collapse for youths seeking work in the capital.

In addition to recording their encounters with work before securing their apprenticeships, this section now considers how critical moments (Thomson, *et al.*, 2002) had an impact on the participants' subsequent career trajectories. As Ian's evidence revealed above, even when getting an apprenticeship in their chosen occupation, the interviewees' choice did not always fulfil their expectations. Evidence presented below, shows that subsequent changes of direction were possible, and even that one choice was determined by chance.

In addition to Ian's abandoned apprenticeship, Charlie (Apprentice Electrician, 1963-68) from the earlier end of the research timeline, remembers in his interview that 'I didn't actually intend to be an electrical apprentice-that was the funny thing'. He recalls that on leaving school, his original intentions were for a career either as a commercial artist, or as a draughtsman. He eventually obtained what he thought was an ideal position as an apprentice draughtsman through a chance recommendation by a school friend who had already obtained a draughtsman's apprenticeship with the company, a firm of electrical contractors.

But both Ian's and Charlie's futures were to be similarly affected by critical

moments (Thomson, *et al.*, 2002) in their life courses. Having both started work in a drawing office, they soon found that they felt themselves to be unsuited for that type of work. The critical moment for Ian occurred when he realised that:

...that was me...very first job on leaving school and I think I lasted...three weeks. I couldn't...handle working inside...working in an office, in a closed environment. It wasn't anything like what I expected it to be (Apprentice Bricklayer, 1986-89).

Unlike Ian, as an apprentice draughtsman, Charlie was fortunate enough to have an expansive apprenticeship (Fuller & Unwin, 2003a), which gave him the opportunity to experience different learning environments across the company. He therefore underwent periods of training throughout the company's various departments. One such learning environment was to spend some weeks outside the drawing office working with the company's electricians on construction sites, and this became a critical moment (Thomson, *et al.*, 2002) for him. Working on site, he found that he liked that type of practical work, and the variety that it offered. So when it was time for him to resume his training in the drawing office:

I decided that I'd...stay out there, give it a bit more of a try on site, because it was quite interesting...doing different sorts of jobs...going on to...different sites. It was never, never...stuck in one place all the time (Apprentice Electrician, 1963-68).

There is an element of good fortune involved here, as Charlie first secured his apprenticeship through a chance recommendation to an employer by a friend, and that his apprenticeship allowed him to experience other areas of work. He was also lucky enough to have a flexible employer who was willing to let him use his agency to change occupation whilst still in the same company. Whereas less fortunately for Ian, this was not possible, and he underwent a period of

frequent job change and training through the YTS, until he eventually found an apprenticeship which suited him.

The evidence from Alec, Barry, Dave, Eric, Frank and Graham's interviews, presented above, along with my own recollections of family resistance to extending my education, indicate that our social and familial expectations generally precluded widespread participation in post-compulsory education. Therefore for most of the participants, direct entry to work or an apprenticeship at the end of compulsory education was considered to be the rule rather than the exception. This indicates that the traditional working class family work ethic played an important role in transitions from school to work, as revealed by their social capital (Coleman, 1988).

However, the buoyant condition of the youth labour market at the beginning of this research timeframe, discussed in Chapter Two and recalled in interviews, meant that entry to employment and changes in career were easily achieved. This aspect of the evidence is clearly revealed by comparing the relative ease with which the earlier participants found their apprenticeships and made changes in careers, with that of Ian, who started work at the end of this timeframe in 1986.

The participants' evidence has shown a range of transitional experiences across the research timescale, and revealed instances of linear, non-linear, reversible transitions, and even a serendipitous transition. The examples of direct entry to work recalled by Alec, Dave and Frank in this section, appear to be consequence of delayed communication from the employers, but indicate that entry level work and apprenticeships were readily available. This seems to suggest that the perception of the continuing availability of apprenticeships in

London from 1959 to at least 1981 remains in the interviewees' memories.

The examples presented in several participants' narratives throughout the research timeframe, suggest that their transitional experiences reveal some areas of similarity. Their evidence indicates that exceptions to the expected 'smooth' transition (Brown, P., 1991: 90) rule were more common than thought. Therefore, as Vickerstaff (2003) contends, generalisations about transitions to work and apprenticeship during the research timeframe cannot be made, because as this research illustrates, each participant's journey varies due to individual circumstances. Consequently, the transition from school to work may be viewed as always having contained elements of uncertainty.

6.4 Summary

This section has offered some examples of how the participants chose their apprenticeships and has given an indication of the processes which shaped and guided their choices. The evidence presented from the participant interviews shows a clear link between mid to late 20th century working class family expectations and career choice, with some participants recalling experiences of anticipatory socialisation (Merton & Rossi, 1950) into gendered types of employment from an early age. For some participants in this research, their choices have been shown to be the consequence of a direct influence by family members, friends and associates through their social capital (Coleman, 1988). For others like myself, these influences still existed, but were more subtle with parental guidance giving advice rather than determining the choice of trade. The research evidence presented here, also indicates a link to wider sociocultural pressures which impacted on personal choice in the form of cultural (including educational qualifications) and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988),

structure and agency. The extent of family influence is discussed further in the next chapter.

The expectation to naturally proceed from school to work recalled in the interview data is interesting as it very much illustrates the limited choices, or horizons for action (Hodkinson *et al*, 1996; Hodkinson, 2009) available to the participants. It illustrates how working class school leavers in London of the period, were expected to swiftly find work in what would now considered to be a narrow range of occupations; offices, factories, shops or warehouses, albeit in a relatively booming youth labour market. For some however, the aspiration was to 'get a trade' and so find some degree of 'trade-security' (Ryrie & Weir, 1978) in a respectable occupation, which their families hoped would provide some form of protection from the impact of economic forces and the vague prospect of future unemployment. Thus, as Vickerstaff (2007: 336) maintains to get an apprenticeship, at least for their male children, was a '...key aspiration for working class families'.

This chapter has also illustrated the transitions from school to work during the period. It has indicated that the participants experienced a range of transitions which included those of both complex and simple natures. The evidence collected for this research provides support for Vickerstaff's (2003) position in which she questions the notion of unproblematic access to apprenticeship and work during a supposedly 'golden age'. Starting work as a marker of 'standard adulthood' (Parsons, 1971; Lee, 2001) was at that time, still a major step for the research participants. Their evidence has illustrated that it denoted that a significant phase in their lives had begun and allowed them to consider their possible futures. In so doing it enabled them to anticipate other expected life events such as an independent life and being able to support a family through

work as the 'male breadwinner'. In the next chapter, these ideas are further explored along with evidence which illustrates the participants' journeys from 'newcomer to 'old-timer' in their chosen trades (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Chapter 7: Entry to multiple communities of practice

He's only the apprentice and we're only havin' fun.

(Kevin 'Bloody' Wilson, 2002, *The Apprentice*, Perth, Both Barrels Music)

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter used the empirical findings to illustrate how the participants secured their apprenticeships, and revealed the importance of family and friends in their decision-making. In this chapter, the findings will be further examined using the conceptual lens of situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991), to show how the participants progressed from 'newcomer' towards 'old-timer' status, through a process of socialisation in their occupational communities of practice. Evidence includes examples of how the apprentices' progress were marked by rituals and ceremonies, whose significance is explained here through the concept of social closure (Parkin, 2001).

Importantly for this thesis, the findings are also used to illustrate how the participants' apprenticeships, through situated learning, enabled them to develop as social individuals (Goodwin, 2007). It will show how their apprenticeships provided a site in which personal adult identities could be developed through intergenerational discourse and legitimate peripheral participation in a range of adult communities of practice.

As discussed in Chapter Three, Parsons (1971) suggests that the state of adulthood may be conceived as satisfying a series of socially constructed criteria, or the 'markers of adulthood' as described by Blatterer (2007a; 2007b), such as starting work, and achieving the financial resources to set up an

independent household, which he describes as 'standard adulthood'. Goodwin (2007) further proposes that adulthood consists of a series of communities of practice in which adolescents participate as legitimate peripheral participants. Here in this chapter, the participants discuss how they were granted access to the other adult social worlds that constitute this perception of adult status. It is argued that access was reached through intergenerational action and discourse made possible by their occupational 'newcomer' status as apprentices, and therefore as both workers and learners, in the adult social world of work.

Participants' recollections concern adult topics such as finance, alcohol consumption, social contact with members of the opposite sex, and the creation of a locally formed hegemonic masculine identity (*inter alia*, Connell, 1987; 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Two of these themes, participation in work and alcohol consumption, are selected specifically to illustrate the process of becoming an adult. This is because in Britain, these are adult social activities that are closely regulated by laws which are designed to prevent, or at least severely restrict the participation of children.

This chapter is organised into four sections. After this Introduction, Section Two examines the interview data to reveal how the participants moved from the status of 'newcomer' or 'novice' towards that of an 'old-timer' (Lave and Wenger, 1991) in their selected trades. This is illustrated through examples of their changing forms of participation at work as an instance of legitimate peripheral participation in a community of practice. It also records how they perceived their changing status within that occupational community of practice. New experiences are provided by the findings which contribute to the understanding of this process.

This section also contains examples of the rites and rituals they experienced as novices at work, such as formal indenture ceremonies, apprenticeship awards, and time-honoured 'coming out' customs performed by other members of the occupational community of practice. The findings centre on how these were intended to reinforce the participants' position in the workplace hierarchy (Collinson, 1988) and to mark their progress within it. The examples are presented as evidence of the process of social closure, a collective, material and ideological process which it is claimed is essential for a group to claim skilled status (Parkin, 2001) and of 'in-group' behaviour (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Some of these rituals consist of workplace banter and practical jokes carried out by work colleagues, in which the apprentice's naivety and peripheral status were reinforced, and such workplace behaviour is alluded to in the song lyric at the beginning of this chapter.

The third section examines the interview data for evidence to support this thesis' contention that consistent with the exclusively masculine nature of the research sample, the participants' apprenticeships, as well as creating occupational identities, featured prominently in the development of their masculine adult identities. Their evidence is used to show how the participants engaged with a range of emerging adult activities and concepts mentioned earlier, which form part of a recognisable hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987; 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). The final section concludes this chapter with a summary of its contents.

7.2 Becoming an 'old-timer'

This section demonstrates through interview evidence how the participants progressed from the status of 'newcomer' towards that of becoming an 'old-

timer' in their chosen occupations. Its subsections relate experiences of learning occupational behaviours, and include examples of the rites and rituals associated with achieving social closure (Noon & Blyton, 2007; Parkin, 2001).

Participants' recollections are used here to illustrate their thoughts about their apprenticeships and most importantly, about how their identities changed during the process of 'becoming'; a process in which an individual makes changes to their identity to fit in with their work colleagues and surroundings through social interaction with others, and so becomes the right person for the job (*inter alia*, Lave and Wenger, 1991; Colley, *et al*, 2003).

7.2.1 Apprenticeships, work and nostalgia

Before the participants continue with their tales of apprenticeship and their journey into adulthood, this subsection considers their views on the difference between an apprenticeship and work. Additionally, the interviewees' awareness of the difficulties caused by the passage of time must be acknowledged and this is addressed first.

During the interviews, all of the research participants recalled their apprenticeships with fondness, although it must be remembered that a major problem encountered with recording social history is that the effects of nostalgia can influence people's recollections of the past. As discussed in Chapter Five, because of the passage of time involved, nostalgia can have a negative effect by '...undermining the credentials of historical narrative' (Pickering and Keightley, 2006: 933). However, this is a problem inherent when using an oral history perspective, and was acknowledged by the participants. An example of awareness of this nostalgic distortion of memory is illustrated by Barry's evidence:

Remembering, that all these things tend to be... 'rose tinted' when you reminisce yeah? And so... I don't... remember... anything... other than... it was alright, at the worst... and the rest of it was always... good-you know... if it ever got bad... it was still alright, you know what I mean? It was a very... rosy perception, I've got of it. If I could re-live it, it might (laugh) seem different, but... as you get older, and you look backwards... you tend to reminisce as much as anything else (Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1962-64).

Identifying the possible inaccuracies of memories does not weaken their reliability because as Portelli reminds us, oral sources have a 'different credibility' (2006:37, emphasis as in original). As we have seen, Ritchie maintains that 'People remember what *they* think is important' (2015: 16, emphasis as in original). Therefore, the integrity of oral history lies not in what is remembered, but in how those memories are interpreted (Peniston-Bird, 2009). As stated in Chapter Five, this thesis uses nostalgia in a positive way as a desire '...not to return but to recognize aspects of the past as the basis for renewal and satisfaction in the future' (Pickering and Keightley, 2006: 921).

During the interviews, the research participants were asked to describe what they thought were the main differences between working and serving an apprenticeship. Alec and Frank, are two of the interviewees that had other jobs before starting their apprenticeships, and can therefore offer some informed insights to this question. In the following passages, they explain their definitions of an apprenticeship. Alec recalls that for him, the main difference between having a job and being an apprentice, was that in work you were expected to be:

...a productive member of staff from the word go, and you felt that pressure was on you if you wasn't... [Whereas as an apprentice]...you were allowed to...make mistakes...its learning.

You're allowed to learn...I think that's the thing about apprenticeship...it is a kind of cushioning effect (Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1959-61).

Frank, in his evidence reiterates the learning aspect of an apprenticeship but also emphasises another aspect, that of potential:

Well, I think that when you're an apprentice, you're seen as someone who has been chosen by a company, as maybe, a bit bright or got potential...to learn. As an apprentice, you should be learning (Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1977-80).

The learning aspect of apprenticeships is clearly apparent in these examples, and positions the apprentice as both a worker and a learner. This is a key aspect of apprenticeship which will be returned to later in this chapter to explore how other facets of adult life were learned, and the effect that this had on the narrators' development and transition to adulthood and the creation of an adult identity.

Alec's evidence states that his apprenticeship had a 'cushioning effect' on his entry to work which was lacking in his previous employment; apprentices were not expected to be 'job ready' (Vickerstaff, 2007) at this time. Instead, an apprenticeship offered the adolescent the opportunity to learn, and to develop occupational skills over an extended period of time. Serving an apprenticeship provided the participants with a 'sheltered experience' in which they were freed from full responsibility for their work by having a 'safety net' of checks and assessment in place, conducted by other skilled workers (Ryrie and Weir, 1978: 46).

In the second of the above extracts, Frank's comments suggest that in addition to the choices made by the apprentices themselves and discussed in the

previous chapter, their apprenticeships contained an element of selection by the employer. This implies that by virtue of being chosen by an employer for an apprenticeship, the individual had been identified as someone at a specific life stage that had an identifiable purpose within society, and this gave the respondents an elevated status within their communities. As Vickerstaff (2007: 342) notes 'It meant something to be an apprentice: it was an expected, respected and structured path to adulthood'.

In this subsection, the participants have shown that they considered apprenticeship to be a period of learning, which provided a 'cushioning effect' between the worlds of school and work. It has also revealed that they were aware of the difficulties presented by the oral history method, in that nostalgic remembrances may reflect a 'rose tinted' view of their experiences. The next subsection considers how they started their apprenticeships and also considers some of the rituals associated with social closure and joining a new skilled, social grouping.

7.2.2 Achieving occupational social closure through material symbols

This subsection considers how the participants achieved a social status within their new skilled occupational groups. It uses evidence of material symbols such as their indentures and trade awards, to illustrate aspects of social closure and identity formation.

Social closure is a Weberian concept, and as discussed in Chapter Four, it proposes that social groups control and restrict their admissions, and therefore limit any ensuing benefits of the group to its own members (Parkin, 2001). Occupations apply this concept to define their communities of practice as

skilled, and therefore different from others and so, regulate entry to them. Social closure can only take place when all three sub-processes (ideological, political and material) take place simultaneously (Noon & Blyton, 2007). The interviewees as apprentices, were accepted into their new occupational groups as legitimate peripheral participants with a role, and a respected status within their trade hierarchies.

As part of their new status, some participants, although not all during this period, signed documents called indentures, which marked the beginning of their apprenticeship, and legitimised and officially recognised their position within their trades (Noon & Blyton, 2007). Indentures were signed either before starting their apprenticeship, or after serving a probationary period during which either party could cancel the agreement. Ex-apprentices often keep these documents long after completing their apprenticeships as a cultural symbol of their occupational and craft status (Fuller & Unwin, 2003a), and examples of these, including a copy of my own, are included in Appendix Five. These documents, along with other symbolic artefacts, including the 'tools of the trade' and awards and ceremonies, represent the material symbolic part of the processes constituting social closure, and signify entry to a distinct occupational group (Noon & Blyton, 2007; Parkin, 2001).

We have seen from the discussion of apprenticeship's beginnings in Chapter Two that the use of indentures originated in the medieval apprenticeship system. Initially, these documents were legally binding and during the period of Statutory Apprenticeship were overseen by local magistrates (Lane, 1996). However, the indentures signed on behalf of myself and the other respondents during the period 1959-89, no longer formed a legal contract, being instead by this time merely symbolic. Despite this, they were still written in a formal archaic

style of language, which provided a link to apprenticeship's medieval beginnings.

Their purpose was now to '...remind the young worker and their parents or guardian of the apprentice's child-like status' (Vickerstaff, 2003: 275); that is, they were human 'becomings' rather than human 'beings' as described by Qvortrup (1994), both within work and society, and discussed earlier in Chapter Three. As an illustration of this, they were usually signed by the apprentice's parents. Dave, Eric, Frank and myself, recall that we had to have a parent sign our indentures because we were still juveniles:

...my parents had to go and sign...the indentures, which [had] a big...seal...in wax on it and...it was taken that seriously. It was a three year agreement between them and my company (Dave, Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1974-77).

For Frank, this act was performed at a public ceremony in front of other apprentices and their parents, further demonstrating the subjective symbolic meaning that this action held for those concerned, and consequently, the changed social status of the apprentice:

Mum and my Dad, had to come with me, up onto stage and in front of everyone, we had to sign...indentures, and I've still got them today. They're...made out of parchment and they've got a big wax seal on them and we had to sign it and it really meant something. It really meant that you was part of this big family of five hundred or-I don't know how many apprentices there was (Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1977-80).

In addition to indentures, other material symbolic artefacts marked the standing and progress of an apprentice on his journey towards being an 'old-timer', such as Apprentice of the Year and various trade award ceremonies. Along with

indentures, these helped the apprentice to self-categorise (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and create a sense of group membership. Both Dave and I achieved the Apprentice of the Year award for our respective companies. Like indentures, memorabilia from these award ceremonies are still treasured possessions:

...I'm quite proud to say that in my third year, I was awarded the Apprentice of the Year for the whole of London Transport, which included all, different other trades and I still have the programme...and the certificate at home in my archives (Dave, Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1974-77).

Other participants also recalled with still evident pride, the prizes awarded to them during their apprenticeship (see Picture 1 below and Appendix Six) as the following passage demonstrates. This provides further evidence of the enduring power of material symbolic artefacts in creating a sense of occupational social closure:



Picture 1: The National Federation of Building Trades Employers London Region Medal awarded to Eric. Author's collection.

I won a medal for the National Federation of Building Trades Employers, the London Region, and it's a silver medal... It's quite...a

nice thing. And I went to a prize giving at...Plaisterers' Hall²⁵... and my boss was very impressed because we was only a small company and we was there with... quite big companies, so he was very impressed to be...amongst those, you know (Eric, Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1975-78.

The significance and ability of various symbolic material objects to be a continuing source of pride for the participants, has been revealed in this subsection. The sense of belonging to a social group that is generated by these objects, still resonates throughout the decades since their presentation, and is profoundly clear in the evidence from the interviews. Such is the power of social closure (Parkin, 2001) and the creation of a social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In the next subsection, the participants' recollections of starting their apprenticeships are presented, and their varying experiences are used to illustrate the 'reality shock' (Goodwin, 2007: 98) experienced.

7.2.3 Early days

The participants' early experiences of apprenticeship are recounted next in this subsection. These include memories of the first day at work, and others of menial tasks undertaken during the early period of apprenticeship. The evidence illustrates how on starting work as an apprentice, the workplace was strange and new to them. Their accounts reveal how their self-identities changed, with new identities emerging as a consequence of a change in status, and how the respondents adapted to their new working lives by 'becoming' (*inter alia*, Lave and Wenger, 1991; Colley, *et al*, 2003). It therefore provides a valuable source of information concerning the fault lines that exist between the

²⁵ The Worshipful Company of Plaisterers is a City of London Livery Company, and as such has links to the 16th century apprentice system.

social *milieus* of school, home and work.

The importance of intergenerational encounters with significant others (Haller & Woelfel, 1972) is also examined, which Wenger (1998: 157) considers to be ‘...much more complex than the mere transmission of a heritage’. The findings illustrate how apprenticeships functioned as a catalyst for change by enabling cross-generational interaction, and by widening the apprentices’ social worlds through access to their older, respected work colleagues’ social capital (Coleman, 1988).

In the larger companies, a short induction period was often completed to reduce the ‘reality shock’ that the apprentices may have experienced as described by Goodwin (2007: 98). Some went straight to Technical Colleges for a period of induction and basic training, whereas others were conditioned to the workplace by entering a company training scheme. The passages from the interviews in this subsection demonstrate just how powerful the disparity between the expectation and reality of work was.

Regarding his first day at work for the GLC, Frank remembers that he joined the apprentice training team, which was a form of ‘sheltered workshop’ described by Ryrie and Weir (1978: 108). This was somewhere that apprentices could produce work without the pressures that often accompany it in the workplace:

...they put me down at...Deptford, with...other apprentices. We all started...with one man, named George H---- fantastic, he’s still around, I think that he’s in his eighties now. He’s a brilliant, brilliant man-influenced me so much...Now I was sixteen, so were the other four boys there-they come from all over south-east London; from Peckham and Dulwich and Charlton, and...so it’s almost like-not a culture shock-but I was from Erith, Kent-I was a bit out of it. I was out in the...‘Sticks’ they used to call me-still do (laughing). And these lads

were from Inner London. So it was a bit of a culture shock with them. But again, really nice lads, and...we had George. He was probably in his...I think mid to late fifties. So he was like our Granddad. And he...inspired us. He absolutely inspired us, you know? (Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1977-80).

Frank spent 18 months working on the apprentice training team before being sent out to join other GLC painting gangs to complete his apprenticeship, working on sites around London. The surprise that he expressed at being part of a new culturally diverse community of practice as a consequence of his semi-rural upbringing, is also recalled from the opposite viewpoint by Harry from Canning Town in the East End of London, who remembers starting a friendship on his first day at work with an apprentice from commuter-belt Essex. His evidence shows how his apprenticeship began a process of change or 'becoming' (*inter alia*, Lave and Wenger, 1991; Colley, et al, 2003), by developing adult skills such as empathy and communication. On his first day, on an induction course at a BT training school in London:

...the guy I was sitting next to...spoke very nice, you know spoke properly...instead of like playing football and whatever, he played cricket. Again, (laugh) which was something unheard of from where I was from (laugh)...He played cricket for Hornchurch...had eight 'O' levels...instead of my two. But, you know what? We were fundamentally the same person! We had so much in common-he supported West Ham as well, poor sod-you know what I mean. But...generally...you can get on with people and mix with people if you learn to you know, adapt yourself a little bit to them, I suppose is what I'm trying to say (Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1981-84).

This phased type of induction to work is more typical of the later apprenticeships described by the participants, because as described by Barry in

the following passage, for some, exposure to the workplace started on their first day and they were immediately subjected to the rigours of work in an unfamiliar adult social world:

I'll never forget it-I went along on my first day...and when I left school at sixteen, I looked about twelve. I was quite short...I did look young! And...I went along and...I had to report to one of the supervisors and [he took me to meet some of the engineers... I was] met with a lot of expletives and mickey taking and all that (laughing)...which was fine. Apart from me going red and feeling embarrassed, I was OK...Then we left and we went to a woman's house, not far from the telephone exchange, and we went in. 'Come in' she said, 'Come in'. And we went in and he got his tools out and I was looking over his shoulder, seeing what he was doing and she said to me 'Are you on school holidays? Have (laughing) you come out with your Dad?' (Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1962-64).

Although their apprenticeships were remembered fondly, some participants recalled aspects which seemed to them, greatly unfair at the time. In keeping with their lowly workplace status, some interviewees recalled being given mundane tasks to do by their senior work colleagues because they were 'the boy', such as being sent to get materials from the company stores, or sweeping up, or acting as the tea boy. But generally this was accepted by the participants as normal and the expected usage of apprentices (Vickerstaff, 2007). Such low-level menial tasks were seen as appropriate to someone entering a work-based community of practice as a 'newcomer' (Lave & Wenger, 1991) as evidenced by this comment, '...I think it-I recognised it as...part of...sort of like ...growing up you know?' (Eric, Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1975-78). But some resentment of their menial work is apparent in the data, and this quotation demonstrates the frustration that could be felt when apprentices that thought that their skills were being underutilised:

...at the beginning...I didn't mind, but once I'd learnt that my...new...skills-my new talents were not being used, it did...grate on me a bit, so I was... a little bit annoyed...some of the foremen were...much more willing to give you an equal role with the other guys... but there was one particular foreman who just didn't rate apprentices-or any young people, so he...he kept us...out of the sort of, the real work you know, it was quite boring...I...thought that if I was learning these skills, I should be let loose to...prove...what I could do (Dave, Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1974-77).

Dave's recollections act as a reminder that not all of the tradesmen saw their apprentice as a learner and occasionally, some were reluctant to contribute to their training. Grievances were more often recalled, when memories of menial aspects of the work were coupled with those of the low wages being earned by apprentices, as they were poorly paid in comparison to other young workers at this time (Vickerstaff, 2003). Charlie remembers:

It was always us. The poor old apprentice. Slaves we were! (laughs). It felt like that sometimes, that...it was a modern form of slave labour. Because we were on poor money, expected to hump and carry, and do all the shit jobs really-all the things that an electrician wouldn't do...all the sweeping up...I had to take the electrician's toolbox home, 'cos he wasn't going to take it-he was...a craftsman [sic], so the poor old apprentice had to lug the toolbox home and bring it in the next day to the next job (Apprentice Electrician, 1963-68).

Charlie's recollection demonstrates the gulf that existed between the status of the apprentice and that of the skilled craftsman, and that he had not achieved parity yet with his more senior colleague. This has similarities with my own memories of the division of tradesman and apprentice through the distribution of tasks. One such incident is described in the following passage:

...one old fellow, he explained to me...the way things work. The way things work is, he said to me 'You're out with me for a few days.'

I said 'Oh, yeah?'

He said 'There's the tools. You're...carrying the tools.'

I said 'Why have I got to carry your tool bag?'

He said 'Because you're the apprentice and I'm not', which (laughing) I thought made perfect sense (Bob, Telecommunication Technician Apprentice, 1971-1975).

Another feature revealed in the evidence concerns the participants' calculated decisions to offset lower wages in the short term, against longer term reward. Frank remembers that he often felt underpaid when compared to his non-apprenticed friends, but was reassured by drawing on his parent's social capital (Coleman, 1988):

I used to go home and tell me Mum and Dad 'Tony, he's earning seventy pound a week'. And they'd go 'Well, you see how much he's earning in five years' time. I'll bet he's only earning seventy five quid a week. You'll be earning a hundred pound a week' (Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1977-80).

Dave takes a reflective position when considering the low apprenticeship wages he received at the time and the deferred reward that an apprenticeship brought. He reflects that when:

...talking to the people who weren't apprentices, who were in it for earning...as much as they could, doing any old work...years later you'd meet these people and they'd still be scratching around for a living, just doing plain manual work, where there is a very low skill factor and you were seen as...someone who has done quite well for yourself (Dave, Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1974-77).

However, being 'the boy' was not always such a bad thing. The participants occasionally welcomed certain duties as they offered an opportunity to spend some time away from the workplace. Also for some, these errands provided an

opportunity to augment their wages as described in this next interview passage:

When I was an apprentice...I was expected to...sweep up, make the tea-I was like tea boy on a rota...just expected to do it...I used to get sent out to pick up materials...I used to like that, I used to get out, and...I used to go up to the office to get a...purchase order and then go to the wholesalers. I used to fiddle the expenses, I would walk...to the wholesalers and...walk back to the job-it used to take me an hour sometimes but, (laughs) it was an extra, added on to my income. [As the tea boy] I used to add money...on the rolls and that-a penny on a roll, things like that, to help...which was something I'd probably never even dreamt of when I was at school, doing that sort of thing...I thought well, this was a way to supplement my income (laughs). I was doing quite well out of it at one stage-I was (laughing) disappointed to be taken off the teas! (Charlie, apprentice Electrician, 1963-68).

Charlie's entrepreneurial spirit shows that change was taking place, in this instance demonstrated by a conscious departure from his school identity, and is a clear indication that a process of 'becoming' (*inter alia*, Lave and Wenger, 1991; Colley, *et al*, 2003) was underway as part of the situated learning process and his journey towards achieving an 'old-timer' status (Lave and Wenger, 1991). But not all advantages gained were pecuniary; some participants found that gaining control over their time was of equal importance, as being sent on errands offered a welcome break from the tedium of the workplace, and gave them an opportunity to exert some independence over their daily routine:

Sometimes as an apprentice, you used to get sent to the yard to pick stuff up, that maybe you might have run out of and that was a chance to have a look in the shops and all that (Eric, apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1975-78).

Similar opportunities were also remembered by Alec who sharing this outlook, also took personal advantage of chances to have some free time:

Because you sort of think 'I can be anywhere. I can be anywhere!' So when...the bloke'd say 'Oh, shoot back to the office with the time sheets for us'...I'd say 'OK Fred, I'll take the time sheets back for you' and you might...wander 'round before you finally turned up. Again, it was an apprenticeship that gave you a lot of personal freedom (Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1959-61).

Here in the last line, Alec demonstrates an important aspect of the participants' apprenticeships, which was the opportunity to gain a sense of independence and personal freedom. A consciousness of independence and personal responsibility is essential to being an adult and will be returned to again, later in this chapter. Other recollections concern more unusual physical aspects of work, such as pulling a barrow full of tools and cables (see picture 2, page 221) from job to job along the streets of London. These memories from two ex-GPO apprentices serve as an example of how an adolescent view of work and adult life, had left them unprepared for its reality, as Goodwin (2007) suggests:

These barrows are real...They were a cart with two wheels, either side like a big cartwheel? Like...with a tee thing? And this guy we was working with said...'Oh! The next job is in Elephant and Castle' he said [and] 'I've got my bike!' (laughing). So we dragged this barrow (laughing)...all the way...because they sell you the job as 'The Leading Light of Technology!' (laughing). We got a lump of sugar at the other end (laughing) (Alec, Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1959-61).

[It was] interesting to be treated like a horse for some of the time (laughing). I mean this was only 1962, but it was like Dickens, you know? Pulling a cart up Holloway Road. It's not what I kind of envisaged (laughing) myself doing (Barry, Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1962-64).

The interview evidence in this subsection illustrates the 'reality shock' (Goodwin, 2007: 98) which the participants felt on starting work, and for which



Picture 2. A GPO handcart of the type referred to by the research participants Alec and Barry. Chenery, 2008

they were totally unprepared. Previous notions of work had been dispelled and images conjured by prospective employers had proved to be misleading, with the realities of working life being much harsher than expected, and included being used as motive power like horses as just described. The evidence has also revealed the irritation felt by some apprentices when they were treated as 'the boy' but it has shown that they were able to assess the deferred rewards that accrued with an apprenticeship, in an adult manner. Instances of change in personal identity and 'becoming' (Colley, *et al*, 2003) have been illustrated by anecdotes of independence, and of making money whilst getting refreshments which particularly typify changes from previous school identities. The next section looks at the way that participants remembered the pranks and jokes played upon them by their workmates because of their naivety and junior status.

7.2.4 He's only the apprentice...

This subsection contains evidence of the pranks and jokes the participants experienced as apprentices. It considers the role played by humour in the workplace, and also that of traditional apprentice rites and rituals. Such customs are important for the formation of communities of practice, because as Wenger (1998: 183) affirms, 'Rituals connect local practices and identities to other locations across time and space'. Therefore, they link the apprentice to the history of the community of practice and to others within the trade, as well as creating a distinct identity.

The interview data reveals the importance that workplace pranks and banter played in the socialisation of the participants into their apprenticeship roles. Collinson (1988) states that humour at work serves many important functions. Humour he contends, is used by people in positions of power as a paternalistic device to generate feelings of inclusivity among those in subordinate positions. He further maintains, that workplace humour operates as a medium through which workers show collective solidarity against everyday boredom, managerial control, and status within the company; that it acts as a control measure for workers seen to be slacking; and importantly for this thesis, that it exerts considerable social pressure to conform to working class masculinity, and this will be further examined later in this chapter.

As part of both the learning process integral to their apprenticeship, and initiation to the adult social world of work, the participants recalled being sent on 'fools' errands'. These are workplace jokes played by more experienced colleagues, which rely on the naivety and unfamiliarity of the apprentices with their new trades, especially with their new language and technical terms. Many popular versions of these activities were recalled during interviews, which these

interview passages serve to illustrate:

...they used to...send you down to the office for...skyhooks. I was sent down there for a skirting ladder (laughs) and some elbow grease for putting the elbows on conduits (Charlie, Apprentice Electrician, 1963-68).

Dave recalls being asked to 'fetch a bucket of steam' and 'a tin of Tartan paint' as part of his introduction to painting and decorating. But the following exchange with a company storeman, was instigated by being him being asked to:

'...pop down the stores and get a long weight for us'...at sixteen you think 'Oh yeah! OK, I'll go and do that for yer'...and I've gone 'I've been sent down for a long weight.' He says 'OK. Just stand there. I'll go to the back of the stores and get it'...' And then he comes back ten minutes later and says 'Oh! Sorry! Sorry! I forgot all about you. I'll go and get that...what, you still want that long weight?'

'Yeah, yeah. That's what I'm here for.' And this went on for...fifteen minutes, and by then, I'm getting a bit...impatient. 'Are you gonna give me this long weight or not!' He says 'How long you been here now, waiting? I says 'Fifteen minutes!' and then started laughing. 'OK, yeah, I've had me long wait. Thank you very much!' (Dave, Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1974-77).

The frequency in which these type of pranks were played naturally decreased as the apprentice became more trade aware and familiar with the trade terminology, and moved further on an inbound trajectory towards the status of an occupational 'old-timer' (Wenger, 1998). This was achieved by a process of increasing participation in work practices and growing responsibilities for the participants. Findings show that at first, they were under close supervision of more senior workers who guided their learning. Dave recalls that '...you teamed up with a more mature...more experienced decorator who took you under his

wing' (Apprentice Painter and Decorator 1974-77). Other evidence supports this position:

...you'd be allocated...one of the...guys that work in the exchange and he'd take you under his wing...nominally for that six weeks...But your day would really, be just spent...just learning the ropes-just learning...a little six weeks stint of...what that particular element of being part of BT was all about (Harry, Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1981-84).

Mistakes were taken as part of the learning process. This extract illustrates how they might be corrected by the more experienced work colleague:

...you didn't get berated for making a mistake, you know, most people were nice about it and just said 'Well actually you don't do it like this, you do it like that' (Graham, Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1977-80).

In this passage, Eric recalls that the work he was assigned to do, at least until he became competent, was often in unobtrusive places where any mistakes would be less noticed:

I mean, I got my chance to do things. I've wallpapered in cupboards and that, where it's not too important...Or sometimes awkward things like very high reveals²⁶. I've done all that where it don't get noticed, but...you can still do a good job (Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1975-78).

Research findings indicate that as they gained confidence and skills, their work tasks gradually increased in complexity and responsibility commensurate to their ability as part of their transformative journey to the status of 'old-timer':

When I first started it was all very strange and unreal at the start. But as I got more used to it... it became easier...as you became more

²⁶ In architectural terms a reveal is the vertical side of an opening in a wall, especially the side of a window or door between the frame and the front of the wall.

aware, of what you were doing and had more skills, you were given...work to do and more responsibility. So as you progressed through the apprenticeship, your responsibility became more and more (Charlie, Apprentice Electrician, 1963-68).

This was also reflected in how the apprentice was perceived by his older colleagues and demonstrates a subtle change in vocational habitus, with the apprentice's identity changing and becoming '...the right person for the job' (Colley, *et al*, 2003: 477). This is further illustrated by the next remark which indicates that the relationship between the apprentice and his colleagues changed over time and, '[Work]...became more of an equal thing as you moved up towards the end of your apprenticeship' (Alec, Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1959-61).

As was mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, interview evidence contained details of some 'coming out' rituals performed on completion of the apprenticeship, and these are now addressed. The end of apprenticeship, or 'coming out' was at this time, still frequently marked by rituals as part of the process of social closure (Parkin, 2001). For most interviewees, this consisted of being taken out for a celebratory drink by their workmates, which in itself served as a marker of adulthood and is a topic further discussed in the next section. For others, a more vigorous ceremony awaited them. Harry recalls that when working in a British Telecom telephone exchange on his last day as an apprentice, he narrowly avoided his induction to the world of the skilled worker:

...on the last day [of the apprenticeship], it was well known that the apprentice would get stripped naked, tied to a chair, with...cable and sent up in the lift...I saw this...group of (laughing) people who worked there...out of the corner of my eye, and I instantly knew. So, basically (laughing) I just legged it straight out of this...window and...never looked back, jumped straight on the train, because I knew if I hadn't

*got out of there when I did, that was what was gonna happen
(Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1981-84).*

A similar event happened to Frank when he finished his apprenticeship, but in this instance he was unable to get away, as he was working on the roof of a block of flats. Frank's apprenticeship finished on a very hot summer's day in August, when his fellow painters grabbed him, stripped him naked and threw his clothes off of the roof, before going for their lunch break:

Now! What do you do?...the sun was really hot that day-it was blisteringly hot. So I couldn't've stayed up there, there was no shade or anything, I would have got really bad sunstroke. Or, I could go downstairs. Now me clothes-look over the roof, me clothes were on the floor, on the grass... so I decided to take a chance and go down.

Now, I could go in the lift, or I could run down the stairs...remember it was sixteen floors up, this was. So, I thought 'I'll go in the lift. No one about-[it's] lunch time.' Anyway, I did. Standing there, stark naked. Open the doors at the bottom, there was two old ladies standing there. And I couldn't think of anything to say, I just said 'Good afternoon' and just walked out!

After the incident, he recalls feeling 'Humiliated, at first, really embarrassed', but on entering the tea hut, he was greeted with cheers and a huge round of applause from everyone on site. He goes on to explain that this incident marked a fundamental change in how he was regarded by his fellow workers:

But they treated me different after that...that had to happen. That was like a rite of passage that had to happen, because: a) I wasn't an apprentice anymore; b) I'd had that done to me and c) I was probably a man now...in their eyes. I was an ex-apprentice...it was just part of growing up-part of the apprentice[ship]. Everyone had something done to 'em. (Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1977-80).

This section has given an account of how the participants moved from the

periphery towards the centre of their occupational communities of practice through socialisation into their trades, and by learning the behaviours necessary for work-related competence from others. It has illustrated how their adolescent views of the workplace changed over a period of time through the process of 'becoming' (*inter alia*, Lave and Wenger, 1991; Colley, *et al*, 2003) as they assimilated themselves into an adult social world. Their progress towards full participation at work was marked by a series of phases in which their naivety and low status, meant that at first they were the victims of workplace humour, progressing to full acceptance by their fellow workers, and eventually for some, a 'coming out' ceremony. The next section describes how by acting as a portal to the adult world, the participants' apprenticeships afforded them entry to other previously restricted areas of adult society, and so allowed them to transform from 'human becomings' into 'human beings' (Qvortrup, 1994).

7.3 Transitions, and entry to multiple adult communities of practice

As discussed in Chapter Three, the concept of childhood is socially constructed and still remains problematic, and as such it has been subject to much discussion during the last few decades (*inter alia*, Qvortrup, 1994; James and Prout, 2005; Uprichard, 2008). However, during the 20th century the status of children became legally distinct from that of adults, following the introduction of a range of laws controlling areas of social action. This separate status has often seen children portrayed as 'human becomings' in which they progress or travel, from a dependent state, to the 'journey's end' of an independent adult state as 'human beings' (*inter alia*, Qvortrup, 1994; 2009; Lee, 2001; Uprichard, 2008).

In modern Britain, work is considered to be an area of adult social activity in which participation by children, defined as those under 18 years of age (The

United Nations, 1948), is strictly regulated. Legislation, chiefly in the form of the Children and Young Persons Act (1933) and local authority byelaws, place firm restrictions on the ability of children to work. These laws state that children can participate in part-time 'light work' in selected occupations from the age of 13 (Department of Children, Schools and Families, 2009), but are prevented from entering full employment until they reach the minimum school leaving age (Gov.UK, 2014).

In this section, I contend that serving an apprenticeship provided the participants with the adult social context that schools and families were unable to offer, and were an instrument by which the creation of adult self-identities could occur concurrently with the creation of occupational identities. Bourdieu (1986) proposes that through membership of a group, in this case an occupational group, individuals can access collectively owned resources, or social capital (Coleman, 1988). This has a direct bearing on identity formation as it requires the person to undergo a process of change by 'becoming' (*inter alia*, Lave and Wenger, 1991; Colley, *et al*, 2003) in a range of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998).

The concept of legitimate peripheral participation within an adult community of practice has its roots in the origins of situated learning theory, with other contributors to the fields of transitions and learning suggesting that serving an apprenticeship provided more than a means of learning an occupation in which to financially support oneself. Lave and Wenger state that children are '...quintessentially legitimate peripheral participants in adult social worlds' (1991: 32), and this view is endorsed by Vickerstaff (2007: 341) who maintains that, in her opinion, apprenticeships provided '...a sheltered transition into adulthood'. Vickerstaff (2007: 339) further claims that in the case of post-war

apprenticeships such as those of the research participants, they were also ‘...an apprenticeship in masculinity’. Goodwin (2007) uses situated learning theory as a model to demonstrate how adolescents move from the edge of the adult community of practice, by learning the norms of adult behaviour, towards full participation in adult society by the same gradual process in which they learn occupational skills in the social sphere of the workplace.

As discussed in Chapter Three and referred to earlier in this chapter, Parsons (1971) suggests that a form of ‘standard adulthood’ emerged in an era of post-war prosperity, which Blatterer (2007a) contends sociologists today still use as a standard model for the evaluation of youth transitions. It is again used here as a trope to describe the participants’ goal. In this understanding of adulthood, to which the participants in this research concurred, achieving an adult status consisted of attaining the ‘*classic markers of adulthood*’ (italics as in original, *ibid.*: 2007a: 775). These markers consist of ‘...family, stable relationships, work and independent living’ (*ibid.*, 2007a: 775). McDowell (2001: 21) notes that for some young men this is defined as an ambition to ‘...settle down in a good job, buy a car and get married’, to which she sharply adds, ‘...usually in that order’. So crucially, using this notion of adulthood, it can be regarded as consisting of membership of many communities of practice, some on the periphery, and others as full members (Wenger, 1998). This concept will be discussed further in Chapter Eight.

The participants’ interviews recalled participation in a broad and varied range of communities of practice. Themes remembered and explored included how they reacted as adolescents to such workplace behaviours as ‘skiving’ or malingering, theft of materials and ‘private work’. Lack of space prevents inclusion of many of these, but other themes such as creating a localised form

of hegemonic masculinity, alcohol consumption, social interaction with the opposite sex and emerging financial responsibility are explored below.

7.3.1 Joining multiple communities of practice

This subsection presents the findings to show how the narrators having entered one adult community of practice (work), went on to enter other adult communities as legitimate peripheral participants. It comprises memories of work conversations about a range of subjects, through which access to their older workmates' social capital was achieved through participation in their communities of practice and discourse. Through this social capital, the participants were able to peripherally engage with other communities of practice and so begin to develop a local form of hegemonic masculine identity (Connell, 1987; Connell, 1995, Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

To begin with, a feeling of belonging is evident in the interviews, revealing that the 'newcomers' felt that they had entered a new phase of their life, as a consequence of being accepted into a new social grouping. Some respondents referred to starting work as joining a family, and like many families, this gave access to collectively owned resources (Bourdieu, 1986), in the form of social capital (Coleman, 1988):

BT...was a bit like a big family weren't it? And that you ended up working with a bunch of guys for whatever reason, you'd usually ended up becoming, pretty good friends (Graham, Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1977-1980).

Barry provides a striking example of the extent to which work colleagues were respected and admired by the apprentices. In his interview he recalls that:

...you gradually get to know those people, you know? And you get to think 'They're alright!' and...they made a favourable impression on

me, you know? ...the way they were with their lives, which was a lot of it. You'd think 'That's alright!' (Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1962-64).

The depth of inter-generational attachment that the apprenticeships engendered between individuals, is further revealed in Barry's comments. He remembers that friendships made as an apprentice with his older work colleagues, lasted for decades:

Well...the thing is I remember it very fondly. I made contact with people who...I stayed...in contact with, all their lives, really...men who were...in their thirties, who were TOs²⁷ at the time...I stayed friends with some of them until they passed away in their seventies and eighties. So...it could've happened outside, but you know, there are some people who I met during my apprenticeship, that I knew for many, many years. (Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1962-64).

Such enduring friendships and memories shows that his more senior work colleagues made a deep impression on him as a youth. That his admiration for the 'way they were with their lives' has endured to this day, speaks for the value that he placed on the collectively owned resources (Bourdieu, 1986) and social capital (Coleman, 1988) that they possessed and shared with him. This is known as 'bridging' social capital, and its influence will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Among these cultural resources may be found the attitudes that define the male norms described as 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell, 1987) discussed in Chapter Three. This remains a contested concept which draws on diverse work by Gramsci, Freud and the gay liberation movement, but posits that the

²⁷ TOs-Technical Officers, at that time the most senior technical grade in the GPO.

organisation of social institutions valorises some culturally idealised forms of masculinity more than others, within a plurality of masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Within this categorisation of masculinity, men are portrayed as breadwinners and some desired 'manly' traits such as courage, independence, risk taking, hard work, and even less desirable ones such as the subjugation of women (Donaldson, 1993), appear as 'normal' due to their portrayal in the social *milieu*. Some of these traits are embodied in the image of the 'Respectable Working Man' (Thompson, 1988) discussed in Chapter Four, as a stereotypical male working class ideal to which the participants as young men were encouraged to aspire. As an example of this stereotype, Willis' 'lads' (1977) in his research exhibit a counter-school culture that is considered to be typical of a local sub-culture of hegemonic working class masculinity, which can also be found in male dominated workplaces (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Social dialogue between the participants as apprentices and their skilled older colleagues presented an opportunity for cross-generational interaction and induction to other, adult communities of practice. During breaks and even whilst working, conversations between work colleagues would cover a vast range of recreational, sporting, political, social, personal and religious subjects. These ephemeral conversations naturally proved difficult for the participants to recall and like the difficulties identified earlier concerning nostalgia, proved to be another problematic aspect of using oral histories to capture data for research, as acknowledged here by Harry:

...to be fair, it's thirty years ago. It's like...to remember-I mean-you're talking about conversations that are really, just passing the time of day (Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1981-84).

Those exchanges that could be recalled reveal a wealth of information about the adult world, to which the participants would not have had prior access. Alec, Charlie, Dave and Frank's evidence provided the most relevant examples of their positions on the periphery of the diverse social worlds inhabited by their older colleagues. Charlie states that 'They'd talk about anything really, at the drop of a hat in a building site canteen'. He continues:

... It was quite informative-I used to enjoy all those sorts of discussions-as an apprentice you were expected to listen rather than say too much...It probably has had an influence on the way you thought as well. If you thought the person who you were working with-who you were listening to-respected them, as...both [an] electrician and as a man, you'd be more likely to take note of their views and that would probably cover how you were thinking as an apprentice. Because as you got older, you decided to make your own decisions didn't you really? I mean you tend to be influenced a lot by what they say, someone who's older (Apprentice Electrician, 1963-68).

Charlie's observations illustrate the respect given to the skilled worker by his apprentice, and are a prime example of how cross-generational discourse gave insights into other adult social worlds. They also show how the status conferred by workplace skills is transferrable to other areas of adult social behaviour. His observation, that the apprentice was expected to listen more than he contributed to these discussions, is supported by other interview evidence:

...in the tea room at lunch time, dinner time and what not, they'd talk about politics at work, you know and...being an apprentice-I didn't know anything about politics. I'd listen, and I would form an opinion, you know? (Frank, Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1977-80).

Here in the following passage, Alec gives a clear example of the social exclusion that a youth in the adult social world of work at first experiences, and of his legitimate peripheral participation in its communities of practice:

...there's guys who've now got families, mortgages that sort of thing and you're not in a position to chat about it. But you're...really, under the age of eighteen, you tend not to be in their world...to that extent because...as an adult you...have responsibilities to people and relationships to people, whereas you're just going out with somebody for a while and the rest of it, and they're talking of their long term relationships; the wife, the kids and stuff like that. So...there's still a difference between you and them...You're in that half and half stage aren't you? And possibly, dare one say it, possibly more so in 1961 than now (Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1959-61).

At this stage of the life-course, the participants were not in a position to form independent households with families of their own, either financially or emotionally, so they were only able to participate at the edges of the community of practice that this represents. Frank continues on a similar theme and his evidence shows a contrast between youth and experience:

...the older blokes would moan about their wives! And obviously, I didn't have a wife then. So I used to think 'Why are you moaning about a wife? You're lucky to have a-because I didn't have a girlfriend at the time-or part of the time, and I'd think 'God, I'd like a wife, [or] a long term girlfriend'. But it's not until you reach middle-age that you realise why they was moaning (laughing) about their wives! (Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1977-80).

Here Frank's evidence shows the clear distinctions between the adult and adolescent social worlds and the relationships that exist within them. His remarks are typical of the self-deprecating, ironic humour prevalent within male dominated workplaces in Britain (Collinson, 2002), but also show that a complete understanding of the complexities of adult relationships is only possible when fully participating in adult communities of practice. Frank's evidence also goes on to give a good example of how the workplace provides a social arena that is different from that found at home, or with his peer group. He

recounts the differences between the types of discourse in those differing social milieus:

...when I was with my mates, of my age, we talked about what sixteen, seventeen, eighteen year old kids would talk about: cars; girls; football and that was about it. It wasn't really much depth or breadth to the convers[ations]-but when I was with the blokes from work, we'd talk about politics, we'd talk about religion, we'd talk about interest rates and mortgages...you know, grown up subjects that other-young kids my age, would find really boring. But I used to listen to them and I used to chip in-they'd go 'Ah-you don't know what you're talking about!' or 'That was a good idea, son'. So, it broadened...my view, 'cos I never used to talk really, about that stuff with Mum and Dad, not really.

Frank's interview provides other rich examples of how discourse between generations influenced his maturation and entry to multiple communities of practice. He also neatly sums up the function that he believes that his apprenticeship played in his transitional process:

So you're learning about life...work teaches you, not just about Painting and Decorating-forget Painting and Decorating. It teaches you about everything. It teaches you how to handle money, even. It teaches you about how to chat up women, how to get a woman; what you might do with a woman when you're on your own with her. It teaches you about the politics-about Politics and politics with a small 'p'...I learned about the politics of work. I mean really that's something you...cannot be taught the politics of work, in colleges; you can't be taught that out of a book; you can't be taught that by your Mum and Dad, really. It has to be taught by workmates.

Workplace discussions also provided a useful source of relationship information, with general advice being proffered by older, more experienced colleagues. This may have been specific, when discussing their own children

and marriages, or more wide-ranging advice shared with the apprentices in preparation for their future lives. Dave's evidence in this area is quite compelling, and is an example of how access to shared social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977a) was achieved through inter-generational discourse at work, and how the participants learned through legitimate peripheral participation in the adult male community of practice (Goodwin, 2007). The advice he was given was:

...you don't want to be out of work, you don't want to end up being a drunk...And in a couple of other things I was taught...by one...specific guy...who'd been married quite a long time, and he used to tell us a lot of stuff about respecting your wife...don't go home drunk; don't ever hit your wife and stuff like that and quite a lot of things that you'd never thought about as a boy, because you've not got these experiences of being married, in a long term relationship. And...I always remember to this day, he says 'Don't hit your wife, because at some point, you'll have to sleep, and she knows where the rolling pin is' and I think that's something you should take through...life with you (Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1974-77).

Insights were provided to other masculine communities of practice, which included military service which has its own specific pattern of hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The participants' apprenticeships were all post-Second World War, and as such, cross-generational interactions enabled them to vicariously share the experiences of those work colleagues that had served in it, further consolidating a form of hegemonic masculinity and entry to the adult world:

...there's...one particular guy, Freddy T----...he...talked a lot

about...being in the Paras²⁸ in the war...he volunteered to be in the paratroopers...I also worked with another feller called Jimmy B--- ...Corvettes²⁹ in the war, on the North Atlantic...convoys...take things up to Murmansk and Archangel³⁰...and my boss, Mr B----- ...he was a Redcap³¹, in...the...Eighth Army and he was in the desert...Jimmy S---- he was a prisoner of war for...five years. He got captured at Dunkirk, so there was loads of stuff...which was for me, I didn't mind, because...in the sixties and the early seventies, everything revolved around the war, didn't it? (Eric, Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1975-78).

Contemporaneous British society was in general, comparatively mono-cultural, but some respondents recalled how their apprenticeships facilitated cultural diversity through working with people from other ethnic backgrounds, as in this example from Dave:

Because, again in the seventies, we had...a lot of...mostly white guys, but there were two or three West Indian guys, so we got their experiences, how they must've come over...and they were probably the first generation after the Windrush³²,....and specifically some of the older guys....told a lot of tales and a lot of stories and you'd sit and listen to them...and for hours, really-especially when you're working.

Similarly, Alec's memories of working in the 'rag trade' clothing factories of London's East End as an apprentice telecommunications technician in the late 1950s and early 1960s include the range of different cultures encountered within them. He recalls that it '...[broadened] my horizons of how different

²⁸ The British Army's Parachute Regiment.

²⁹ A type of small warship.

³⁰ Murmansk and Archangel are ports in Northern Russia

³¹ A soldier in the Royal Military Police.

³² The passenger ship SS Empire Windrush landed 480 people, mostly from Jamaica and Trinidad, at Tilbury Docks on 22nd June 1948 and became an iconic symbol of post-war immigration to Britain from the Caribbean.

people behave and different cultures...and that was a bit of an eye opener for me'. To emphasise the wide ranging social nature of his apprenticeship he added that '...it was an apprenticeship out there, in the wide world'.

In this subsection, we have seen that the workplace was an important site in which to access the social capital of male adults. A variety of knowledge ranging from relationship advice, child raising, politics, finance, war experiences and mortgages was available to young, eager apprentices. The differences between the social *milieus* of work, home and peers is revealed by the participants' testimony, and indicates that an active phase of identity formation was occurring. In the next section, the theme of legitimate peripheral participation in other aspects of adult life is continued, with instances of freedoms gained and obligations conferred being presented.

7.3.2 Finance, Freedom, Obligations and Responsibilities

Continuing with examples of legitimate peripheral participation in adult communities of practice, this subsection considers the new freedoms, responsibilities and obligations faced by the respondents as part of their new status as apprentices. Recollections of contributions to the family budget and of personal responsibility illustrate how the participants entered and engaged with the adult world.

Alongside the insights to previously closed adult social worlds discussed in the previous subsection, the respondents noticed a significant change in their family relationships, which signalled another transitional marker: they were now to be contributors to household income. My own recollection is that in the first year of my apprenticeship, from my weekly take-home pay of £8.20, I gave my mother

£5³³ for my keep. This theme is shared by all the research participants, who remember contributing to the family income by paying money, usually to their mother³⁴, as these examples show:

Whereas before, I didn't have to contribute to the household, even though I [sold newspapers] for a few years. But soon as I started work, my Mum said to me 'You've gotta...pay your way'...so I did. I gave...out of my five pound...take home pay, I used to give...two quid³⁵ a week to my Mum. So that makes you kinda realise that you are actually living in...a grown up world really and you have to pay your way. So that was an early lesson for me. But I could do a lot on three quid! (Barry, Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1962-64).

Alec continues the theme of paying his way in the next passage. He reveals that a significant aspect of these contributions is that he was no longer dependent on the family and consequently, had achieved a measure of financial independence:

...I'm sure that it never covered the cost of keeping me and the rest. It's just that I felt that you ought to do a contribution. But obviously, I never asked my parents for money anymore. That's the...big difference! I would not ask my parents, whereas up to the age of sixteen, you'd have said 'Oh, could I have some money, I want to go there, or I need to go to the cinema or I'd like to do that...' -that no longer would be...I was past that stage of asking them for money. You made me think there, Bob, yeah! The more I think, it wasn't so much what I was giving; I was giving some... it was I wasn't taking anymore (Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1959-61).

³³ Using an economic status indicator, £8.20 in 1971 is now the equivalent of £209, whereas £5 is now worth £127.50 (<http://www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare/>) accessed 28/12/15.

³⁴ For further information on maternal roles and relationships in working class families in London, see Young and Wilmot, 1986.

³⁵ Using the same indicator mentioned in footnote 33, £5 in 1962 is now the equivalent of £254.70 and £2 is worth £101.90 (<http://www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare/>) accessed 28/12/15

Other financial aspects of adulthood were also revealed during interviews. In this instance Eric remembers how his senior work colleagues introduced him to one of his future adult financial responsibilities:

...we talked about the merits of buying houses. At the time, two of the younger foremen, N--- and B----, one had bought a house in Upminster and the other had bought a house in Romford...So-they was on at me about [saving to buy a house]...When we worked at Barclays Bank, in... Charing Cross Road...[they took] five pound out of my wage packet and went and opened me a savings account in a bank, so that I could start saving for my deposit for a mortgage (Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1975-78).

The participants recalled that they were all still living at home during their apprenticeships. Most of them remembered that they were not treated much differently by their families after starting work, despite contributing to the household finances. But Dave noticed that, signifying his new found status, some changes were apparent:

...the changes at home were...that...they didn't ask me so many, questions of...what time I was gonna be home. So there's a bit more respect. I started getting different food on the plate, such as more meat, instead of beans on toast-I'd have the odd sausage or piece of bacon thrown in (laughing)...and you know, I think I was more respected because...I was part of...the income...of the family-so that's-that's how that changed (Dave, Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1974-77).

Dave's slightly altered relationship with his family indicates that having started work, he gained a growing sense of independence and freedom and so, was treated more as an adult. This opinion is supported by interview evidence which reveals new responsibilities and freedoms such as unaccompanied travel. For some, this was a novel experience as related here:

I suppose it was an adventure wasn't it? You've gotta remember I'd left school. I've been in an environment where you've been told what to do, you know...by teachers...and now I'm...going to work. So, jumping on a bus-never done that on my own before. Jumping on a bus and jumping on a train and going to work (laughs). It was all a new experience (Harry, Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1981-84).

Continuing this theme, another participant recalls how travelling gave him new freedoms:

I think it made you...more confident of travelling about, because you had to move about, from job to job, 'cos you could go anywhere. Nothing was daunting. When they said to me 'You're working down in East Grinstead³⁶', I just shrugged and thought 'Now how do I get there?' (laughs). London Bridge-train down to East Grinstead-I just did it, never thought anymore of it... London was my oyster! (laughing), I used to go everywhere! (Charlie, Apprentice Electrician, 1963-68).

Travel was only one aspect of the responsibilities now faced by the participants. Being punctual for work presented a major responsibility for these young workers. A part of the 'reality shock' (Goodwin, 2007: 98) they faced was the prospect of getting to work for early morning starts. Charlie and Dave recall leaving home for work at half-past five and six o'clock in the morning respectively because they were working so far from home:

I ended up having to travel close to Wembley³⁷ every single day and had to be there for seven thirty in the morning, so that was quite a thing in itself (Dave, Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1974-77).

For most participants, these early starts were a new experience and required

³⁶ East Grinstead is a town in West Sussex, 27 miles (43km) south of London.

³⁷ Wembley is a part of the London Borough of Brent, situated in northwest London, a direct distance of 11 miles (18km) from Tottenham where Dave lived, and considerably longer by public transport.

some acclimatisation, whereas those accustomed to working whilst still at school had well-developed strategies for coping with them:

I had a great alarm clock, called my Mum, (laughing) who (laughing) always...made sure that I got up early in the mornings, so...that was never going to be a problem to me (Barry, Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1962-64).

Other forms of responsible adult behaviour still had to be learned however, one of which was the consumption of alcohol, and this is now addressed in the next subsection.

7.3.3 Alcohol and the Apprentice

The findings show that socialising with adult workmates was part of the apprenticeship process for the research participants. This is an area in which they would have had limited access during their childhood, as Britain's strict licensing laws control alcohol consumption. This subsection uses participants' memories of joining this adult community of practice and learning the rituals of hegemonic male, working class, alcohol consumption.

The creation of a locally formed hegemonic masculine identity, in which drinking alcohol is admired (Connell, 1995), is a theme within social history. In Britain, licensing laws prohibit anyone under the age of 18 from purchasing alcohol, and set strict limits on the age at which it may be consumed. Apprenticeships allowed youths to access this adult social activity through being a part of a social group in which drinking was an accepted leisure activity.

The rise of interest in social history has drawn attention to '...drinking as an important part of social life and sociability in most industrial societies' (Barrows and Room, 1991: 3). Previously in pre-industrial times, the English public house was not only a place to consume alcohol, but a social centre, library, debating

society, labour exchange, payment office for workers and a hostel for tramping artisans and journeymen (Adler, 1991). As such, it historically has had a place within the work ambit, and barroom culture is recognised by Wenger (1998) as a community of practice.

Adler (1991) argues that before the full impact of the market economy in England in the 1830s, drinking served the purpose of generating and affirming the social relations of the community. She contends that to not comply with these reciprocal drinking rituals was considered to be tantamount to withdrawing from social interaction, as they were considered to be essential for the observance of social etiquette and courtesy. Being an apprentice provided opportunities to engage in this aspect of social behaviour, as it still remained an integral part of hegemonic male, working class culture during the period 1959-89, as the following quotations confirm:

I suppose it was just part of the culture really, back then in BT weren't it? It was...everywhere you went, everybody went over the pub at lunchtime (Harry, Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1981-84).

Ian takes up Harry's point and confirms that drinking was 'part of the culture':

Actually, it...was part of a day's work. It was...you know...the majority of the people on site...have like a pint, pint and a half at lunchtime. A game of pool, a game of darts...and then back (Apprentice Bricklayer, 1986-89).

Apprentices, as befitting members of occupational and adult communities of practice, would occasionally participate in these lunchtime visits to the pub and also in some work related social occasions. As previously noted in this section, licensing laws restricted their participation, but at some time in their

apprenticeship, they will have engaged with this facet of the hegemonic masculine workplace culture as part of the process of 'becoming' (*inter alia*, Lave and Wenger, 1991; Colley, *et al*, 2003). Crucially, their status as both a worker and learner provided a sheltered entry to this adult activity. Alec recalls that gaining membership as a legitimate peripheral participant of this particular community of practice was a gradual process. In his first year of apprenticeship, he moved frequently between different staffs and noted that:

You weren't there long enough to be involved in their socialising. Later, once you got there longer, like Clerkenwell³⁸ where I ended up... You start being 'Oh, yeah we're going out to the pub'; pretend you weren't old enough; you got invited to the first Christmas drink and stuff like that (Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1959-61).

Others engaged in a wider range of social activities with their work colleagues and were introduced to alcohol through those activities. These may have included official, as well as unofficial sports and social activities outside of work, as many larger companies at that time, supported a range of clubs to which the apprentice may have been able to join if they wished, as the following passage demonstrates:

I... used to play in a ten pin bowling team with the blokes at work as well. And I was still an apprentice. And we used to go up to the local bowling alley. We used to play...and we used to go for a beer afterwards and it was really good-it was just a good social...thing. It was great (Frank, Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1977-80).

This type of social activity at work was a significant development in the participants' independence which served as a transitional marker, as for many,

³⁸ The participant is referring to a telephone exchange area in London, located in the Borough of Islington.

their exposure to alcohol and the drinking culture of the workplace was a new experience. Factors such as age, the law, lack of finance and opportunity meant that during this period the likelihood of engaging in this form of adult recreation was limited. Graham (Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1977-80) recalls that he had not consumed alcohol to any great extent previously because, 'I really didn't have the money for it'. For others, their apprenticeships provided their first real experiences of intoxication. The following extracts provide insights to this behaviour:

Now and again you would...get drunk with a couple of them. I remember the London Hospital Tavern³⁹ once-that was the last time I touched vodka as well (laughing). I was in such a terrible state (laughs) (Charlie, Apprentice Electrician, 1963-68).

In the next extract Frank reveals his position as a legitimate peripheral participant in the drinking community of practice:

They used [to take me to the pub] and one of the rules was 'You're an apprentice-you don't pay for anything', because I was on really low wages...and also 'You're under eighteen-you're not drinking!'-wink-wink, you know? And of course, they got me drunk-they got me drunk really easily (Frank, Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1977-80).

In Dave's interview, the changing status of the participants in this particular aspect of adult social behaviour is acknowledged. He reveals that 'I think that I was respected for not getting drunk, and not being silly, and behaving you know, like one of the guys instead of a giggly...schoolboy' (Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1974-77). Being respected and accepted by adults in adult social activities is a clear indication of a change in personal identity, and reflects

³⁹ An old well-known pub next to the London Hospital, in Whitechapel Road, East London, originally dating from 1750.

learned behaviours on the part of the participants as Dave continues:

Some of the behaviour, it has to be, I suppose, learnt behaviour, because you're seeing all these other guys doing it, and think 'Well, that's a quite acceptable thing to do...' You're not told that it's not the thing to do and then you end up doing it and...seeing...and being with other men, specifically, in the pub at lunchtime, in the pub after work and in the pub at weekends, it was a very central part of socialising with other working ...men ...But the drinking culture, the pub culture, was very much a part of the...working...man's week and that was seen to be accepted as normal (Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1974-77).

Such learned behaviours also concern the inter-generational transmission of gendered stereotypical role models and hegemonic masculinity as also revealed by Dave in this passage:

...well...having...seen me dad...coming home from work, and there was definitely a role to play and...it was you know, his role to bring home the money, me mum's role to bring up the family, to keep the house in order...and one of those masculine traits was to have...time alone with men, drinking in pubs and doing other things, such as going to football...on a Saturday afternoon, and...that's something else that I've carried on, again to this day and I now take my son to...football, which my dad did with me, so...it was definitely seen as a masculine thing (Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1974-77).

A final, important aspect of their 'apprenticeship in masculinity' (Vickerstaff, 2007: 339) is how the participants engaged with females at work. Remembering that Goodwin claims that young people experience a 'reality shock' (2007:98) because family and school fail to prepare them for adult behaviour in the workplace, then encountering women outside of these environments can contribute to this trauma.

7.3.4 Social interaction with women at work

How the interviewees were exposed to everyday social interaction with women who were not part of their associated kinship groups is explored in this subsection. Research findings reveal that instances of teasing by older women occurred in the workplace, and this subsection considers how this contributed to forming an adult male identity.

The interviews reveal that the participants worked in exclusively male environments, which excluded working with female work colleagues, as their industries were not at all inclusive at the time. However, some of these trades required contact with women as customers, or within the customers' workplaces such as offices, shops and factories. As part of the power relations existing then within the workplace, the apprentice would occasionally be the target of much of the banter, with older women often taking the lead in making life very uncomfortable for young male apprentices by making overt sexual comments and references towards them.

Alec's evidence of working as an Apprentice Telecommunications Technician on customers' premises in London's East End clothing factories, illustrates this point and is not unlike my own recollections of bawdy comments made in similar situations:

...if I went into some of the rag trade firms, they'd like to see a guy go red (laughing). They would make remarks about...(laughing) 'I wonder if he's done it today?' 'I wonder if he's had it away this weekend. What do you think? Have you my love?' (laughing) Actually, pretty rough, the ladies in the rag trade firms! (1959-61).

Dave recalls similar treatment when working as an Apprentice Painter and Decorator in bus garages for London Transport:

I think...some of the Clippies⁴⁰ were quite friendly and always had a cheerful word to say...and especially to the apprentices-they'd go 'Hello darling', you know, and 'Give us a cuddle' and stuff like that, but it was all good natured stuff...I never sort of thought that there ever was a danger-it was...always...tongue in cheek... (1974-77).

The following final passages locate this banter firmly within the apprenticeship experience and demonstrates that this type of interaction, which was also usually cross-generational, was all part of their 'apprenticeship in masculinity' as described by Vickerstaff (2007):

It was just a group of women-it was their chance to embarrass a young man. I didn't take it personally, because I realised what they were up to. But, in some ways you enjoy it, as part of the joke, but you're still-you're still on the receiving end and they're on the dishing out end...It was part of my learning curve! (Alec, Telecommunications Technician Apprentice, 1959-61).

This following account reveals that alternatives to this behaviour could be considered to be even worse by the apprentice:

...part of the aim was to...you know 'Here's the...young apprentice, let's [have some fun]' and I think it was quite good, that they did. If you were...totally ignored, I think that it would have been even worse...I think that it also helped you become part of, what's seen as the team, part of the banter that went on and I think that it helped, really...in the workplace, that you could all, you know, have a laugh and a joke (Dave, Apprentice Painter and Decorator, 1974-77).

This section has illustrated how the participants' apprenticeships made possible entry to multiple communities of practice through their location, their participation, and through gaining access to the social capital of their respected

⁴⁰ The term 'Clippie' was universally applied to female bus conductors, whose job was to collect fares from passengers during this period.

work colleagues as significant others (Haller & Woelfel, 1972). It has covered several areas of adult social action, which may as communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), or as part of a constellation of practice (Wenger, 1998), be conceived to constitute the markers of adulthood (Blatterer, 2007a, 2007b). This will be further discussed in Chapter Eight.

7.4 Summary

In this chapter, I have used the participants' recollections of their experiences to illustrate how their apprenticeships served over a period of years, to socialise them into adulthood. As Wenger (1998: 215) maintains that 'Because learning transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an experience of identity', I have described examples of learning in different adult communities of practice to illustrate how these contributed to the formation of the participants' individual self-identities. Their memories of how they moved centripetally from legitimate peripheral participation as 'newcomers' on the edge of multiple communities of practice towards the status of 'old-timers' are presented as examples of the maturation process viewed through the lens of situated learning theory. Their stories stop well short of reaching the end of their journeys, as they cover only the few years of their apprenticeship, and to become an 'old-timer' in any community of practice requires many more years of experience (Wenger, 1998).

The second section of this chapter, followed my participants' progress towards attaining skilled status in their respective industries as they learned the necessary work-related skills. It also demonstrated how the process of occupational social closure helped to create close-knit communities of practice in which symbolic representations such as indentures, humour, ceremonies and rituals measured the apprentices' progress, and formed part of the ideological,

political and material processes associated with forming a recognised occupational group (Parkin, 2001). As a consequence of these processes and exposure to new forms of occupational language, customs and values, the apprentices became socialised into their trades, and helped to reinforce the skilled status of the occupational group.

The third section of this chapter, focussed on the participants' accounts of changes in their lives beyond work. It established the effect that a growing participation as a '...person-in-the-world, as a member of a sociocultural community' (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 52) as a consequence of their apprenticeships, had on the creation of their adult identities. The evidence indicates that the formation of a type of locally formed masculine identity which can be associated to that defined by 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell, 1987; Connell, 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005) and 'standard adulthood' (Parsons, 1971), was achieved by the same process of legitimate peripheral participation as their occupational identities. Through participation in work as one sphere of adult social interaction, they were able to draw upon collectively owned values, knowledge, social and cultural capital in other spheres, which aided the process of constructing adult identities. A further discussion of how the evidence and theory interact follows in the next chapter.

Chapter 8: A 'life apprenticeship'-a new conceptual framework

It is hardly possible to overrate the value, in the present low state of human improvement, of placing human beings in contact with persons dissimilar to themselves, and with modes of thought and action unlike those with which they are familiar.

(J.S. Mill, *Principles of Political Economy with some of their Applications to Social Philosophy*, Book III, Chapter XVII, 1848)

8.1 Introduction

The two preceding chapters have described how a small group of ex-apprentices, who served their apprenticeships in London during the years 1959-1989, accessed a wide range of social and cultural capital both at home and most importantly, at work. Wenger (1998) considers that social exposure to a range of different adults is considered to be an important element in the development of identity, because as Mill's quotation at the head of this chapter suggests, a high value is placed on knowledge gathered from social interactions with others that are dissimilar to ourselves.

In this chapter, the findings are discussed from a symbolic interactionist (Blumer, 1969) perspective using situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991), to establish how different types of social capital (Coleman, 1988; Gittell & Vidal, 1998) impacted on the participants' transitions to adulthood. This state is represented here as multiple communities, or a constellation of practice (Wenger, 1998), in which adult identities are formed through a nexus of multimembership (*ibid.*1998: 158). 'Standard adulthood' (Parsons, 1971; Lee, 2001) is used figuratively as before, as the goal to which the participants aspired.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Vickerstaff (2007) proposes that socialisation into adulthood was an important aspect of apprenticeships during the research period, as traditionally they were ‘...an expected, respected and structured path to adulthood’ (*ibid.* 2007: 342). Also, the concept of becoming an adult through legitimate participation in diverse adult communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) has been proposed by Goodwin (2007) and was similarly discussed in Chapter Three. In this chapter, I take these proposals further by linking Vickerstaff’s (2007) and Goodwin’s (2007) concepts directly to the participants’ apprenticeships to create ‘...a sheltered transition into adulthood’ (Vickerstaff, 2007: 341).

This chapter is divided into five sections. After this introduction, section two considers the contribution that social capital (Coleman, 1988) makes to understanding choice of apprenticeship. It consists of two subsections, which consider the themes emerging from this research. The first of these examines how the participants selected their apprenticeships by using the concepts of ‘bonding’ social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998), and of ‘bounded agency’ (Evans & Heinz, 1991; 1993; Evans, 2007). The second section emphasises the impact of ‘bonding’ social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998) on the participants’ post-school choices by revealing an interesting finding from this research: its unequal distribution between the construction and telecommunications groups.

The third section introduces my concept of a ‘life apprenticeship’. It consists of three subsections and the first of these discusses how the participants’ ‘bonding’ social capital provided the foundations for their adult identities. The second subsection concerns how ‘bridging’ social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998) gained through social interaction at work, supplemented their existing ‘bonding’ social capital (*ibid.* 1998) and so contributed to the construction of

their adult self-identities through initiating multiple trajectories in a 'nexus of multimembership' (Wenger, 1998: 158). The third subsection explores how the participants' dual status as both worker and learner supports my concept of a 'life apprenticeship'. It is contended here, that an apprenticeship provided a sheltered learning environment, in which adult behaviours in the diverse adult social communities of practice arising from the findings, could readily be learned.

The fourth section proposes a new conceptual framework in which the influence of social capital (Coleman, 1988) can be identified and recognised. It uses Wenger's (1998) notions of constellations of practice to draw together the various strands that make up adulthood, and that of a nexus of multimembership to describe how complex adult identities are formed. This allows a fresh perspective to be taken on apprenticeships, in which their former historic role as a social and cultural institution which acted as an integrative vehicle to adulthood may be recognised, and consequently allows a better understanding of apprenticeship's important socialising function. The final section provides a summary of the discussion.

8.2 Social capital and apprenticeship choice

This research project offered an opportunity to investigate specific aspects of apprenticeship studies in which Vickerstaff (2007) maintains that scope for further research remains. One such area was the apprentices' experience of work during its 'golden age' (*ibid.*, 2007) explored in the findings chapters.

Another was revealing the key influences on individuals' choice of apprenticeship during that time, which is examined in this section (for examples of extant research see *inter alia*, Liepman, 1960; Ryrie and Weir, 1978;

Vickerstaff, 2003; 2007; Goodwin and O'Connor, 2005a; 2005b).

This section is further divided into two subsections each of which discusses a main theme emerging from the data collected in this research. It centres on the impact of class and social capital (Coleman, 1988) on the participants' choices of apprenticeship and of the construction of their adult identities.

Through analysis of the data collected for this research, the first subsection focusses on how this particular group made their career choices within the range of opportunities available to them at that time. Consequently the key influences on those choices can be identified, which furthers our understanding of apprenticeships and youth transitions.

8.2.1 The influence of social capital on choice of apprenticeship

This subsection uses Fishbein & Ajzen's (1975) theory of reasoned action to assess the influence of important others (*ibid.*: 1975), in the form of family and respected friends, on the choice of post-school destination of the research participants. It examines the impact of class and social capital (Coleman, 1988) on the participants' identities as a base for constructing their adult identities.

This thesis set out to 'give voice' to the participants by recording their apprenticeship stories in mid-late 20th century London, and to ascertain the extent to which their experiences influenced the construction of their adult identities. Therefore, qualitative research methods of semi-structured interviews and biographical questionnaires were used to collect the data in the form of oral histories, as discussed in Chapter Five. The interviews generally began by the interviewee recounting how they chose their trades and became an apprentice.

Choice has been interpreted by sociologists as a complex interplay of social structure, circumstances and individual agency (Thomson, *et al.*, 2002). But

educational sociologists have also stressed that the importance of social class and family backgrounds on educational outcomes and future employment paths cannot be discounted (*inter alia*, Simpson, 1962; Bourdieu, 1986; Karlsen, 2001; Irwin, 2009; Evans, Schoon and Weale, 2010; Schoon, 2014). As discussed below, the participants' choices in this research were found to be in some cases deliberate, and in others 'haphazard and adventitious' as described by Ryrie and Weir (1978: 13).

The choice of an apprenticeship has been historically identified as often being a collective family decision (Humphries, 2010), in which the likely returns in terms of human capital (Becker, 1993), were deliberated within the family. In the previous findings chapters, the participants similarly referred to the influence of family on their choice of apprenticeship.

As an example Frank recalls that his parents decided that, '...maybe because of their background or our working-class, that I was gonna be in the building game of some sort'. In his interview Dave recalls that his family expected him to follow in the family trade 'It was already assumed I did the same trade as me dad, and me granddad...I think that it was assumed, by everybody and it was guided...by...me dad'. Therefore typically for the group, it is apparent that Frank and Dave's choices were directly influenced by their class and social capital (Coleman, 1988) which in turn, shaped their future prospects.

The discussion in Chapter Three, supports this view by suggesting that even now, debates within youth studies literature (*inter alia*, Dickens, 1999; Adkins, 2003; Irwin, 2009; Furlong, 2009; Karlsen, 2001; Dawson, 2012; Eidlin, 2014), have found that cultural, and in particular, the social capital (Coleman, 1988) of young people's families, whilst no longer considered to be the primary influence

on their outlooks and experiences, nevertheless remain important elements in shaping their life chances.

Similarly, as also discussed in Chapter Three, the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) posits that parents as important others (*ibid.*: 1975), directly and indirectly influence their children's choice of career (Oren, *et al*, 2013). This is achieved through '...two conceptually independent determinants of action' (Ajzen and Madden, 1986: 454). One is a personal factor, perceived control over behaviour (the individual's conviction of their ability to perform a behaviour). The other consists of a social factor, subjective norm (the perception of how people that are of importance in a person's life regard an action), and for the purpose of analysis, the latter influence is used here to illustrate the relationship between the participants' career destinations and their families.

The interview evidence presented in Chapter Six, revealed the extent to which subjective norm (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) shaped choice. Frank's pride in pleasing his parents by getting an apprenticeship is evident in this excerpt from his interview; 'Mum was proud of me and...I heard later in life dad was extremely proud of me'. Dave also recalls that '...it was good to see, that the family were very proud-my mum and dad were especially proud of me'. Frank underlines the significance of subjective norm when he says 'I think that in those days, we did-most kids, wanna make their parents proud-wanna make their parents happy'.

An explanation for this need for parental approval is offered by Karlsen (2001) who drawing on Bourdieu (1977b), suggests that children at an early life stage adopt the worldview of their parents through family socialisation or 'indirect

confrontation' (2001: 244). This Karlsen suggests, is because in early childhood, children '...encounter work through their immediate social environment-usually that of their parents' (*ibid.* 2001: 244). Thus through the influence of social capital (Coleman, 1988), the individual's habitus '...creates orientations, preferences and attitudes towards work' (Karlsen, 2001: 244).

However, Gittell and Vidal (1998) to better illustrate its composite origins, describe two different types of social capital; 'bonding' and 'bridging'. The former concerns the '...type that brings closer together people who already know each other' and the latter refers to the '...type that brings together people or groups who previously did not know each other' (*ibid.* 1998:15). Thus 'bonding' involves family members, close friends and strong ties (Granovetter, 1973) as discussed here, whereas 'bridging' relates to associates, colleagues and weak ties (*ibid.*, 1973) and is discussed later in subsection 8.3.2 of this chapter.

Interview evidence presented in Chapter Six, also provides further support for the influence of family 'bonding' social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998) by detailing the influential roles played by class, gender and family expectations on the occupational choices available to the research participants. It also supports recent longitudinal studies conducted on two British birth cohorts (1958 and 1970), which emphasises the influence of class and gender on transitions to work and independent family formation (*inter alia*, Schoon, Ross, and Martin, 2007; 2009; Evans, *et al*, 2010). Analysis of these studies claims that the social class of the individual and of their families, continues to have some influence on young peoples' future occupational paths.

In addition to the effects of class and social capital (Coleman, 1988), Evan's

empirically grounded concept of bounded agency (Evans & Heinz, 1991; 1993; Evans, 2007), explains the parameters of choice available to the research participants as adolescents. As discussed in Chapter Three, this concept advocates the idea that limits exist over the amount of personal control an individual can exercise over all aspects of their life, with some features being able to be changed through education, or by the individual's own resourcefulness. Other elements though, prove more resistant to change and are often found to be outside the individual's control.

As an example of bounded agency in this thesis, many participants recalled in Chapter Six, their family's firm conviction that they should 'get a trade'. Despite rising standards of living, changes to working practices and the expansion of women's engagement in employment in an era described as the 'Social Revolution' (Hobsbawm, 2013: 287), the notion of 'getting a trade' spoken so widely of in the interviews, remained as Vickerstaff (2007) claims, an accepted and even expected, part of working class male aspirations in post-war Britain.

Such aspirations arose through the participants' families' social capital (Coleman, 1988). This had as a possible source the memories still fresh within British working class families of the period, of unemployment during the inter-war years, which culminated in the Great Depression of the 1930s. Combined with rising levels of job insecurity experienced from the late 1950s onwards (Richardson, 2007), the received family wisdom used as a risk management strategy, assumed that by becoming an apprentice and learning a trade with its attendant 'trade security' and wider employability skills (Ryrie & Weir, 1978), some measure of protection from market forces would be gained. This belief was passed on through families as part of their 'bonding' social capital (Gittell and Vidal, 1998) becoming an accepted tenet, influencing and shaping the

respondents' post-school choices and future occupations.

Through the social capital (Coleman, 1988) of individuals, different opportunities presented in the course of education, availability of suitable role models, occupational knowledge and familial networks, combine to have an impact on the opportunities and choices available. Social ties therefore, can be seen to have an important function (Granovetter, 1973), both in the form of strong ties (for example with parents and close friends) and weak ties (such as with teachers and acquaintances). These ties, it is contended, '...constitute the social capital of adolescents, providing resources, such as knowledge and support, which contribute to effective goal attainment' (Tynkkynen, *et al*, 2010: 449), and so influence their post-school destinations.

In conclusion, this subsection has indicated how the 'bonding' social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998) of family and close friends had a lasting impact on the direction of the participants' post-school choices. It has highlighted the importance of social ties (Granovetter, 1973) through subjective norm and its pressure to conform to the expectations of important others (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). In the next subsection, the unequal distribution of social capital within the research sample is revealed, its origins are explored and explanations for its existence are offered.

8.2.2 The inequality of social capital within the research sample

Social capital is not evenly distributed across classes or even a single class (Bourdieu, 1986), and this subsection discusses its unequal distribution throughout the research sample. As indicated in this chapter's introduction, when the data collected for this research were subjected to an exploratory thematic analysis, two groups emerged from the research sample, each

displaying a marked difference in the extent to which social capital through family advice and socialisation guided choice of apprenticeship. These were aligned along industry lines, with the greater influence being found within the construction cohort. Through a comparison of the two groups of respondents, the influence of their familial social capital (*inter alia*, Coleman, 1988; Gittell and Vidal, 1998) and of significant others (Haller & Woelful, 1972) can be discerned.

Starting with the exception to the rule, in that despite being from the telecommunications cohort, Harry's evidence provides a striking example of 'bonding' social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998) and 'strong ties' (Granovetter, 1973) in action. He explains how his career choice was influenced by his brother-in-law's job. He recalled that,

I didn't have any inclination to become a telephone engineer, it was just that he was the only role model that I had in the family...the only (laughing) role model ...that had...any kind of a...decent-in inverted commas, job.

As shown in Table 1 (page 142), other members of Harry's family had less stable jobs; his father was a dock worker and later became unemployed, and his mother had insecure employment as a cleaner. With such an insecure family employment background and uncertain future prospects, features not uncommon for this research group, the received wisdom of familial social capital (Coleman, 1988) offered Harry a feeling of employment security via the prospect of entering a trade as an apprentice.

Harry's brother-in-law acted as a significant other (Haller & Woelful, 1972): a person that has sufficient influence in an individual's life to affect their sense of self, and whose opinions matter. According to the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), by acting as a role model, his brother-in-law

influenced his post-school destination through perceived social pressure via subjective norm. No other family member had a 'decent' job, but Harry by following his brother-in-law's trade, had an opportunity to enter a respected secure trade, raise his status through employment, and so gain the approval of his immediate and extended family.

Other interview evidence, this time from the construction cohort, provides further examples of how significant others (Haller & Woelfel, 1972) influenced post-school destinations and choice of apprenticeship through subjective norm (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). This particularly illustrates the way that participants were acculturated to their future working life, and emphasises the importance of 'bonding' social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998) in creating identity. For those participants in this group that had significant others (Haller & Woelfel, 1972) within the family who provided them with work at the weekends, or during the school holidays, this offered an opportunity for anticipatory socialisation (Merton & Rossi, 1950): to experience first-hand the type of work that they would eventually undertake. Through subjective norm (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), these participants sought and gained approval from their family by conforming to their expectations. In so doing, they became accustomed to the type of work expected of them. Additionally, they were also able to start developing a vocational habitus with an identity that fitted their future employment prospects before leaving school, making them '...the right person for the job' (Colley, *et al.*, 2003: 477).

Evidence of anticipatory socialisation (Merton & Rossi, 1950) was entirely absent in the data gathered from the telecommunications apprentice sample. For this group, the choice of apprenticeship was more haphazard, with much less emphasis on role models and familial input and involved a greater reliance

on outside agencies such as the Youth Employment Service set up by the 1948 Employment and Training Act (Deakin, 1996).

Apart from Harry, none of the other telecommunications cohort had family members in the industry. Alec recalls that he knew ‘...nobody in that job or anything like that’. As described below, Harry’s choice shows his desire to learn a trade; his brother in law’s secure employment status was merely the deciding factor in choice of trade:

So if my brother in law would have been working (laughing) on a building site or, if he’d have been doing...something else...say he was a plumber or an electrician-I might have gone and done that.

A possible explanation for the lack of role models in this group is that the telecommunications industry was relatively smaller and newer than the traditional established trades in construction. Therefore, fewer participants had significant others (Haller & Woelfel, 1972) in the form of family or friends working within it, and so experienced family influence to a lesser degree. The industry’s relative novelty as a trade can also account for a break with traditional employment paths within the participants’ families (see Table 1 page 142). The telecommunications apprentice sample consequently benefitted from the ‘bridging’ social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998) of outside agencies in that with the exception of Harry, they all acquired apprenticeships through the Youth Employment Service.

The disparity between the two groups’ experiences of anticipatory socialisation (Merton & Rossi, 1950) may also be explained by structural factors. The relative ease in which work in the construction trades, such as bricklaying or decorating, could be obtained by the participants’ family members working independently of their normal employment, is as much a consequence of the *laissez-faire*

regulation of the construction industry in Britain as it is of entrepreneurialism on their relatives' part, in that such work was freely available.

This can be contrasted to the state monopoly of the telecommunications industry of the time. The GPO (later Post Office Telecommunications and now BT) provided the entire national telecommunications infrastructure for Britain during this time (with the notable exception of Kingston-upon-Hull, whose telecommunications infrastructure was at that time municipally owned). All work on the national network was therefore tightly regulated and obtaining commissions for large scale 'private work' were difficult, prohibited and considered to be a dismissible offence by the employer. Chances therefore, for family members to experience anticipatory socialisation (Merton & Rossi, 1950) in the same informal way as the construction group were non-existent.

Due to the technical nature of the telecommunications industry, the apprenticeship entry requirements were nominally higher for this group than for most of the construction trades, but the interview data has shown that strict enforcement of this criterion varied over time. However, because family participation in the industry was rare, it was mostly perceived by other family members to possess a certain aura of incomprehensibility. Subsequent conversations with this group of participants revealed that most of those apprenticed in the industry, did not even have a telephone in their own homes at that time, which even further distanced their work from their families. This led to family conversations about work being fairly limited due to a lack of common experiences. Accordingly, the participants added to their families' social capital (Coleman, 1988) by making accessible new areas of knowledge through their occupations.

For those in the construction industry however, the research findings show that advice from the extended family and friends had a direct impact on the decision making process for the individuals concerned. As described in Chapter Six, Charlie, Dave, Eric, Frank and Ian's choices of apprenticeship, were all directly the consequence of the influence of family and friends. Charlie obtained his apprenticeship through a school friend who was already apprenticed in the same company. Similarly, Frank's choice was directly influenced by his older brother's much admired friends' recounted experiences of work. Dave, Eric and Ian were all acculturated to their future trades through anticipatory socialisation (Merton & Rossi, 1950), by working with family members.

Conversely, for the telecommunications technician group, the choices of Alec, Barry, Graham and myself, were guided by other factors and agencies, mostly the Youth Employment Service, whose advice in the form of 'bridging' social capital, supplemented our families' 'bonding' social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998). In my case, it can certainly be argued that my father's advice to get an apprenticeship in a technical trade had an effect on my career, although in my analysis, I feel that it had a subtler influence. His guidance merely gave a general direction rather than a specific occupation.

However, the distribution of families' 'bonding' capital, that is the '...type that brings closer together people who already know each other' (Gittell and Vidal, 1998: 15), can be identified as unconsciously raising ethnic barriers within apprenticeships. Although not a theme originally considered for research in this thesis, the ethnicity of the participants is notable for its homogeneity, which reflects apprenticeships of the period, and cannot be discounted.

Research suggests that young people from ethnic minority backgrounds still

'...appear to have to rely on 'official routes'-rather than friends and families-for their labour market knowledge' (Beck, Fuller, and Unwin, 2006: 682-3). It is reasonable to assume then, that during the research period, employment advice would have not been any better. They would have not had access to the same content of familial social capital as the research participants, for advice on post-school destinations. Therefore, a contributory factor to the low take up of apprenticeships by ethnic minorities during the research timescale, may be that apprenticeships featured less prominently in their social capital (Coleman, 1988), because their families had less exposure to the English apprenticeship model in comparison to the indigenous working class families of the research group.

In addition, apprenticeship means different things in other cultures and even has connotations with slavery in the Caribbean. For example, the Emancipation Act of 1833, introduced apprenticeship as a transitional step towards freedom for the slaves, with service for periods of four to six years after slavery's abolition. But in practice, this proved very unpopular with the emancipated slaves because it continued to exploit their labour, much as slavery had done before (*inter alia*, Shelton, 1995; Heuman, 2000; Morgan, 2012). This is an area in which more research is necessary to provide definitive evidence for this assertion. However as described earlier in subsection 7.3.1, the participants' apprenticeships did provide exposure to other cultures, and this formed an important part of their 'bridging' social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998), and this will be discussed in the next section.

The comparison of the construction and telecommunications groups' experiences in this research illustrates the degree to which social 'bonding' capital influenced the respondents' choice of careers and access to

opportunities. The effects of both structural determinants and individual agency, along with that of institutional bodies such as the Youth Employment Service, can be identified in the career choices made by the individuals in this research project. Therefore it can be concluded that the effects of the interplay of many forces, particularly that of social capital (Coleman, 1988; Gittell and Vidal, 1998), which when added to that of bounded agency (Evans & Heinz, 1991; 1993; Evans, 2007), gives a more insightful explanation of those choices.

8.3 A Life Apprenticeship: transitions to adulthood in London, 1959-1989

Using a symbolic interactionist perspective which proposes that the meanings which people give to the world are socially constructed (see Chapter Three for discussion), this section considers the impact of apprenticeship on the research participants' formation of their adult identities. It will reason that the construction of self-identity is reflexively shaped by, and also shapes, social interaction.

Divided into three subsections, this section discusses how the participants used both 'bonding' and 'bridging' social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998) to reflexively create adult identities in the social arena that was provided by the workplace. It contends that the participants' apprenticeships enabled significant social interaction to take place, and occurred during an important time in their maturation process in which gendered identities were formed (Leszczynski & Strough, 2008). Consequently, apprenticeship provided an important stimulus for their transition to adulthood.

The concept of a 'life apprenticeship' is proposed in which the participants, through a controlled induction to adult communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), were able to build on their 'bonding' social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998).

By gaining access to a range of 'bridging' social capital (*ibid.*1998) available as legitimate peripheral participants (Lave & Wenger, 1991) in those communities, they were able to increase their knowledge of the adult world. This process will be illustrated through a discussion of how the participants were acculturated to a range of adult communities of practice, conceived here as a constellation of practice (Wenger, 1998), such as alcohol consumption and gendered social relations through their apprenticeships. It is proposed that participant trajectories within a constellation of practice created a nexus of multimembership in which complex adult identities were created (Wenger, 1998).

As was discussed in Chapter Three, Wenger considers that a constellation of practice consists of a '...grouping of stellar objects that are seen as a configuration' (1998: 127). Such configurations may not be closely related but are aligned to each other through the perspective in which they are viewed. This thesis regards adulthood as a constellation of practice, whose constituent parts include a range of social behaviours, cultures, activities, customs and knowledge, some of which constitutes the hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987; Connell, 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005) of the period, and which also encompasses standard adulthood (Parsons, 1971).

Next, in the first subsection, the construction of the participants' adult self-identities is considered. The concept of 'bonding' (Gittell & Vidal, 1998) social capital is used to illustrate the family's impact on the construction of identity.

8.3.1 Bonding social capital's influence on the journey to adulthood

Previously in this chapter, we have seen how the family's 'bonding' social capital influenced the participants' choice of apprenticeship. The discussion in

this subsection now relates to describing how 'bonding' social capital formed the foundation on which the respondents' adult identities could later be constructed through access to 'bridging' social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998). It reveals how the participants were socialised into reproducing their family value systems, and how those values link to the concept of 'standard adulthood' (Parsons, 1971).

The social constitution of adulthood, which is the way that societies historically and culturally recognise that a youth has matured, and is now a full and equal participant in that society, is often figuratively referred to as a 'journey' in youth studies literature (*inter alia*, Parsons, 1971; Qvortrup, 1994; Lee, 2001; Blatterer, 2007a; 2007b). Consequently, childhood is seen as a stage in that process of development, with adulthood as the journey's end (Lee, 2001), or as Qvortrup (1994) puts it, the transformation of human 'becomings' into human 'beings'. How serving an apprenticeship in the period 1959-1989 contributed to that process is now addressed.

In Britain during the mid to late 20th century, adult status was still profoundly influenced by Victorian values and ideals. The image of the 'Respectable Working Man' (Thompson, 1988) with its associated virtues of independence and self-sufficiency discussed in Chapter Four, features heavily in working class aspirations of the time as evidenced in the research findings, and is closely bound to the post-war sociological concept of 'standard adulthood' (Parsons, 1971).

Analysis of the research evidence presented in Chapter Six illustrates how the participants were socialised through 'bonding' social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998), to reproduce certain aspects of their families' social behaviour. These aspects included belief in the value of work as a marker of adulthood, not only

as a consequence of the financial independence it gave, but also as a social symbol of maturity, as contended by Blatterer (2007a; 2007b). For example, Ian's interview evidence revealed the extent of his enculturation; '[We]...were brought up...right from a little age... [to believe that] you don't get nothing for nothing'. Similarly, Graham's evidence shows that for his family, work was an integral part of adulthood:

I just knew that when I left school that I had to get work. It's just that my...whole family have never been unemployed or anything. It's just...the way I was brought up. You go to school; you go to work and that was it.

Another important outcome of the family's socialisation process was the reproduction of gendered behaviours and values. Dave's evidence provides an insight to how gendered roles and hegemonic masculine activities are passed on through the generations, as part of their cultural and 'bonding' social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998):

...well...having...seen me dad...coming home from work, and there was definitely a role to play...it was you know, his role to bring home the money, me mum's role to bring up the family, to keep the house in order...and one of those masculine traits was to have...time alone with men, drinking in pubs and doing other things, such as going to football...on a Saturday afternoon, and...that's something else that I've carried on again to this day, and I now take my son to...football, which my dad did with me, so...it was definitely seen as a masculine thing.

The participants' 'bonding' social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998) included an appreciation of how human capital (Becker, 1993) could be accumulated through investment in skills. Since apprentices' pay at the time was too low to support an independent lifestyle (Vickerstaff, 2003), the following interview

extract shows how Frank, like most apprentices, was prepared to accept lower wages in exchange for deferred gratification due to the higher skills he would acquire. This investment in human capital (Becker, 1993) highlights a key difference for the participants, between just 'getting a job' and serving an apprenticeship. His evidence contains an example of accessing his family's 'bonding' social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998) regarding his non-apprenticed friends who were earning higher wages:

I used to go home and tell me Mum and Dad, 'Tony, he's earning seventy pound a week'. And they'd go 'Well, you see how much he's earning in five years' time. I'll bet he's only earning seventy five quid a week. You'll be earning a hundred pound a week'.

Such advice draws on the family's belief that learning a trade would inevitably reap benefits in terms of higher wages on completion of his apprenticeship, along with the associated trade security (Ryrie & Weir, 1978) discussed before. As part of the family's 'bonding' social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998), it formed the starting point in the participants' formation of an adult identity, which was augmented by acquired 'bridging' social capital (*ibid.* 1998) from sources outside of the family. I contend that a major source of this latter form of capital was the workplace, and I discuss how this contributed to the formation of adult identities in the next section.

8.3.2 'Bridging' social capital and entry to multiple communities of practice

Clearly, all adults enter the range of communities of practice that comprise society's definition of adulthood in some way or another. The question posed here in this subsection, is what was so different about entering adulthood as an apprentice during the period 1959 to 1989?

My concept of a 'life apprenticeship' is offered as a possible response to this question. This idea posits that the participants were able to form their adult identities in multiple communities of practice as suggested by Goodwin (2007), but extends this, by proposing that through entry to one adult community of practice (work), the apprentice gained extensive privileged access to other adult communities of practice through their work colleagues' multiple memberships. As both workers and learners, they were then able to form lasting close social relationships with adults from whose 'bridging' social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998) they could obtain knowledge and learn adult skills. In this manner, entry to adulthood, was facilitated through their apprenticeships, thus fulfilling its historical purpose of providing '...a sheltered transition into adulthood' (Vickerstaff, 2007: 341).

The view that exposure to a range of adult social arenas is desirable for identity formation, is proposed by Lave and Wenger (1991), who recognise that working with adults has a significant impact on the formation of young workers' identities. In a later work, Wenger (1998) further suggests that, apart from the roles that adults have in education, the opportunities for interaction between young people and adults acting in an adult manner, should be increased: 'What students need in developing their own identities is contact with a variety of adults who are willing to invite them into their adulthood' (*ibid.*, 1998: 277). Through a mutuality of engagement Wenger argues, a mutuality of learning exists: 'It is the learning of mature members and of their communities that invites the learning of newcomers' (1998: 277). This mutual relationship may be demonstrated by perceiving learning by participation as the formation of identities through the process of 'becoming' which Lave and Wenger consider to be '...the historical production, transformation, and change of persons' (1991:

51). As has been seen from the research findings presented in Chapter Seven, the participants in this research project as apprentices, found many such willing adults, and were granted access to their diverse adulthoods.

The following extracts from interviews serve as examples of the friendships entered into by the participants during their apprenticeships, in which knowledge and skills were learned from respected older workmates through socialisation. Graham recalled that as an apprentice ‘...you ended up working with a bunch of guys for whatever reason, you’d usually ended up becoming pretty good friends’. Barry explains the profound personal impact of this socialisation process in the following interview excerpts:

I made contact with people who...I stayed...in contact with, all their lives, really...men who were...in their thirties, who were TOs⁴¹ at the time...I stayed friends with some of them until they passed away in their seventies and eighties. So...it could’ve happened outside, but you know, there are some people who I met during my apprenticeship, that I knew for many, many years.

He continues:

...so...you gradually get to know those people, you know? And you get to think ‘They’re alright!’ and...they made a favourable impression on me, you know? ...the way they were with their lives, which was a lot of it. You’d think ‘That’s alright!’

Barry and Graham’s evidence shows how important the acculturation experienced at work through apprenticeships’ protective, supportive role, was. It enabled the participants to develop enduring cross-generational social relationships with colleagues whose adult behaviours could be closely observed and imitated. The evidence also indicates how admired qualities were noted,

⁴¹ TOs-Technical Officers, at that time the most senior technical grade in the GPO.

and consequently how a widened 'radius of trust'-the circle of trusted people who share cooperative norms (Fukuyama, 1995), was able to be built through extended contact in a network of diverse adults.

The importance of these relationships is confirmed by Granovetter (1973), who suggests that individuals' personal experiences are affected by the effects of social structure. He argues that the strength of social ties has an important bearing on how information is shared. By sharing through weak ties (in the case of this thesis, work colleagues), a greater, more extended network becomes accessible. In this way, the research participants in this study, participated in an extended network of communities of practice in which the knowledge of their work colleagues acted as both an introduction, and as a resource.

Consequently, they were able to learn other adult behaviours through the assimilation of their more mature work colleagues' 'bridging' social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998).

Through access to 'bridging' social capital (*ibid.*, 1998) new experiences were encountered by participating in social landscapes in which adult behaviour differed from that previously experienced in the family or education. The research findings provide support for Goodwin's (2007:98) contention that behaviours of adults at work are different from those within the family, contributing to what he refers to as the 'reality shock' adolescents often experience when starting work. Evidence collected from this research supports and extends Goodwin's (2007) concept by identifying the difference between the social *milieus* of work and the home, for example as recounted by Frank when describing the conversations at work '...cos I never used to talk really, about that stuff with Mum and Dad, not really'. He continues:

I learned about the politics of work. I mean really that's something...you cannot be taught the politics of work in colleges; you can't be taught that out of a book; you can't be taught that by your Mum and Dad, really. It has to be taught by workmates.

The participants' evidence in this thesis contains other examples of how learning from older, more experienced work colleagues helped them acquire knowledge that would aid the achievement of an adult status. Charlie recalls that work conversations contained 'bridging' social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998) which provided useful information about a range of subjects; 'They'd talk about anything really, at the drop of a hat in a building site canteen'. He continues:

... It was quite informative-I used to enjoy all those sorts of discussions-as an apprentice you were expected to listen rather than say too much...It probably has had an influence on the way you thought as well.

Alec's evidence illustrates the existing gulf between his own knowledge gained from his family's 'bonding' social capital and his work colleagues' 'bridging' social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998) in this extract:

...there's guys who've now got families, mortgages that sort of thing and you're not in a position to chat about it. But you're...really, under the age of eighteen, you tend not to be in their world...to that extent because...as an adult you...have responsibilities to people and relationships to people, whereas you're just going out with somebody for a while and the rest of it, and they're talking of their long term relationships; the wife, the kids and stuff like that.

Other memories concerned how their apprenticeships exposed them to other cultures and ways of life. For white working class youths coming from a comparatively mono-cultural society, this was an important method of acquiring a broader range of communication skills and world knowledge. Alec and Dave's

recollections of other cultures in Chapter Seven show how their apprenticeships were, as Alec said ‘...out there, in the wide world’.

Eric remembers how plans were laid for his future through discussions of a financial nature far beyond his previous experiences. His colleagues’ advice through ‘bridging’ social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998) and as role models, produced in him new ideas for future home ownership:

...we talked about the merits of buying houses. At the time, two of the younger foremen, N--- and B---, one had bought a house in Upminster and the other had bought a house in Romford...So-they was on at me about [saving to buy a house]...

Continuing with the financial theme, and returning to the social markers of adulthood (Blatterer, 2007a; 2007b) achieved as a consequence of their apprenticeships, the recollections of many of the respondents demonstrate the new feelings of financial independence and provision that their apprenticeships gave; of ‘paying their way’, that their small but symbolically significant monetary contributions to the family income gave them. The participants’ evidence shows that this was recognised by both their families and by themselves, as an indicator of the change that their new-found status as an apprentice had produced in them. In this example, although Barry had worked part-time while still at school, his earnings had not previously formed part of the family income. But now that he was in stable full-time employment as an apprentice, he was required by his family to make a contribution as this quotation illustrates:

So that makes you kinda realise that you are actually living in...a grown up world really and you have to pay your way. So that was an early lesson for me.

However, the realisation that they were no longer financially dependent on the

family, as they once were as children, demonstrates the important symbolism of their contributions. As Alec observed, 'The more I think, it wasn't so much what I was giving; I was giving some... it was I wasn't taking anymore'.

Another area in which the participants found themselves developing adult identities can be found in the after work social activities in which they engaged. Like many adolescents, this included going to public houses with friends and drinking alcohol; others visited the dance halls, discotheques and clubs appropriate to the youth culture of the time. Specifically for the participants as apprentices, this also included engaging in some adult activities in a sheltered social environment with older, respected workmates.

Using Frank's example as an illustration, interview evidence includes memories of joining his company's ten pin bowling team. He recalls that 'We used to play...and we used to go for a beer afterwards and it...was quite a good social thing. It was great'. In this way, learning the accepted behaviours, norms and rituals of the social environment from respected adults helped to create a new self-identity for the participants. The social consequences of this learning process and the subsequent changes in behaviour, are exemplified by Dave's recollection: 'I think that I was respected for not getting drunk, and not being silly, and behaving you know, like one of the guys instead of a giggly schoolboy'.

The participants' experiences of consuming alcohol are of relevance to studies of apprenticeship, because at that time, lunchtime and after work drinking were an accepted part of the working culture and a feature of a locally formed version of hegemonic manhood (Connell, 1987). Dave provides evidence which demonstrates this aspect of working life; '...the

drinking culture, the pub culture, was very much a part of the...working man's week and that was seen to be accepted as normal'. Through their apprenticeships, the participants were therefore able to access yet another adult social activity, which in Britain is restricted by age and controlled by law, and whose reciprocal drinking rituals were an integral and important part of contemporaneous hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987). In support of this claim, Dave offers this observation:

Some of the behaviour, it has to be, I suppose, learnt behaviour, because you're seeing all these other guys doing it, and think 'Well, that's a quite acceptable thing to do...being with other men, specifically, in the pub at lunchtime, in the pub after work and in the pub at weekends, it was a very central part of socialising with other working...men.

The interviews produced evidence to show that even this type of socialising was conducted under conditions of legitimate peripheral participation. Frank recalls that even in the pub he still had a privileged status, as due to his low apprenticeship wages he was told that 'You're an apprentice-you don't pay for anything'. As a legitimate adult leisure activity, the participants engaged in these practices as a symbolic representation of their changing identities and status, and as part of a process of socialisation into adulthood. Engaging in adult social activities such as those described not only allowed the apprentices to self-identify with the hierarchy of hegemonic adult masculine culture, of which they were becoming part. In addition, it also allowed the identity of the work group and its political and social solidarity to be strengthened through communal drinking sessions, and the identity of the apprentice as a group member to be correspondingly reinforced (Adler, 1991).

Similarly, mixing with adults at work also provided the participants with a safe

environment for contact with adult females from outside their familial and educational circles. Some participants recalled instances of being mothered or teased, usually by older women. Alec recalls that sometimes when working in private houses for the GPO, cups of tea and biscuits were provided for him by the female householder; 'I think that when you're sixteen, seventeen, some of the older ones would be a bit mumly [*sic*] almost...which I could live with (laughing)'. Other occasions were more embarrassing however, particularly when working in places with a significantly large female workforce, such as factories and bus garages. Dave recollects that the female bus conductors would often call out to him 'Hello darling' and 'Give us a cuddle'. Alec also recalls that teasing was sometimes of a personal nature:

They would make remarks about... (laughing) 'I wonder if he's done it today?' 'I wonder if he's had it away this weekend. What do you think? Have you my love?'

However, such behaviour was seen by the participants as part of their induction into adulthood, with Alec recalling that 'It was part of my learning curve!', and Dave remembering that '...it also helped you become part of, what's seen as the team'. Therefore by participating in the adult community of practice of work, they were learning as legitimate peripheral participants how to interact with females from outside their previous familial and educational settings, and to deal with embarrassing comments as well as their own emerging sexuality.

This research did not encounter any resistance to developing locally formed hegemonic masculine identities, as the participants to this research all created identities which can be related to this norm. But as noted in Chapter Three, masculine identities take many forms. Apprentices developing alternative masculinities may have either found themselves left on the periphery of this

hegemonic masculine core group to some extent, or chose to exclude themselves from it with the attendant social consequences. Others might have even terminated their apprenticeships. This is another area which is highlighted by this thesis as requiring more research, along with ethnic minority apprenticeship participation and the delayed impact of the youth labour market collapse in the capital previously mentioned.

This subsection has revealed the intergenerational process of acquiring skills and knowledge from other members of the constellation of practice that comprises adulthood. It has shown how some attributes were assimilated as learned behaviours, and how the participants were exposed to new adult behaviours. The next subsection explains how an apprenticeship moderated entry into adulthood.

8.3.3 The 'cushioning effect' of apprenticeship

In this last subsection, the privileged dual position of the apprentice as both a worker *and* a learner is emphasised, and linked to their participation in an adult constellation of practice. Through this unique position, I argue here that as apprentices, the participants had an advantage over other young workers, and achieved a protected entry to the multiple communities of practice of the adult social world.

My proposal of a 'life apprenticeship', derives from the sheltered structure of the participants' apprenticeships. Their dual status as both workers and learners, gave them unique opportunities to participate in a privileged way in cross-generational social interaction as a legitimate member of the sociocultural occupational group, and concurrently in other adult social worlds at work with groups of adults from both genders, drawn from outside their own families and

peer groups.

In line with symbolic interactionist theory, the self-identities of the participants in this research, were constructed in response to the range of social situations in which they found themselves. As their workplaces formed a significant part of the extended social spheres in which a range of social activities and interactions were now able to take place, and in which occupational identities were formed, it can be reasoned that the influences of work colleagues are also detectable in their adult identities.

Wenger (1998: 159) maintains that 'Because our identities are not something that we turn on and off, our various forms of participation are not merely sequences in time'. They are instead '...pieces of a puzzle' (*ibid.*, 1998:159) that we put together to create our self-identities. Consequently, people at work '...talk about their kids; and more generally, the tidbits of conversation they interweave with their exchanges of work-related information continually reflect their participation in other practices' (*ibid.* 1998: 159). As the findings chapters illustrated, the ephemeral conversations at work contained many instances of experiences beyond the participants' prior experience. So for the research participants, as a consequence of their privileged status and occupational group membership as a worker *and* a learner, they experienced a controlled exposure to a wider variety of adult experiences than they would have otherwise had access to in other situations. Accordingly, by participating in multiple adult social arenas and conversations as legitimate peripheral participants at work, they were able to gain access to a more diverse range of life knowledge and skills through their older work colleagues' 'bridging' social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998).

Therefore, my contention in this study is that the key to gaining entry to other adult social worlds, was the respondents' extended participation as apprentices in the adult world of work, and that entry was facilitated by the protection that their distinctive dual status as both workers *and* learners gave them. This supportive aspect of apprenticeship is confirmed by Alec who stated that 'I think that's the thing about apprenticeship...it is a kind of cushioning effect', and this remains true for the social learning aspects of their apprenticeships as well as learning occupational skills.

The supportive features of the apprenticeships recalled by the participants' evidence is crucial. Dave and Harry, from separate occupational groups, recall that they were protected to some degree by their older workmates by using identical figures of speech that emphasise the protective nature of their experiences: they were both taken under a colleague's 'wing'. This expression suggests that learning, whether occupational or social, was conducted in a way that cushioned the activity.

It is further suggested here that the participants were able to enter other adult social worlds, because apprenticeships of this period, as remnants of a cultural institution, uniquely possessed a holistic nature that transcended vocational training, and were instead, as Frank stated in his interview '...learning about life'. As Snell (1996: 304) argues, traditionally the apprenticeship model as a cultural and social institution provided in the past '...an extensive regulatory framework for people's lives'. This thesis highlights the way in which apprenticeships developed the social side of the participants' adult identities to provide a framework for the creation of their self-identities, and is an aspect that is frequently overlooked in the field of modern apprenticeship studies. Next, in the penultimate section of this chapter, the concepts discussed are drawn

together, and a new conceptual framework for apprenticeship is proposed.

8.4 A new conceptual framework

This section addresses the overarching research question: 'In what ways did serving an apprenticeship influence the apprentices' transition to adulthood in London during the period 1959-1989?' Here, I propose the concept of a 'life apprenticeship' as a life stage, in which young people in transition from school to work, can gain a sheltered entry to a constellation of practice (Wenger, 1998) that represents adulthood. As such, an apprenticeship during the years 1959 to 1989, not only developed occupational skills, but acted as a holistic and integrative vehicle for the formation of adult identities. Consequently, this thesis has illustrated the significant role played by apprenticeships in the research participants' maturation process.

This section proposes that by providing a sheltered learning environment, in which controlled exposure to diverse adult activities could take place, the participants' apprenticeships were able to enrich their lives by expanding their cultural and social horizons through access to a range of 'bridging' social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998) via a network of 'weak' social ties (Granovetter, 1973). Consequently, the norms and behaviours required for contemporaneous adulthood were learned through participation and social dialogue with a wide range of adults around them. I now propose a new conceptual framework for understanding apprenticeships as consisting of more than merely acquiring occupational skills.

The concept of social capital (Coleman, 1988; Gittell and Vidal, 1998) when added to that of 'bounded agency' (Evans & Heinz, 1991; 1993; Evans, 2007) can now be understood to have shaped the maturation process in a more

nuanced way, by influencing the career destinations and life courses of the research participants. Their careers influenced the construction of their adult self-identities because they defined the network of 'weak ties' (Granovetter, 1973) with whom they worked, and therefore the type of 'bridging' social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998) that they were able to access. Larger social networks naturally offered entry as legitimate peripheral participants to more communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

Subsequently, a sheltered learning environment was created, in which entry as legitimate peripheral participants to multiple communities of practice (*ibid.*, 1991) was made possible. These collections of varied communities of practice are described as constellations of practice (Wenger, 1998) as they can be perceived to be related, when viewed through a lens such as that provided by standard adulthood (Parsons, 1971). Constellations of practice exist because as Wenger (1998) describes, they share many features, such as having members in common; shared historical roots; face similar conditions; mutual artefacts and '...geographical relations of proximity and interaction' (*ibid.*, 1998: 127).

In individual communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), as legitimate peripheral participants, the respondents created identities through forming trajectories (Wenger, 1998) or strands (Thomson, *et al.*, 2002) in which progression differed in pace from community to community. People behave differently in each of these according to the social landscape in which they are acting. Therefore, individual trajectories when taken together, form complex adult identities which are considered here as a 'nexus of multimembership' (Wenger, 1998:158). Through facilitating controlled contact with a variety of adults who '...are willing to invite them into their adulthood' (Wenger, 1998: 277), '...a sheltered transition into adulthood' (Vickerstaff, 2007: 341) was able

to be made, in which the respondents, as legitimate peripheral participants could learn social norms and skills. By linking Goodwin's (2007) and Vickerstaff's (2007) concepts together, and relating to the historical literature, a historic function of apprenticeships can be reclaimed. It is this function of apprenticeship as a social and cultural institution, serving as an integrative vehicle for socialising apprentices into adulthood, which modern, narrow, instrumental conceptions of apprenticeship as a model of skills training, and as a tool of the youth labour market, have frequently overlooked.

8.5 Summary

This chapter discussed how the evidence in this thesis illustrates the significant effect that serving an apprenticeship during the years 1959 to 1989 had on the research participants' formation of a self-identity. It concludes that an apprenticeship provided the contributors to this research with opportunities to engage as legitimate peripheral participants (Lave & Wenger, 1991) in an adult constellation of practice (Wenger, 1998), represented here by standard adulthood (Parsons, 1971). It has highlighted the importance of social capital in the participants' choices of trade, in which their dual status as both workers *and* learners, they were able to learn occupational skills. But most importantly for this thesis, it has revealed how this dual status also facilitated a 'cushioned' entry to a range of other communities of practice, in which through legitimate peripheral participation as a 'newcomer' and discourse with 'old-timers' (Lave & Wenger, 1991), they were able gain the social knowledge considered appropriate for the time.

The new conceptual framework proposed here, positions apprenticeship during this period as a life stage, or as a 'life apprenticeship'. As such, the participants

were able to transition from school to work and acquire not only one of the markers of adulthood (Blatterer, 2007a; Blatterer, 2007b), work, but also a recognised status as an apprentice. Through a sheltered induction to adulthood provided by their status as a participant *and* a learner, and facilitated by creating a larger network of weak ties (Granovetter, 1973), they were able to engage in other areas of adult social practice. By legitimately participating in the constellation of practice (Wenger, 1998) that these areas represent, and by reacting to the new social situations experienced in them, they were able to engage in the dynamic process of 'becoming': '...the historical production, transformation, and change of persons' (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 51) necessary to construct their self-identities.

Chapter 9: Conclusions and recommendations

Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it
(George Santayana, *The Life of Reason*, 1905: 284).

9.1 Introduction

The principal aim of my study, as outlined in Chapter One, was to explore in what ways serving an apprenticeship contributed to the transition from youth to adulthood for a group of working class boys during the years 1959 to 1989. In particular, as revealed in the rationale for this study, an important factor in choosing this topic was to enable me to understand how my apprenticeship prepared me for adult life.

Through a small scale qualitative study in which empirical evidence was principally collected as recorded interviews and presented as oral history, this study has gone some way to enhancing our understanding of the socialising function of apprenticeship. I have presented evidence which has indicated that serving an apprenticeship made a significant contribution towards the participants' construction of personal adult identities by acting as a portal to the adult social world. This research therefore, extends our knowledge of apprenticeships and so we can, as the quotation from Santayana at the chapter head suggests, seek to learn lessons from the past.

Although this research is based on a numerically small sample of participants, its findings suggest that their apprenticeships included a socialising aspect that is overlooked in its current form. In particular, it has illustrated how apprenticeships facilitated participation in various adult communities of practice, through widening the apprentices' circle of 'weak

ties' (Granovetter, 1973). This enabled them to draw on diverse 'bridging' social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998) through interaction with their work colleagues to participate in multiple communities of practice. In so doing, their apprenticeships assisted in the construction of their adult identities and transitions to adulthood, which are considered in this thesis as achieving a nexus of multimembership in a constellation of practice (Wenger, 1998).

In this, the final chapter of this thesis, I present my conclusions and offer some recommendations. This chapter consists of five sections. Following this introduction, the next section provides a reminder of the study's research aims, and of its findings. Section three considers the key contributions of this study, and contains five subsections, each one linking a finding to the thesis' structure. The fourth section presents some implications suggested by this research and outlines how this research can be further developed. The last section evaluates key areas of the research process and gives a brief autobiographical reflection on my research.

9.2 Revisiting the research question

This study set out to investigate whether serving an apprenticeship during the mid to late 20th century contributed to the transition to adulthood for the research participants. In particular, it intended to find out if the apprenticeships explored in this study, still retained aspects of their historical function as an integrative vehicle: that is of their purpose to integrate the apprentices into adulthood through socialisation at work.

I also seek through this thesis, to reclaim the term apprenticeship from over

liberal usage in the modern lexicon of education, training and employment in which it has been used to describe various types of training (*inter alia*, Fuller and Unwin, 2009; Richard, 2012). I retain a great sense of pride in my apprenticeship, as do the other participants in this study, a fact which is supported by their interview evidence. By emphasising the social aspects of apprenticeship, I draw attention to the distinct function that apprenticeship served in the life course. This I contend, in addition to being a means of learning occupational skills, provided a safe place in which a supported and extended transition to adulthood could be achieved. The principal research question asked:

In what ways did serving an apprenticeship influence the apprentices' transition to adulthood in London during the period 1959-1989?

This raised two sub-questions:

1. What was the lived experience of these London apprentices during their apprenticeships?
2. To what extent did social class, gender and family background influence the participants' choice of apprenticeship?

As my research is concerned with the social aspect of apprenticeship, I used a qualitative approach to collecting the primary data, as this was in keeping with the constructionist ontological methodology chosen for this study. It also reflects the interpretivist epistemology adopted, which considers that understandings of the world are constructed and interpreted by individuals through social action. Consequently oral history interviews were used to gather evidence from the participants. This allowed the participants to play an active part in the research, by relating their own stories of apprenticeship, and for those narratives to be recorded and shared as an academic resource. I consider it to be a vital

purpose of this research to document these memories before my age group of apprentices finally disappears, and these stories are lost forever.

A research sample was formed of volunteers who had served apprenticeships in the thirty-year period between 1959 and 1989. Biographical questionnaires were used to gather contextual information from the participants, such as education, qualifications and parents' occupations (see Table 1, page 142). The information provided generated helpful starting points to get the conversation flowing, and areas for possible follow-up questions during the semi-structured interviews.

The data gathered from the questionnaires and interviews were collated and subjected to an exploratory thematic analysis to discover any similarities or differences between participants' experiences. The evidence revealed the significance and relevance of familial 'bonding' social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998), which in this thesis, I interpret as fashioning a foundation on which individual adult identities are constructed. The participants share certain dispositions and outlooks regarding the function and desirability of work, which the evidence strongly suggests, were shaped by their families and social class backgrounds.

New responsibilities such as contributing to the family's collective income, even though small in value, were large in symbolism as they announced to the participants, their families and friends that a new life phase had begun. As discussed in Chapter Three, these shared mind-sets and obligations may be considered to reflect the enduring influence of the image of the 'Respectable Working Man' (Thompson, F., 1988) on their adult outlooks and identities, transmitted through social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1977a).

During data analysis, a distinct division between the construction and telecommunications groups became apparent, which illustrated the degree to which 'bonding' social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998) influenced their occupational destinations. A comparison of the two groups' evidence reveals that for those in the construction group, 'bonding' social capital (*ibid.*, 1998) had the greatest influence. A probable explanation for this, is that the explicit and implicit guidance of a range of 'important others' (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and 'significant others' (Haller & Woelfel, 1972) consisting of extended families and friends, inspired, guided and enculturated in some cases through anticipatory socialisation, these young men into construction apprenticeships.

The same conclusion could not be drawn for all the telecommunications apprentices, as they mostly lacked the influence of close relationships with people with long histories of working in that occupation, as a consequence of it being a relatively new field. Although their bonding social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998) produced dispositions which were shared with the construction group, they did not experience the same enculturation into a trade. The only exception to this was the participant codenamed Harry, who was influenced by his brother-in-law's job in British Telecom. His evidence strengthens my contention that occupational choice for the participants was often guided by significant others (Haller & Woelfel, 1972) as role models.

A major conclusion that may be drawn from the evidence, concerns the extent to which access to an extended network of weak ties (Granovetter, 1973) provided by their apprenticeships, contributed to the participants' construction of an adult identity. Some aspects of a masculine working class identity were drawn from experiences at home, as borne out by the evidence, but others were assimilated by becoming a member of an occupational group. I argue that from

a symbolic interactionist perspective, having access to the 'bridging' social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998) of work colleagues, accessed through legitimate peripheral participation in multiple communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991), was of paramount importance in the creation of the participants' adult identities. As discussed in Chapter Three, identities are constructed by individuals in response to the social situations in which they find themselves, and are a consequence of reflexive action and reaction with the world. The new knowledge and experiences of work colleagues as 'social objects' (Blumer, 2002), their biographies and social capital (Coleman, 1988), all significantly influenced the formation of self-identity in the participants.

By acting as a portal to other adult communities of practice, apprenticeships of the time can be understood to have implicitly retained their medieval function as an integrative vehicle, in which apprentices were socialised into the constellation of practice (Wenger, 1998) of adulthood. The next section considers the main contributions that this research has made to understanding apprenticeships.

9.3 Key contributions

My analysis of apprenticeship has extended knowledge of apprenticeship, by reconceptualising it as being more than a method of occupational training. It is now possible to identify the key contributions made by this research.

Many studies have concentrated on the effectiveness of apprenticeship as a model for skills training. With notable exceptions (*inter alia*, Unwin and Wellington, 2001; Goodwin and O'Connor, 2005a; 2005b; 2007a; 2007b; 2009; Fuller and Unwin, 2003a; 2011a; 2013; Vickerstaff, 2003; 2007), few have had the experiences and perceptions of individual apprentices as a focus. By

recording first-hand the experiences of a group of ex-apprentices, my study has unravelled some of the mysteries surrounding mid to late 20th century apprenticeships' contribution to supporting individual transitions to adulthood. The following subsections indicate areas in which this thesis makes new contributions to knowledge.

9.3.1 Recording the apprentice 'voice'

This research has contributed to the knowledge and understanding of apprenticeship as more than the just the acquisition of occupational skills in several ways. Firstly, as a primary objective outlined in Chapter One, this thesis has recorded the 'lived experiences' of a group of apprentices during apprenticeship's assumed 'golden age' (Vickerstaff, 2003).

Contributors disclosed their opinions on the difference between a job and an apprenticeship through their evidence. Those that had experienced work prior to their apprenticeships, revealed that they considered the main difference between both forms of work to be that as an apprentice, the focus was on learning rather than productive work. Their evidence served to emphasise their unique dual status as workers *and* learners by revealing the cushioned entry to work and consequently, to the adult social order.

Some of the daily activities of the participants were recorded and transcribed to give their first-hand accounts of the apprentice experience. Feelings of indignation for being treated as 'the boy', along with much loved stories and reminiscences showed the wide range of their experiences, and has enabled the apprentice 'voice' to be heard. This is a vital function of the oral history method chosen as the main form of data collection (Portelli, 2006) for this study, and was discussed in Chapter Five. With permission from the participants,

these recordings will be presented to the British Library's Sound Archives as a resource for other researchers.

9.3.2 Using intimate insider research

The second key contribution to knowledge is the application of a little used research method; intimate insider research (Taylor, 2011). The unusual circumstances of this study, in which I have used members of my personal circle of friends and colleagues as well as myself to form the research sample, has enabled this technique to be used and evaluated.

As discussed in Chapter Five, the position taken by myself as an 'intimate insider researcher', and those of my participants as 'friend-informants' (*ibid.*, 2011: 8), has produced evidence of great richness, that may have otherwise been difficult to collect. It has allowed the interviews to be conducted as a conversation, in which the participants had an active role. This is a significant departure from normal research practice, and produced evidence of great candour (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). My insider knowledge (Rabe, 2003) as an ex-apprentice also allowed me to gather rich data from the interviews as I was able to empathise with my friend-informants and understand the nuances of technical language and trade jargon used in the interviews.

Being an intimate insider researcher additionally allowed a deeper understanding of my friend-informants' evidence, as familiarity between us over the years facilitated the reading of their facial expressions and body language. This enabled a multi-layered insight into their evidence that would not have been possible for an 'outsider' researcher to achieve.

I have been very fortunate in that my previous careers gave me privileged access to my research sample, and I am aware that this may not be the case

for other researchers that would like to use this technique (although I am sure that research into other communities of practice of which they are members, would permit this method). I am also doubly fortunate, in that my experiences as an apprentice telecommunications technician and subsequent careers in the construction industry and further education, have equipped me with the ‘insider knowledge’ (Rabe, 2003: 151) required to be perceived as a knowledgeable practitioner as well as a researcher. It is arguable that much rich data would have otherwise been lost, as the participants may have been less open and forthcoming with researchers from academia, than with a friend and colleague. However, without a comparable study undertaken by outsiders, it is not possible to be definite on this point.

As a research approach, intimate insider research may prove useful in gathering evidence from hard to reach groups. Although originating in research into ‘queer culture’ (Taylor, 2011: 5), similar techniques using ‘...the researcher’s background street credentials’ (*ibid.*, 2011: 6) have been proved useful when researching, goth culture⁴², or refugee families (*inter alia*, Jones and Allebone, 1999; Hodkinson, 2005).

9.3.3 *Work and identity as social constructs*

Through a discussion in Chapter Four, I sought to clarify the centrality of work in modern societies, noting that as Casey argues, it has been a ‘... primary element in social organization’ (1995: 21). I acknowledged that although a clear definition of work is difficult to achieve, it was possible to confirm work as an activity that serves a variety of functions within human societies. It has had

⁴² Goth culture is a youth subculture with origins in the post-punk music scene of England in the 1980s. It takes inspiration for its fashion from Victorian gothic novels and art. Its enthusiasts are characterised by wearing dark clothes and styling themselves on horror imagery.

many purposes including religious, moral and regulatory functions along with its simple function as a means to exist. However, in this discussion, it was found that above all, it was primarily a social activity, in which humans interact with one another, and therefore provides a social space in which learning (as a social activity) through legitimate participation takes place.

If, as is maintained from the symbolic interactionist viewpoint, the very idea of a 'self' exists because of social interaction, then the workplace provides an ideal social arena in which identities can be constructed. Conceptualising apprenticeship as a life phase in which young people construct their adult identities, means that through legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991) in the work environment as both a worker and a learner, the individual is open to, and in reflexive relation with the experiences and life views of other work colleagues.

9.3.4 Constructing an adult identity in a constellation of practice

An analysis through the lens of situated learning theory enables the participants' occupations to be identified as communities of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991). I adopt Wenger's (1998) view here, which maintains that multiple communities of practice can be implicitly grouped together in loose configurations because they contain common elements, but are too broad and diverse to be considered as directly related. Constellations of practice are used in this study, to define a range of activities, knowledge, behaviours, roles and responsibilities that are undertaken by individuals in a nexus of multimembership, to define adulthood.

As stated in Chapter Three, Parson's (1971) concept of standard adulthood is used in this thesis as a trope to describe the destination to which the

participants as young people, were journeying. The markers of adulthood, referred to by Blatterer (2007a; 2007b), such as entering work, independent living, marriage and parenthood were able to be achieved partly as a consequence of an apprenticeship enabling them to gain trade security (Ryrie & Weir, 1978). My participants, like McDowell's (2001: 21), were able to '...settle down in a good job, buy a car and get married, usually in that order'.

The findings in Chapter Seven, indicate that access to the multiple communities of practice which form an adult constellation of practice, were available to the participants through their apprenticeships. The few examples able to be given, due to lack of space in this study, also illustrate how aspects of locally formed hegemonic masculine adult behaviours and dispositions were achieved through legitimate peripheral participation an adult constellation of practice. Therefore, I contend that through social interaction in their privileged position as both workers *and* learners, the participants were able to engage in adult behaviours, discussions and activities in a controlled, and cushioned environment. This, I maintain, means that they could construct their adult identities as a life apprenticeship.

As particular examples of adult socialisation in action, this study has revealed how as apprentices, the participants were introduced to alcohol consumption and gendered social interactions in a controlled way through participation in the workplace. This is an area in which this thesis illustrates the manner in which the participants were socialised into adult social *milieus* that were previously inaccessible to them, as a consequence of entering one field of adult social action: paid work.

Memories recorded and documented in Chapter Seven, include instances of the

long-gone rites and rituals common in apprenticeships of the time. These rituals ‘...connect local practices and identities to other locations across time and space’ (Wenger, 1998: 183). Records of such experiences are of great value because as the stock of ex-apprentices from this period diminishes, the importance of documenting the way that transitions were marked in society, increases. As a social history document which records this group’s oral histories, this thesis has contributed to the understanding of apprenticeship as an aspect of everyday life in Britain during the period 1959-1989.

9.3.5 Social capital and identity

This study has revealed how the participants’ ‘bonding’ social capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998) formed the foundation on which ‘bridging’ social capital (*ibid.*, 1998) allowed them to construct new adult identities. Both types of social capital are tightly bound to their class backgrounds and may be explained as a form of social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1977a). When viewed through the conceptual lens of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969; 2002), the evidence significantly reveals the extent to which the participants’ identities as dynamic social constructs, were formed and reformed through reflexive action with others in diverse social situations, primarily those provided by entry to work as both a worker *and* a learner.

Also, through its unequal distribution throughout the research sample, this research has highlighted social capital’s value in influencing the life course (*inter alia*, Bourdieu, 1977b; 1986; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). This has been illustrated through the discussion of differences in the two research cohorts’ experiences of choice of apprenticeship, in which the influence of social capital played a central part. Establishing the strength of social capital’s

influence on the research sample has illustrated the effect it had on the participants' life courses.

Accessing 'bridging' social capital through relations with work colleagues was identified here to be crucial to the formation of their adult identities because it contributed to widening the individual's circle of trust (Fukuyama, 1995). As Granovetter (1973) argues that a wide variety of weak ties such as these, provides access to a greater range of experience and opportunities, it is contended that apprenticeships gave the respondents a controlled exposure to the adult world as legitimate peripheral participants (*inter alia*, Lave and Wenger, 1991; Goodwin, 2007). My findings support Vickerstaff's (2007: 339) claim that apprenticeships of the time provided '...an apprenticeship in adulthood'. By linking Goodwin's (2007) proposition that adulthood is achieved through legitimate peripheral participation in diverse communities of practice, to Vickerstaff's (2007) claim of post-war apprenticeships being a path to adulthood, this thesis provides a better understanding of how apprenticeships facilitated this transition.

9.3.6 Apprenticeship as an integrative vehicle into the adult social order

Last, but not least, the data has illustrated how mid to late 20th century apprenticeship still functioned as an integrative vehicle in which adolescents were socialised into adulthood, through discourse and participation enabled by their work colleagues. This provided a 'cushioned' transition into the constellation of practice representing adulthood, crucially through their status as a worker *and* a learner. By proposing a new conceptual framework, in which this traditional and historic function of apprenticeship is reclaimed, I have highlighted an area in which lessons from the past can be learned, and which can influence

current and future apprenticeships. Reimagining apprenticeship as an important life stage in which young people (of both genders, and ethnically inclusive) can safely transition to adulthood, is an important area in which this research makes a contribution to knowledge.

9.4 Implications and future research

It was mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, that I feel that the term apprenticeship has been applied too liberally in recent decades, and now encompasses all forms of vocational training (*inter alia*, Fuller and Unwin, 2009; Richard, 2012). Consequently its function for socialising youths into adulthood as full members of society has been neglected. It is to be hoped that this study has shown that an apprenticeship always encompassed much more than vocational training. It is also hoped that my findings will inspire new research into how apprenticeship can be redefined to incorporate its original role as a life stage and as a mechanism for supporting young people's transition to adulthood.

Some other areas of interest for future research have been identified during this study. This thesis has identified the need for more research into the experiences of mid to late 20th century apprenticeships in a range of sectors, as the site of adult identity formation, to provide other studies in which the concept of a life apprenticeship can be tested, and that their findings may eventually influence government policy. As such, it has pointed out a useful area in which the transition to adulthood may be observed and recorded.

Specifically, this has been a gendered research project into how masculine identities were formed during the period. It has also been ethnocentric in that the selection of the research sample, although reflecting apprenticeships at the

time, failed to gather the views of other ethnic groups. Similarly, its London-centric focus limits its usefulness to describe contemporaneous experiences in the rest of Britain. A useful extension of this research would be to discover the extent in which adolescent girls and individuals from ethnic minorities established adult identities at that time, and what influence their social capital had in the choice of occupational identities in which complex adult identities could be constructed. Evidence from such research, could be compared and contrasted with this to ascertain the contribution of social capital in those groups to reveal any differences or similarities.

Additionally, contemporary apprenticeships can also be studied to establish how current young apprentices view their experiences of becoming adults for comparison with the historical sample. This thesis has also indicated a need to conduct research into the experiences of apprentices who did not comply with the facets of the local hegemonic masculine identity that the apprenticeships in this study promoted. This data may be used to influence the future composition of the model and the way in which apprenticeships are focussed and promoted.

9.5 Evaluation: my journey as a researcher

Lastly, in this section, I seek to briefly evaluate this research. Also in keeping with the theme of transition within this thesis, my personal journey as a researcher is assessed.

Researching and writing this thesis has been an interesting and illuminating project, which has appealed to me immensely as a social history study, and which has obsessed me for the last six years. It has formed part of my everyday activities, and consumed every available moment of my time, whether researching, writing, or thinking about it, to the detriment of many other aspects

of my life. But it has been a very enjoyable project, and has enthused rather than diminished, my passion for enquiry.

It has enabled me to gain knowledge not only of research techniques and practice, but in a range of subjects, of which I was previously unaware. Some areas of expanded knowledge are located in the fields of sociology, psychology, medieval history, industrial history, economic history, political theory and political history, as I found that a greatly improved knowledge of these subjects was required to provide context for the research, and to understand, analyse and interpret the evidence from the study. As a researcher, I have also improved my experience and knowledge of research techniques to increase my range of skills, through experimentation, and experience. These I have used in my employment in further education, to conduct several small research projects, including one in 2015 for the Institute for Learning (now the Society for Education and Training).

My study has revealed some interesting evidence, but I must emphasise that its major drawback is the very small scale of the research project, which consisted of only ten participants. Through reasons explained in Chapter Five, this was of necessity rather than by design. However, as Williams (2000; 2003) contends, this does not necessarily negate the value of this research as it can be used in conjunction with other research as a *moderatum* sample to which it can be linked and compared, some of which I hope that this study inspires.

In addition, as indicated in the rationale for this thesis (Section 1.2), my main reason for choosing to focus on apprenticeship's role in adult identity formation was personal. I have long been intrigued by the impact of my own apprenticeship on my life. This research has enabled me to compare and

contrast my own experience of apprenticeship as a social and cultural institution, which by acting as an integrative vehicle socialised me into adulthood, with those of others. I can now conclude that my exposure to a wide range of adult experiences as an apprentice was not unique, and was an experience shared by the other participants in this research. My controlled exposure to multiple communities of practice, comprising a constellation of practice representing a version of adulthood in the early 1970s, has had a lasting impact on my ongoing identity formation. It has been central to my evolving self-image throughout my life, and has provided a key lens for autobiographical reflection and evaluation.

In evaluating the research itself, the value of oral history as a research technique has been highlighted by the rich data collected for this study. My role as 'intimate insider researcher' (Taylor, 2011: 5) in particular, has been discussed as a key contribution in 9.3.2, and has indicated the great depth of evidence that was gathered through the pre-existing friendship and affiliation that exists between myself and my 'friend-informants' (*ibid.*, 2008: 8).

Some notable problems encountered in this study with the general oral history method, included the natural difficulty of recalling memories due to the passage of time, in one case in this thesis of over fifty years ago, and of those caused by the effects of nostalgia. These difficulties are inherent in the method, but as also described in Chapter Five, if they are sufficiently understood, plans can be laid to offset the worst of these effects. Also it is worth remembering that purpose of oral histories is to record the participant's interpretation of events, not the actual events themselves. During the interview process the participants '...remember what *they* think is important' (Ritchie, 2015: 16, emphasis as in original).

Consequently, the reliability of oral history lies not in what is remembered, but in

how the memories are interpreted, and therefore the skill of the oral historian resides in interpreting its meaning (Peniston-Bird, 2009). It is hoped therefore, that this thesis has allowed the apprentice 'voice' to be sufficiently heard, and that the experiences of a group of ordinary working men have been accurately recorded to have made a contribution to British social history. It is also hoped that I have had the necessary skill to interpret the meaning of their memories to do all our apprenticeship experiences justice.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Research information sheet given to participants

The Apprentice's Tale: entry into multiple communities of practice for working class boys

Thank you for expressing an interest and agreeing to take part in this PhD research project. This study will explore the relationship between work and the formation of an adult identity in working-class young men from the viewpoint of an apprentice.

My intention is to collect the everyday experiences of apprentices in two industries; telecommunications and construction, to record the part played by an apprenticeship, in their transition from youth to adulthood.

What the study involves

As one of a sample of around 15 ex-apprentices, your role in the study will consist of at least one recorded interview over the next year, in which I will invite you to tell me 'your story' about what happened during your apprenticeship. I am interested to know:

- About your early life-education, parents, where you lived, what qualifications you achieved, how you chose your apprenticeship.
- How you saw yourself before, during and after your apprenticeship.
- The everyday experiences of your apprenticeship-banter, practical jokes, work tasks, errands, responsibilities, bullying, after work socialising.

Contact details:

Robert Galvani

*Teaching and Learning
Leader*

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Falkirk Street,

London N1 6HQ

Telephone: (020) 8613 9111

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rgalvani@hackney.ac.uk*

*This research is
part of a PhD
thesis at the
Institute of
Education,
University of
London*

*You are welcome to
receive a copy of the
finished thesis as a
Word/PDF document*

- How you found the experience of transition from school to the workplace.
- Hobbies, interests and various activities that began during that time as a consequence of working.

Before the interview, you will be asked to complete a short questionnaire via e-mail, to establish some biographical details. Also, for the interview, it would be helpful if you could bring along any items of memorabilia from your apprenticeship that you still possess-indentures, photographs, exam questions, college notebooks, certificates or other related material. These will act as a prompt and help you to remember those experiences.

Interviews will take place at a mutually agreed time and place-your home, place of work or another venue. As you are taking part in this study voluntarily, you will be able to end the interviews at any time, or withdraw completely from the study if you so wish.

The interviews will be recorded, transcribed and used as part of my PhD thesis at the Institute of Education, University of London. The information collected, may also be used in reports, academic articles and presentations at academic conferences. You will be able to review, censor or edit material obtained from your interviews, up to the final draft of the thesis.

This study is completely confidential; everything that you tell me will be kept in the strictest confidence. When the research findings are written up on completion of my research, your name will be changed, as will those of other people and places that you refer to, so that no one will be able to identify you.

Appendix 2

Electronic biographical details questionnaire

PhD research project-Biographical details

Name: [Click here to enter text.](#)

1. In which area were you brought up? Give a brief description:

[Click here to enter text.](#)

2. Describe the type of dwelling you lived in as a child (e.g. own/rented house, flat, shared, single occupancy):

[Click here to enter text.](#)

3. What were your parents' occupations?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

4. What was your mother and father's education (did they have any qualifications, or did they do an apprenticeship-if so, what occupation)?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

5. Give a brief description of the type of secondary school that you attended (i.e. was it single sex or mixed; grammar, comprehensive, secondary modern, other):

[Click here to enter text.](#)

6. What qualifications did you achieve at school?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

7. Give a brief description of your school experience (e.g. did you enjoy/hate learning?):

[Click here to enter text.](#)

8. What were your early career choices?

Click here to enter text.

9. Why did you choose to become an apprentice in your particular trade (e.g. school/family influence)?

Click here to enter text.

10. What age were you, when you first entered your apprenticeship?

Click here to enter text.

11. Did you have any previous work experience before you started your apprenticeship? If yes, briefly describe.

Click here to enter text.

12. Did you need to have any qualifications to enter the apprenticeship-e.g. 'O' levels in Maths, English or science? If yes, please briefly describe.

Click here to enter text.

13. Were you required to take a test to become an apprentice? If so, give a brief description (e.g. written, oral, interview):

Click here to enter text.

14. Who was your employer?

Click here to enter text.

15. Where was your apprenticeship based?

Click here to enter text.

16. Approximately how many people were employed in the organisation where your apprenticeship was situated? Were there any other apprentices-if yes approximately how many?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

17. How far did you travel to work each day?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Appendix 3

Consent form

The Apprentice's Tale: entry into multiple communities of practice for working class boys

Consent Form

I hereby acknowledge that:

I understand that the study is about the transitional experiences and identity formation of young men during their apprenticeships.

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the study and its component parts.

My participation in this study is entirely voluntary and I have the right to withdraw my participation at any time.

I have the right to end the interviews at any time.

I have the right to edit or censor information up to the final draft, but will not be able to edit or censor the final thesis unless my identity has been revealed or there has been any other serious breach of the initial research agreement, of which this consent form constitutes a part.

Any information which I will give will be used solely for the purposes of research which may include publications, such as reports.

Any information which I will give will be treated in the strictest confidence. Names of persons will be protected by the use of agreed codenames and those of places etc by pseudonyms, so that I cannot be identified in the reports.

I voluntarily give my consent to be interviewed as part of this study.

Name (print)

Date

Appendix 4

Invitation to narrative and aide-memoir used in the interviews

The Apprentice's Tale: entry into multiple communities of practice for working class boys

Invitation to narrative

Read verbatim introduction:

'Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of my PhD research project for the Institute of Education, University of London. You have signed a consent form giving your voluntary informed consent for the data gathered in this interview to be used in my PhD thesis and for publication as articles for academic journals and presentation at academic conferences. You can stop the interview at any time, or withdraw from the project entirely if you so wish. I'll take some notes during the interview, which will also be recorded.

I am interested in *your* story-not just the details of your apprenticeship, but your whole life story. I am interested to see if the experience of being an apprentice affected your transition from childhood to maturity. Start wherever you like and take your time. Mention anything that comes to mind. Your identity will always be protected whenever the data is used, in whatever form.'

Prompts:

- Have you brought any memorabilia or photographs with you?
- In what way, if any, would you describe an apprenticeship as different from other forms of work?
- Describe some of the practical jokes played at work.
- What did you talk about with the other workers, when not talking about work?
- Tell me about your work as an apprentice bring you into contact with women? How were you treated by older women at work?
- As an apprentice, did you skive at work? How did you feel about that?
- In what way, if any, did your status at home change after you became an apprentice?
- What did you feel about yourself, once you had started your apprenticeship?

Appendix 5

Examples of apprenticeship documents



Telephone Rentals
LIMITED
Incorporating
TELEGRAPH TELEPHONES LIMITED
OPERATING IR SERVICES

APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME

To the Directors of
TELEPHONE RENTALS LIMITED.

APPLICATION FOR APPRENTICESHIP

I the undersigned being an employee of your Company on the terms of your published Engineers' Employment Conditions hereby apply to be enrolled in your APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME and if accepted for enrolment I agree with the Company that during the whole term of my membership I will diligently and faithfully serve the Company to the utmost of my power and skill; that I will keep the Company's secrets and obey all lawful commands of the Company and will not absent myself during the usual working hours without their consent and that I will at all times and in all things behave towards the Company as a good and faithful apprentice should.

AND I the undersigned guardian as surety for the applicant undertake with the Company that the said applicant will diligently and faithfully fulfil his above obligations.

Dated this SIXTH day of APRIL, 19 72.

Full name of Applicant ROBERT GEORGE GALVANI

Address 21, COLUMBINE COURT, HOLLY STREET, HAGENITY, LONDON, E.8.

Full name of Guardian R. Galvani

Address 21, COLUMBINE COURT, HOLLY STREET, HAGENITY, LONDON, E.8.

Occupation CIVIL SERVANT

SB 493 2.71



This is to certify that ---

R.G. Galvani

*was admitted to the Craft Apprenticeship Scheme of
Telephone Rentals Limited on 16th August 1971 and
that he completed his Apprenticeship on 31st August 1975.
He has satisfactorily acquired the knowledge and the
skills required in accordance with the Apprenticeship
Training Syllabus.*

Technical Education

Attended East Ham Technical College and was awarded
the City & Guilds of London Institute Telecommunications
Technicians Certificate Part I, studied for Part 2.
Achieved 2nd year Apprentice of the Year Award.

Telephone Rentals Ltd

W. Cooper

CHAIRMAN

THE NATIONAL JOINT COUNCIL FOR THE BUILDING INDUSTRY

THIS AGREEMENT made the4th..... day of
.....October..... One thousand nine hundred and76..... BETWEEN

.....
.....
(hereinafter called "the Employer") of the first part

and

of
(hereinafter called "the Apprentice/Trainee") of the second part

and

of
(hereinafter called "the Guardian") of the third part

and

of18/20, Duchess Mews, W1N 3AD.....
(hereinafter called "the Representative") of the fourth part

WITNESSETH

1. This Agreement is made pursuant to and there shall be incorporated herein all the provisions of the National Joint Training Scheme for Skilled Building Occupations dated 2nd September, 1974 (hereinafter referred to as "the Scheme" or any subsequent amendment thereof current during the period of service under this Agreement and any such amendment of the scheme shall take effect without formal amendment hereto.

2. The Apprentice/Trainee (with the consent of the Guardian until the Apprentice/Trainee shall reach the age of 18 years) hereby covenants with the Employer and also as a separate covenant with the Representative to serve the Employer faithfully and honestly in all respects as from the22nd day ofSeptember..... 19.75 for the period ofthree years.... or a reduced period of training as provided by Clause 4 of the Scheme (hereinafter referred to as "the period of service") as an Apprentice/Trainee in the occupation of...Painting/Decorating (hereinafter referred to as "the occupation") and to observe and be subject to the conditions contained in the Schedule annexed hereto.

3. The Employer hereby covenants with the Apprentice/Trainee (and until the Apprentice/Trainee shall reach the age of 18 years with the Guardian) and also as a separate covenant with the Representative to receive the Apprentice/Trainee into his service for the period of service and to the best of his knowledge, power and ability to teach and instruct him or cause him to be taught and instructed in the occupation and in all things incidental or relating thereto and to observe and be subject to the conditions contained in the Schedule annexed hereto.

4. The Representative has been selected by the London Regional..... Joint Training Committee constituted by the National Joint Council for the Building Industry (hereinafter referred to as "the Council" to be a party to this Agreement.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT

[REDACTED]

HAS COMPLETED AN APPROVED
APPRENTICESHIP IN THE CRAFT

of

PAINTING & DECORATING

Issued under the authority of the

NATIONAL JOINT COUNCIL

for the

BUILDING INDUSTRY

by the

NATIONAL JOINT APPRENTICESHIP
BOARD



CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

CLERK TO THE COUNCIL

Date 21.9.1978

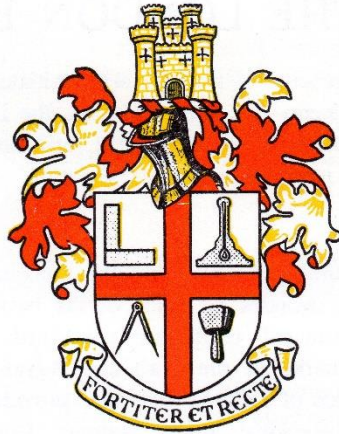
11, WEYMOUTH STREET, LONDON, W.1

Appendix 6

NFBTE Awards Programme 1977

National Federation of Building Trades Employers

LONDON REGION



PRESENTATION OF MEDALS

FOR 1977

BY THE RT HON. JOSEPH GRIMOND, T.D., LL.D., M.P.

IN THE CHAIR—THE PRESIDENT—T. F. K. BOUCHER, B.SC., F.I.C.E., M.B.I.M.

PLASTERERS HALL . 6TH DECEMBER 1977 . 3 p.m.

(BY KIND PERMISSION OF THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF PLAISTERERS)