

Student identities in new spaces of
higher education

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A thesis submitted in the partial fulfilment of the
requirements of the University of Brighton for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy

September 2015

Abstract

As new ways of delivering higher education are promoted this study has built upon existing work on 'becoming a student' and extends investigations into changing economic and socio-spatial conditions that give rise to new student experiences. Specifically, it explores the co-production of student spaces and student identities in the context of new higher education provision. The research contributes to debates on student and youth identities by revealing the contested production of student spaces and the socio-spatial inclusions and exclusions that accompany these processes.

The research is drawn from a case study of higher education in Hastings, south-east England where the foundation of post-18 education at the University of Brighton Hastings Campus is part of a suite of interventions to stimulate coastal urban regeneration, contributing to policy to address deprivation in struggling seaside resorts. The thesis examines the everyday geographies of an early group of students in this context in order to shed light on the ways in which student identities and student spaces are co-constructed within Hastings, often in uneven and unexpected ways.

The methods included a quantitative survey of student experiences and behaviours together with a follow up qualitative photo elicitation interview that examined student's articulation of their identities through visual representation. These methods involved a particular cohort of students and explored how a range of student experiences and spaces were influenced by student life-course, previous residential location, relationships with other students, the university and the town. Place, space and identity were key concepts used to examine the similarities and differences of experience between the local and migrant groups. Further empirical data was obtained from in-depth interviews with key actors with a responsibility for shaping the student experience through space and place in order to examine how their actions and perceptions shaped student spaces and experiences.

The findings of this research demonstrate the importance of place making to higher education students who have attempted to reproduce the Brighton student experience in Hastings. The results are timely as education and learning is reconfigured nationally, and students shape their identities in new spaces, through new relationships and experiences within a new setting. The conceptual framework combined findings related to place, identity and the accumulation of capital that advance an understanding on place making as pertinent to a new student body.

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Acknowledgments

My thanks go to the respondents and participants in Hastings: students, lecturers, bar owners and those who held roles of governance. Some participants undertook a great commitment to carry a camera with them for a week and then share their very personal student experience. My aim was to undertake meaningful research that could inform the progress for them and for education-led regeneration in the town.

I am hugely grateful to my supervisors Professor Andrew Church, for his steadfast belief in me, Dr Rebecca Elmhirst's creative suggestions including a study involving visual representation, and in the first year Dr Darren Smith with whom I held endless excited discussions about studentification.

Wider university support was received from the School of Environment and Technology, peer PhD colleagues, department lecturers who welcomed my teaching especially on valued field trips, Juliet Millican's enthusiasm for Hastings' based research on behalf of the Community University Partnership Programme, Professor Neil Ravenscroft who was endlessly patient, and Sarah Longstaff in the Doctoral College who is fantastically super-organised.

The longest journey has been taken by my family. My children Jacob, Asher, and Solomon have each undertaken undergraduate studies alongside my PhD and I'm very proud of them, wish them much aspiration and happiness, and look forward to us regaining weekends. My sisters Jemma and Lorraine have both come through traumatic times, with less support than I would usually give; they are strong women that I admire. I met my partner Kev as I started this research and so he has not really known a relationship other than with a student. I thank him for the faith, motivational milestones and goals, and I now eagerly anticipate our next chapter together. Finally, I undertook the PhD in part to achieve my mother's wish to see me succeed in academia. I'm sorry she never managed to stay the course, today she would be fulfilled.

Declaration

I declare that the research contained within this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not previously been submitted to this or any other university for a degree, and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Signed

Dated

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The research policy context

Hastings is a new student town, in south east England, developed within the context of widening participation under New Labour's administration and therefore has an interesting and comparatively diverse student body ripe for research. Hastings and St Leonards comprise one town on the south coast, with a population just over 90,000, a little over 60 miles south of London. Heading approximately 30 minutes and an hour respectively; eastwards are Rye and then Folkestone and to the west are Eastbourne then Brighton (see Figure 1.1). Hastings has a medieval history with a much visited Old Town neighbourhood dating back to 1066, whilst St Leonards on Sea, to the west, was developed by father and son James and Decimus Burton in the late Georgian and early Victorian period of the 19th Century.



Figure 1.1: Map to contextualise Hastings within South East England.

Source: <http://www.1066online.com/maps/south-east-england/south-east-map.gif>



Figure 1.2: Images of Hastings Old Town and St Leonards
Source: Hastings Borough Council Media Store

The age profile of Hastings has the youngest profile within the County of East Sussex with almost a quarter of the population below the age of 19. The town is also the most deprived in the country with Central St Leonards (where the student halls of residence are located) scoring 58.14 within the Indices of Multiple Deprivation and with 46% of children in the ward affected by income deprivation (Hastings Borough Council 2012a). Approximately 20% of the population claim out-of-work benefits which rise to 34% in the ward of Central St Leonards and around a third of households have an income identity of less than 60% of the national income (ibid).

Using Hastings as a case study, my thesis sets the familiar concept of student identities within a substantially new social and geographical context. In generating wider access to higher education, government intention was to extend the national skills levels, develop knowledge based economies and encourage economic competitiveness across the regions (Orchard-Webb 2012). In 2001 the neoliberal agenda of the 'New' Labour Government through the quango of the South East England Development Agency set up the Hastings and Bexhill Task Force charged with leading on the regeneration of the neighbouring towns (SEEDA 2001). Among the five key targets of the Task Force Plan, Initiative Three was to develop Higher Education Centres for Excellence in Hastings (ibid) citing the University of Brighton as a partner.

The University of Brighton in Hastings in 2015 comprises a small campus of three buildings nestled within Havelock Road and the regeneration area of the Priory Square development in the town centre (see Fig 1.3), a few hundred metres from the main line rail station. Students in halls of residence have a 15 minute seafront walk to the main campus (see Fig 1.4). The campus intake in 2014-15 hosted 681 students, approximately 60% of which were local. The university offers a range of joint honours degrees and includes broad genres of social science, digital and broadcast media, education, health, biology, business, mathematics, and computing.



Figure 1.3: Images of the Hastings Campus buildings
Source: Google

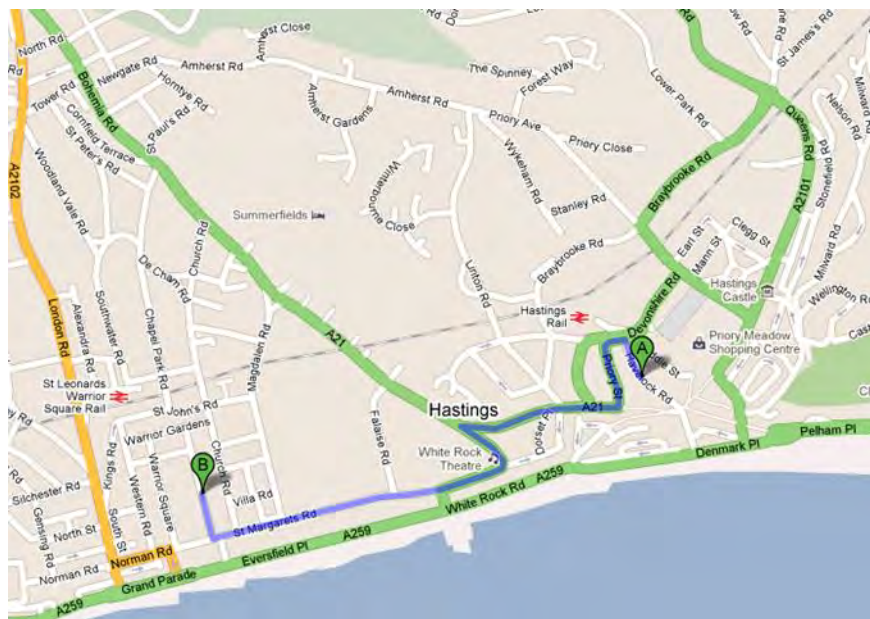


Figure 1.4: Map of University of Brighton in Hastings (A) and Warrior Square Gardens (B)
Source: Google

The University engaged its support for the education led regeneration in Hastings, with Vice Chancellor Professor Crampton interviewed by the Times Higher education in 2014 in which he stated,

‘...the project was a “brave approach” to regeneration. “A lot of others may think that one of the first things you have to do is create business space or a science park,” ...“This was taking a rather radical view where education was at the heart of the whole initiative. That was quite innovative.”

The university did not stop at higher education. In 2011, two new academy secondary schools opened with the university as lead sponsor. Earlier this year, three local primary schools joined the Academy Trust and three more are expected to join by the end of the year.

[Professor Crampton added] that the university has always had good links with the local further education colleges. *“Here is a town of about 100,000 where the university has really brought together education from primary school right through to secondary, sixth form and vocational or higher education.”* This provides a “road map” for children to progress right the way through the education system, he argued.’

Else 2014: www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/news/regeneration-through-education-in-hastings/2011561.article

I follow Taylor’s (2010) framework to examine the limitations and shape of [student] identity in relation to place [Hastings]; through an investigation of the influences of student construction and formation of identities in this new space of higher education, how home-based student identities are similar or different to migrant students, and what effect these have, if any, on the formation of identity and their impact on place.

Taylor (2010) takes place as a place of residence to enable the examination of narratives that position the self and to explore the juncture of multiple identities such as national identity, social class and gender. I use the approach to discover the intersectionality of student identities and cultural capital in relation to place; home, university and the town of Hastings.

More specifically my research focuses on exploration of student identity formation with a diverse group of students (not exclusively the realm of young students below the age of 25) but where the accumulation of capital serves as a theoretical outline (Bourdieu, 1984, Thomas, 2002, Jamieson et al, 2009). The concepts of identity and place further extend the recent research of Hopkins (2010) and Horschelmann and van Blerk (2012) who identify young peoples' interaction with place, lifecourse, intergenerationality and the intersections of these points and more specifically student oriented advances the work of Holdsworth (2006, 2009), Chow and Healey (2008), Hubbard (2009), Smith (2009) and Holton (2013). It is timely to re-value student identities within this changing policy context of wider university provision from which my research questions emerge, using Hastings as a case study.

1.2 Research questions

The research aims to explain the recent social experiment that is the expanding provision of higher education, an attempt, in a long round of such experiments by various governments to increase participation and strengthen the economy with skilled graduates as 'unravelling' by Garratt and Forrester (2012) and Chitty (2009). Against this backdrop, I look at what influenced the construction and formation of student identities in a new university town and thereby build on the work of

Holdsworth (2006, 2009) and Holton (2013) exploring the student experience. Further, the investigation aims to identify the similarities and differences of home-based and migrant, post-18 student identities, examining the emergence of student 'life courses', spaces and relevant experiences in Hastings – a town that was at an early development stage of identification as a place catering for students. Holdsworth (2009) considered the different experiences of students who migrated to university and those who chose to remain at home whilst studying but this study was narrowed to the first time away from home experience of eighteen year old students in larger university settings. My thesis opens the debate to include mature students and students from a variety of ethnic, and especially social backgrounds, in a small seaside town with a new university and considers the impact of space and place on student identities within this setting. My research will follow up the implications of New Labour's expanding higher education policy, considered a form of social engineering, with unforeseen consequences, particularly with regard to the crafting of new kinds of student identities and place-making that has arisen in the social and geographical context of Hastings. These aims are explored through the following research questions:

- 1. What influences student construction and formation of identities in new spaces of higher education?**
- 2. Does student origin affect response to place identity?**
- 3. How are spaces of higher education remade in the process of student identity formation?**

These research questions are extended below through the conceptual framework of identity, cultural capital and place.

1.2.1 Identity

Research question 1: What influences student construction and formation of identities in new spaces of higher education?

Cultural theorists describe identity as a ‘sense of oneself’ with an interest in how this sense mediates a person’s own behaviour (Hollands et al 1998) and how identity is socially produced (Taylor 2010). Identity is always socially related (Woodward 2002) set between relationships of the self and others. Similar to Giddens (1991, 2013) my research investigates the role students themselves identify in actively shaping their own ‘self’ awareness of the influences around them. Further, I consider the identity of Hastings as a student town, the town’s preparedness for university students, and who has influence in ultimately shaping the student experience. This is achieved through a research questionnaire of second year students, completed by half of the cohort, and followed up by a group of self-selected students using visual representation methods to provide personal stories of identity and place. Finally, I undertook key actor interviews.

Both the policy and town context are relevant for investigating student identities, particularly when in a position of shaping new student identities, and again of even greater significance when developing student identity in Hastings without previous academic history or student experience to draw upon. The notion of students constructing identities is linked to expectation and awareness of their social and academic position in the various networks and hierarchies they encounter, all of which have relevance for their identities. The thesis considers whether and how these identities are imposed or culturally embodied (Hollands et al 1998). Further, why these identities are important (or not) to the individual, and how they are

demonstrated as reflected in their social choices, the clothes they wear, or places they use. Historically, academic focus on identity has centred upon difference,

‘Identity is about difference; it is about marking out ‘us’ and ‘them’...’

Woodward, K. 2002:viii

Significantly, in Hastings I explore the ways in which ‘them and us’ is played out in a new university context, and amongst a diverse student body that includes home students and those at different points in their life course. I consider intentions of collective identity, and a more contemporary focus displayed through students’ understanding of similarities and a desire to ‘look like a student’ - or not - dependent on place, conscious of the influences of multiple identities, the spaces occupied, and modes of dress that signify a shared belonging. Marxist theory looks at collective identities through familiarity referring to fragmented identities (Woodward 2002). The students in this study follow the theory of group identity, and I wanted to examine whether they were aware of a collective wish to belong, how loosely constructed identities might be in accommodating additional characteristics of home, family, and employment and so on. The analysis chapters will explore the social production of multiple identities and I will question how students perform particular identities in their quest for belonging or as Skelton and Valentine (1998) refer to young people acting out identities. This research considers young students’ construction of identity as explored by Chatterton and Hollands (2003) and Holdsworth (2009), focusing specifically on leaving home, difficulties of becoming a student and defining student identities such as attending lectures or developing social and cultural capital.

1.2.2 Cultural capital

Gaining social and cultural capital is fundamental to student experience. My study investigates the importance placed on ‘becoming’ a student and how identities are framed by a desire to increase cultural capital post-graduation; dress, physical appearance, intellect, or speech. For, beyond identity, my research aims to investigate how the students develop a sense of ‘self’, and how the concepts of identity and self, work together to build cultural capital and develop the student experience. In addition to developing a sense of identity and the new student experience, additional agents of habitus include the well-being and happiness, developing self-confidence, adopting student dress codes, progressive successful relationships with their chosen course and course leaders, university, and in Hastings being part of a seaside community. I will investigate how the university itself is a key agent of power in the control of many student occupied fields (Holdsworth 2006). Bourdieu used the analogy of a playing a game and in this case the university is the games-maker (Friedmann 2005).

Bourdieu (1984) used cultural capital to demonstrate social difference as he defined the hierarchy of habitus. This thesis explores the students’ ambitions to build individual cultural capital and how this gain is identified through development of new experiences (Jamieson et al 2009), through relationships with each other, and within the place of a small seaside town. Again the notion of ‘becoming’ a student through the building of social and cultural capital is important, linked to identity, gaining access to society and social networks (Holt 2008). The significance of this research and the exploration of new ‘studentscapes’ is the provision of an alternative model to Chatterton and Hollands (2003) who have focused on traditional student nightscapes in large ‘univercities’ (Garcia 2006).

Thus, developing the student experience and building capital are linked with the study of how students view their capital through an ambition to achieve a higher status in society (Friedmann 2005). The students in this study are invited to consider the importance of new skills, access to high quality equipment, improved work experience and career opportunities. Supporting this human capital the research also explores activities that build social capital through leisure opportunities, meeting new people, making new friends, maintaining existing friends and family networks, discussing both university and 'home' based activities. I provide equal emphasis to both local origin and external origin students in the construction of student identities.

Holt, D (1998) refers to students as 'consumers' of cultural capital and this research aims to demonstrate how they are also producers of capital. Leese (2010) has explored students as independent learners - a status the Hastings' student strongly identified with in their visual representation of student life and as demonstrated in the analysis chapters.

1.2.3 Cultural capital, identity and place

Research question 2: Does student origin affect response to place identity?

As discussed above, students consciously make their own individual and reflexive identity (Taylor 2010), with an awareness of 'self' which is influenced by outside factors (Giddens 1991). Holdsworth (2006) recognises the limitations of habitus seen to constrain the notion of reflexivity that becomes apparent through this research using narratives from Hastings' students. Daniels (1992) exploration of place explores the fluid boundaries of place that also frames this research of student engagement with place.

My research extends these discussions through photographic representation of individual journeys to ‘studenthood’ exploring the sometimes very disjointed transitions they take. Social and spatial mobility is a useful trajectory to explore both student habitus and the accumulation of cultural capital (Holdsworth 2006, Holton 2013). With this research question helping to explore how students use spaces at different times of the day for different purpose (possibly in opposition to the purpose it was designed for) how students consciously reflect on their identities to suit the space they are in, their location, the time of day, and what they wear to lectures, to socialise, or at home and so on. I also consider the diversity of the student body to include so called ‘non-typical’ students who have chosen to stay at home for financial, family, friends, or work reasons.

Jamieson et al. (2009) convey the importance of capital as pertinent to the ‘non-traditional’ student; human capital and professional skills required for employment; social capital such as relationships with family, new friends and new contacts, including professional contacts and participation opportunities; and identity capital recognising the added value students’ gain through their wider experiences of professional development and qualification, enjoyment of learning, improved self-confidence, personal development and overall happiness.

1.2.4 Engaging with place

Research question 3: How are spaces of higher education remade in the process of student identity formation?

My research draws on Taylor’s (2010) ideas in which identity and place are linked through the social production of space, and provides the opportunity for participants to self-identify priorities around narratives of place attachment. Identity is used as a

narrative to demonstrate fluidity and process. Again with reference to Hastings' students, the research will explore how students (re)construct their identities physically within spaces in the town centre and on the beach, and through the recognition of the capital they aim to achieve in order to belong or exert their student identity and will compare local and external origin approaches to identity through space.

There is an established body of work on student identity that has focussed on those who move away from home. As discussed earlier, this thesis extends Holdsworth's (2006, 2009) interest in this area of research and the local student experience in which she identified a lack of research aimed at the (non)mobility of students declaring when the issue is addressed the greater concern is with class and background and how this impacts upon student identity. More specifically, whether local origin students miss out, and if so where does social class play a role in this, as developed in the following chapter. The thesis considers the general assumptions of students missing out on student experience if they are local, and whether they participate in student focused activities or not.

Bourdieu's (1984) introduction to consumption lends itself to student consumption of space as students decipher and decode the non-existent student spaces outside of university provision with the intent of re-shaping the space according to the performance of their own identities (Horschelmann and van Blerk 2012). This is relevant to Hastings town centre, bars, beach areas, and even travel between home and university. This research question explores the temporal meaning of place at different points in the day, and at different times in the year, taking into account seasonal change and now university term dates, thus identifying the transiency of

space and place (Horschelmann and van Blerk 2012). Further, as a small new university campus in a town without a history of higher education it challenges the student literature of Chatterton and Hollands (2003) due to their focus on large and established university cities.

My research considers the construction and formation of student identities as witnessed through academic discourses and media representations, respectively. Set against the claim that a predominantly negative view of students is portrayed in media reports and early discussions around studentification (Smith 2008); a description of the effects that a large student population can have on an area. It is argued that an alternative positive view can be identified in new spaces of education where provision is linked to education led urban regeneration. With an absence of previous empirical data in this field the case study for this discussion is the research within Hastings and St Leonards on Sea, South East England.

1.3 Case study: Hastings, East Sussex

Hastings is a cosmopolitan seaside town in Sussex on the south coast of England, just less than two hours travel distance from London, and with a population of 90,300 – a growth of just over 5,000 between the census of 2001 and 2011 (ONS 2015). It is home to the largest fishing fleet in Europe to be launched from the beach. The development of the fishing area has undergone recent regeneration alongside the contemporary art collections housed in the new Jerwood Gallery (see Fig 1.5).

The town has two well-known histories; the famous battle of 1066 and a more recent experience shared with many English seaside towns in a loss of attraction to tourists (Fig 1.5). Beatty and Fothergill (2003) define the terminology for ‘seaside town’ as a

resort by the sea; hosting its own urban conurbation; with more than 8,000 residents. Kennell (2011) identifies the regeneration focus of Hastings through economic and social strands including a £2 million artistic performance piazza and community space. The town has been on a wider journey to regenerate its identity as ‘Famously Hastings’ (Hastings Borough Council, 2014) that began as a ‘place-making’ activity to build the ‘Hastings story’ in order to attract funding and regenerate (Orchard-Webb 2012). Part of this process was to respond to the skills and education weaknesses in the town and address the factors that fuelled the situation of ‘parallel lives’ of working and not working communities across the town (Cantle 2008).



Figure 1.5: Montage of Hastings fishing, history and tourism
Sources: Hastings BC Media Store; <http://www.saga.co.uk/>; <http://www.hastingsflag.org>;
<http://static.standard.co.uk/>

In 2001 the Indices of Multiple Deprivation demonstrated that Hastings was a town within the top 8% most deprived in the country (SEEDA 2001). In 2015, Hastings remains the most deprived area within England’s affluent South East corner with economic inactivity at 32.2% (Hastings) as opposed to 28.0 (South East) (ESIF 2015). However, the University of Brighton in Hastings has a popular and

functioning campus that has expanded from 40 students and 5 staff when it opened in 2003 to almost 700 students (2015), over 100 members of staff, and an enlarged campus with the opening of new offices within a third campus building for the academic year 2015-16.

The Hastings and Bexhill Task Force recommended that set amid a context of failure and deprivation the town should recognise the place of community activism to create change and initiate the Local Strategic Partnership (Orchard-Webb 2012, SEEDA 2001). Crucial to the model was the inclusion of 'local voice' within governance that assisted the destination to improve and regenerate 'a learning town' through education (Orchard-Webb 2012:99). Laing (2006) looked at the town's historical commitment to social mobility through the work of two famous local residents Robert Tressell (1907) and Raymond Williams (1957) identifying the intention of both to address the challenges of social experience faced by local residents with a collective resolution towards a shared transformation through education. Laing (ibid) looks to the University of Brighton in Hastings to fulfil the twenty-first century vision of the purpose of education in raising social progress in the town.

This journey is not particular to Hastings alone, although the shape and development of higher education within the town is indeed distinctive. As part of the town's place-making objective the importance of a Channel Corridor Partnership (CCP) had been identified to combine the similarities of seaside identities and economic objectives of coastal towns along the South East coast to stimulate regional enterprise and partnerships that would extend economic development. This included the new university centres based in Chatham and Folkestone (Noble and Barry 2008). In a review of the Regional Economic Strategy (RES), East Sussex County Council (2006) discussed the need for exploitation of some major strengths within the higher

education institutions that should be manipulated more directly to maximise economic development, recommending further partnership and collaboration within the business sector to provide cross cutting opportunities to meet the enterprise, innovation and creativity, and skills targets of the RES.

The following chapters discuss further the conceptual theory underpinning the research into a case study of higher education in Hastings and the policy context of neo-liberal growth and widening participation that fuelled the town's new campus. Concepts of identity, cultural capital and place are drawn on to explore the social construction of student identities within the social and cultural landscapes of Hastings, a new university town. Following Skelton and Valentine (1998), the approach focuses on students' consumption of place(s), using a visual methodology to examine every day experiences of the town's spaces of higher education, thus building on and extending current human geography research on students and student spaces (Holton 2013, Holdsworth 2009, Smith and Holt 2007, Chow and Healey 2008, and Chatterton and Hollands 2003).

The rationale of linking place and cultural capital is useful to working with students as it offers a new perspective for understanding (student) identity. Firstly, the study conceptualises student identities and the intersections between place, identity and cultural capital. Secondly it unpacks the importance that students attach upon the accumulation of cultural capital and the role of place in developing their identities. Further, it extends theoretical decisions from Bourdieu (1984) with an investigation that reaches beyond the acquirement of cultural capital achieved through education (Kingston 2001) to investigate further the student opinion of cultural capital and the case for the development of new student spaces. This approach links Bourdieu to the student literature on young people, place and identities with student mobility that

traverses the boundaries of transition (Holdsworth 2009, Chow and Healey 2008, and Chatterton and Hollands 2003). These concepts are explored in Chapter 2.

The analysis within Chapters 6-8 draws directly on the 'student voice' in Hastings in relation to place and identity. The relevance of my research follows Aitken's (2001) discussion on the lack of young people in geographical and policy research. Hopkins (2010) more recently drew upon what he sees as the increasingly popular interest in the subject of the education of young people. He states, whilst attention is given to young people (identified broadly between the ages of 16-25) their voices are still often parodied and altered. His approach is useful in that he intersects identity with young people and place. My thesis extends this debate through a framework that reflects the exploration of connection to place, in a town without history of higher education and where students have directly and indirectly shaped their own student experience.

2.0 Setting out the debate: student identities in the context of widening participation

2.1 Introduction

The aims of the research examine how students shape their identities using space and place and how their student experience informs these identities. Student access to higher education and reasons for selecting the University of Brighton in Hastings (a new, small seaside campus) came up as themes for consideration. Interrogating the current literature provided opportunity to consider the issues that arise through the concepts of place and access. This chapter includes current higher education policy debates within the context of the literature of student geographies to ensure political relevance, which is extended in Chapter 3.

The focus of the following literature review will investigate the influences of student construction and formation of identities in new spaces of higher education and how home based student identities are presented through similarity or difference, against the backdrop of living at home or moving away to university. The chapter uses theoretical frameworks that broadly consider student identity through a range of approaches to identity that consider in turn class and elitism, exclusion and place, and building student identity. These methods generate insight to perceived social restrictions of access at application stage, course level, and wider notions of belonging that university students themselves identify as important (Thomas 2012). Further, the themes reveal the student perceptions of student life in Hastings from a particular cohort perspective with attention to entering university, developing a sense of belonging and the position of place in these debates.

This overview of student literature informs the investigation of the influences on student construction and formation of identities in new spaces of higher education. There are three areas that have informed the methodology and underpinned the research questions of the thesis as explored through the following sections: Marxist approaches that draw on historical debates around widening participation that began fifty years ago and conclude with current concerns to increase student enrolment; how power and exclusion are inextricably linked within current higher education practice; and how building cultural capital is desirable, although different, at government and individual student level. Whilst respecting leading research in the field of student experience and place, this research is critical of Holdsworth (2006, 2009) and Chatterton (1999, 2010) who use examples of established larger universities and thus here provides the opportunity to build on this work to focus on student experience in both a smaller and less established setting.

Section 2.2 draws on approaches that highlight the role of social class in shaping the process of access to higher education in general terms. This view considers how class shapes higher education in a material sense related to affordability and how the system is economically determined. The shape of higher education also impacts on students' belonging or not belonging. Further, student access to higher education is 'structured' through class as particular trajectories can be seen to steer some students away from elite establishments towards new spaces of higher education provision.

This leads into Section 2.3 where the spatiality of power is used to investigate students' restriction and exclusion to space. The dynamics of space as relative to power are considered through the relationship of social interaction that creates the dynamics of space (McGregor 2004). The material influence of spatial power is

constructed through agency influence (ibid) as pertinent to university spaces and witnessed by students in access to university spaces. However the research will determine how space is fluid as it interacts with social relations and time.

The notion of changing access to spaces of higher education is explored through the intersectionality of class, race, and gender in Section 2.4 and extended further in Section 2.5 with a consolidation of student experience debates and the importance of identity, capital and place within the argument of this research. Finally, the chapter concludes with a framework of the three theoretical concepts that crucially underpin student identity formation in new spaces of higher education through place, identity and cultural capital.

2.2 Accessing higher education: class and the negotiation of student identities

In 2014 the then Coalition Government policy stated:

‘We want the student population in higher education to better reflect the rich diversity of the general population in England. This means creating a system which delivers equality of opportunity and fairness and in which a person’s age, ethnicity, gender, disability and/or social background present no barriers to them accessing and succeeding in higher education and beyond.’

DfBIS2014:8

This statement introduces a range of backgrounds and identities that make up the student population as the Government sought to promote social mobility (ibid) and therefore reduce barriers to prevent access according to student social profiles. This is an approach that the Labour Party grappled with, but never fully realised in the 1960s, where the foundation of new universities such as the University of Sussex came about to counter elitism (McGregor 2004).

‘By linking wider access to higher education to interventionist economic and industrial planning, the Government aimed to confront both their social and economic agenda. Between 1961-2 and 1967-8 student numbers (undergraduate and post graduate) grew from 113,143 to 200,121... This was partly achieved by growth of the civic universities and when a number of the former Colleges of Advanced Technology (CATS) including Battersea (University of Surrey), Aston, Loughborough, Brunel, Salford and Northampton (City) became universities. The establishment of the 7 new universities of Sussex, York, Canterbury, Lancaster, East Anglia, Essex and Warwick was the most visible sign of growth and became a symbol of 1960s public sector expenditure. They were established as a challenge to the elitism of the civics and the ancient universities, to better prepare students for the world of work and break down barriers between disciplines, especially between arts and science.’

Rose et al 2010:6

Radice (2013) sets the context for higher education within a neoliberal world with reference to the ambitions of the 1960s and 1970s:

‘Within the UK public sector, the form taken by neoliberalism has been the “new public management” (NPM), or “new managerialism”. This is a particular combination of Stalinist hierarchical control and the so-called free market, in which the values, structures and processes of private sector management are imposed upon the public sector; key elements include a shift from professional to executive power, a focus on ‘performance’ as measured by quantitative targets, and the widespread use of financial incentives. Meanwhile, the purpose of the university has changed from the education of the elites in business, politics, culture and the professions to the provision of marketable skills and research outputs to the ‘knowledge economy’.... these developments first surfaced in modern form in Britain in 1970, following the Warwick University ...student occupation of the Registry had revealed the systematic maintenance of secret files on politically-suspect students and staff, and subsequent investigations revealed that Warwick had from the start

been established as a ‘business university’: its overall direction was subordinated to the needs and purposes of a regional and national business elite...’

Radice 2013:408

Rather than widen access to university as had been expected through the rapid growth of the new 1960s universities (Garrett and Forrester 2012), it became a period that saw global changes and power shifts which impacted in less independent control of universities and the move towards universities meeting targets within industry and the economy (Radice 2013) that is the subject of Chapter 3.

It can be argued that access to higher education linked to elitism is entrenched back to medieval times and despite successive attempts by various political parties the gap has yet to be narrowed further (Garrett and Forrester 2012). Following the notion of elitism in the higher education system, according to Milburn (2012), top placed higher education institutions select from the wealthiest 20% of society and those applicants from lower social class backgrounds (the lower 40%) are twenty-two times less likely to secure places at the most selective universities than peers who have attended public school. Further, a greater number of successful entries to Oxbridge are recorded by applicants from one single private college and four private schools than the collective success of two thousand state institutions (Sutton Trust 2011).

As discussed, widening access to higher education is not new policy, the 1980s Conservative Government had placed importance upon the role universities contributed to the economy (Garratt and Forrester 2012). Under this Thatcher late-capitalist administration a tiered system of education had emerged to compete in global markets to recognise a stronger economy and a need for vocational scientific

and technological skills (ibid). So began a recognition that placed students at the heart of this expansion and the recognition that cultural capital would be needed along with a degree level qualification as more students graduate at a time of less job creation.

Post World War 2, the Prime Minister Harold Wilson had been developing the Labour Government's ambition to develop a skilled workforce that could respond to the need to economically restore the country, with a commitment to socialism and access. He worked closely with universities prior to delivering his famous 'White Heat' speech that recognised the need for the 'white heat' in a 'scientific revolution' (Francis 2013). His approach was much ridiculed in the press (see Figure 2.1 below).



Figure 2.1: Vicky, cartoon showing Harold Wilson, Aneurin Bevan, Michael Foot, Ian Mikardo attacking Herbert Morrison, Clement Attlee and Hugh Gaitskell (July 1951)
Source: www.spartacus-educational.com/

The Conservative Government developed and extended the pledge for widening participation during the 1980s with the aim of accessing those under-represented in higher education from marginalised, lower social class communities. The Dearing

Report (of 1996) was commissioned as the largest overview of higher education to demonstrate the success of expansion, and notably recommend the introduction of student loans to sustain the growth, the findings of which were utilised by the incoming Labour Government the following year.

The foundations of corporate social policies underpinned the Labour Government approach to higher education and were maintained through Cameron's 'Big Society' under the Coalition Government (2010-2015). However, as Garratt and Forrester point out, there remains a lack of empirical research to demonstrate the effectiveness of increased vocational degrees (2012:119).

Skeggs (1999) provides a consideration of access with references to entry and restrictions to space associated with leisure spaces, set within a feminist framework.

‘An understanding of entry and restrictions on space is absolutely central to understanding how and why certain places can and cannot be used...’

Skeggs 1999:213

The reference can be re-phrased around notions of generic entitlement to space, in this case the space of higher education. In identifying class Skeggs (1997) uses Bourdieu to consider social space within the layered composition of global space in order to determine how class is perceived according to an accumulation of wealth. More specifically how much capital a person owns and what it consists of that Skeggs has applied further in terms of access to social capital and negotiation of position (referenced in Flemmen 2013:330). Flemmen (ibid) identifies a lack of reference to economic capital and is critical of Skeggs' focus on discrimination and misrepresentation. The notion of inequitable access is pertinent to higher education

students in this debate as social class is constructed through access to cultural capital and the building of relevant identities.

Within a geographical political setting and the massification of higher education (Garrett and Forrester 2012) the media focus on difference rather than similarities of young people (in this case students and non-students) again further exacerbates the lack of interest or engagement from lower economic groups with higher education. Elton-Chalcraft (2009) discusses the many reasons for prejudice between groups which arise out of rivalry for the same resources (in this case competition for jobs or a place in education) resulting in 'out' group hostility. These serve to discourage positive and harmonious neighbourhood identities and reduce applications from some aspects of lower income and minority ethnic communities who understandably, in some cases given the media representations, view the world of higher education as different from their own (Connor et al 2004).

It is appropriate to consider who participates in higher education and the journeys students have taken towards this aim. For, changing social and economic conditions have given rise to new university student experiences (Holdsworth 2005), as new ways of delivering higher education are promoted by central government. The construction and formation of new student identities in the context of the new provision of higher education, connected to wider processes of local urban regeneration is under researched (Holton 2013, Chow and Healey 2008). Chow and Healey (2008) refer to the little attention given to students moving away from home to begin their university life. Whilst Holton (2013) determines what is missing from current research is how students use space on a daily basis and how the spaces they use become popular or not. These areas are considered within this research.

More explicitly, the effects of home-based students on wider student identities are explored as this is a more recent area of research (see Holdsworth 2006, 2009, Chow and Healy 2008, Hinton 2011, Holton 2013, Holton and Riley 2013, 2014). The discussion also examines the connection between higher education and further education to explore the idea of new 'student life courses' and 'student experiences' in post-18 education; thereby building upon recent critical work around more specifically student identities (Holdsworth 2009) and contributing to the gap that is the local student experience, combined with student stories from white, lower socio-economic women who return to study after having children (Wainwright and Marandet 2010) and whose experiences are classed as 'invisible' by Marandet and Wainwright (2009). For this thesis these approaches are considered against the context of power and exclusion related to student access in new spaces of higher education.

The research of Middlehurst and Fieldman (2011) explores the latest trends and responses made by newer universities to address issues of access considering the following four approaches to university provision in a new location: 1) The need to identify gaps in the market offered by universities 2) The definition of new geographical locations 3) The identification of alternative delivery models and 4) The recognition of the university offer relevant to the community in which it is situated. These approaches help to break down access barriers, (as identifiable in Hastings and demonstrated later in this thesis). Broader government proposals and widening participation methods are discernible (Lewis 2002), particularly in relation to the recruitment of undergraduate students from lower social class and minority groups that have significantly increased over the last fifteen years (DfBIS 2014, 2009, Browne 2010, Thomas 2002).

Local economies constantly evolve and change within the national and global picture and since the 1980's student transitions at 18 years of age have been a contributing factor to the debates, with even more young people following a path of continued study, many into higher education (Green and White 2008). These groups have followed complex identity pathways particularly from lower socio-economic backgrounds whose access negotiations have reflected those communities previously under represented at universities and are therefore considered to be non-traditional students (Holton 2013, Harvey 2004, 2009). New spaces of higher education, in non-conventional towns and settings such as Stockton (Cross and Pickering 2008), Falmouth, Chatham, (and Hastings), have been developed as models for where these barriers have been reduced (DIUS 2008). Although according to Browne (2010), the aims of widening participation and fair access have still not been achieved and the case of Hastings' students demonstrates many difficulties still witnessed in gaining access to higher education, particularly from the less traditional student in a new higher education institution.

As seen above, Skeggs (1997) is concerned with inequality and social differentiation that according to Bourdieu involves fields of capital that include material gain and proficiency to invest capital to significant advantage (Flemmen 2013). The notion of widening participation here is framed by Bourdieu's (1984) definition of 'social space' as the metaphorical space that has different forms of capital to which, in this case the student, has access. Bourdieu (ibid) demonstrates that movement in and out of spaces requires portable capital which often changes and indeed increases in value subject to the space it is within. Further, Skeggs argues:

‘Some groups have more power than others to enter into negotiation’

Skeggs 1999: 214

Therefore groups learn where feels ‘safe’ to negotiate in terms of place and where they feel ‘in’ or ‘out’ of place. Widening participation has sought to break down barriers to higher education institutions so that students do not feel ‘out of place’, although Thomas (2012) has identified the need to consider more specific attention to institutional habitus to encourage a sense of belonging. Cresswell (2009) refers to the concept of place and place-making in particular as an impediment on individuals making their own meaning. He questions the role of those in power to influence and bring about place change and the notion of belonging as ‘in’ or ‘out’ of place (ibid).

Historically, some groups did not enter places engaged with learning and teaching beyond eighteen and traditionally even younger at fourteen or sixteen (the legal age for school leavers since 1972) (Sheldon 2008). Archer (2005) questions the ways social class and higher education are framed by researchers as positionality will impact upon the way the research is conducted, questions framed and findings represented,

‘Thus the way in which social class is understood within research on higher education and widening participation is grounded within the researcher’s views about the structure of society.’

Archer 2005: 6

2.3 Approaches to the construction of identities

In addition to Archer’s perspective above, she discusses a Marxist approach that draws attention to inequality of access in an education system due to the nature of a capitalist society that operates a ruling class as decision makers, through economic

indicators that display power and control (Archer 2005). The alienation from education is true for those students from lower income backgrounds and minority groups, the so called non-traditional student, where despite targeted new centres of learning and approaches to increase participation, considerations are required related to space and entitlement negotiations on a daily basis, in all wider aspects of life, including education, and employment (Chatterton and Hollands 2003, White and Cunneen 2006). There are notions of belonging entwined within these negotiations to enter and occupy spaces for example shops, health clinics and educational spaces (White and Cunneen 2006).

Holley (2009) investigates a framework around socialisation relevant to Chatterton's (1999) work on traditional, white middle or upper class, students who have clear expectations of shaping their student identity, often communicated pre-university by peers, siblings and parents. These students join a new community with pre-existing ideas of how they will position themselves and construct their social identity. This is underpinned further by Holley (2009) in reference to social strategies to address themes of belonging and investment. From this middle class position on how these students perform their identities predetermines their student experience and confirms their class position. Postmodernism introduces the aspect of lived experiences as indistinguishable from identity when interacting with class inequalities through ethnicity or gender, suggesting that identity and commonalities are further concepts for inclusion (Archer et al 2005 after Williamson 1981). Further, Taylor (2010) reminds us to consider the accumulation of meaning derived through people and society for new opinions, in the construction of thought about place [here taken as a new space of higher education], cannot fail to be influenced by older notions.

This research considers students from a variety of backgrounds (economic class, ethnicity and gender) and their approaches to developing individual identity through place and acquisition of cultural capital. The hierarchies of entry to space fuel processes of discrimination and form exclusive ownership of spaces, where unfortunately the lower social classes and other disadvantaged groups such as Black and minority ethnic groups suffer, an often hidden, exclusion (Phillips 1998). Skeggs (1999) identifies the requisite for researchers to consider that entitlement to space is denied to some groups.

For student identity the personal reference point for 'belonging' to date has been that of the traditional student (Thomas 2012). However, with the increase of students from a wider variety of backgrounds, socio-economic, ethnicity, age, gender, carers, and so on, it should be considered from which starting point students see themselves. For these so-called non-traditional students such labelling can fuel the 'lower status' when internalised that can lead to lower expectations (Thomas 2002, Wainwright and Marandet 2010). Holton (2013) discusses the interchangeable nature of student imagery as non-traditional students attempt to fit the student mould and are required to make decisions for example about where, when and who they socialise with, students, of which backgrounds, similar economic status or ethnicity and so on. In relation to widening participation that,

'...aims to be inclusive of students, irrespective of social class, ethnicity, age and gender, non-traditional students are expected to make drastic changes to their identity and values in order to conform or 'fit in' amongst a largely traditional cohort.'

Holton 2013:34

This concept of fitting in is again transferable for students to whom much of the belonging or not belonging has previously been discussed, and in relation to access to higher education, whether they visualise themselves as a prospective university student. However, this should not assume that all students are not required to position themselves within a student and academic hierarchy. For on arrival at university, as part of their identity creation, students will do this, just as children are used to positioning themselves within the pecking order from a very young age (Elton-Chalcraft, 2009); moreover, this identity is often subconsciously constructed around race and class,

‘...that so often black children in white societies feel they have to name the colour of their outward appearance to show they have pigeonholed themselves in the pecking order...creating their own identity.’

Elton-Chalcraft 2009:66

Archer (2008) explores not only the positioning of self but establishes the experiences of being positioned, beyond race, social class and gender to include experience and performance and the notion of becoming or ‘unbecoming’. The approach adapted for in this case students, entering higher education who aspire to the ‘becoming’, a student, and yet with the need to traverse the challenges of ‘unbecoming’, to shed their pre-student image to construct their student identity. In this identity-building students have recognition that the pathway will not necessarily be a smooth one and that processes along the way to shaping their identity have the potential for interruption (Archer 2008). This concept of becoming is extended further into belonging within the context of higher education by Thomas (2012) who investigates the relevance to student engagement and student retention. Feelings of belonging is not a new concept and was explored through popular culture in the works of Alan

Sillitoe who was 'angry' in the 1950s about the limitations of Oxbridge and the failings for communities from lower economic backgrounds (Sierz 2010) or the 1980s play made into a film 'Educating Rita' where Willy Russell explored class difference through an Open University student and university lecturer. Whereas Massey explored the notion of power geometry as a method of positioning individuals and groups within social networks of time and space in place (Massey 1994, Callard 2011).

Student choice of place of university is also contested through class as discussed earlier in Oxbridge or Russell Group admissions where over 48% of pupils from independent schools were selected and only 18% from state schools (Sutton Trust 2011). The background of students from wealthier families, with experience of higher education, and years of preparation benefits the student access to the 'right' highly selective institutions, and provides a notion of belonging even before entry. Further, this early sense of belonging and prior experience of university through family connections supports student retention (Thomas 2012). Wider choice of the 'best fit' university in terms of career aspirations and interest relevance will also influence retention of students (ibid). As discussed by Thomas (2002), students consider a range of factors when making applications from 'lifestyle' large city centre campus to 'family' small town university. What the 'new' offer is for the Hastings' student is evolving and for discussion within this research in relation to the University of Brighton in Hastings.

Class and identity once students have registered at university has been explored by Chatterton (2009) who recognises that student identities change between years one to three as students explore their identities and build their own experiences (also see

Holton 2013). Students have been found to participate in an early socialisation phase, most notably 'Freshers' that defines an initiation period where they explore their sense of belonging and discover how to enrol for the 'in' club and identify as a member of the student community. Students gradually seek to engage a more individualised identity which involves trying new social spaces (Chatterton 2009). This of course can be different for so called non-traditional students who may live at home, with existing well developed local networks and outside interests (Chatterton 2009, Chatterton and Hollands 2003) on which to build their student identity. The research considers the differences of students in relation to identity and capital between local and non-local perspectives.

2.4 Power and exclusion within university spaces

Most of Chatterton's work is framed by the identity of the traditional 'move away from home' student experience based on the students from wealthier backgrounds in the city of Bristol (Chatterton 2009, Chatterton and Hollands 2003). The notion of a divided city is explored through spaces which students inhabit. It was found that this group of students is clearly identifiable through the use of specific, 'exclusive' areas of the city. The students have disposable incomes and time to distort the boundaries between study and socialisation, night and day, weekends and weekdays. This makes them lucrative to local businesses that formed strategies to directly engage with them (ibid). However the successful businesses were limited to a few elite businesses, further carving up the city spaces. The owners of pubs and clubs learnt to recognise how these students liked to spend their leisure time and created spaces to attract students as early as 'Fresher's Week' and to retain their patronage. Strategies which supported these successes included aggressive marketing, décor and comfortable

furniture, music and themed nights on particular days of the week (ibid). These strategies are designed to encourage the spaces as positive areas within which to socialise and form friendships. Further, the employment of students and graduates in the roles of bar staff, promoters and DJ's were arranged to maximise and retain audiences to ensure the student 'feel' remained contemporary year on year (Chatterton, 2009). In this area of the city the students socialised around a drinking culture without causing trouble, making them desirable clientele (Chatterton and Hollands, 2003). However, these exclusive spaces can marginalise the local young people and create tensions and oppositions between student and non-student communities. A wealthy set of students made homes in the area more desirable and house prices increased, so marginalising local communities (see Hubbard, 2009; Smith, 2009 for wider discussion on studentification). Whilst the town and gown debate of elite universities is ancient in the discussion of city landscapes, these more recent examples link gentrification and studentification to some student neighbourhoods for further discussion throughout the thesis.

Chatterton (1999) describes the social areas of the city as liminal spaces where students play out and experiment the development of their identities. The spaces are created by a 'time-space' framework that builds the student popular culture infrastructure as determined by the places they access during an academic period (Chatterton 1999:119). As accessible areas these spaces operate as places for association necessary determined by the students thereby developing the successful belonging students are seeking. They create safe spaces for students to mix with similar types although:

‘Leaving home is not much of a learning experience if the only people you encounter are people from similar social and economic backgrounds.’

Chatterton, 2003:131

Chatterton (ibid) frames this focus on student ‘mini-communities’ with reference to divided cities with students constructing one of the divisions. Communication is a contemporary concern in relation to these accessible spaces and how to identify where to go has changed, with young people frequently using non-verbal forms of communication (Mesch 2009); such as online technology with email, texts, chatrooms, Snapchat, Whatsapp, Twitter, and Facebook through mobile phone technology. This is changing the language, grammar and spelling used by students and has had the effect of blurring boundaries of authority breaking down the more formal codes of interaction (ibid). This evolving language can be used to demonstrate wider divisions and hierarchy as framed by Bourdieu’s theory (2001) that age can cause significant conflict, for these are young, ‘hedonistic, trendy students (Chatterton 1999).

Space is crucial to class formation and the Bristol example of Chatterton’s (1999) research demonstrates how middle-upper class students are defining space within the city for their exclusive use, through accommodation, bars, and events they organise for their own groups, operating exclusive spaces. Psychoanalytical approaches to space are framed succinctly within Sibley’s (2001) concept of exclusion, who has the ‘power’ to enter spaces and negotiate or cross the ‘boundaries’ of space. This poststructuralist perspective sees groups that lead a monopoly of space such as the wealthy, traditional students in Bristol who have developed smart neighbourhoods

and marginalised the local communities, displacing them from the student neighbourhoods.

Various widening participation policies have been implemented to grow numbers of students from new communities (low economic background, mature, Black and minority ethnic and so on) that over time will counteract segregation within communities. Through these initiatives the intention is for barriers to be reduced in higher education spaces with strategies designed to widen access to higher education and thereby access to spaces previously not entered by the majority of marginalised communities (DfBIS 2014, 2011b, 2010). Whilst the number of students entering higher education has grown there is a lack of evidence to demonstrate any change in class boundaries. As Chatterton (1999) describes the model of an overall student is still determined by the so called traditional student; young, wealthy, moves away from home.

Disadvantaged student groups from non-traditional backgrounds have greater experience of discrimination of places loaded with values and restrictions in day to day life and have accepted exclusion from certain spaces (Sibley 2003). This can be day to day positioning through access to health care or education. Students from non-traditional backgrounds have less experience than those from traditional families provided with experience of siblings or parental engagement with higher education degrees. Lack of involvement with such processes and systems of governmental structure perform as barriers and challenges to access spaces of higher education from the process of initial engagement through to registration (Thomas 2002). Archer reflects upon universities as the:

‘...field which despite undergoing substantial shifts in recent times, remains somewhat ‘fixed’ in terms of patterns of dominant power relations. Thus, those who do not fit or pass easily within this (white, middle class) space may be impelled to perform their identities otherwise, in an attempt to ‘break in’ and ‘be accepted’.

Archer 2008:394

A certain amount of knowledge can be required by groups to access spaces of privilege such as; who you know, what you wear, where and how to gain access, in both a physical and a metaphorical sense (Thomas 2002, Sibley 1995). Although it will frequently be the disadvantaged groups that meet with resistance, that are not equipped to approach these spaces, or that simply have not learnt the rules of the game to entry, or membership, often through lack of knowledge, experience or opportunity.

Ainley (2008) describes the space of higher education as a privileged site of communicative action which provides independent communicational space. Additionally, it is suggested that universities are places where staff and students co-construct and collude to consolidate institutional identities (ibid). Ainley (2008) continues to challenge some of these notions further, with recognition that spaces of higher education act as privileged sites, identifying the notion of staff and students in some way colluding to consolidate institutional identities thereby fuelling hierarchical academic rivalry and further restricting participation.

Consideration has been widely publicised around issues of planning permission for building conversion and extension, new campus development, community and business relations, student fees, numbers of applications, or the relationship of town youth and university students - whether study or leisure contexts - and for the concern

of this research as explored in subsequent chapters, the impact upon student identities.

2.5 Class intersectionality with race and gender

In examination of power and inclusion the survey undertaken by Jamieson et al (2009) established some interesting conclusions particularly connected to ethnicity and the benefits of higher education within the context of the following three areas of capital (human, social and identity). Overall less capital benefits were identified from white students, with increased benefits reported by Black and Asian students (ibid). With reference to this sample group of so called non-traditional students it was assumed that the importance of a professional identity thereby leading to a professional qualification was tied to aspirations for higher education linked with desire for employment (Jamieson et al 2009). Whilst, it should be recognised that all students have hopes, aspirations and expectations but the identities of this non-traditional group will be different to those for example of the young, traditional, 'Sloane Ranger' students (Chatterton, 1999). However, whilst the Black and Asian students demonstrated greater benefits within the capital triangle including generic skills, the research reflects two contrasting power related aspects: the differences in expectations and motivation of this group of students, and the institutional racism existing within statutory agencies as identified by Lord Macpherson (1999) within the Stephen Lawrence enquiry that brought about significant changes to the Race Relations Amendment Act in 2000. Further, it raises the question for whether universities should increase their commitment to reducing marginalisation particularly to assist graduates into employment given the identified barriers in their post student career.

Additionally, Taylor (2010:46-47) questions the role of gender as biological and social constructs, with essence in identity. She references the positioning of 'men and women's talk and the associated stereotypes used in 'performing gender'. Grant and Sleeter (1986) researched various representations of class, race and gender and consider how authors oversimplify analysis through a concentration of only two aspects say, class and gender, or class and race, that perpetuates stereotyping without the full picture. They point out that within a higher education context Black and minority students are more likely to experience oppression based on skin colour as well as class and that of course everyone should be considered in terms of all three status groups (ibid). A Black female student of lower economic class will have different viewpoints or requirements in her application to university than an Asian male student of middle class background. Additionally, the positionality of researchers will affect the viewpoint and representation of students further (discussed in Chapter 5). It is important to reflect upon terminology within discussions of positionality (Arber 2010) because the nature of such comparison in itself assumes a central point, for the purpose of this study most usually, the traditional student (Holton 2013). If scholars' impacts and expectations from particular perspectives is fuelling the various hierarchical and exclusive practices it wishes not to.

As a route in to this discussion, Sibley refers to stereotyped groupings in relation to place as 'in' or 'out' of place (1995:19). He is critical of a structure that recognises grouping from a reference point of male, white, able bodied and mentally well (ibid). Therefore contextualising 'otherness'. Vanderbeck and Dunkley discuss diverse methods of inclusivity (2004), caution is required not to overcompensate for exclusion, through positive inclusion which may produce artificial consequences. Again, Sibley refers to the 'generalised other' and extends this from people to place

and thing, built around 'images of difference' (1995). Twenty years on, anti-racist theory promotes a starting point of similarity, before identifying difference, and is the position taken within this thesis considering how students construct their identities.

2.6 Constructing student identity through capital and place

Analysis of class, space and power in the preceding sections require attention to identity when relative to students creating new identities in higher education. Various theoretical frameworks shape discourses on student identities, first, and for the point of entry here - Bourdieu (1984, 1989) as discussed previously in relation to capital and hierarchical identities for both geographies of location, and access through which students gain entry to begin constructing their academic identity. Reid et al. (2008) assert the importance of ambition surrounding professional identities, claiming that a student's own approach to learning is based on their professional expectations. Finally, Jamieson et al. (2009) link capital with identity suggesting students themselves recognise the added value of the wider student experience.

Student identities are complex, as human identities are complex, whereby individual identities are created and hierarchies are negotiated in everyday life (Hopkins 2010). Identities are transitional (ibid) and interchangeable according to place, group and setting and people adopt certain profiles according to location (Thomas 2002, Taylor 2010). In citing Proshanky et al (1983, 1995), Taylor (2010) defines access to place identity through cognitive processes of emotional state, approaches, connotations and memories. For example, in response to power and exclusion, student identities are fluid and will alter frequently as they negotiate entry to the space of learning or campus space, or socialising on campus or in the town. Students reinvent themselves as they practice different identities in adaptation of dress code and language

according to the space they occupy, or change their stature and language relevant to the company or group they are in - whether lecturer/student relationship or student/student relationship- again as relevant to their location. Students perform different roles within their identities as a student away at university, child or even parent at home, colleague at work and so on.

To examine this further the research of Thomas (2002) and Holton (2013) demonstrates that for inclusion to educational or social space students who move away to university adopt a particular student dress code, whereby on returning home for the weekend they are known revert to their local dress style (or non-student identity) to go out with friends within their home community. Thomas discusses below the changing of friendships and interests in line with altering student identities,

‘This demonstrates how students, particularly those from non-traditional backgrounds, tend to lose their friends at home as their interests and tastes change. “I went home a few weeks ago and I saw a couple of friends, people that I used to hang about with. And we went out and I had to dress differently to the way I dress. I had to put on shoes and trousers . . . I just don't do that anymore. We didn't go into one single bar, club, etc., that played any music I liked, we didn't go anywhere where the people weren't all really pretentious, and at not one point did any of them show any interest in what I was doing. They've made their own little clique, and I'm not part of it anymore because I've dared to be different and move away. So I don't really fit in anymore.”

Thomas 2002:436

Thomas uses this example to illustrate the importance of networks when students have moved away to university and left their own contacts behind, demonstrating the positionality of institutional habitus of the university within this role.

As suggested, multiple identities are commonly enacted. Burke and Reitzes (1991) suggest the psychology behind this is set within a framework of self-meaning that reflects multiple bases of commitment, in this case the student demonstrating a commitment to study and commitment to being a student. The student has clearly defined the meaning of purpose, to study, however this commitment is not necessarily consistent, nor does it have to be, but it does have boundaries which offer security or stability. The association of identity here produces connections with actions, people and organisations. Notions of commitment are further explored by Reid *et al.* (2008), who whilst recognising that students adopt a range of identities, identify that one of these is related to learning, stating that students shape a professional identity concerning expectations of learning. Therefore, with study aims clearly linked to employment (Jamieson et al 2009), the student creates a professional identity during their transition (Chatterton 2010, Holton 2013). With students now paying increased tuition fees their expectations for learning and teaching are continually evolving, changing and demanding (Wilkins et al 2013). Chatterton identifies the neoliberal context of graduating students, referencing Waters below:

‘Student life has been shaped by the introduction of these neoliberal regulatory environments in a number of ways. First, a brief glance at today's university careers fairs highlights the extent to which graduate career opportunities are conceptualised in terms of routes into corporate careers. The ‘big four’ international accountancy and professional services firms (PWC, KPMG, Deloitte, Ernst and Young) have a particularly dominant presence on campus. The continued deflation of university degrees means that students are continually seeking new positional advantages to maximise their employment opportunities and their status as employable transnational professionals in the increasingly aggressive and saturated corporate job market (Waters, 2009).’

Chatterton 2010:512

Jamieson et al. (2009) have focused the use of identity theory to understand student identities around a triangular model related to capital pertinent to the 'non-traditional' student that reflects the identity of many Hastings' students. The triangle contains human, social and identity capital placed one on each side: Human capital relates to the generic and professional skills required to lead to employment; social capital reflects positive contributions pertaining to people such as relationships with family, new friends and new contacts, including professional contacts and participation opportunities; and finally, identity capital where most emphasis within this model is placed. Contained here is recognition of the added value students' gain through their wider experiences including professional development and qualification, greater enjoyment of learning, improved self-confidence, personal development and increased overall happiness.

Social and identity capital fit with the wider and contemporary student experience that has been the consideration of differences between those students who move away from home to study and those who remain at home (Holdsworth 2009). Again, in Hastings these non-traditional students who choose to remain in their home town to study make up the majority, as in the case of Jamieson et al (2009) many of these are mature students with greater external commitments upon their time.

Further relevant research linking student identities and the formation of capital by Golde (1998) has referenced the student experience and acceptance within a (student) community gained through socialisation, placing emphasis on the wider encounters beyond their academic experience when shaping their identities. This embodies some of Bourdieu's performed capital that Holt (2008) defines as the operating vehicle to develop social capital, and as relevant to students through the outcome of mutually

beneficial networking opportunities. Holley (2009) takes another approach to discuss wider collective identities in relation to social actions that have outcomes for students, with the suggestion that these actions have implications for shaping investment in student life and developing the notion of belonging.

This conveys the formation of student communities and identities as relevant to contemporary discourses seeking to understand increasing numbers, the impacts students have upon wider communities and how some towns and cities are now prepared to cater specifically to student needs and wants (Chatterton and Hollands 2003, Smith 2008, Hubbard 2009). The focus of this research addresses some specific issues that remain under-researched such as the intersections of class, race and gender; in a new space of higher education as identified by Chatterton (2010).

Impacts on neighbourhoods, institutions and students are identified in further research of Chatterton (1999, 2001, 2009). Initially Chatterton (1999) reflects upon the range of student identities to be found, at one point contrasting a single white wealthy teenager with a Black married mature student, in order to recognise the entire range of lifestyles which exist between the two extremes. Reflecting once more on 'becoming a student', with such variable student backgrounds, the pre-student phase commences before university starts with increasing competition for university places that demonstrates how the gap year has developed credibility. Then moving to the post-student phase or graduate year(s) has also become a respected term to define the time seeking professional employment and embarking upon a career. Both of these years, before and after, crucially have now become defined by 'studenthood' (early references of this term to describe the social period of the student date back more than 40 years, Hendricks and Zimbrolt 1974). This extension of student identity lengthens

an average of three years study to five or more and now conversely can be used to contrast non-student identities.

In a globally accessed media world the traditional student representation has become stereotyped and embedded within popular definitions and measures student identities from the central 'traditional' student position. The media theorises the representation of students in print, broadcast, and more recently digital media have shaped extreme student identities. Stereotyping student images which become ingrained in public's perceptions of what it is like to live the hedonistic student lifestyle which encapsulates an individual, 'grungy', alcohol and streetwise, fashion of privileged youth culture (Valentine 2008). Again, these perceptions are framed around the traditional white middle class student who moves into the city and can deny the experience of the 'non-traditional' student.

This image does further harm in university towns separating students from non-students which can be seen as a cause for rivalry that increases the gap between the identities of students and local young people, something pertinent in new spaces of higher education and relevant to Hastings. Young people are concerned about competition for local jobs, with an increasing number of service industry positions, traditionally filled by locals, and now often filled by students who need to fund their way through higher education (Munro et al 2009, Green and White 2008). Students arrive in town and place themselves in positions formerly occupied by locals, thereby creating separate spaces in attracting other students and friends to use these spaces, often manipulated by the businesses to attract the student pound (Chatterton 1999). This creates a student impact on labour markets that can change local the work patterns for students will work longer hours in the retail and service industries,

including bars where they can socialise whilst working (Munroe et al 2009, Green and White 2008). Munro et al (2009) raise wider concerns of competition with evidence of students displacing others, for promotion or altogether out of work. The effects of students' work life are cited through the following four key areas (ibid).

Firstly, employers seem to prefer the more qualified students as local school leavers tend to have poorer examination results and core skills. Secondly, students demonstrate more willingness and flexibility, happy to accept contracts which are short term. Thirdly, students tend to demonstrate more initiative to tasks bringing more skills to a position and enhancing the roles they fulfil. Finally, Munro et al. (2009, 2012) identified the more generic and gentrifying effect students contribute in some cities through the enterprising and economic benefits they bring to a community. Most of the positive attributes tend to be overlooked by the media who largely portray negative stories based upon stereotypical social lives of students based on student identities in 'studentified' neighbourhoods and not generally acknowledging the local or non-traditional student.

Dominant media discourses of student identities have the effect of projecting the all too familiar images of students as noisy, drunken, disrespectful, anti-social, self-interested communities who do not engage with their immediate neighbourhood (Smith 2009, Hubbard 2009). It is not yet researched how these portrayals fuel student's own identity construction, although comments relevant to these stereotypes are raised as concerns by students within the findings of this research with relevance to identity and place. Students stay in an area is largely temporary over nine months of term time, although arguably not all students vacate for the summer, some remain to work or are attracted by the student city, and some remain because often landlords charge rent over the summer period (Hubbard 2009). Through media images the

student neighbourhood is associated with noise, pollution, abandoned furniture, parking difficulties and crime, for a student house is lucrative for the burglar who immediately gains access to a television and laptop in every room, rather than one or two of these items in a family home (Scott 2006). Local authorities are required to serve these densely populated areas and respond to concerns about refuse and noise pollution. There is a burden for greater resources in an area which is more expensive to regulate and at the same time brings in less revenue through council tax exemption (Smith, 2009). These factors tend to lead to an increase in insurance costs and the lowering of house prices in ‘studentified’ areas, and often force the local, traditional communities to leave. Smith (2009) considered the cause and effect of studentification upon neighbourhoods when students moved out of the community, ‘New Arrivals’ (or Asylum Seekers) replaced them in the low cost housing vacancies. Some members of the community studied then stated they had preferred the students (Smith 2008). This scenario is pertinent to where the student halls are positioned in Hastings as demonstrated in the research analysis.

2.7 Conclusion

In the context of the latest wave of higher education expansion in the United Kingdom, where new student spaces have been constructed, there is a need rethink student identities, and in particular, how these play out in this new and rapidly changing context. Through my empirical research aims within a new space of higher education it is possible to consider how students frame their own identities around their student experience, and contribute to the construction of new kinds of student spaces and places, thus building on the work of Hopkins (2010), Holdsworth (2006, 2009) and Chow and Healey (2008). Student identities are seen as being constructed

through and within everyday practices of university life in university spaces, identities are constructed in and through everyday practices, and generally, everyday spatial practices.

Holdsworth (2009) has stated that geographical mobilities are not given fair consideration within the wider debate of student experience an area explored within this thesis. She discussed local-origin students' movement between the different worlds of home and university.

Amongst other views the chapter has used Sibley's (1999) poststructuralist perspective to consider movement, and access to university spaces and place in Hastings, and the analytical strategies sought to identify how students have positioned themselves, or been positioned, to see themselves 'fitting in' to enable the provision for different perspectives of how students might engage in a new space of higher education.

As the student 'habitus' changes - and new spaces are constructed – it is timely to re-theorise student identities. This empirical research considers how students frame their own identities around aspirations, life course and relations, and contributes to the construction of new kinds of student spaces and places to extend the discussion of Holdsworth (2009), Hubbard (2009) and Smith (2009). As a place without previous history of higher education, this Hastings' case study provides the complexities of student identities and the production of complex student spaces in the context of evolving higher education policy and public discourses on the value of universities more broadly. The following chapter contextualises the policy background and current context more specifically through the concept of New Labour's widening participation strategies.

3.0 Contextualising student experience: policy shifts and the forging of new spaces of higher education

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores policy that has affected university applications and student mobilities (both social and geographical) and to reference the changes within contemporary policy objectives and recent history relevant to post-18 studies in the United Kingdom. The chapter explores the changes in policy context for higher education provision and the consequences this has had for both the shape of the provision and the student experience generally. Underpinning recent policy shifts is a tension between neoliberalism, social engineering and regional development objectives, which are suggestive of conflicting views around the purpose of higher education and the place of new universities within current policy. The trajectories of policies and the demands of higher education provision are explored in general, before moving to consider policy related to Hastings as a new campus of the University of Brighton. The chapter investigates home-based student populations, mobility in higher education, and how the latest Government driven university agendas align with businesses to develop economic responses. This has led to competitive marketing requirements between institutions as they aim to attract new student populations.

Whilst young people have remained on national agendas there remains a need for research on higher education students, their experiences, contribution and impact upon communities. This is timely with both the New Labour and Coalition Governments' expectations that 50% of 18-30 year olds enter higher education, with an increasingly heterogeneous student population and

‘...the development of flexible study options that meet the needs of students and employers.’

BIS 2014:11

The literature reflects a changing model of provision from ‘elite’ to ‘mass’ education (Chatterton 2009) and ‘taking universities to the communities’ Holdsworth (2009), and invites a nuanced analysis of how places and identities are made and remade through student practices at a time when Government policy on higher education is changing.

3.2 Competing views on what universities are ‘meant to do’

The geographical landscape of higher education is once more changing, driven by economic and social indicators. According to the Rt. Hon. Greg Clark when addressing the Higher Education Funding Council for England, higher education is,

‘A world of learning, but still, to be sure, distinct from the world of affairs swirling around it. Any earlier generation than this, our own generation, could scarcely have dreamed of the centrality of the world of learning not only to the world of affairs today, but to the way that we live now.’

Clarke: DfBIS 2015

The pattern for universities to serve a central purpose in Britain was laid out by the Conservative Government of the 1980s that had placed importance upon the roles of higher education linked to economic growth; also warning to avoid a reliance on central funding (Garratt and Forrester after DES 1985). At that time there were clear priorities for a more sustainable higher education system and the need for a skilled workers (such as engineers and technicians), that was reiterated by the Labour

Government of the 1990s. 'Ask me my three main priorities for government, and I tell you: education, education, education,' taken from Tony Blair's first leadership speech at the Labour Party Conference, Blackpool, October 1, 1996 (www.britishpoliticalspeech.org). Following their election a year later, the Labour Party was committed to developing relationships between business and education through improved individual vocational qualifications (NVQs) introduced in the 1990s and currently still valued by the present Coalition Government's belief in post-compulsory education and economic growth. To this end, degrees to produce highly skilled workers are valued, and current higher education places are uncapped, raising funds for the university and offering greater student choice (as recommended by Browne, 2010).

Universities have a history of developing and marketing their characteristics of identity which are necessary in increasingly competitive fields, and with relevance to the contemporary globalisation of higher education (Marginson 2007). Universities are increasingly required to offer enticing courses and brand images, locally, nationally and more recently globally (Brooks et al 2012, Waters 2009). They must deliver exciting stories of location, together with alumni successes to grab the attention of potential students in an aggressive marketplace (Bok 2003). Further, the universities contribute images that extend specifically to place identity with both tangible and intangible heritage (Woodward 2013): 'the dreaming spires' of Oxford; the socially-conscious city of Brighton (Hodkinson and Chatterton 2006); and Hastings and St Leonards on Sea - the focus for this research - a seaside image where a small-scale institution is well-placed to develop individual and supportive student and staff relationships.

More specifically at the spaces within the university Ainley (2008) hinted at the encouragement of staff and student ownership of the spaces they occupy, buying into the branding, as advocates for the university and thereby shaping longer term identities to secure futures. Universities such as Birkbeck (University of London) and the Open University are known to actively promote a sense of belonging and encourage membership from non-traditional students. As Shaw (2013b) debates through her online blog review of Diamond's (2011) research into universities' effectiveness there is a problem with universities communicating what they deliver and Diamond's recommendations for transparency.

Universities are required to market their position through research scores, brand recognition, student offers and so on, that have recognised roles within recruitment policies and agendas to include the increased recruitment of student intake. In publishing the White Paper (2011b) that placed 'Students at the Heat of the System' the Coalition Government stated a commitment to widening participation through increased social mobility opportunities. This Paper followed Browne's (2010) recommendations for the increase in tuition fees and the removal of the limit on recruitment numbers for a more 'Sustainable Future'. The key six principles are outlined in table 3. 1 below.

Six principles to maintain Higher Education(HE)	
Greater available investment	01
Increased student choice	02
Those with potential have fair access to HE	03
No upfront cost to student	04
Affordable repayments when working	05
Better support for part time students	06

Table 3.1 Principles outlined by Browne (2010:4)

Browne (2010) recommended that universities continue to increase recruitment of students from diverse backgrounds through fairer accessibility, outlining clearer options in their marketing, promoting wider partnerships and levelling the student opportunities between part time and full time students so no-one paid fees before graduation. When the Coalition Government implemented these policies through the White Paper of 2011 ‘Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System’ it removed the cap on numbers higher education institutions (HEIs) could recruit and enabled them to controversially almost triple the increase in student fees. Then Minister for Universities and Science, David Willetts had expected most institutions to raise fees from £3,290 to £6,000 (DfBIS 2010). However, those institutions which undertook the route of exceptional circumstances could raise fees to £9,000 per annum if signed up to the National Scholarships Programme, and undertook a responsible commitment to widen participation and improve fair access through agreements with the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) (ibid). The scheme that was introduced for the academic year 2012/2013, saw a dip of 12% in student applications (Ratcliffe 2013), particularly from mature students, and was later announced in

November 2013 to end in 2014/2015. Recruitment patterns also shifted to attract live at home students who attempted to manage the rise in fees through the reduction of living costs and access to continued employment in their home town.

In setting a competitive market over fees, the Coalition Government had set higher education institutions to contend further and rather than the anticipated average fees of £6,000 per annum, universities responded with OFFA agreements to set closer to the higher rate, for according to (Grove, 2013) the response showed universities were concerned that they would be regarded as inferior if they charged lower fees than their competitors in the market. Grove identified,

‘Among the 123 universities assessed by the Office for Fair Access, only University College Birmingham and the University of Sunderland will not levy £9,000 fees in 2015-16. About a third of universities – 44 in total – will charge £9,000 for all their courses, and a further 43 will charge between £8,800 and £9,000 Overall, average tuition fees will rise from £8,735 in 2014-15 to £8,830 in 2015-16, Offa ...statistics might be seen as confirmation of the failure of policies to curb tuition fees through the “competitive pressure” of the market. Instead, many universities have charged £9,000 or close to it, fearing that they might otherwise be viewed as second rate.’

Grove, 2013:THE 2014710.article

Drawing these updates to a conclusion Shaw (2013a) set up an online blog for *The Guardian* that provides a useful resource when considering the roles of universities in contributing to economic growth. She suggests ten ways that universities may wish to develop activity (see Table 3.2):

Ten ways to stimulate economic growth through Higher Education	
Focus on internationalising higher education	01
Ensure that soft and hard ‘skillsbase’ is world class	02
Measure and explain the impact of research	03
Collaborate more with business	04
Focus on local economic impact	05
Never lose sight of commitment to excellence and academic freedom	06
Help students navigate the system	07
Nurture graduates of all shapes and sizes	08
Disseminate ideas	09
Understand what different degrees do for students	10

Table 3.2. Suggestions for stimulating economic growth through higher education
Shaw 2013a: www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2013

Consideration of the impacts of students is pertinent with the expansion of universities and ever increasing numbers of student applications. There are arguments of studentification (Smith 2006) and the impact of the student pound on small businesses, such as bars, cafes, night clubs, launderettes, corner shops, as well as landlords (as recently discussed by Hubbard 2009; Rugg and Rhodes 2009; and Smith 2009). The argument around student culture in towns and cities is too often reflected negatively. However, the potential benefits a university and the student community can bring to a town outweigh media criticism. Government policy clearly intends to continue to widen participation and grow new spaces of higher education (BIS 2009).

As previously mentioned, during the 1980s under the Thatcher late-capitalist administration, a tiered system of education began to emerge through the need to

compete in foreign markets, which was reflected in the recognition for a stronger economy combined with wider access to higher education to provide vocational scientific and technological degrees (Garratt and Forrester 2012). Human capital took prominence in the rush to compete in skilled global markets. Graduates were required to be ‘multi-skilled’, ‘responsive’ and ‘adaptable’ (Garratt and Forrester 2012:117). This was the beginning of the recognition that placed students as consumers and the government wanted them to share the responsibility of positioning themselves within the rapidly growing global context of which the possession of human capital would be central (ibid). Having a degree alone would not be sufficient, a position carried into the twenty-first century, where responsible social policy is embedded within economic policy for the next thirty years. This policy encouraged the growth of new university provision and influenced regional growth objectives, such as in Hastings, positioned as education led regeneration.

In March 2008 the then Government Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (now DBIS) launched “A new ‘University Challenge’: Unlocking Britain’s Talent” (DIUS 2008). The aim was twofold, to unlock the potential of new towns and people thereby driving economic regeneration. Further, the aim would set out to challenge media perceptions of graduates competing at a ratio of 10:1. The plan was to target skills requirements and retain graduate workforces in areas of identified need. From the outset, in order to unlock the higher education talent within Britain, the challenge was placed firmly upon the new universities themselves (citing amongst others: Cornwall, Southend, Folkestone and Hastings) to creatively address very current issues through extending opportunities, driving economic growth and upskilling workforces (DIUS 2008). Expectations that were reinforced through

consultations commissioned through the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE, 2008).

As identified, new universities are faced with challenges to maintain competitive and innovative contributions to economic and cultural regeneration (Benneworth and Arbo 2007), particularly in the present climate of economic depression and spiralling unemployment (redundancies have reflected an increase in university applications as re-employment is rethought and planned). The universities had to reflect upon Denham's (2008) challenge that placed a priority upon local, high quality campuses working in partnership with expanding local businesses to create a variety of approaches specific to local demand for example, the University of Cumbria was commissioned specifically to educate a workforce with the skills to decommission the local nuclear power plant at Sellafield. A further example of the new university approach demonstrated by the University of Suffolk was a commitment to develop a joint presence of higher education in further education in direct response to under supply in the region (DIUS 2008).

Data gathered from the new universities provides evidence of job creation and economic contribution, for example, in Lincoln the university created 3000 new jobs and contributed £200 million to the local economy. Whilst in the North East, graduate start-ups (including business advice and support such as accommodation) have been supported by a partnership brokering a service across five universities, marketing the regional expertise and underwriting consultancy relationships.

From the Government's perspective, universities were positioned to add to the wellbeing of a community as a centre for arts, music and drama, opening to public audiences and providing opportunities for public lectures and library facilities. The

challenge of new universities in smaller towns or rural settings would be to develop this potential for engagement through the formation of local partnerships such as sports providers. Again the Government promoted a healthy student body to add greater community benefit as students are more likely to follow healthy lifestyles with lower incidences of obesity and depression (HEFCE, 2008). Students and graduates reflect positive attitudes within the communities and are more likely to be voters, often willing to engage with local concerns and campaigns, and see themselves as active citizens to bring about change. Cortese (2003) argues a similar perspective and emphasises the importance of careers suggesting that reached through a route of citizenship and sustainability universities can fulfil the social and moral responsibility of higher education. Additional benefits of a university population are reflected in transport services, doctors, dentists and so on. Universities are recognising the role they play in reversing economic decline and contributing strategies for population growth (BIS 2009).

The foundations of corporate social policies underpinned the Labour Government's approach to higher education and maintained through Cameron's 'Big Society' under the Coalition. However, as Garratt and Forrester point out, there remains a lack of empirical research to demonstrate the effectiveness of increased vocational degrees (2012). Their research, citing Wolf (2002, 2004 and Wolf et al 2006) questions whether higher education can make a difference to 'productivity' and 'economic performance', stating where examples of success can be found they remain 'ambiguous' and 'contradictory', and further, after Keep and Mayhew (2004) there is no evidence that graduates have more career skills despite increased qualifications (Garratt and Forrester 2012:119).

As further and higher education roles merged around vocational courses and degrees so HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England - a quango or non-governmental department body in the public domain) was established within the Higher and Further Education Act of 1992. The Act allowed former polytechnics to move beyond vocational training courses to offer fully accredited degrees. HEFCE became the body that oversaw the higher education funding.

The Conservative Government had developed and extended the widening participation activities under Margaret Thatcher's leadership (1979-1990) with the aim of accessing those under-represented in higher education from marginalised, lower social class communities. Although, Dearden et al (2011) point to the fact that the gap between access to higher education between the most economically 'advantaged' and least economically 'disadvantaged' actually widened during this period. The Thatcher Government commissioned Lord Dearing's research (1996, 1997) to back up their commitment to improve access, the findings of which were utilised by the incoming Labour Government the following year.

Within the policy changes the New Labour Government had declared,

'Investment in learning in the twentieth century is equivalent of investment in the machinery and technical innovation that was essential to the first great industrial revolution. Then it was physical capital; *now it is human capital.*
DfEE 1997:15'

Cited with emphasis added by Garratt and Forrester 2012:119

By 2008, greater state control over higher education is identifiable as new universities were to drive economic development through job creation and economic partnerships. The UK required a workforce of 40% educated to degree level - standing at 30% in Denham's report (2008). The campus becomes a key player to provide job

opportunities within a small town and for every job created within the university it is calculated that one job is created elsewhere in the economy, through the procurement of services, etc. This could be seen as an interpretation of the Government using business and employment to drive policy through expansion. Further, students were now effectively selecting vocational degrees of their choice from the new higher education marketplace.

3.3 Trajectories of higher education policy

The New Labour Government endorsed neoliberal policy that suggested ‘Higher Ambitions’ within university expansion, and for traditional universities to widen participation from local and less traditional students (BIS 2009). The Coalition Government retained this commitment of ‘massification’ as expounded by Garratt and Forrester,

‘Over the last 20 years, the exponential growth and so-called massification – (the move from an elite to a mass system) of higher education (Henkel 2000; Jarvis 2000; Morley 2003; Barr 2004; HEFCE 2004) has gathered considerable momentum across the globe, literally transforming the sector, as a move to ‘widen participation’ continues apace. Higher education institutions ‘are constantly in motion’ and ‘change is a permanent condition, with universities constantly responding to external and internal demands’ (Delanty 2008:126). The resultant structural effect has produced not only greater numbers of students from a wider variety of backgrounds entering into higher education, but, in fact, greater political centralization as the orchestration of what counts as ‘good university education’ has become increasingly state-managed.’

Garratt and Forrester 2012:122-123

Universities came under pressure to remove the expectations of privileged access and to reach the masses through widening participation agendas and activities; some

tensions this causes are demonstrated above. There is concern about the social engineering taking place whilst financially, universities required considerable student registrations. Migrating, wealthy and so called ‘traditional’ students remained highly desirable but there was a desire to reach students that would be the first in family to attend university. With this in mind New Labour introduced the Aimhigher programme of recruitment aimed at university outreach to local schools and colleges. Whilst widening participation had received hegemonic momentum under New Labour (Burke 2012), the Aimhigher programme was not continued by the Coalition Government, who stated a preference for the new National Scholarship Programme that required universities with fees above £6,000 to commit more of their own resources towards fair access (Willetts 2011).

The title of the Browne Report (2010:25) places ‘Students at the Heart of the System’ and prioritises widening participation to reach new intakes of students through new ways of repaying their increased tuition fees (discussed below). Browne states to promote student choice as students buy their tuition according to desired subject, to which universities respond with enticing course marketing and branding, thereby creating changing landscapes of higher education (ibid). As discussed in Chapter 2 Browne notes the increase in ethnic diversity of students in post 1992 institutions as models of widening participation demonstrate success.

3.3.1 Policy demands on universities and student fees

The reaction to the rise in fees from students was contentious and sparked responses in the form of demonstrations, occupation and riots. Younis (2011) researches the various protests and compared them to movements of social activism of the 1960s. With reference to the mass student demonstration of November 2010 Younis

identifies an attendance of approximately 52,000 participants, with various occupations such as Millbank (the Conservative Party Headquarters) simultaneous with many university occupations (see also Hopkins et al 2012 for an in depth account of the occupation of Newcastle University). This student rally mobilised young people and teachers from schools, colleges and universities from across the country, to converge between Bloomsbury and Whitehall (see Fig 3.1).



Figure 3.1: Students and teachers in central London in protest against university funding cuts and Government plans to charge up to £9,000 per year.
Source: The Guardian. Photograph: Steve Parsons/PA

Students were mobilising in new ways, across education pathways to develop common identities as dissenters to challenge the most recent policy changes. The fees were implemented and research evidences a drop in student registration equivalent to 3.9% per £1,000 increase in fees, whilst an increase in students of 2.6% was demonstrated with an increase in grant support per £1,000 (Dearden et al 2011).

Politically, recent governments have undertaken a neo-liberal approach towards education witnessed particularly since the global economic crash of 2008. Gradually, control of schools has devolved from Local Authority control to include greater

representation from parents identified as the consumers (Garratt and Forrester 2012), and most recently entered into business partnerships to form Trusts and Academies. Universities have bought into these policies that smartly link to their widening participation objectives, generated to increase popularity and therefore fierce competition within the recruitment marketplace. Lecturers have been party to this rapid change from cooperation to competition between HEIs requiring them to undertake new business roles in marketing the university, their school and courses, at the same time aware of the position in league tables, the need to increase recruitment of student intakes and therefore the associated income. As Garratt and Forrester describe, ‘with teachers and lecturers doubling as business *‘entrepreneurs’* within their own institutions (2012:113, original emphasis). In regard to students they go onto state they are, ‘reconfigured as ‘products’ of education (2012:114).

3.3.2 Mass provision for higher education and employability

The effects of the ‘massification’ policies resulted in expansion rates of student numbers increasing at a faster rate than housing developments designed to accommodate them, and often resulted in quick house conversions, frequently of family homes, by private landlords who have a relatively small expenditure set against an increased income from regular, year on year student occupancy, for students tend to hand over tenancy to subsequent year groups. Developments in advanced planning for student communities include the integration and dispersal of oversized populations in order to restrict the growth of concentrations of HMO’s (Houses in Multiple Occupation) together with the new building programmes in university cities of PBSA (Purpose Built Student Accommodation) (Smith, 2008, 2009; Hubbard, 2009). The Government stated the aspiration to achieve balanced and sustainable communities (Smith, 2012). In response to this ideal it is argued by Smith

(ibid) that steps are required for local councils to license HMO's in their area, taking a grip on dilapidated housing stocks. This should serve to outlaw any remaining 'Rising Damp' properties and seedy 'Rigsby' landlords as characterised in television situation comedy. Planning between local authorities and the universities should consider how dispersal of large student numbers, can be achieved to reduce over populated neighbourhoods and provide adequate university accommodation in the provision of some PBSA, whilst reflecting a commitment to neighbourhood regeneration (Sage et al 2012). Student identities will be influenced by these lifestyle experiences.

Hubbard (2009) and Chatterton (2009) have contributed further to the debate focusing on the new Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) dominating university cityscapes, although the idea of students and high rise living is not a new one. Tower blocks in 1980's Hackney, Stratford, Peckham and Manchester all housed students in once 'hard to let' and now gentrified areas. The notable changes for the contemporary student relate to the student expectation of modern appliances. Students have more disposable income and are required to be responsible with money matters, since paying tuition fees and learning debt management. As serious consumers within rental property markets, including PBSA's, the money savvy student can now demand plasma television and wireless internet connections as standard (Smith 2009). Of course as students demonstrate more demands the media could use this to portray further negative images rather than seeing them as engaging intellectuals. Further, there are patterns to be observed in regard to perceptions of live at home students and their journeys to higher education characterised in Holdsworth (2009) as 'changing their bus route'. Widening participation routes into higher education are successfully increasing the numbers of local students attending local universities. However, the

difference and value of these student experiences remain speculative and further research is still required into the value of higher education experiences of the local students in relation to the more often, more affluent students who migrate for the ‘whole’ move away to university experience, and the employers who view that are looking for the whole developmental package in graduates. Of course, mature students will feature far more as stay at home students as discussed earlier and their experiences should be considered as part of the diversity of both student and graduate experience. Using Longhurst’s (2010:105) framework of ‘place matters’ the similarities and differences between these student identities in relation to the cultural, student geographies constructed through location are further unpicked within this research to include current trends and financial responsibilities.

3.4 Higher education in new spaces and the University of Brighton in Hastings

Arguably, new universities in spaces of urban regeneration have not yet grasped all challenges and opportunities open to them through increased access and participation. In a study which included the maximising of social benefits within Lancaster University (Armstrong *et al.* 1997) access by the local community to the university spaces is discussed and identifies that a huge 94% of local residents say the availability of arts is important for them to enter the spaces. The benefits through access to higher education space to students, staff and wider communities whilst seemingly obvious, as yet do not seem to have been prioritised by new, or the more recent, universities engaged in Denham’s (2008) ‘New University Challenge’ (then Minister for the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills) to increase access and widening participation through new spaces of higher education. University roles now include engagement with the wider community and, in particular, the

business community and benefactors to prepare for sustainable academic futures (Browne 2010). Birkbeck and the Open University both have led example in these areas of commitments for responsibility ahead of the Community Cohesion agenda.

‘New urbanisation’ of student neighbourhoods attracts the ‘creative classes’ who seek lively, mixed and vibrant communities. Hubbard (2008) discusses the impact of such aesthetics, and cultural capital which “uplifts” neighbourhoods socially and physically and popular ‘student’ wards have been identified by Duke-Williams (2009). Such student areas dominated by Housing in Multiple Occupation (HMO) are increasingly associated with creative communities, although this dimension has not yet been picked up by the media. Successful arts events and their association with universities are celebrated by the press for example Cowley Road Carnival in Oxford attracts over 45,000 visitors to an area of the city dominated by student housing (Bagdi, 2015). This area is one of many student neighbourhoods across the United Kingdom to be gentrified over the last thirty years, an effect of the growth of higher education.

There are positive stories to be found within the media portrayal of student life more often linked to business. The Guardian newspaper ran a feature on students and their impact on local economies. A kebab shop owner in Manchester discusses the importance of the student pound for his business,

‘...“We are here because of the students” and he continues to say, “The students are well behaved, you have to give it to them. They have a laugh, but they don’t cause trouble, even when they have a few drinks.”...’

MacLeod and Ward 2006: The Guardian

Mongon (2009) discusses the importance of community engagement for schools to enable them to build successful relationships in white working class areas. Universities are well placed to promote community cohesion, employing local people who can become role models, engage in local activities and demonstrate successes. The University of Teeside has been successful in its local community with support for business growth, development and start-ups (Cross and Pickering 2008, DBIS 2009).

HEFCE (2008) expressed that no single model of higher education should be relied upon; it was up to each individual partnership to make their case with their partners when identifying need and demand. Leach (2002) talks of the consequence of familiarities, territorialisation and ‘narrativisations’ in place construction that would have relevance for Hastings. Evidence of the development of the Hastings Campus and the very early partnership involvement through the town and the wider south east had already commissioned an approach in 2001 under the neoliberal agenda of the ‘New’ Labour Government through the development of education-led regeneration to attract traditional and non-tradition (local) student participation. The progress for higher education in the town was led by the South East England Development Agency that set up the Hastings and Bexhill Task Force to lead on the regeneration (SEEDA 2001).

By 2008, it was clear that the then Universities Minister John Denham wished to identify and further strengthen approaches for the growth of the English higher education sector. With this in mind and with reference to the global economic crisis at the time, the New Labour Government appointed the Browne (2010) review to research an economically viable future for higher education that would still position the United Kingdom within a global competitive context. Browne’s (2010)

recommendations included the need to retain the higher education drive towards social mobility through wider access and economic growth opportunities. The report places students at the centre of the aims suggesting that graduates attract higher salaries and better status employment (Browne 2010), although the *Independent* (2013) national newspaper declared an average of 85 applicants (with some posts attracting up to 211 applicants) for each graduate vacancy, which questions the demand for an increase in graduates. The Rt Hon David Willetts, incoming Universities Minister (2010-2014) under the Coalition Government implemented some of Browne's (2010) proposals through the new higher education White Paper that placed '*Students at the Heart of the System*' (DBIS 2011).

Additionally, this gave more responsibility to HEFCE to carry out the following roles:

1. Regulate funding to HEIs (not students) for education and to implement policy
2. Widen access and participation developing links between universities/community partners and businesses
3. Oversee the National Student Survey
4. Support such teaching initiatives as CETL (Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning).

HEFCE 2015a

As discussed earlier, the reforms taking place – including those in Hastings - had shifted student centred funding onto to the student in the form of tuition and away from the public purse with instruction to ensure safeguard widening access, whilst attracting students with higher grades – promoting the marketization of higher education (Garratt and Forrester 2012, DBIS 2014). In 2015/2016 HEFCE will

distribute funds of £3.97 billion between post-compulsory education institutions including 130 universities (HEFCE 2015b).

3.5 The impact of student finance on student mobility

Students' first payments of maximum tuition fees of £9,000 per annum affected the applications considerably in the year of introduction 2012, reduced by approximately 40,000 (Coughlan 2015), although the trend of a continued rise in applications beyond this has continued and therefore 2012 is regarded as a 'dip' in applications (Bolton 2014). It was noted that the rise in fees reduced applications from mature and part-time students (Independent Commission on Fees 2014) and a greater number of students submitted applications to universities more local to home in order to save additional costs.

Investigation of new challenges for universities, as maximum fees are maintained, together with the stories of effects upon student identities (as discussed in Chapter 2) are of current academic interest (Chatterton 2010), whilst pertinent to a small university campus in Hastings. This section includes a focus on student mobilities related to higher education: those who migrate, those who stay at home, and how their decisions are influenced. Until recently the focus has largely been upon traditional students (Chatterton and Hollands 2003, Munro et al 2009, Chatterton 2010): white British; upwardly mobile teenagers; of middle and upper class families; privately educated; and moving away from home. Reference to the dichotomy between traditional and non-traditional student backgrounds steeped in 'class' based British society and once again the notion of privileged access to higher education is well recognised (Egerton and Halsey 1993). However, with the rapid expansion of university places and targets to widen participation by students from the less

traditional backgrounds of lower economic backgrounds and minority ethnic communities, together with the introduction of tuition fees, the live at home student population has also increased (Holdsworth 2009).

Whilst at one point there were expectations that the Labour Government would consider withdrawing fees for students who did not move away from home to university in England (Coughlan 2009, Shorthouse 2009), this case was reflected in the numbers of students who lived at home whilst studying and that had increased to an average of 20% demonstrating a rise of 12% from 1984 (Coughlan, 2013). This changed significantly with the change to a Coalition Government in 2010 that considerably and controversially increased higher education tuition fees. It is argued by some that the future will see only the wealthiest students afford tuition fees and take advantage of choosing which university they wish to move away to in order to study and what course they would like to undertake (Garratt and Forrester 2012). These students buy places in traditional universities (ibid), the accompanying student experience of their choice, thus considering the wider benefits of the place of study. Thus, dependent on place of study, local stay at home students, who often tend to be those from disadvantaged backgrounds and minority ethnic communities can be excluded from an unequal offer of choice, often selecting from the range of courses on offer by the local university rather than the course of their choice, or one in relation to their aspirations (Garratt and Forrester 2012). The University of Hastings in Brighton responded initially by offering a wide range of locally based courses delivered through many different university' school departments that often appeared as a variety of Joint Honours degrees.

Holdsworth (2006, 2009) identified the consideration of whether live at home students are disadvantaged by missing out on the move away or 'whole' university

experience, including the transition to independence. Student experiences carry various values and promote a range of diverse experiences as important for their student identity and future employment. However, it is argued that there could be a role for live at home students to attract further local applicants and redress some of the negative so called 'traditional' student stereotypes. Arguably, locally based students are the best placed to establish community and business links during their undergraduate years and remain local after graduation, and the loss of local students and graduates could have serious consequences on towns such as Hastings undergoing education led regeneration. Cultural issues also have a place in the argument for or against moving away to university, as Holdsworth (2009) identifies, of the current live at home students there are more women, and particularly women of Bangladeshi or Pakistani backgrounds. In respect for the differences between the traditional and non-traditional routes of access to degree qualification it will be necessary not to regress to pre-feminist, pre anti-racist advances for diversity in education and employment. Therefore, in valuing the individual university experience it remains important to reflect upon diversity issues to ensure that women do not miss out on access to higher education and post-graduation opportunities. A majority of the women identified by ethnicity happen to be Muslim women and with current Islamophobia media 'hysteria' it will be especially important to consider the futures of Muslim women in this ongoing debate of the identities of students, access to the spaces of higher education, and the link between student identity and place.

Reflecting on place, access and the student experience, Chatterton (1999) identifies 'mini-communities' within a city that are divided by practices of segregation, in the case of Bristol University students, through socialisation. Move away from home students have created clusters within neighbourhoods in the traditional university

cities. Further research is required to assess the impacts on less traditional backgrounds upon a new university town, and for the benefit of this thesis, linked to urban education-led regeneration as desired through both the Labour and Coalition Governments neo-liberal agendas to develop economic growth through ‘state-managed intervention’ linked to education and employability (Garratt and Forrester 2012:123). It is frequently argued that there are benefits to attracting new and increasing student populations to towns to increase: individual ambitions, local skills, the formation of new business and sustainability of others, employment opportunities, and to attract a creative community to a town’s identity (DBIS 2009, Communion et al 2010, Communion and Faggian 2011). However, Smith has also raised awareness of a negative counter-argument:

‘...the lack of Government policy and the incapacity of institutional actors to intervene or regulate the residential geographies of students are yielding ‘unbalanced’ populations.’

Smith, 2008:2541

Moreover, Ainley’s (2008) ‘sixty four thousand dollar question’ criticism focuses on learning and the wider experience of the higher education student. Ainley quotes Hutchins (1995) in evaluating the student experience beyond the outcomes of the course study to define the ‘whole student experience’. Holdsworth’s (2009) reference to research into student experiences in Liverpool, ‘Going away to Uni’: the mobility, modernity and independence of English higher education students, identifies ‘importers and exporters’ of students and graduates, and patterns of internal migration, also discussed by Sage et al (2012), Smith (2009) and Duke-Williams (2009). The notions of student mobility as a stable stepping-stone to independence with the benefits of independence which some employers regard as important can

provide advantages for the graduate who has moved away home. Yet, the local student can retain local connections and develop contacts in preparation for graduation. Duke-Williams (2009) identified patterns of migration with some ‘move away’ students returning to their home town following graduation whilst others were drawn to employment capitals such as London. The study locates movement away from South-east England, often quite far north towards urban university centres such as Manchester and Newcastle. Movement following graduation gravitates south again with increasing numbers of graduates moving to London in search of employment rather than their home town. These patterns of migration together with the wider student experiences influence the formation of student identities (Duke-Williams 2009).

The HEFCE (2009) report claimed local retention of graduates will be important for towns with no previous provider of higher education such as Folkestone, and Hastings, which are undergoing regeneration and therefore need to encourage and retain the knowledge, skills and attitudes of graduate workers. Greater numbers of ‘live at home’ students are likely to contribute to local graduate retention. Holdsworth (2006) claims students that stay in their home town for university and maintain their home-based networks are building up local social capital that could be more profitable if they plan to stay local after graduating. Local provision ideals that link to the original aims set out in the Labour Government’s new ‘university challenge’ (DBIS 2008) to develop local economies through higher education.

Mandelson (2009) referred to the responses required by universities to meet the demands of fee paying policies and therefore it is timely to reflect upon this new age of consumerism within higher education and the challenges related to individual

models of provision. This is a period of systemic change which Archer (2008:388) associates with ‘increased feelings of insecurity and uncertainty’ referred to as ‘The New Times’ in ‘Higher Education’. The challenge to undertake the placement of ‘Students at the Heart of the System’ (DBIS 2011) has been controversial, brought protesters onto the streets and occupation of university buildings, as students now pay for higher education and universities compete within wider, and expanding, global markets.

The opportunity for private higher education institutions in new localities has also arisen through increased student applications, students paying annual fees of up to £9,000 per year, and some loan repayments facilitated through private enterprise (ERUDIO 2015), a competitive student market has emerged. Initially, under Conservative rule, the University of Buckingham was the only independent operator (opened in 1976 and awarded university status in 1983) (Mixed Economy Group 2015). A further seven institutions received degree awarding powers between 2006-2015, with four key players from the group forming the Independent Universities Group in January 2015.

Higher education expansion in new spaces are also being utilised through cyberspace and international spaces (Brooks et al, 2012) and students cross international boundaries to study around the world. Growing out of language schools, British universities have opened international campuses across the globe and it is feasible to buy a British education in many countries as students seek British accredited degrees (Waters 2006). Altbach and Knight (2007) liken the current position of higher education as ‘at a crossroads’ that requires assurance beyond economic benefits to include public benefits too.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has considered equality issues for access to space and place within higher education that accompanies an evolving system for the allocation of student places linked to the most recent fee paying structure. As is demonstrated in Hastings, the present system of widening access to encourage a new student body is encouraging students to live at home whilst attending university. This policy context provides a platform for examining the gap between those students who move away to develop independence and seek the ‘whole’ experience and those who remain local. Within this context, Hastings emerged as a new expansion project for the University of Brighton and my research provides a rich biographical narrative of personal identity and explores how such spaces are remade through the processes of student identity formation; ‘traditional’ and ‘non-traditional’. For, there is evidence of the ongoing need to examine student perceptions of their university experience and the diversity of the student body (Wainwright and Marandet 2010, Holdsworth 2009, Crooke et al 2004).

The methods chapter which follows will explore my approach to examining these issues with the students and key informant participants who are part of the new university campus in Hastings and the construction of student identities in the town.

4.0 Methods and Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The methodology selected for this research aimed to reflect the investigation questions into the influences on student and place identity, and how new spaces are constructed through new processes, in a new town participating in education-led regeneration. In order to be current, it was designed to incorporate current geographical enquiry and reflect the policy context that is one of developing spaces of learning and increasing access and participation.

The chosen methods relate to the case study to explore the influences upon the construction and similarities of student identities in new spaces of post-18 education and the effect these have, if any, on the formation of identity and impact on place. These methods included a survey, photo elicitation and semi structured interviews to encourage the exposure of different perspectives that provided me with the opportunity to explore emergent or revealed differences. The student survey questionnaire was designed to capture valuable student background information that would best reflect the student diversity in Hastings and respond to government policy to attract new types of students. The survey covered four relevant key themes that would respond to the question of influences in the construction of student identities. Closer information was followed up using photo elicitation methods to capture visual representation of place and student identity. This method was extended through the production of recorded, individualised storyboards that recognised the student point of view (Bryman 2008). Finally, interviews with key figures in positions of governance were incorporated into the research to provide further evidence of

influence, and to provide an alternative viewpoint within the scalar of identity formation.

The methodological discussion is outlined in the following six sections. Firstly, in section 4.2 the rationale is outlined, reflecting the reasons for the selected approaches, the related debate of the ontological and critical theory guidance. The justification for the chosen case study as relevant to the methodology is also found here (a full contextual analysis of the current and timely nature of the enquiry of the research setting forms a later chapter [8]). Secondly, section 4.3 considers the research design, reviewing the practical application of the research methods set within the site specific context of a student body, small coastal town and the ambition of a new university campus as part of the education led regeneration. The reasoning for the sampling strategies is also explained, incorporating student voice through survey and photo elicitation and key informants through semi-structured interview. In section 4.4 my own positionality as researcher is discussed along with the associated ethical considerations that are integral to the description of this mixed methods approaches for the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. The final reflection of this chapter in section 4.5 outlines the necessary research boundaries, generalisations and limitations bringing the chapter to a conclusion. Further, planned dissemination was incorporated into research methodology to provide clear purpose from the outset.

The following section introduces the methodology and philosophical assumptions which underpin the aims of the research. The particular focus of which is the diversity of student lifestyles, experiences and identities within a new space of higher education.

4.2 Rationale

As identified in Chapter 2, general investigations into student life to date have centred either upon students' relationship with the city and the city response to student occupation (Chatterton and Hollands 2003, Chatterton 2009, Munro et al 2009), or the experience of the part-time or returning student (Connor et al 2004, Cook et al 2004, Patiniotis and Holdsworth 2005, Holdsworth 2009). Observations of the home-based student have concentrated on mobility and transition issues (Holdsworth 2009). The research within my thesis looks at the construction and formation of student identities in reference to local-origin and external-origin students and the similarities and differences of the student experience, through how new spaces of higher education are being reproduced concluding the intertwining of identity construction and place-making, sometimes working against the intentions of the policy planners who envisaged the production of a different and particular kind of student space in Hastings.

A multiple method approach lies within the case study as relevant to my thesis investigation into the nature of identity construction as related to place, and the setting selected to reflect the New Labour Government for new university provision in the town where previously there was no opportunity for higher education study and therefore no previous history of post-18 student experience. The town lent itself as this research setting, for the town governance, local business and residents had not previously engaged with post-18 students, meaning, student identity was not influenced by earlier student experience. The student experience was new and therefore, the students might create multiple identities in response to this background. So, to investigate research objectives in relation to student life in Hastings the case

study approach complied with a contemporary examination where behaviour had not been manipulated (Yin 2009). Further, the approach bestowed the research questions with both substance and form (ibid). The substance, or what the study was about, in its simplest - the student experience. The form unpicks the detail further: who? - second year student cohort; what? - the construction and formation of student identities in relation to place; where? - at University of Brighton in Hastings; why? – to further knowledge of student experience; consider the similarities and differences between internal/external origin; and to disseminate findings to include local governance, that address any issues that arose for the mutual benefit of town and students.

As a way in to understanding the diverse student population the survey was to target a particular cohort of second year students that could provide continuity within results. For, this group had been at university a similar length of time and therefore had the same time to form a relationship with each other, the town and higher education. Working with lecturer support, students were surveyed across all second year courses again to balance the full range of student experience. Further, this ensured that the survey reached students from both local origin and external origin, to deliver feedback on what influenced their student identity and their engagement with the town.

This methodology reflected the principles of critical theory within the wider methodological debate discussed below (4.2.2). Rather than test this particular theory (Wisker2008), the aim was to use it as a framework for which to build a shared ethnographic narrative of student experience through the examination of identity construction and interaction with place.

4.2.1 Research setting

Much media attention has been generated around student hedonistic lifestyles as introduced in the previous chapters. However, there is little research on home based students, particularly relative to student experience in a new university and further, within a small place setting. Broadly, the intention has been to analyse some of the similarities and differences between student experiences through the examination of how students construct their multiple identities. The location context of a liminal seaside town, Hastings, East Sussex was selected to enable a focus on impact for students arriving into this new university setting, as opposed to a much documented ‘univer-city’ experience such as Bristol, Somerset (Chatsworth and Hollands 2003). In this case, the nature of a coastal town operates as a liminal space for it affords a hinterland of 180° with poor transport infrastructure. As such the cohort offers high recruitment numbers from local home based students and therefore the perfect opportunity to contrast the student home and migrant experience. As a researcher for the University of Brighton in Hastings, and a local resident I also had interest in the new spaces being forged through student practice and engagement.

The research setting is both location and context; Hastings is a coastal town with a population of approximately 90,300 (ONS 2012, 2011 Census) that hosts a new university which attracts about sixty per cent of the student body from within the town. Remaining students are largely young migrant students, mostly from London and the South East, and very few international students seem to enrol. The student body loosely sub divides into two further categories: i. Students taking social science subjects who tend to be local, mature and more often female; ii. Students who migrate to the town to study who tend to be younger, male, largely attracted by the offer of

the broadcast media related subjects and live in university accommodation (Figure 4.1).



Figure 4.1: Robert Tressell Halls Source: Mandy Curtis May 2009

As mentioned, similar studies of younger student lifestyles (see Chatterton and Hollands 2003, Chatterton 2009, Holdsworth 2009, Holton 2013) report findings of external-origin students, who have moved away from home, to the established ‘univer-city’ but very little in relation to a smaller, new university town, such as Hastings where regeneration is education led and there is no history of higher education. So, rather than to compare the experience of this research with existing findings that could not directly equate with the above contexts, the rationale has been designed to encompass a holistic approach through which to assess the student lifestyle in relation to place and identity.

The case for Hastings is interesting because the new university is integral to the town’s regeneration (developed further in Chapter 8). In summary, the decision to select Hastings has involved consideration of place, that is to say a coastal town often denigrated and marginalised by national media with limited transport links and business opportunity (Walton and Browne 2010, Beatty 2010, Smith 2012). This

made for an interesting research question to consider why students were choosing to study in Hastings and how important the university is perceived by local students and town, when forming identities (individual and institutional). With these considerations in mind I prepared the questionnaire survey, planned image-based research working directly with a student photographic sub-group for the photographic elicitation exercise, and developed semi-structured interviews to involve influential key actors.

4.2.2 Methodology

The research into how students construct their identities and the contrasts between the ‘live at home’ or migrant experience is a contemporary and relevant investigation, pertinent politically and socially within the current post-18 agenda.

The methods within this research actively engaged articulation, individual and reflexive responses that provided the opportunity to represent student voice in order to gain in depth knowledge around the research question of ‘Student Life in Hastings’. Practical methods involved listening to students through surveys and photo elicitation in order to understand the distinctions they made around identity and place. Within this context, Ekinsmyth (2002) describes the positionality of myself as researcher [in the case of the Hastings’ research, a student myself],

‘...and the part played by interpersonal relations between themselves and their research subjects ‘in the field’ (where the research involved direct contact between research and research subjects).’

Ekinsmyth 2002:178

The methodology was sensitive to the researcher's position and selected to suit the research aim and objectives in order to facilitate the information and fact finding required. The underpinning critical theory held particular relevance here to take into account the positionality of myself (also a local-origin student) and the relationship between research, researched (students) and researcher. The nature of the enquiry is that of visual sociology as the visual methods involve shared ownership between myself and those I researched, with the overlapping of perspectives between researcher and student (Harper 2012). The overarching rationale was to integrate the views of the students into the research, through survey and photo elicitation participation, demonstrating the student's own visual narration of their identities in relation to place.

This methodology is defined by critical theory for the narrative is constructed by all parties; the photographer (the originator of the image), myself (in how the image is represented), and the viewer (who adds yet further interpretation). Thereby, the critique acts as a reminder of changing contexts and meaning (Harper 2012). These interpretations are not necessarily the transcribed meaning assigned by the researcher, and neither are they static; lending a fluidity to the image. The student narration of identity through the photo elicitation methodology demonstrated a bond with place that Chow and Healy (2008 reference after Rowles 1983) as 'insideness' for their particular discussion on place attachment and place identity. The student identities are reflected in their sense of place shaped by habitation with further references to engagement, pleasure and displeasure (discussed later in Chapter 6).

Harper (2012) sees critical theory as the natural interaction of a visual sociology. Whilst Beilin (2005) discussed the tensions between the various roles involved in the

process of using photo elicitation and used critical theory to clarify them in order to recognise the differences between the intention (of the photographer) and the interpretation (of the viewer). However, it should be remembered that it is difficult to clearly distinguish between the original intention and how the image is ultimately interpreted (ibid). Of course, within narrative there is often a desired intention for the viewer (or listener) to add their own interpretation or additional features which therefore required specific analysis within the context of defining this research (extended in the following chapter).

Applying the methodology of critical theory for this purpose it was important to promote respect for the contributions of participants. Further, to give voice to the image (as selected by the student) and therefore give voice to place, through the process of photo elicitation discussed in more detail below (see 4.3.1.4). Again, Beilin (2005) emphasises how as a critical theorist she understands the value of everyday experience and daily actions, the same ethics which exist at the core of this research into ‘Student Life in Hastings’. As Beilin (ibid) assigns greater importance to the everyday landscapes she describes, so here I have recognised the importance of the relationship the student has with an image to represent place with significant meaning as more than merely a backdrop. The method of critique is used to clarify meaning(s) and critical theory is used to integrate the practical methods, the photograph, with the theory, and the analysis (Calhoun 1995).

It is questioned whether there is ever the possibility of collecting observations without prior influence of pre-existing theory (Bryman 2008). In this case, knowledge of the discussions of influential research in the field (Chatterton and Hollands 2003, Holdsworth 2009, Chatterton 2010, Holton 2013) would render it difficult not to be

influenced by their associated theories. Therefore, it is relevant to respect the importance of the epistemological status of observation, alongside the theoretical nature of the enquiry (Bryman 2008). This is not to undermine the importance of validity and rationale in objective enquiry but to observe and outline findings that provide a balance alongside the theory contained within the methodology.

Beilin (2005) makes reference to Kelly's (1955) early personal constructivist theory to provide the wider perspective surrounding individuals, their situations and events, and all are relevant to this research, to investigate student life in Hastings in the comparison of local or external origin student experiences. This is achieved through the capture of a range of surveyed and photographed images to reflect the construction of personal student identity. Throughout the research, my task remained to collate the broader view through the interpretation of the questioning, hence, the inductive nature of the approach with an attempt to co-define meaning with participants. Subsequent application of the research outcomes demonstrates the ontological position of constructivism (Bryman 2008).

The analysis of the survey, visual imagery and semi structured interviews was collated to provide perspectives on student life in Hastings in keeping with the research aims that identify the influences upon student construction and formation of identities in the new space of post-18 education Hastings. Further, objectives to consider how local-origin student identities are similar and different to those students of external-origin and what effect these identities have (if any) in relation to place identity or as Chow and Healy (2008) describe 'a sense of belonging'. As referred to in previous chapters, the development of how students construct their identities is tied to their notion of belonging or not belonging, becoming or not becoming (a student),

and assumes a central position of the traditional student image as portrayed in the media. Sibley (1995:19) refers to stereotyped identity and relation to place as 'in' or 'out'. He criticises the central positioning of the white, male, able bodied and mentally well from which otherness is measured. It was essential within this research to challenge any pre-conceived assumptions of identity and place. In order to do this I was in a position of neutrality without stereotype of the student or town. Moreover, the questioning and analysis used were scrutinised for fairness. Throughout, the survey and elicitation were constructed to maximise the potential for student voice. The reflexive nature of the photo elicitation process further promoted student thought and contribution. In a similar way, semi-structured interviews were designed to promote key informant opinion, prompting was minimal to enable the participant time to think and reflect carefully on what they wanted to say in contributing to the subject of 'Student Life in Hastings'.

4.3 Research design

The composition of the research design was intended to reflect the setting of Hastings, a coastal seaside resort undergoing regeneration, of which education has been an integral component. The student survey set out to explore student engagement with the town, accommodation and social priorities. The semi-structured interviews provided an alternative view from key actors and decision makers, whose decisions affect students' lives in Hastings. Neither group had specific agendas of student identity for there was no local university history for comparison. The research was positioned to collate information from students (of local and external origin) together with town officers, businesses and university. The impact of place and place

identities upon the construction of student identities was investigated in greater detail through the photo elicitation study.

The research design began with the wider contextualised setting of the town itself, as selected as a place of regeneration, with pockets of gentrification, and associated expectations of the new university and creative opportunities surrounding a graduate demographic. This was followed by the questionnaire survey of undergraduates that addressed the engagement impacts of a university student cohort. The next stage was the collation of individual student narrative of personal identity construction, through the photo elicitation evidence, that focussed upon their identity construction using a visual representation of what it means to be a student in Hastings. Then the final stage was the key actor interviews which provided an institutional, business and governance perspective to the research.

The research was designed to investigate the questions surrounding the formation of multiple student identities. A decision to use a range of methods followed consideration of the case study and place. Time was spent to scope the research questions and aims, read significant literature in order to familiarise the new university agenda, and apply the research to both local and national relevance. The questionnaire itself consisted of five pages with a range of questions for participants including quantitative data with multiple choice options to answer, qualitative style questions where further detail could be provided to capture snapshot stories of student experiences, ethnic monitoring and finally information for participation at the next stage of focus group interviews if chosen.

The design allowed Hastings to act as a robust case study without need for a contrasting location; for the range of students, home based and migrant enrolment was significant enough to provide contrast and similarities of experience. The questionnaire survey was designed to reach the chosen cohort (see below) and to extract a broad range of information as relevant to accommodation, lifestyle and local place engagement. Photo elicitation followed with a smaller group of self-identified students, an equal number of whom were local or had moved into town. Finally semi-structured interviews with key actors who held responsibility for shaping the student experience and therefore influenced multiple identities were planned to complete the picture so that the research was grounded by a range of views and contributions.

4.3.1 Sampling strategy: students

The aim was to reach as many students as possible from a complete cohort by date of entry (September 2009). This was the second year of intake and was the first large cohort to attend the University of Brighton in Hastings. I planned to reach a significant proportion of the cohort so as to reflect the range of desired backgrounds for the research (that is to say, migrant students who had moved into the town for the purpose of higher education and local students who had established backgrounds within the existing community). This selection enabled me to focus on a group of students with a similar length of experience at university. Chow and Healy (2008) refer to Mazumdar (2005) in their explanation for a relatively small participant group and their framework is useful for the purpose of this study. Namely, not to over generalise in the questionnaire but rather to provide an opportunity for in-depth enquiry on the subject of student identity formation, place identity and attachment to place. This focussed approach enabled the research analysis to identify similarities

and differences, and look for patterns (Bryman 2008), within the groups represented and recognise student experience in a new space of higher education.

The timing of the survey was selected to ensure all students in their second year were in residence for long enough to respond to questions regarding their location and student experience. These questions were charted against the four survey themes: 'About where you live', 'About university', 'About your work and leisure', 'About you'. Undoubtedly, third year students would have a greater range of engagement and multiple identities to draw upon – but given the small size of the third year – and they were likely to be preoccupied with final year course demands, the second year students were selected to engage with the research. The newly arrived first year students could not have had the same experience or reflect similar responses, nor would they have had the experience of living out of halls of residence, or engaging with the community that migrant students often commence during their second year. It was felt that this latter experience of the second year would have affected the formation of the students' identities. The focus was therefore specifically on the cohort who entered in 2009. To ensure as high a response rate as possible some of the second year student groups had completed questionnaires a little earlier than others, at the very end of their first year. With the remainder interviewed as they moved early into their second year. All surveys were completed prior to the photo elicitation participation.

The sampling strategy aimed to obtain an even balance of local and external origin students that was required in order to make an analysis of similarities and differences in the findings. Students self-identified through the survey to become more involved

in the qualitative research and this enabled the identification of a group to participate in the photographic exercise.

The aim of the sampling strategy was to survey at least 80 out of the cohort of 200 to ensure a sample of significant size to allow robust statistical analysis. I designed a list to detail courses and course lecturers and requested time within lectures to survey students. This returned a variety of responses as some lecturers were willing to cooperate and others preferred to distribute the questionnaires themselves. In practice, where I had direct access to the group a greater number of completed surveys was achieved, a total of 100 questionnaires were completed which is approximately half of the cohort. Additional external-origin students were reached directly via the halls of residence. I monitored responses to identify a balance between local and external origin students until approximately fifty per cent of each was attained.

4.3.1.1 Survey methods

The survey was constructed so that questions would reflect the aims of the research, evaluating choices students make about where and how they live, study, work and socialise in the town. The detail of the design was deliberately short and practical, printed over three pages (double sided), with an additional front explanatory page introducing the researcher, how the data would be used and stored, contact details and information on how participants could gain feedback. An additional section requested participant details if self-selecting to participate in the research further. Pages and questions were numbered (Wisker 2008) and the exercise took approximately fifteen minutes to complete (see appendices for a full copy of the questionnaire).

I was conscious that having a presence whilst the survey was completed should not shape or 'steer' answers. However, it is realised that within the design and layout of

the research process it was not entirely possible not to affect the answers received for example through the given order of questions and answers and so on. In order to maximise opportunity for the participant to express individuality and preference, some questions were designed to be open-ended for the respondent to answer as they deemed appropriate, therefore avoiding leading word layout (Lindsay 1997). Other questions provided multiple choice answers, some in the form of table format, where it was necessary for me to provide a broad range of answers, with recognition for which could be prioritised in the mind of the participant who would read answers as they moved down the page, potentially asserting an unintentional priority for the answers at the top of the list.

The first theme within the survey asked ‘About where you live’ and was designed to provide a non-threatening way in to the survey. Students answered simple multiple choice questions to ascertain their preference for where they had chosen to live and the influences upon these choices. I wanted to establish any prior knowledge of areas in the town in which students wanted to live in, and how important neighbourhood provision was to the students with the knowledge to make this decision. For example, were decisions about place selected on the basis of convenience, cost, amenities or family? The survey moved on to investigate ‘About university’ to establish whether the student was the first in the family to attend university, particularly relevant in a new university town, with large numbers of home-based students, pockets of deprivation, and undergoing education-led regeneration. This section asked for the influences on students’ decision to register at the University of Brighton in Hastings, looking for common themes such as to remain local, financial implications, to be part of the University of Brighton, or the importance of being near the sea.

The third section 'About your work and leisure' contained multiple choice questions about retail, transport, and leisure services used by the students. This created a general picture of services which are held with importance for students constructing their identities and would underpin the more in depth study by the photo elicitation group (discussed below). This section contained qualitative questions about when and where the students spent nights out in the town and the factors which influenced these choices. It also questioned how they engaged with local people and businesses, and to identify what they perceived would enhance their experience in Hastings. To complete this section they were asked to sum up the main features of their student life in Hastings in no more than ten words. This provided quick sound-bites of what students prioritised, enjoyed or wished to raise as an issue. Finally the fourth theme 'About you' provided the research with statistical information of gender, ethnicity, age group and whether students would be happy to participate further in the research.

The decision was made to approach the external students first, as they were more readily accessible within halls of residence. Permission was gained from the University of Brighton accommodation office to distribute questionnaires through the hall of residence. A letter explaining the process was delivered to students living in this accommodation and attendance in the common areas arranged. Over the following few weeks I regularly visited the halls, met with students who completed surveys and transcribed any additional comments from these informal meetings. These visits yielded a forty-five per cent response rate. Taking time to meet directly with small parties of students also enabled me to answer any questions and gain confidence from the students which in turn meant some of them signed up to be involved during the later phase of the research. As most discussion took place after

the questionnaire had been completed, the discussion did not influence the answers written by the participants.

Further surveys were completed directly within lecture times as arranged with individual course leaders (discussed earlier). This method reached the local-origin students, including many part-time, women, undertaking Joint Honours degrees. All questionnaires were completed by students from the same cohort by date entry (September 2009).

4.3.1.2 Survey methods of analysis

It was important to consider the analysis of data before the collection of the information to ensure relevant questions were asked and as such, asked in a way that could be usefully analysed (Bryman 2008).

The open ended answers in the survey had created a generalised picture of the formation of student identities and student experience in Hastings and St Leonards. This was relevant to the earlier discussion on student 'habitus' (Bourdieu 1979) and student capital in economic, social and cultural form (see Chapter 2), that linked directly to the four themes of accommodation, university, work and leisure, and themselves (gender, ethnicity and age). The coding analysis for the qualitative data was used by myself to deconstruct these areas and organise responses in categories devised as economic, social, and cultural. Additional notation was made following conversations with students, or questions and comments they made at the time of survey. This was kept in date order and identified by location.

The data editing package SPSS was used to analyse the quantitative findings to supply frequency information, graphical representation and exploration of

relationships between responses to different questions. Variables were distinguished and the relationships between them explored to provide a comprehensive view of student responses to 'Student Life in Hastings' through single and multiple variables from the data. Management of data within SPSS provided a fresh look at the questionnaires, in order to identify new information, something different, or information which spoke out again (Sarre 2010).

A coding frame for the quantitative analysis was constructed and the data entered in numerical form within the SPSS framework. For example, in a simple yes/no question a 'yes' answer was given the value of 1 and a 'no' answer the value of 0. In this way I could transcribe the student answers firstly onto an Excel spreadsheet prior to depositing into the master SPSS coding. A master coded sheet was kept for reference. These processes had the additional benefits that enabled me to familiarise the data; observe patterns of commonalities and difference, whilst defining further suitable categories of interest.

The survey preceded the photo elicitation study. A general response from the students had been received, that outlined the student experience in Hastings, and recruited 12 participants who wished to take part in the photography component. This built upon initial findings, to further identify the construction and formation of student identities (self and place) in greater detail through the method of visual representation and photo elicitation.

4.3.1.3 Photo elicitation methods

I had gathered contact information within the questionnaire and through introduction and discussion about the survey. During this phase a group of 12 students were identified to participate further with the research. This sub-group of students (all in

their second year at university) were selected to represent a range of student experiences and therefore reflect diversity and with a balance of local/external origin. Individual meetings were held so that neither myself, nor other students influenced the individual approach to the task required. A group briefing of the aims of the task would have risked providing a steer for the range of images and this had the potential for 12 similar photographic case studies of the town. So care was taken to enable each student to interpret the meaning of the task alone in order to fulfil the research objectives to investigate the influences upon construction and formation of student identities within a new space of post-18 education. Further, to consider the commonalities and differences between local origin and external origin students and the affects (if any) these may have on the formation of identity and their interaction with place.

Photography was selected to provide personal contexts to the research. Photographic contexts provide meaning in two strands; firstly, that belonging to the person who made the image and secondly the way in which it is viewed (Adelman 2006). In capturing an image the photographer infers meaning or reasoning for its selection, and for its relation to the series within which it is made. Following the initial decision to select a particular frame the photographer has the opportunity to reflect on the image they have taken (ibid). However, this reflection can also be viewed in two stages for there is an immediate response to the image at the time it is taken, often viewed within a digital frame, and later when the image is processed there is a secondary reflection on receiving a printed copy. Becker (2006) investigates the meaning ascribed to images through the way in which they are viewed in relation to the context in which they are taken. When looking solely at an image (without caption or description) the mind focuses on immediate clues to the context (Becker

2006), initially scanning for the time it was taken, night, day, year, decade, and so on. Other immediate clues are found from what people are wearing and the location of the image, as happens in an approach to interpret any cultural object (Becker 2006). Becker (ibid) references Hagman (1995) to explain how annotation is the process that will explain when and where the image was taken, and who is doing what within it. In this way the photographer and observer are reasoning the meaning or context.

When images are used with captions, Myers (2009) reflects on how the photographer is given a voice. Within the context of this research into ‘Student Life in Hastings’ the (student) voice was enabled through the shared ownership of the approach to the investigation and more specifically from the requested short descriptions related to the photographic images selected. Thus, providing opportunity for the (student) voice or viewpoint to be heard within a process where they may otherwise be excluded, unheard or distorted (Hopkins 2007, Myers 2010). As demonstrated below in the description of methods, caption books, storyboards and reflective captions enabled students the opportunity to record any underpinning event or emotion associated with the picture. In this way captions offered both immediate and reflexive response opportunities.

The students had individual interview times arranged to limit the influence by myself and reduce peer influence that could easily cause conflict within the study of personal response to place identity. Each student was given a small brightly coloured folder containing a 24-exposure disposable camera, a small caption notebook and pen. This pack also contained an instruction guide which encouraged the participant to carry the case with them for the next ten days, enabling a period which covered two weekends (see appendices for a copy of the instruction guide). The study guidelines were

deliberately brief and without direction. This was to ensure that students were given the same task to complete and provided rigour to the research. A short brief was included to set the background and context for this data so that students aimed to best capture what being a student in the town meant to them. The instruction guide requested that students take pictures which represented their everyday experiences (Myers 2010) of student life in Hastings. These images could include people, object or place (whole or part of) as selected as meaningful by the student. They were also encouraged to write down in the caption book immediately what image they had taken and why they had chosen it to help contextualise the meaning during later reflection. Participants were requested to write something about how they felt at the time to help consider how the image related to their student experience (Myers 2010).

Whilst no set interview introduction took place prior to the photographic exercise, the guidance was explained at the start of the interview to set boundaries for the research activity. The student photographers within this research had been asked and agreed to contribute to the visual methodology adopted by the researcher. In becoming participants each had been asked to document personal aspects of their world. Consideration was given to the benefits of group direction prior to the exercise; shared ideas and discussion of student life. However, Myers (2009) discusses the decision to individually brief the participants, who participated in the 'Moving Methods' study of photo elicitation using semi-structured interviews. This method was defined for a study to understand the significance of the group (HIV-positive, men-who-have-sex-with-men) in relation to people, movement, place, and their experience, however, lends itself to the privacy for individual student participation. In Hastings, this photography method provided the research with a personal view of the town's offer for its student population. The students were encouraged to think about

places of importance or comfort (Silver 2008) and their personal identities as they moved between spaces for example as a student, employee, family or community member. The research definition around multiple identities, as pertinent to youth, as identified by Rattansi and Phoenix (2005), and the importance of contextualisation within such multiplicity as the fluid nature of youth identity is captured within this qualitative approach since the photo elicitation questions explored different identities.

Incorporating the photo elicitation method within the research enabled individual responses to the exploration of personal and place identity, examining the impact of new student experiences within the new university town. Students were asked to sort and arrange the images they had taken according to priorities that best reflected their student experience and which they identified as most important. This process reduced the images from 27 to approximately 12. Students arranged the images to create storyboards and were free to add additional material or write on the images or across the board to annotate their story. I recorded the discussions that took place during this process and field notes were kept and later transcribed. In conclusion, I have used a triangulated methods framework of; guidance, student led photography, and a reflection interview. This model provided scope for the participant to add richness, demonstrate creativity (Bijoux and Myers 2006), and share ownership of the research into the spaces and places important to everyday student life in Hastings.

4.3.1.4 Photo elicitation methods of analysis

Student-selected photography reflected and documented 'student life in Hastings' and the construction, and co-construction, of themselves. Constructivism defined the student-researcher relationship, for, inevitably when 'sense-making', what the participant says I 'fit' the findings to the research argument and this is how I

ultimately account for the data (Sarre 2010). Care has been taken to limit influence as I considered positionality throughout the research.

The representations of student place identity reflect Watson's (2007) discussion of smaller narratives or stories which reflect daily life, building and positioning identities which she denotes as performed. I engaged with the micro-detail of the data presented as students selected the stories which captured the performance of their multiple identities (and as reflected in the various location choices and visual representations). It became my role to distinguish and interpret the significance of the various roles and identities that were played out through these images. The significance of how the participating students constructed place identity underpinned this analysis, referred to the relevance of the case study and research setting, and the co-construction nature of explanation. Beyond these individual identities constructed through the 'performance of self' (Watson 2007, p371) there is the collective identity to consider (Sibley 2001). Analysis of this empirical data included a photography sub-group debrief session held individually for participants rather than as a group, that enabled the students to explain their selected representations, capture their own feelings and emotions towards the images, and examine whether any changes occurred as a result of the participatory nature of the process (Silver 2008). Further to the importance of retaining respect for individual contributions that has been discussed above, questions were designed to ensure each student was provided equal opportunity to discuss their participation with the researcher, and through agreed time (Wisker 2008) to foster the idea that each story was of equal importance. The shared benefits and learning opportunities taking part would provide were outlined (Silver 2008).

Drawing further on Watson's discussion (2007) of Bamberg's positioning analysis; a model was used in relation to the stories gathered from students to identify how their identities were constructed. Watson's discourse deconstructs narrative, recognising the importance of small stories which she relates to the production of local identities. Using three levels of positioning analysis I considered the position of the character in the narrative ('Who?' 'And why?' – level 1), the effects of interaction between participants (student to student or student to researcher) begins to unpick the way the story is told (level 2), and finally through investigation of the wider narrative the student pitches their identity against what they believe society wants them to be (level 3) (Watson 2007). Thus, I analysed the self-positioning by students using this approach. Through the coding and analysis of the narrative, the co-construction of data (Sarre 2010) between the participant and researcher, was also considered so as to ensure accurate representation of the student position and by making note of how the questions were asked and whether the researcher's presence influenced the narrative.

Beilin (2005) makes reference to Kelly's (1955) early personal construction theory to provide the wider perspective surrounding individuals, their situations and events, all relevant to this research which captures a range of images to reflect the construction of personal student identity. I as the researcher (together with the researched) unpicked these woven patterns of unique identity, where theories are represented as layers of experience and values Beilin (2005).

I arranged for the development of the photographs and then met individually with each participant to support the reflective stage of the process. A large piece of card was provided for each student to create an individual storyboard. They were given time to reflect on their first view of the developed photographs in order to prioritise

and build a card made of the images most important to them. No restriction was placed on how many or few images were used, although about 12 were suggested. The participant was then asked to scribe any additional thoughts or reflections beneath each chosen image. At this stage they could still add or remove any of the images. I took field notes and recorded discussions during these reflections and considerations. Once the participant had demonstrated their satisfaction with the story they had created on their storyboard, I then asked prompting questions about the student's choices. This was followed through with the selected order so as to articulate meaning and ensure clarity (Myers 2010). In this way I assumed the role of mediator between the participant and the images (ibid). This conversational method provided 'intensive' qualitative data in support of the storyboard (Ekinsmyth 2002). The conversations were recorded to assist the reflexive research analysis. A total of 12 photo elicitation participants (generated a collective total of 324 images, reduced to approximately 150 images at interview) and created 12 student storyboards.

The argument for writing down thoughts (immediately an image is captured) is debated further by Bijoux and Myers (2006) who note the importance of 'closeness' when experiencing the photograph and so not to lose thoughts at that very moment. Later reflection then provides additional thoughts and meaning, which is why students were asked to prioritise and comment on the images individually during selection and again when through the completed storyboard. Ethical considerations were challenged through the agreement between researcher and image maker (student) for the pictures (whilst capturing personal snap shots of the students' lives) were produced in response to a specific request from myself to participate (Bijoux and Myers 2006). This arrangement was formalised by a participant signature when

undertaking the project. Similarly, when sharing the captions and during the reflective processes, the student had agreed for this information to be used in the research.

Kaźmierska (2004) considers the following three stages of narrative analysis. Firstly, that which is communicated overall within the story, followed by a more detailed understanding of sequence or units, and finally, observation of generalisations and distinctive features within the story. I used this method when unpicking the layers represented in the images the students selected. Initially, the participants were asked to discuss the reasoning behind their photographic images and the photo-sequencing adding any themes or categories for the images as they came to mind. I took notes and recorded these discussions for later transcription. A ‘laddering’ (Beilin 2005:59) process was also applied. This method of analysis required the next stage (equivalent to Kaźmierska’s second stage) of more detailed understanding by ordering the prints according to priority or importance. The students considered the order in which their story had been narrated and moved images according to meaning, ranking those which best reflected their identity in order of preference (Beilin 2005), or grouped by subject or theme. The images were numbered upon the story board to record these decisions. This was a further part of the reflexive process that assisted to identify relevance to the intersections of student identity, experience and place.

I collated the student priorities across the participant group to analyse commonalities and differences and therefore indicate key themes to emerge. Principles of coding data used included: concepts, categories, properties, conditions and relationships to define the visual images (Venn 2010). This identified the links between categories, similarities between data, or assisted to distinguish data. Thus, these stages provided the photo elicitation data with a strategic structure, which enabled me to consider the

initial and first responses to the photographs, prior to interpretation and summary (Venn 2010). The structure of these narratives reflected the research objectives that provided representational dialogue of individualised student and place identity construction.

4.3.2 Sampling strategy: key informants

Key informants were approached according to position of employment held, processes that would have been influenced in this role, and therefore held a relationship with this research to examine the influences of new student life courses, identities and experiences in the town and their impacts on Hastings.

The view of these key actors was pertinent to both the experience of identity and students, and to some extent the role of the university. In depth interviews with key informants relevant to the Hastings' student experience with appropriate private sector agents (such as letting agents, developers, employers) and public sector agents (for example university, local authority, local councillors) were undertaken, to further the analysis. Conversational interviews with only a semi-structure of questions, as opposed to the structured style of student questionnaire, encouraged deeper insights (Valentine 2005).

The sample identified 12 key informants for interview, who expressed an interest in ensuring students, had a beneficial experience in the town. Each interview lasted no longer than an hour and was arranged so that the interviewee had an introduction to the research and an opportunity to say how they engaged to date with the University of Brighton in Hastings. This included how often they had interacted with students

and how they perceived their role in trying to ensure mutual benefits for students, the university, and the town. An opportunity was provided to say if things were not working well and what could be improved. To complement the student questionnaire the final question was similar, asking the key actor to sum up their understanding of the main features of 'Student Life in Hastings' in no more than ten words.

The findings identified current, and proposed, practice by key organisations for student identification and engagement and how the informant thought this process might affect student identities. Further, they identified the processes underpinning the student experience with significant outcomes such as: the commissioning of a student panel of key actors to represent town; community opportunities; a student summit or conference to address the increased numbers of students in the town; the town's response to student numbers; and the opportunities available to all parties within the commitment to education led regeneration in Hastings (see later chapters for more on student and town engagement).

4.3.2.1 Semi-structured interviews methods of analysis

Interviews with key informants were used as a vehicle to capture the town's interaction with student identities and the effect of place on these identities, so that a balance to the student opinion could be defined within this research. Each interview was recorded and transcribed with care to respect confidentiality. This avoided misunderstanding, allowed time for evolving themes to emerge, for myself to observe non-verbal communication and reduce the amount of field notes taken, to provide better accuracy (a full schedule of interview questions can be found in the appendices).

Questions were open-ended, enabling the interviewee to avoid a yes/no answer and provide opportunity to expand as desired. As mentioned, the final interview question was similar to that of the student questionnaire for continuity and a sense of ease to finish the interview. The answer in no more than ten words gave short reactive sound bites in response to immediate priorities.

I read through each interview initially to compile an overall picture taking into account Silva's interpretation:

‘What you see in research largely depends on a combination of what you want to see, what you ask to see, what you are allowed to see and how you frame the research.’

Silva 2007:13

A second read through of the transcription required me to unpack, interpret and re-interpret what the interviewee was actually saying as their voice was ‘heard’ again. As discussed in the earlier section, I developed a framework for the initial coding in relation to social, cultural and economic factors and how they relate to student identities and experience. These categories were then widened to include other emergent themes such as student, volunteer, noise, nuisance, values, and so on. Analytical themes were drawn up for this theoretical coding that demonstrated priorities, similarities and differences. Transcripts were coded by hand and then quotes were compared, representing key views of respondents.

A staged approach to the analysis provided ‘steps’ for the coding process as I returned to the data coding, redefined, sub-divided, removed or merged, and created new codes. This reflexive approach allowed for an initial response to the data,

familiarisation, re-interpretation and the opportunity to check-back through the analysis, to redirect the process of capturing and recording the data as new themes or codes emerged.

The key informants gave balance to the student opinion, sometimes in agreement with student concerns, with other opposing views. Further, the balance of opinion gave weight to conclusions and additional purpose for the research. For, once the key informant had taken part in the research they had a greater interest in the results and the ownership they shared to create change for the better. Dissemination and wider interest of the informants was also an important part of reason for study.

4.4 Ethics

Ethical considerations for any research are three-fold in the protection of providers of information, innocent or vulnerable people, and myself, or the university from harm or litigation (Wisker 2008). The research design and implementation should not infringe on the human rights, harm anyone, or reveal information which has been shared in confidential circumstances (ibid). Therefore, I was required to be ethically responsible from the outset, planning the questionnaire, arranging the consultation opportunities, and for the storage and usage of information. The research was approved by the School of Environment and Technology Research Ethics Committee and documentation including information and consent forms can be found in the chapter appendices.

In this research all questionnaire information remained anonymous, consent was received through engagement with the questionnaire and the hard copies of surveys kept in a secure place, and electronic data entered using a protected password.

However, the autobiographical nature of the participatory approach within the photographic documentation required participants to complete consent forms. This process included shared deconstruction and agreement of images used within the research.

Key informant participation involving semi-structured interviews were transcribed to respect confidentiality. Whilst the nature of interviews with key actors was less structured, this meant the individual nature of the stories shared by participants often became more identifiable, as were the subjects of their role within the education led regeneration strategy for the town and student provision. Agreement was secured to ensure the willing participation and provision for feedback opportunities was given.

The university ethics process supported my position as researcher (University of Brighton 2010). The checklist process identifies any potential problematic areas. A risk assessment acts as a further planning tool to anticipate, respond and limit any concerns I may have.

It was necessary for the researcher's own positionality to be a consideration within the context and setting of the research. I have been a local community activist as a producer of community events, an education consultant and race equality advocate, and therefore needed to demonstrate neutrality in the gathering and reporting of evidence of student provision and experience. Similarly, I am also a research student and needed to consider the ethics of fair student representation. As a researcher, the staff or student boundaries could be masked, as it was possible at times for me to construct both these identities, making and remaking roles during the research process (Crang and Cook 1995). This is significant because it became clear very early

on that the university students were more likely to provide honest answers to a fellow student than a member of staff, indeed many respondents asked for the status to be clear before participating. In this position I made it clear that the investigation was on behalf of the university and that confidential findings would be available. However, the purpose and the aims of the research were shared with participants to understand, evaluate and potentially improve 'Student Life in Hastings'. The research exposes further ethical considerations in that the university had engaged a researcher to investigate 'itself'.

Flowerdew and Martin (2008) discuss the exploitative position of research. They point to the fact that the outcomes are clear, that is to say their own personal development, whilst the benefits to the participant are not so tangible. To counteract this inequality, I made it clear at every opportunity that the research would have clear purposefulness and outcomes relevant to the improvement of the student experience, and contribution to knowledge on student lifestyles and identities, building on the earlier work of Chatterton and Hollands (2003). Findings are available to be shared with contributors and key actors in the university such as the director and accommodation team, and with key statutory actors within the local council and regeneration teams who hold responsibility for students' experience in the town. A dissemination event was also part of the research process.

The approaches taken have been relevant to provide the research with a context for study that has focussed in depth on a small group of students. The ethics in representing this group has therefore required a reflexive methodology to evaluate, reflect and contrast the different student lives, both the external-origin student experience and local-origin student experience. The assessment has required me to

consider the findings from each student's perspective, grasp their meanings and reflect this honestly within the research conclusions (Cohen et al 2007).

All data remained anonymous, with no data recorded that could be used to identify the participant. No address or postcode data was recorded (beyond which hall of residence the information had arisen from). Equalities monitoring was used in a broad context to ensure that a reflective response rate is recorded but no individual comments are traceable to an individual of a particular ethnic background (this is relevant to a small group of students, for example in halls of residence where ethnicity is potentially more 'visible'). No data that could identify an individual was used. Once completed, hard copies of the surveys were stored in a locked cabinet. The data was inputted to Excel, transferred into SPSS (statistical computing data tool), with all files being stored on a secured PC (as opposed to networked file space), protected by password access. Once the input of the data was completed, hard copies of the surveys were locked away until the end of the project. Preparation of hard copies of the survey (i.e. printing and collating) were undertaken by myself before entering any identifiable fields and participants were given the opportunity to receive a summary of the survey results by emailing the researcher, thereby reducing the amount of personal data stored by myself. For interviewees and case study participants, a consent form was provided to inform participants of their role, rights and responsibilities (University of Brighton 2010). A full copy of the information and consent materials is available in the chapter appendices.

4.4.1 Positionality

As introduced above it has been important within this thesis for me to consider my own positionality and approach to undertaking the research. As Shurmer-Smith states,

‘My own preference when conducting social and cultural work is for long-term commitment between myself and the people I am working with. I see research with people as requiring that I become part of what I am studying, with the implication that I cannot avoid being politically and morally bound up in it. This means I cannot contemplate doing research in the manner of a raid – dashing into ‘the field’ with a Dictaphone and a schedule of interviews, dashing back to the university to transcribe and perform a content analysis.’

Shurmer-Smith 2002:96

Careful planning for each stage with attention to how my positionality could affect the interaction with students, participants and informants was required. Further, the students and key informants positions were considered in the approach to the construction of meaning and knowledge through relationships between themselves (for example, student to student, student to key informant - either university or local council provider, or researcher to student or university). I was required to capture the student or participant voice, demonstrating sensitivity to their feelings (Shurmer-Smith 2002), whilst maintaining ethical integrity during the process of interpreting the data. These inter-relationships extended further to meanings between people and experience (Wisker 2008) and again the researcher’s aim was to capture the essence of for example the student voice, whilst demonstrating an awareness of that which I constructed from the information presented by the participants (Bryman 2008). Each case allowed for interpretation of difference in behaviour and experience.

The positionality of myself as the researcher was considered alongside the associated ethical considerations (outlined above) that are integral to the description of the mixed methods approaches for the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. The researcher's position is that of shared student status whilst investigating the university on behalf of the university. For the purpose of analysis I considered whether my position could have been interpreted as a member of staff, student, colleague, or resident. At each stage, I made my position clear, that was not to criticise colleagues at the University or in a position of governance, nor to inform student response, but to retain a neutral position to inform the thesis as much as possible from the information provided for analysis. Student's responses tended to be more forthcoming when they considered they were speaking to another student. However, they were made aware that findings would ultimately be shared within the university hierarchy. Further, as a mature researcher, often, but not entirely, working with a young body of students, it was necessary to consider Leyshon's (2002) concerns for the understanding young people's lives from their perspective and the surrounding issues of transferring meaning (the context of young people) to the research (academic perspective). The points of transferring intended meaning without dilatation or subjectivist addition, whilst also not reflecting a 'them and us' or 'other' approach, are often criticised where object and subject are separated (Valentine et al 2001).

Reflexive principles were applied to recognise and value intended meaning with care to reflect accuracy and question how much 'other' (or researcher perspective) is inserted into what is represented (Ley and Mountz 2001). It was essential to map the social world of the students, recognising spatiality through identities, leisure choices and lifestyles. The mixed methods approach of gathering quantitative and qualitative

data encouraged a range of comments from students, although profiles were often easier to achieve in practice, in relation to external origin students, living in halls of residence. There seemed little interaction between local students and those who had migrated to Hastings within the university setting and even less outside of curriculum time. However, the similarities of selected student identities on campus made it difficult to distinguish one group from another.

4.5 Conclusion

The purpose of the research methodology was to provide a link between previous research on students, key concepts such as identity and the methods used for the investigation of student experiences in an area of new provision for higher education. The methods expressed within this chapter identify the boundaries I worked within. The comparison and contrast of the lifestyles of the two broad groups of students, external origin and local origin, has required a structure within the survey, to provide a defined field of quantitative and qualitative data comparison. Questionnaires were included in the construction to source particular information rather than reflect wide ranging stories, although follow up photo elicitation interviews referred to early responses and enabled greater flexibility for the student to provide a range of stories.

However, it was essential that there were constraints within questioning methods to define the research area. Thus, responses in the questionnaire had controlled variables which can be mapped to the research questions (Parfitt 2003). The data achieved through the survey has further sub categories in classifying the student body, their behaviour and opinions (ibid). The research design ensured concentration on the research aims and similarly, whilst the individual interviews with students and key

actors certainly provided greater scope for storytelling opportunities, I used a structured framework to ensure the discussions were relevant to the subject (Parfitt 2003). Time factors to gather a sufficient response rate within a given time period for the research and the need to meet students during term time also shaped the overall research design. Informed access to student groups from the selected cohort in halls of residence and through lecturer given opportunities took time and commitment. Nevertheless, it was necessary to work within this structure for myself and students involved. Greater time flexibility was available for interviews with key statutory providers and local business owners.

The research was designed to be both evaluative in nature and responsive to a political issue of new higher education provision (Cohen et al 2007). Results are to be shared widely with student participants upon request, with agencies and key actors who share a responsibility to maximise a positive student experience in Hastings (including local council officers, elected members, landlords, businesses and university representatives), and through wider dissemination at conferences and publication.

The combined methods approach provided balance to the research. The survey delivered the general overview and introduction to a specific case study of second year student identities in an area of new post-18 education led regeneration. The photo elicitation narrowed the student view to an in depth study of the construction and formation of student identities, and their interaction with place, providing a student 'voice' to the research. Finally, the semi-structured interviews with key informants gave an alternative organisational perspective and further, provided an opportunity for dissemination and recommendations for the future.

5.0 The student body: new students in new spaces of higher education

5.1 Introduction

The diversity of the Hastings' student population is captured through one hundred surveys and is reflected in the analysis as relevant to the background information and places of origin identified here. Consideration is given to social and economic background as pertinent to new university student experiences (Holdsworth 2006), and in keeping with the aims for delivering new higher education experiences directed by central government. The construction and formation of new student identities and acquisition of cultural capital in the context of Hastings and associated with the wider processes of local urban regeneration are under-researched (Holton 2013, Chow and Healey 2008). As discussed the case study of Hastings is singularly unique in its context, location, and ability [or otherwise] to attract students from both within and outside of the town. This student profile provides an under represented group of people that have been rather neglected in student literature. To comply with the research aims the survey results explore the influences on the construction of student identities and whether place of origin affects student response to a connection with place and identity (Taylor 2010).

This chapter presents some of the quantitative findings from the surveys of a second year cohort of students at University of Brighton in Hastings, a mixture of both home-based students and students who have migrated to the town as their chosen place for higher education, and accounts for 50% of the total cohort. The discussion explores some of the key themes to emerge from the surveys around why students selected to study at the University of Brighton in Hastings. Further, this area of the analysis

introduces some of the evidence that underpins the construction of student identities such as a sense of belonging and the concept of home (whether family home or ‘moved away to university’ residence) as concerns which are pertinent to the self-formation of student identity (Chow and Healy 2008).

Completion of the surveys was taken to facilitate the identification of emergent themes that had influenced student experience, the existing and the formation of current capital, seen relevant by the students. It was designed to capture valuable student background information, habitus, and key features that would best reflect the student diversity in Hastings in response to government policy to attract new types of students. Some key themes were explored in greater detail by revisiting the subjects with individual students who self-identified that they wished to participate in the photo elicitation exercise. These topics were raised by students who self-selected the issues through the images they chose to best represent their experience of ‘Student Life in Hastings’.

The questionnaire ‘Student Life in Hastings 2010/11’ was divided into four themes: ‘About where you live’, ‘About university’, ‘About your work and leisure’, and ‘About you’. A full sample of the survey can be found in the final appendices. These subject areas were also reflected within the key informant semi-structured interviews to enable comparative analysis where appropriate, and so as to provide views from both sides, that is to say student or key informant on any of the topics.

In the following section 5.2 an overview of the student cohort is presented to demonstrate the demographics of the second year students who engaged with the study and to build a picture that reflects the student body at University of Brighton in

Hastings. This is supported by a breakdown of where students live and accommodation influences in section 5.3. Finally, there follows a dialogue in 5.4 to capture the choices made about university and why the University of Brighton in Hastings was selected as the students' choice of place to study. Thus, the chapter provides an overview of the student body in a new space of higher education and suggests early conclusions that provide a greater justification for in-depth research.

5.2 Respondents

In gathering data about the students I identified a particular cohort who would have had a similar length of experience at university and individual backgrounds. I wanted to capture the background features that were underpinning their student identity construction, identify some of their priorities, and consider the broader migration patterns. The survey was designed to gather this data. In all, one hundred second year students (cohort entry in September 2009) were surveyed and the response questionnaires coded to reflect a contact point, for example, the degree course of study, or halls of residence. This ensured that I could track a balance of degree courses, accommodation, place of origin, and ensure I was accumulating a reflective and representative sample of a range of students that avoided for example any bias towards Hastings based students or students only undertaking a particular module. The coding sequence further enabled me to identify where within the set of 100 participants the questionnaire had originated, to cross reference the balance discussed above and clearly identify how many students had participated. Where a student appeared within the final total did not influence any questions, answers or findings, but was generally useful to give a broad data range and for me to identify whether they were an early participant (as some were at the very end of their first year) or a

later participant in their second year (most of the cohort). From a point of practicality I worked with lecturers and accommodation teams, around curriculum, examination and vacation periods. The support I received was invaluable in reaching half of the cohort. I could target particular subject areas that were under-represented and approach lecturers to provide time for me to introduce my research and gather responses at the start or end of the lecture. This approach worked well and most lecturers responded timely in support of the research. I worked with the accommodation officer who provided access to the halls of residence and student gatherings there gave me a captive audience, from which I could take additional, wider, and useful field notes.

The coding was assigned as follows. The very first student survey was completed in the Robert Tressell (RT) halls of residence and was catalogued as RT1. The twenty-fifth student questioned was also the first social science (SS) student surveyed and was therefore catalogued as SS1(25); identifying the course (SS), a unique social science identity number (1) and a position in the running total of students surveyed overall (25). Social Science students were generally of local origin, women and mature. A broadcast media (BM) student can be identified as BM10 (67) reflecting that this student was the tenth surveyed on the course, the sixty-seventh overall. This BM10(67) student was surveyed in their second year of , and from the degree course more likely to reflect a student who had moved into the town or commuted daily to Hastings.

Coding was also used to identify additional students' comments within field notes. These were made through discussion at the time of the survey completion and transcribed by myself. I coded the statements for date and location. Therefore, a field

note comment made by a Broadcast Media student was given the following code FN4-BM (Field Note, 4 [4 reflects the field note group and identifies as January 2011- the month in which these field notes were taken], - Broadcast Media).

5.3 About where students live

A complete introductory section of the survey focussed on where students chose to live (home-bases, commuter, or moved away from home). These choices affect the formation of student identities, both individually and collectively (Bauböck 2003). Related political theory of student and place identity has been neglected and is seen as a further justification for the chapters within this thesis. It is envisaged that final conclusions will reflect explanatory analysis for dissemination.

First year students who are new to the town having moved for the purpose of study, are most likely to live in Robert Tressell halls of residence (RT), Warrior Square Gardens, approximately one mile along the seafront from the main university campus (see Figures 5.1, 5.2).

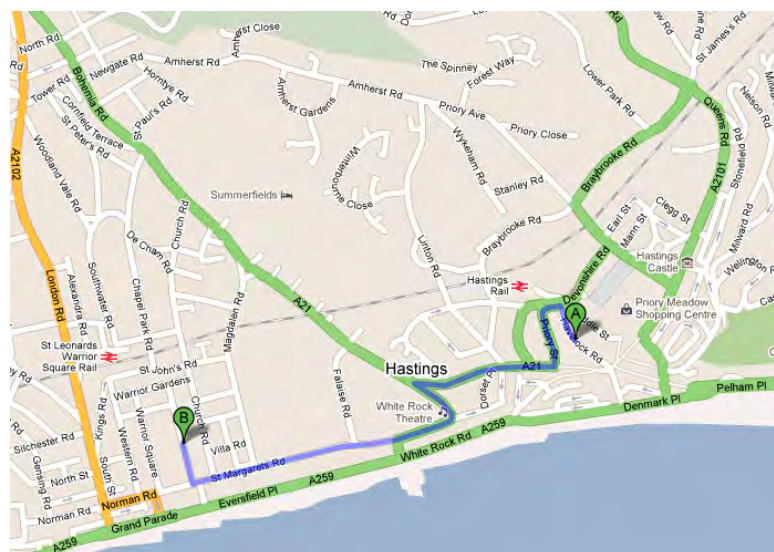


Figure 5.1: Map of University of Brighton in Hastings (A) and Warrior Sq Gdns (B) Source: Google



Figure 5.2: Warrior Square Gardens (RTH is mid terrace to the left)
Source: Hastings Borough Council

In articulating areas where they would choose to live and areas where they would not choose to live, students were very clear in their choices. St Leonards on Sea, despite the (re)gentrification (Shah 2011) did not receive favourable comments. Living in Robert Tressell halls of residence had impacted upon student experience (discussed in Chapter 7). Student selections of place identity together with spaces and places that reflect importance in structuring their own identities are discussed in Chapter 8.

5.3.1 Where did you come from?

In analysing the question from where students have arrived, I was required to consider terminology from the perspective of political theory upon the wider concepts (Bauböck 2003). Proposed theoretical classifications are not without difficulties, as Trueba (2009) discussed there are dichotomies of ‘macro’ and ‘micro’, ‘explanatory’ and ‘applied’ which can deny cultural contributions, important within singular and collective place identities. Terminology used here is not without difficulty, the case of a Hastings resident student can see the student referred to as ‘home-based’ - but does

this imply a younger student living with parents? As identified earlier, a number of home-based students are mature women, often with children, and under-represented in academic research on students (Wainwright and Marandet 2010). If the label 'local' is used - then how long will they have been resident in the town? How long does a student live in a place to 'earn' the title of a 'local'? Or should the chosen term be 'local origin' student? For the case of the student who has 'moved-away' - does this clearly imply that they have moved into Hastings for the purpose of university? Would external origin student comply with political theory? Is the term 'migrant' student correct from a geographical perspective? Or does this imply that they belong to a 'migrant group' (Allen and Massey 1995) – And, does this have connotations of 'otherness' or 'remove' cultural identity? What of the wider issues with such geographical mobilities? There is no easy terminological answer and there is potential for slippages within the categorisation.

Within this research the reference will generally be local and external students, to differentiate between those who had an established home in the town prior to university and those who moved into the town for the purpose of study. The photo elicitation analysis explored how students classify themselves in narrating their own identities. Within final dissemination I will ensure I clarify the reason for selected terminology for each reference.

Survey Q1.11 asked the students how long they had lived in the Hastings area and were provided with a range to select their answer from including: 'Less than a year' [37%] for those students in halls of residence who were surveyed at the end of their first year; '1-3 years' [18%]; '3-10 years' [7%], '10+ years' [8%] often considered a

colloquial threshold for ‘becoming’ a local; and ‘all of your life’ [16%]. Table 5.1 identifies these findings below.

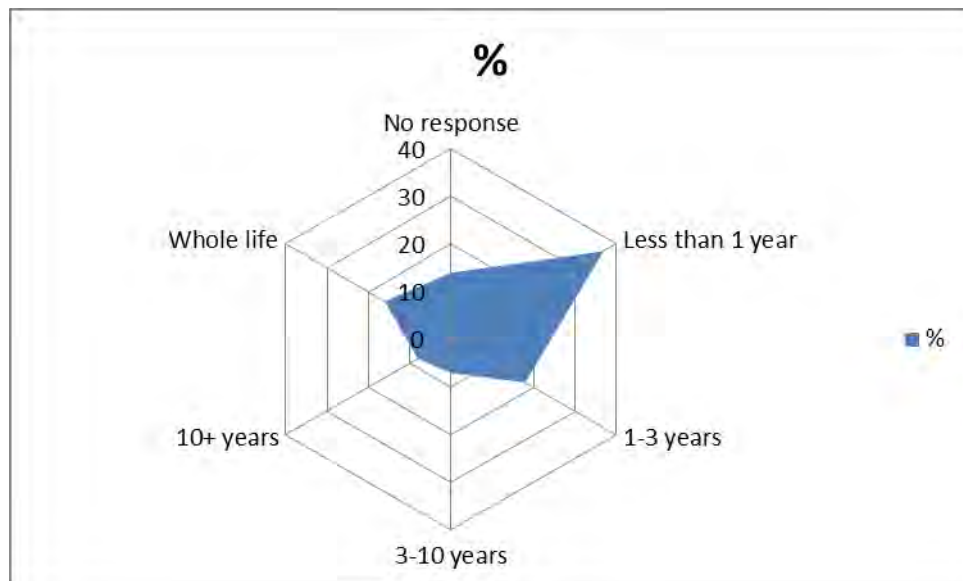


Table 5.1: Q1.11 How long have you lived in the Hastings area?

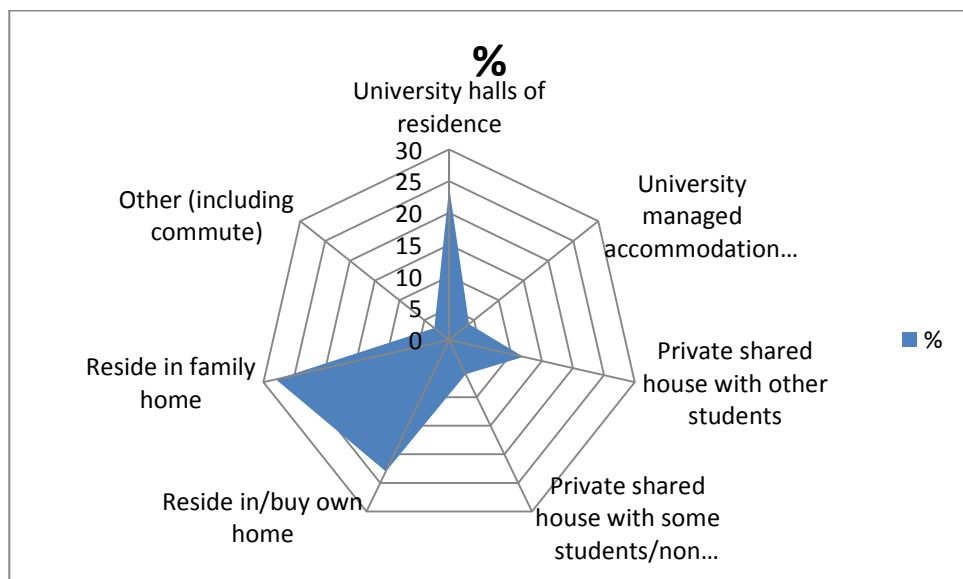


Table 5.2: Q1 What is your type of accommodation for this year?

Where the students were living at the time they answered the survey is referred to in Table 5.2 above. The table shows that approximately 51% of the students identified themselves as residing in their own home/with family, whilst 55% identify having lived in Hastings for up to three years (Table 5.1). This is an interesting local result

because it also reflects an increase in external students since the University Health Statistics (2007/8) found approximately 40% external students.

The recruitment of external students was attributed to the successful interest in recruitment for the range of Broadcast Media degrees, which largely attracts external students and saw rapid growth of the uptake and courses offered. However, it should be noted that only 25% of survey respondents are identified as on Broadcast Media courses (although further Broadcast Media student responses could have been incorporated through Joint Honours degrees).

Broadcast Media students spoke about commuting to Hastings reflecting the following reasons related to the particular course of choice:

‘...I travel from Brighton because I didn’t want to move to Hastings...’

FN:5 - BM

‘...I commute because I really wanted this course and if you want to study Broadcast Media at the University of Brighton, Hastings is the only place you can do it...’

FN:5 - BM

‘...If there was a university in Crawley with a Broadcast Media course I would have studied there...’

FN:4 - BM

Table 5.3 investigates whether patterns pertinent to age reflected whether younger students have greater mobility, as well as to compare and contrast the number of local origin students with their age ranges. This identifies that the university attracted 60 young students under the age of 25 – equivalent to 60%. Within the context of the

‘massification’ of university recruitment (Garratt and Forrester 2012), over half of these students were mobile and had migrated for university (see table (5.3 below).

	No response	Under 20	20-24	25-29	30+	Subtotal
No response	1	1	6	0	2	10
Less than 1 year	2	19	15	1	0	37
1-3 years	1	5	8	1	3	18
3-10 years	1	1	0	2	3	7
10+ years	1	0	0	0	7	8
Whole life	1	3	6	1	4	15
Commute	0	1	1	2	1	5
Subtotal	7	30	36	7	20	100

Table 5.3: Cross tabulation to show age of student against how long lived in Hastings

So, this posed the question of which destinations these students had arrived from. I was interested to see if students were attracted to study in Hastings from any particular areas. Unsurprisingly, 17% of students had moved from London, as this is reflected in the local wider Hastings communities. Local terminologies, in DFL’s (Down from London) residents, are represented particularly in the areas of (re)gentrification of St Leonards on Sea (Shah 2011). However, other statistics were more surprising (Table 5.4). The proportion of students that have migrated into the town had been relatively local; relocating from other districts within the county of East Sussex was also 17%. These were students moved from smaller towns and villages, and generally from the hinterland. Therefore, these students had made a decision to move into the town rather than commute (photo elicitation responses discusses these findings further in Chapter 7). This could be because transport links are weaker across country, because of transport costs or because of the attraction of the sea (a further question also explored in Chapter 6 through investigations of place identity). However, perhaps for very similar reasons, students from Eastbourne and Brighton tend to choose to commute (better infrastructure and already live by sea).

The other surprising commute area was from Crawley, a long journey, as one student explained:

'...I live in Crawley, it is cheaper to commute and live at home with my parents than move to Hastings. My family and friends are in Crawley and I work near to my home. In Year 1 of my course I commuted twice per week. Now in Year 2 I commute 4 days a week. I come on the train, the journey takes about 2 hours each way...'

FN:4 - BM

The locations of students who had migrated from wider national or international places included Mansfield (x2), Hertfordshire, Luton, Scotland, Europe, Lithuania, and Cuba. The locations are charted against the length of time resident in Hastings to analyse whether the decision to move into the town was for the purpose of higher education study or whether it predated university application. These findings demonstrate that the two highest categories for external students still reflect a move within one year, indicating that students had mostly moved away from home to study (see Table 5.4).

	No response	Less than 1 year	1-3 years	3-10 years	10+ years	Whole life	Commute	Subtotal = %
No response / Always in Hastings / Commute	7	3	5	1	3	15	5	39
East Sussex/ Brighton	3	8	2	2	2	0	0	17
West Sussex	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	4
London	0	11	3	2	1	0	0	17
Surrey	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	4
Essex	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	3
Kent	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Hampshire	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Dorset	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
Home Counties / Midlands	0	2	2	1	0	0	0	5
North of England	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
Scotland	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
France	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Germany	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Lithuania	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Cuba	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Subtotal = %	10	37	18	7	8	15	5	100

Table 5.4: Q1.12 Where did you live previously?

In analysing the question where students have arrived from I was required to consider terminology. For the case of a Hastings resident, did this imply a younger student living at home with parents? If the label ‘local’ is used, then how long have they been resident in the town to earn the place of a ‘local’, or should this be ‘local-origin’ student? Or were they a ‘migrant’ student the terminology for which could also imply that they belong to a ‘migrant group’ (Allen and Massey 1995). Further, what of the wider connotations with such geographical mobilities? Other authors have referred to ‘home-based/move-away from home’ (Chow and Healey 2008), ‘traditional/non-traditional’, (Chatterton and Hollands 2003), local/non-local (Holdsworth 2006, Holton 2013). There is no easy answer. For the purpose of this research that is place-based I began using ‘home-based’ and ‘migrant’ but with recent media construction

of the word ‘migrant’ linked to the current refugee crisis, it is more pertinent to select the references local and external students.

The external students’ place of origin varies widely with as seen, most moving from London or from within East Sussex. I engaged further with some of these students through the photo elicitation process and developed further understanding of what it means to be a student moving into a new university town without a higher education history. The external student experience is contrasted with local-origin students throughout the analysis to investigate similarities and difference.

It would appear gender does not affect decisions about commuting or moving away from home to university halls. Table 5.5 shows what type of accommodation students lived in and whether female or male. This analysis identifies 17 female students and 8 male students residing at home with family. With 15 female and 8 male residing in own home.

	No Response	♀	♂	Subtotal
No response	0	0	0	0
University halls of residence	1	11	12	24
University managed accommodation (eg shared house)	0	3	1	4
Private shared house with other students	0	5	7	12
Private shared house with some students/non students	0	2	4	6
Reside in/buy own home	0	15	8	23
Reside in family home	3	17	8	28
Other	0	1	2	3
Subtotal	4	54	42	100

Table 5.5: Cross tabulation to show the gender of students and where they lived at time of survey

Holdsworth (2009) references a greater number of women than men staying at home whilst attending university, particularly related to cultural background, more often

young Asian women (as discussed in Chapter 2). The gender and ethnicity divides of students who choose to live at home do not appear in depth in recent research (Holdsworth 2006, 2009, Munro et al 2009, Holton 2013) and would benefit from further investigation in relation to place. See Table 5.6 for the student self-identification of ethnicity in Hastings.

	Frequency	%
No response	14	14
White British	67	67
White Irish	1	1
Any other white background	7	7
Mixed - White and Black African	1	1
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	1	1
Mixed - White and Asian	1	1
Mixed - any other background	1	1
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	1
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	1
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	1	1
Any other Asian background	0	0
Black or Black British – African	4	4
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0
Any other Black background	0	0
Total	100	100

Table 5.6: Q4.6 How do you prefer to classify your ethnicity?

The students were asked to describe their ethnicity, for a commitment to equalities is an important consideration for the research into the formation of identities and an inclusive study involving possible consideration of geographies of exclusion (Sibley 2003). The identification of ethnic background would enable me to investigate any anomalies and compare the participant's ethnicity to see whether a discrepancy was valid. Although perhaps interestingly, the academic health report for the University of Brighton in Hastings (2008) had identified a larger proportion of students of mixed-heritage background attending the University. This number reflected more than three times the local population, and when comparing the statistics for Brighton where the

students of mixed-heritage reflected the local Brighton diversity statistics, there was a significant increase in Hastings. It was hoped that some of these students would self-identify in the questionnaire and that a picture may form through analysis of this data to reason this three-times-larger-than-the-local-population statistic. Later, I discuss student identities further with the notion of liminal spaces (living on the edge) and the traditional seaside town, spaces not usually associated with the Black and minority ethnic community (Burdsey 2013). The ethnicity statistics provided by the second year cohort did not reflect the academic health results and the issues remain outside of the scope for this research. The majority of students identified themselves of UK origin (87%) demonstrated below in Table 5.7.

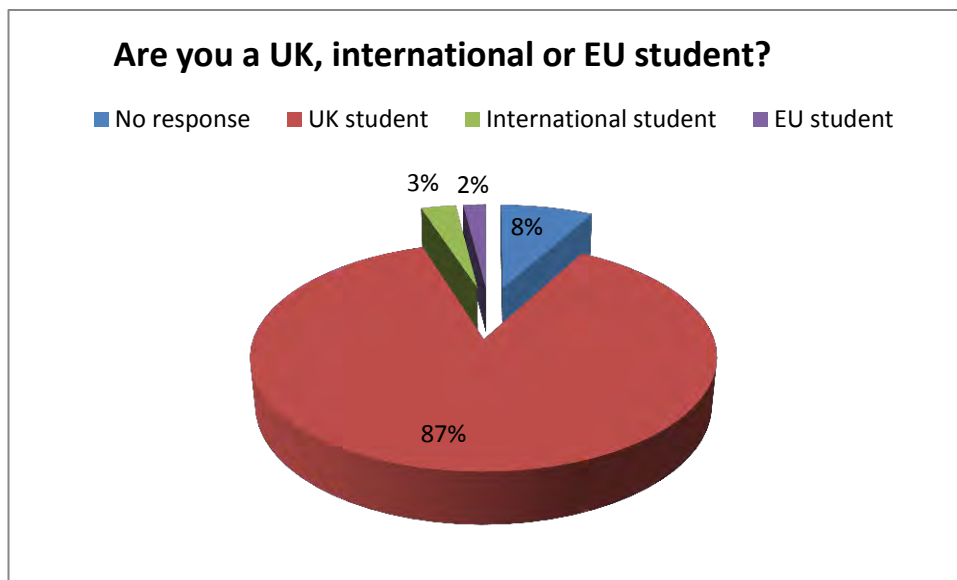


Table 5.7: Q4.4 Are you a UK, international or EU student?

Student origins are explored in greater detail in the following section. Considering concerns of importance the students have identified in relation to accommodation.

5.3.2 What are they looking at?

The University of Brighton in Hastings was opened in 2003 as part of the, then Labour, Government's education led regeneration and contributed to the aims of Denham's New University Challenge (DIUS 2008). The local aims were multi-layered to: widen participation, increase opportunities for local students to take up higher education, and for the retention of skilled graduates to assist the deprived seaside town's regeneration (as discussed in Chapters 3 & 8). The opportunities for the town to capitalise on increasing numbers of students and to engage them with economic, social and cultural activities are dissemination aims behind this research into how student identities are shaped and the wider student experience. It explains the importance of the key informant interviews to see what (if any) influences town and policy holder participants had to shape student identities through governance and social responsibilities. Landlords were also part of this enquiry (and see section 5.3.2.2).

Hubbard (2009), Smith (2009), and Rhodes and Rugg (2009) have led recent academic debate into student accommodation developments, as student numbers increase. Student housing has developed a growing interest, in part because of the guaranteed, secured income to benefit landlords during a period of recession. Larger organisations are building purpose built accommodation to meet the demands of young, 'savvy' students who want the latest technology as standard. In some 'univer'cities' the familiar, 'grotty', damp student accommodation in HMO's (Houses of Multiple Occupation) no longer dominates the rental scene. National organisations such as UNITE (www.unite-students.com) offer new student housing developments in most large cities. In London, the Carlyle Group seized the opportunity for a multi-

million pound offer in student accommodation when the company realised the existing market could only cater for 16% of students in the City (www.propertyweek.com). In support of good quality student housing practice the UNIPOL charity set up in the 1970's and the organisation has developed a training and accreditation arm ANUK to support accommodation standards, including the National Code of Standards for Larger Developments. (www.unipol.org.uk).

In the context of Hastings and St Leonards where overall student numbers were planned to grow to 1500-2000 (Else 2014 after Crampton), smaller landlords did not seem to have responded to the opportunities of providing student housing in the town (see Chapter 7). With the exception of Roost that has managed the university halls of residence - currently 60 rooms, with planning permission for an additional 150 rooms (see Figure 5.3), and some further individual houses under university management adjacent to the main campus.



Figure 5.3: Robert Tressell Halls managed by Roost Property Company
Source: M Curtis

In Section 1 of the questionnaire students were asked: ‘About where you live’. These questions were placed first as a way to engage the students with the survey and designed with analysis in mind to inform university, town and local landlord policy to meet the student’s requirements. Table 5.2 demonstrated students’ current accommodation (at the time of the survey). This gave a range of responses and included responses directly about Robert Tressell halls of residence, managed by local property company Roost.

5.3.2.1 What price accommodation?

Students commented on the type of accommodation, whether this was their first choice of accommodation, how much they paid for their current accommodation and how much they were prepared to pay weekly to obtain their first choice. The University of Brighton had been investigating taking on the management of additional student accommodation and it is hoped the information provided by the students is useful to inform this planning. Table 5.8 shows the weekly rent students paid at the time of the research and the amount of rent that students were prepared to pay in order to achieve their ideal accommodation.

	Students’ PRESENT rent %	Rent students WILLING to pay %
No response	8	55
Less than £70	29	8
£71-£80	6	9
£81-£90	13	13
£90+	44	14
Total	100	100

Table 5.8: Cross tabulation to show the rent students currently and are willing to pay

The average weekly rent of the students is in excess of £90 in keeping with local rents for a one bedroomed property (£90.90/£91.15 per week) but greater than the average price of a room in shared accommodation (£60/£65 per week) for 2010/2012 respectively (Hastings Borough Council, 2012). However, students clearly find this expensive as they are not willing to increase their rent to improve their accommodation. I referred to 'savvy' students in Chapter 2 and again here students are aware of how much they are prepared to pay to achieve their desired accommodation. These findings will be disseminated to the University Accommodation Office to inform their revised planning for student accommodation in Hastings.

The research investigates living spaces further in Chapter 7 in relation to meaning attachment, sense of belonging and place identity (Taylor 2010, Chow and Healy 2008).

5.3.2.2 Accommodation benefits

I wanted to identify the key accommodation benefits to residing in student's present accommodation and what was important in identifying neighbourhoods to live in. Again, the intention was to feed into the town's political governance structures, neighbourhood regeneration aims, local landlords and the University's own development plan for accommodation. The students' suggestions included, meeting new people, space, transport, amenities, security, price and location. Whilst a broad range of responses was received (see Table 5.9); the most important factors identified were location (46%), good room size (41%), access to the internet (40%), nearby shopping amenities (39%). However, as discussed above the students were either not

willing to state, or not willing to increase their rent in order to achieve these benefits.

Those who selected other, mostly referred to family commitments and children.

	Frequency	Frequency as % of ALL selections (354)	Out of 100 students as %
Social aspect (meeting new people)	26	7.34	26
Good room size	41	11.58	41
Public transport	27	7.62	27
Amenities nearby (shop, supermarket etc)	39	11.01	39
Night time activities (bars, clubs, restaurants)	24	6.77	24
Internet access	40	11.29	40
Sports nearby	10	2.82	10
Communal areas	11	3.10	11
Security	30	8.47	30
Cheap	30	8.74	30
Parking	16	4.51	16
Location	46	12.99	46
Other	14	3.95	14

Table 5.9: Q1.4 What are the key benefits to residing in your present type of accommodation? (Please tick ALL relevant)

5.3.2.3 Neighbourhood benefits

There is scholarly research suggesting that student neighbourhoods attract creative communities (Florida 2004) and St Leonards on Sea has been the subject of its own recent regeneration research (Shah 2011) that discusses the ‘lure’ of St Leonards and the ‘gathering of entrepreneurs’. Robert Tressell halls sit within Central St Leonards, a neighbourhood regeneration area which had received sustained and targeted support from central government (2003-2013) (Peters 2013). The rise of the area has featured in many recent press articles (including Dyckhoff 2010, Finnigan 2014, Gillilan 2014). However, students living in St Leonards did not seem aware of the benefits reported in national press coverage, nor did they seem to engage with:

'...the growing number of local independent cafes, shops and galleries which are making the neighbourhood a more 'funky', desirable place to live...'

KI:2 2011



Figure 5.4: Images of independent cafes/shops/restaurants
Source: Google images

Subsequent student questioning focussed on the types of neighbourhood that interested them in order to identify what they saw as important place features, and to disseminate these findings to those who have political influence on the formation of student places. Students were asked to select from a range and include their own ideas for what the benefits might be. The range included; close to town, close to sea, student community, shops, bars, pubs and transport etc. A wide scope of responses demonstrated that all features were important, see Table 5.10.

	Frequency	Frequency as % of ALL selections (801)	Out of 100 students as %
Local shops	74	9.23	74
Internet access	62	7.74	62
Gym/sports facilities	34	4.24	34
Student community	33	4.11	33
Doctor's surgery/Dentist	34	4.24	34
Close to Hastings town centre	58	7.24	58
Close to sea	44	5.49	44
Supermarket	53	6.61	53
Bars/clubs	47	5.86	47
Pubs	50	6.24	50
Close to campus	45	5.61	45
Public transport	47	5.86	47
Close to central St Leonards	11	1.37	11
Sense of freedom	42	5.24	42
Sense of wider community (clubs, arts, events, music venues)	20	2.4	20
Other	5	0.62	5

Table 5.10: Q1.6 What type of neighbourhood is important for your accommodation?
(Please tick ALL relevant)

The most popular choices were local shops, internet access, and close to Hastings town centre (74%, 62% and 58% respectively). Students generally never identified additional benefits but some additional comments through the survey included:

- 'nice area/safe'* - SS28(52)
- 'living remotely'* - SS31(55)
- 'no-one nearby'* - BM9(66)

In opposition to this desirability, this suggests that students felt St Leonards was neither a 'good' or 'safe' neighbourhood, and that it was too busy. However, this ideal of remoteness conflicts with the majority of student responses who when asked 'where they would most like to live' opted to be closer to the University site, in the main town centre. Again, this links to place attachment and place identity as students have a stronger preference for the town centre and spaces near to university.

Student experience and neighbourhood engagement are discussed further below and within the photo elicitation analysis relating to student places and spaces in Chapters 7 and Chapter 8 that explore the attraction of the seaside (if any) for students considering their accumulation of cultural capital, looking for a place of study, and whether there is an attraction to move to, and between, coastal locations when selecting university place benefits. Whilst Duke-Williams (2009) notably referred to the patterns of movement undertaken by undergraduates and upon graduation, there is a lack of information about coastal movement. Future research possibilities could investigate the benefits and attraction of liminal spaces and patterns of migration for students for example to Hastings from other coastal towns and from Hastings to other coastal universities.

A sub group who chose to commute daily to Hastings provided further insight whilst undertaking the questionnaire; their comments were transcribed from field notes. The main reason provided for the preferred choice of travel into Hastings, was because the students would not consider living in Hastings, although other reasons such as family, relationships or cheaper to live at home than commute were also given (see also above section 5.3.1).

5.4 About university

The penultimate section of the analysis investigated what the students identified in the ‘About university’ questions. What had influenced their choice of university and whether they were the first in their family to undertake study within higher education. This analysis is significant with the government’s on-going commitment to widening

access, development of increased university provision, and the emphasis on widening participation to reach local students without family higher education tradition.

5.4.1 First in family

The students were asked to identify whether they had brother, sister or cousin who had attended university. Followed by whether either parent or carer had been to university. The findings in the table below (5.11) show that more than half of the students who attend the University of Brighton in Hastings are the first in the family to do so.

	Brother/sister/ cousin attended university?		
Either parent/carer attended university?	No	Yes	Subtotal
No	56	28	84
Yes	9	7	16
Subtotal	65	35	100

Table 5.11: Cross tabulation to show students who are first in family

Remembering also Table 5.3 earlier identified that 66% of students were under the age of 25 years. Building the profile of this second year cohort further, these students have mostly moved into the area, and now here too, are likely to be the first in their family to register for higher education.

5.4.2 Why Hastings?

Factors which influenced students' decisions to attend the University of Brighton in Hastings are central to the research into the formation of student identities and the similarities and differences of student experience. Further, they are crucial to the research dissemination, towards sustainability and governance of the university, and

for feedback to town' key informants who it is suggested have a role in shaping student identities.

A range of prompts were given to the students including near to sea, part of University of Brighton, course offer, size or facilities of University of Brighton in Hastings (then UCH), local, tuition fees etc. (the full selection is listed below, see Table 5.12), again with understanding that student answers could be influenced through the order of presentation. However, there was space provided for the students to self-identify additional categories which had influenced their decision. The most notable from a young student whose decision made due to:

'...I wanted the gayness of Brighton...'

FN1 – RT

Concerns were raised about the safety of this student, taken from field notes, and pertinent within later chapters on the formation of student identities. However, the proximity to Brighton has also been an issue for other students:

'To be honest I was only told it was Hastings at the last minute...Thought I would be studying in Brighton'

BM4 (61)

'Thought was closer to Brighton'

RT (23)

Place identity is clearly a concern for students and Hastings simply does not have the same city attraction, or city 'offer' as Brighton. However, the University of Brighton has already commenced a response to this issue by rebranding the University Centre Hastings as the University of Brighton in Hastings, and as the University's fifth campus, located in Hastings. Against the selected reasons for choosing the University of Brighton in Hastings (UBH), students were asked to score how important these

influences were (course offer, size or facilities of UBH, local, tuition fees etc) by answering all questions with a rating (1-Very important to 4-Not important). See the answers below in Table 5.12.

	0 = No answer	1 = Very important	2 = Quite important	3 =Not so important	4 = Not important
Near to sea/coast	22	6	16	23	33
Part of University of Brighton	16	30	32	11	11
Courses offered	10	58	28	3	1
Size of UBH	21	10	15	36	18
Facilities at UBH	20	22	31	18	9
Friends attending UBH	23	4	9	19	45
Cheap to live in Hastings	24	13	14	25	24
Local to family home	14	40	10	10	26
Existing connections with Hastings	22	20	6	13	39
Tuition fees	23	10	16	18	33
Other (please specify)	88	2	1	1	8

Table 5.12: Q2.2 What factors influenced your decision to come to UBH? (Tick ALL relevant)

These results in the above table identified that the ‘University of Brighton’ (62% combined) was very/quite important, and the ‘courses offered’ (58%) was the most significant indicator for choosing to study in Hastings. This was closely followed by ‘a university local to home’ (40%), as intended under the development of local universities under the widening participation strategies (Burke 2012). Those who identified other as important generally referred to family commitments, although several used the opportunity to restate that they did not wish to be in Hastings and had thought they would have closer links to Brighton.

Many of the mature, local origin students have identified in discussion with I that it was the proximity to home, together with hours that were flexible to suit childcare arrangements, which encouraged their application to university. A decision they would otherwise not have made. There have been further testimonies to course

leaders who have understood and encouraged students with young families. Further, students have identified the value they place on attending a smaller institution where ‘everyone knows everyone’ and supportive environments have been evident.

However, as previously mentioned, my field notes contain transcriptions of discussions with many disgruntled students who thought they were attending a campus closely connected with the Brighton campus and the City of Brighton, who were disappointed with the location of Hastings and St Leonards.

‘...Expected closer links between Brighton campus and Hastings, never realised distance between two...’

FN1 - RT

‘...Thought was in Brighton...’

FN2 - RT

‘...Go out in Brighton...’

FN3 – RT

It is doubtful the response in rebranding the University location will be enough to limit the concerns with place frustration. Solutions will contribute to the research outcomes, suggestions, dissemination and conclusions.

5.5 Conclusion

A profile of Hastings based students of the University of Brighton is beginning to emerge. It is diverse, reflective of government agendas that were expected to appeal to less ‘traditional’ students. Many of the cohort were young, moved away for university, some of whom have expressed frustrations at the lack of interconnectedness between Hastings and Brighton and the expenses incurred in order to extend social possibilities in Brighton. Some are mature, with children, who, without a local university would possibly have otherwise not engaged with a degree course (Wainwright and Marandet 2010). The ongoing research and analysis of the

formation of student identities explores how the student experience, local and external, intersects.

Students are moving in to the town of Hastings from other areas within East Sussex, whilst some choose to commute from these areas (particularly from Brighton, Eastbourne and Crawley). Commuters refer to the following reasons for this option: to save money by living at home, retain work commitments, or retain links with friends and family. Significant numbers of DFL (Down from London) students are selecting Hastings as their place of study but these students do not appear to be engaging with local opportunities or benefits in the area, which distinguishes them from the typical DFL's who are moving into the area, to participate in a developing creative community (Shah 2011). I respect that this could similarly be a true reflection of other young people in other student univer'cities'.

Accommodation has been important to students who want to be close to university and social spaces. The average rent of £90+ per week without food seems high in relation to the 2010 average room rental price for the town of £60 (Hastings Borough Council 2012). Further discussion related to living spaces and places will emerge from the photo elicitation study and be analysed within Chapter 7.

The heterogeneous student population reflected varied background issues and concerns as relevant to a large cohort of students from various places of origin and social backgrounds. This picture builds on the neglected profile of students' backgrounds to extend the work of Holdsworth (2006, 2009) and Holton (2013) with this snapshot of a particular student body in a new space of higher education.

6.0 Student identity: remaking spaces of higher education

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 explores the importance of place as a fundamental construct within this research and in section 6.2 challenges some of the notions of place as pertinent to the student experience and Hastings where the policy context driven by the Hastings and Bexhill Task Force under New Labour took a place-making driven approach to construct a new university town. This approach supports the research questions of that which influences the students' construction and formation of identities in a new space of higher education, whether there are similarities in the local origin or external origin experience and what impact this has upon identity and place association (further extended in Chapters 7 and 8). The discussion of how place is constructed and an introduction to how place identity is represented is demonstrated through research examples. These are combined with quotes that link student and key actor contributions on space and place to current theory within the case study of the University of Brighton in Hastings. Here also, I consider the transitional nature of place as relevant to students moving away from home, thus extending some of the work by Chow and Healey (2008) and Holdsworth (2009) and how spaces of higher education are remade in the process of student identity formation. This leads to the impacts of place and belonging for student identity construction and student mobilities which are demonstrated in section 6.2.

The following section 6.3 introduces the role of the university as the place of choice for study, moving the analysis further from the previous chapter to consider the influences behind the students' decisions, particularly in relation to social and economic capital. This leads to a discussion about student spaces as they self-

identified of importance and demonstrated through survey analysis, in-depth interviews and photo-storyboards in sections 6.3 and 6.4.

Final conclusions draw upon the importance of aesthetics and continuity related to place attachment and social capital (Hillier and Rooksby 2002, White and Green 2008) in the consideration of place from the students' points of view, the influence on student identity formation and student experience that lead into Chapters 7 and 8 exploring place concepts related to home and the town respectively.

6.2 Place concept, construction and identity

For the purpose of this research it was desirable to understand place from the students' and key actors' point of view and not to be steered by researcher's imposition. Therefore, during introductions and in-depth interviews I avoided defining place for participants thereby enabling the notion of place to come from the interviewee. It was essential for the participant to establish place construction through their own individual voice and for myself to be aware of my own positionality in the transcription and analysis. In this way the opportunity to be faithful to the research questions on the impact of place on student identity formation was respected. At the start of a photo elicitation interview, to create the individual student storyboards, I explained that there would be minimal two way communication to enable the participant to think and speak, and also for me to hear, without influence. For, as place is interpreted and defined and has different meanings to different people (Hubbard and Kitchin 2011), the purpose here was essential to listen to the student's self-construction of place.

Broadly, I use place in relation to social construction through the practices within a person's surrounding environment, and the links that exist with a place and the people who live there (Cresswell 2009, Hubbard and Kitchin 2011). I review student experience through space and place using the empirical data to explore the connections of young people's social construction of the town through spaces designed for particular uses and how they are (re)made through students use (Horschelmann and van Blerk 2012). This is relevant to the student experience (and see also later sections) for using the research coding framework to provide guidance for the analysis of these in-depth student interviews on place, and using the idea of attachment through life course, and place of birth, to link place and identity. For the process, the student had been provided with a disposable camera and asked to photograph 'what it is to be a student in Hastings'.

Taylor (2010) references family and historical roots in constructing local and regional identities (for example Scouse or Cockney). She refers to life courses through the notions of 'born and bred' (such as local town, place of birth or community) or 'property ladders' (move away from home, first property purchase, 'executive' home, retirement accommodation) but this is limited as it does not identify a period of 'studenthood' in either example. This research extends Taylor's (ibid) work to consider an additional period within life course expectations, especially relevant at a time when numbers of students are increasing (Burke 2012, Garratt and Forrester 2012). Further, this recognises that Taylor's approach lacks the fluidity which is pertinent to both geographical enquiry and particularly the hybridity of student identity (Holdsworth 2009). Tom, an external origin student who had moved from the Home Counties to Hastings spoke most directly about his identity and the hybridity of home and university:



Figure 6.1: Identity Ph.E:8 Tom, external origin student

Tom: *“Everything’s different really. I can’t rely on my parents now. My flat gets in a mess after a few pizzas and I have to sort things. I guess this picture [Fig 6.1] identifies me as a student. I mean, it’s a mass of t-shirts and jeans - with nothing smart in the middle. It’s a common student look - I wear jeans and trainers clubbing here [Hastings] - they’re more lenient here than home.”*

Researcher: Do you dress differently at home?

Tom: *“Not so much. I’ve got suits at home so have the option to wear them...I want to dress smarter in the 3rd Year, you know, less logos and so on. These [points to picture] are cheap, no impression is being made. As a student in Year 3 I shall be looking for work. And, I need to start censoring Facebook and Twitter so I don’t put off potential employers”.*

Ph.E:8 Tom: external origin

Brooks and Waters (2010) discuss youth mobilities linked to social networks, the imagination (and re-imagination) of self through critical examination of self-identity; such as Tom undertook throughout the interview making continual references to his independence and moving away from home, as important choices in the formation of his student experience. He discussed his responsibility to keep the flat tidy, having

left the parental home, and chose to leave his suits behind to construct a student identity that consisted of casual, branded clothing that he associated with reflecting studenthood.

Hillier and Rooksby (2002) explore the social interactions of a sense of place through references to Bourdieu's *habitus* (see also Chapter 2) and the interconnected roles - and behaviours - between the self and others, and the world. This is also pertinent to students' perceptions of leaving home for university and the requirement to establish a new sense of place. The research suggests that students consider both home and university as significant places and this is of importance to both local origin and external origin students. Holdsworth (2009) proposes the idea of boundaries that need to be crossed as relevant to local origin students who are members of their local community and need to move out or between them to gain identity beyond local to becoming a student [or rather, a local student].

Negotiating space, place and boundaries was a preoccupation for Maria, a mature student with a family, a resident of Hastings and photo elicitation participant, who described the admission process to her local university:

“Just to get into the place is like a gate...it was closed at the time....I took some steps and applied through UCAS. I came through clearance and had to get my overseas qualifications recognised through the British Council. This was difficult...I kept going back...These were narrow steps which became quite broad once I was in....this was a new beginning, a new life...”

Ph.E:2 Maria: local origin



Figure 6.2: Boundaries



Figure 6.3: Obstacles



Figure 6.4: Steps

Ph.E:2 Maria: local origin

Maria's ambitions contradict what Brooks and Waters (2010) determine as mobility capital due to her decision to enter higher education, study locally, and because of the grounded networks of family, friends and social connectivity. However, she has also demonstrated the geographies of exclusion coined by Sibley (2001) in reference to exclusion from certain places. Where barriers were demonstrated, Maria was required to negotiate - prior to entry (Fig 6.2): a) take steps to make an initial approach, b) enter the building, c) experience obstacles, and d) the frustrations of getting recognition for her overseas qualifications. In fact, Maria faced further

exclusion throughout her studenthood in her efforts to build the student identity she imagined (see also figures 6.3 and 6.4). She stated the desire to belong, to the university and to the student body, neither of which had been easy for her. In her wish to belong she had experienced isolation and exclusion.

6.2.1 Place theory and narrative: the student experience and student identity

To understand student experience as relevant to place identity it is necessary to consider where students have moved from or whether they have remained at home as a local student. The survey asked the question ‘Where did you come from?’ with a range of answers to also identify how long the student had lived in Hastings and where they had lived previously. I wanted to map both local and external origin students, identify trends or patterns of migration, and consider the similarities and differences of student experience and place identity construction amongst the 2010 entry cohort (50% response rate). The analysis is discussed in Chapter 5; therefore for the purpose of place identity here I focus on where students have migrated from and how long they have resided in the town (see Table 6.1 below).

	No response	Less than 1 year	1-3 years	3-10 years	10+ years	Whole life	Commute	Subtotal = %
No response / Always lived in Hastings / Commute	7	3	5	1	3	15	5	39
East Sussex/ Brighton	3	8	2	2	2	0	0	17
West Sussex	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	4
London	0	11	3	2	1	0	0	17
Surrey	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	4
Essex	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	3
Kent	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Hampshire	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Dorset	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
Home Counties / Midlands	0	2	2	1	0	0	0	5
North of England	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
Scotland	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
France	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Germany	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Lithuania	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Cuba	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Subtotal = %	10	37	18	7	8	15	5	100

Table 6.1: Where students have migrated from and how long have lived in the Hastings area (of those who answered survey questions. NB neither question was compulsory)

Of the students surveyed 50% were female and male and 55% had moved into the Hastings area in the last 3 years. Some of those moving into the town had arrived from other areas within East Sussex, whilst some choose to commute from quite a distance notably Brighton, Eastbourne and Crawley, all distances of between 40-120 minutes, and for example with no direct rail or road route between Hastings and Crawley. Set within this thesis and the context of increased participation by the non-traditional students, these commuters refer to the following reasons for this option: firstly to save money by living at home, to retain work commitments that also

supports their university costs and keeps them networked for post-study opportunities, or retain links with friends and family.

Significant numbers of DFL (Down from London) students are selecting Hastings as their place of study but these students do not appear to be engaging with local opportunities or benefits in the area (see also Chapters 7 and 8). This distinguishes them from the wider DFL's moving into the area, as part of the regeneration (Shah 2011). The halls of residence have sea views in St Leonards on Sea, but the neighbourhood of the town remains one of deprivation, despite neighbourhood regeneration which led one key informant to say of St Leonards on Sea:

“Hastings and St Leonards is not a cloned town...it's more quirky...the growing number of local independent cafes, shops and galleries ...are making the neighbourhood a more 'funky', desirable place to live...”

KI:2 2011

Chow and Healey (2008) consider students' sense of place through such changes in their environment or location, together with associated difficulties. They analyse the effects of meaning on place perception. The interview above represented one of the key actor's view of the town; someone with a responsibility for shaping the town that has become the students' neighbourhood, the opinion therefore is fixed in a local governance mind-set. However, the student's sense of place differs according to their age, their home experience, their student identity and how they use places and spaces in Hastings. Critical discursive psychologists theorise the transitional, fluid or changing state that is pertinent to the student's use of place. As Taylor reflects,

‘...[place] identity is understood in terms of what people *do* rather than what they *are*, as practice, process and performance rather than some fixed state or substance.’

Taylor 2010: 48

This theory is therefore relevant to the research into students’ construction and formation of identity and impact of experience on place. For when they discuss home, this is influenced through memories, feelings, behaviour, experience and so on (Taylor 2010). Creating a narrative based on historical associations of more symbolic meaning derived from particular topographies (Sarbin 2005).

Hazel, a local origin student was juggling her student experience through her love of books, family ties and full time work. She referred to,

“The table at my mum’s is clear. It’s easy to be at my mum’s...in mum’s kitchen I can make a mess. I was living with my brother but I struggled with his girlfriend and at his flat I was confined to my bedroom. There were more things around because of my niece... I still see her every day. At mum’s I can focus on my work. I bring my washing with me... I rely on mum to help.”

Ph.E: 4 Hazel: local origin

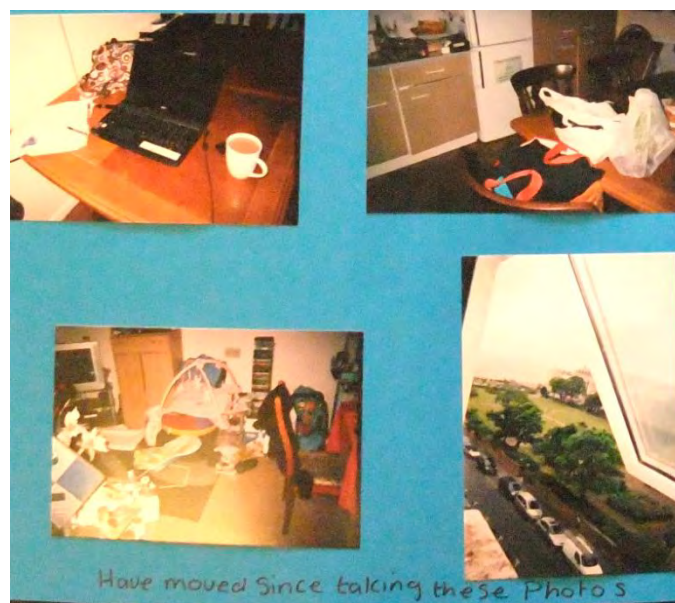


Figure 6.5: The view over Warrior Sq towards Robert Tressell halls
Ph.E:4 Hazel

The flat where Hazel stayed shared the same vista (Figure 6.5) as the students living in the Robert Tressell halls of residence on the opposite side of the gardens. Hazel talked about the external origin students,

Hazel: *“I liked the view. When we had snow and couldn’t get to uni I’d spend more time looking out of the window.”*

Researcher: “Did you see the students in the halls?”

Hazel: *“I did see them. I didn’t know them. I never spent a lot of time in the flat because I’m working late. I have 2 jobs and get back late, in the early hours of the morning. I need to work over the summer break then go back to ‘uni life’ at the end of the season.”*

Ph.E:4 Hazel: local origin

Hazel’s student identity is very different to that of the external students living opposite her. However, she is reflecting a pertinent student experience that is reflective of the wider group of local students currently recruited to universities following the New Labour widening participation ambitions (Garratt and Forrester (2012).

My research was to gather information between local and external origin students, however, there seems to be little crossover between the two. This is influenced by many factors including, age, family, residence etc. As stated by photo elicitation participants,

“Local students don’t make the effort to find out about events. We’ve bumped into them on student nights.”

Ph.E:1 Darren: external origin

“I’ve tried talking with them [external origin students]...tried talking to them in the pool rooms, engaging with them through things in common. We set up a Facebook group for our group work but texting follows and I always miss out. I have a family. I’ve chosen to be here. What they’re doing now [socialising] I’ve already done. When there are open days in the café that’s good, when there are workshops there I can meet with other students from outside of my group, that’s good.”

Ph.E:2 Maria: local origin

Massey (1994) refers to a sense of place shaped because of wider connections. I interpreted these as family for local origin students (local-cultural capital) and geographical (external origin). To stereotype a student as someone who is not from round here (Massey 1994) denies the 55-60% of students in Hastings who are local. Membership of the student ‘club’ could be expected to come from the shared experiences that make up student identity(s) regardless of origin or difference in class (Holdsworth 2009). Additional distinctions between class, social life, and student debt have been discussed earlier in reference to student stereotyping (see Chapter 2).

Darren [Ph.E:1] an external origin student discusses ‘bumping’ into local students making a clear distinction between the two groups (local-external). He refers to the external students as ‘them’ thus ‘othering’ their status. He bumped into them, rather than engaged with them or extended an invitation to join the groups together. Similarly, Maria [Ph.E:2] of local origin refers to trying to talk to ‘them’. Her expectations are for a common student identity, without local-external distinctions, but she only finds this through special communal events, facilitated by the University of Brighton Student Union, where she meets students [other mature women students] from other courses rather than her own broadcast media studies.

Healey (2002, 2004) theorises the role of governance and physical development within this discussion and with relevance to this research in Hastings. For, there are key organisational actors who influence students' relationship with place. Healey refers to governance as more than people who create jobs or buildings stating influences that:

‘...impinge on our daily life worlds and our identities...’

Healey 2002:173

Another aspect of place identity in Hastings is the attraction of local origin students (around 60%) frequently mature students with established ‘local’ capital in social networks, families and friends (see table 6.2). As a new space of higher education the reputation trades on high specification facilities and personable approach by the staff in order to compete for an emblem of distinction amongst the ‘parentocracy’ (Brown 1997). Brooks (2008) unpicks the role of parents in selecting and co-selecting university places for their children identifying the decisions afforded through class, familiarity and experience. Add to this is opportunity, through schooling and connection. For, it is parents who can demonstrate significant cultural capital through familiarity with universities (Brooks 2008), together with the economic capital for the ‘right’ education, that acts as preparation or ‘thrust’ for the university place of their choice (Pugsley 2004). Those with some knowledge of higher education will ‘try’ out the market and those without knowledge or experience of the field will ‘trust’ choices (ibid). The research undertaken in Hastings demonstrates ‘trusting’ (Pugsley 2004) students and their parents, with a majority body of local origin students with their locally accrued capital, and choosing to study in their home town.

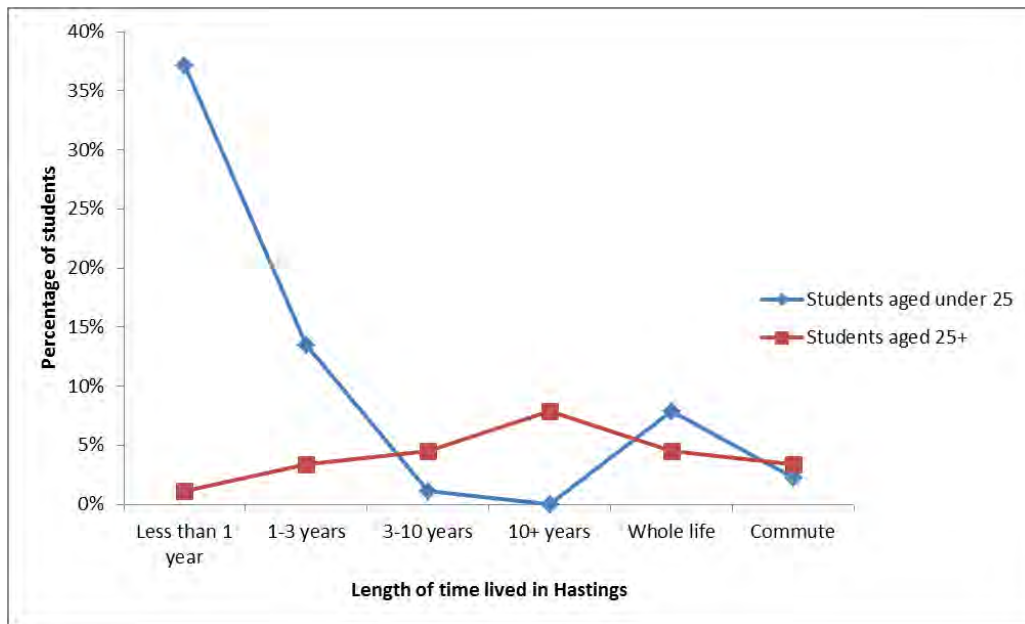


Table 6.2: Percentages of students under/over age 25 and length of time lived in Hastings

Chapter 5 demonstrated the frustrations of many of these students who thought they were to study in Brighton or that the Hastings Campus would be closer to Brighton. Indeed they had placed considerable ‘trust’ or faith in their application, often attracted by the Broadcast Media courses and facilities discussed below (see Section 6.4).

Also for consideration is the intersection between time and spatial divisions related to student habitus. The student experience at university cannot fail to be influenced by buildings, physical places and space. Dovey (2005) refers to the institutional capital of a degree award, title and knowledge which is of social value. These influence student experience in a co-existence with the,

‘...silent complicity of architecture.’

Dovey 2005:285

In Hastings the purpose for the introduction of higher education has been to transform socio-economic regeneration through knowledge, skills and physical space. Dovey (ibid) discusses the value of cultural capital in relation to communities and identifies

an absence of trust, isolation and alienation in communities without such institutional capital, stating that buildings and neighbourhoods provide social structure and grounding for neighbourhoods.

In relation to students in or passing through the town - the narratives they create - sense of place, and experience of Hastings, actors of governance subtly influence their wider view and therefore their identities – hence their inclusion in the interview process for this research. For some students the expectations of building cultural capital through place have not been met by the town of Hastings and so they have started to investigate different spaces such as Eastbourne (and for further discussion in Chapter 8).

“My house mates and I are moving to Eastbourne next year. We prefer to live there because of the night life. Hastings is going to be amazing, definitely, it will get better when there are more students.”

Ph.E1:Darren: external origin

Hazel [Ph.E4] a local origin student shaped her identity(s) according to the academic terms. Her experience was that of a student when attending university but clearly during vacations she identified differently, as a local woman, with local family priorities who worked very long hours. Her socialising tended to be around her work rather than with other students, although she mentions car sharing. She was employed both in a local bar and working with children during term time, and increasing her hours during the holidays. Hazel was conscious of her multiple identities,

“I’m interested in women and work appearances. Sometimes, for one job I just put a t-shirt on but when I’m in the bar I put more make up on, then I talk to people more and socialise through work. I don’t have time to socialise out of work. I know this is my work identity. I’m a different character in different

places. In any form of education, I'm the quiet one. I was bullied at school and this is always at the back of my mind."

Ph.E:5 Hazel: local origin

Hazel [Ph.E:5] and Kev [Ph.E:6] both of local origin, referred to a different sense of place on different campuses of the university. Whilst the Hastings Campus is often identified as small and friendly, the students have also been keen to make comparisons with Brighton spaces.



Figure 6.6: Brighton campus

Ph.E: 6 Kev: local origin

"The Brighton picture has a sports field on the campus. You feel that you're at a university there. I looked back across the field and asked if I should go back [stops to write 'fear' and posts onto storyboard]...I found the Student Union building, I was stumbling on these places quite easily, bumping into people easily. People were there having lunch even though it was a Saturday. Hastings Campus is quiet, the downfall is the size of place...In Brighton we went for drinks after with the lecturers...going to Brighton for the seminar was an excuse for students to go to Brighton University."

Ph.E:6 Kev: local origin

Interestingly, and without any prompt, Kev [Ph.E:6] also referred to the University of Brighton in Hastings as 'home'. He took photos of the campus before he left Hastings and again when he returned. As he had labelled the Brighton Campus with 'fear', he labelled the Hastings Campus with 'home'. Hazel also referred to her visit to the campus in Brighton. She had earlier referred to being 'the quiet one' in Hastings. Again, Brighton was to reflect another aspect of her student identity,

Hazel: "I'm a different character in a different place...I contribute more in Brighton. Everyone knows each other, people ask what I'm doing...there's more structure there. We work in seminar groups so I have to make an effort to speak."

Researcher: "Do you talk less...in Hastings?"

Hazel: "We're not put into seminar groups here in Hastings. I won't talk aloud in class. In a big group it reminds me of being bullied in school. In Brighton the seminar teacher is good at what he does, is not so serious about it."

Ph.E:5 Hazel: local origin

These local students identify that they are aiming to increase social and cultural capital through their university enrolment and expectations of the university's role in helping to shape and improve their access and experience. The next section looks further at the role of university in helping students achieve the best possible student experience whilst in the town.

6.3 Place identity: university

The importance of students' own formation of space and place through the opportunity to be reflexive is demonstrated further through the photo elicitation

methodology in this research. Initially the student selected an image as seen in that precise moment; then reflected on the image when developed; considered the position of the image - within the wider group and its relevance to space, place and identity; and lastly again through the construction of narrative to accompany the process. During discussion with the researcher, the student is reflecting upon the construction of space and place from their individual perspective. As indicated earlier, there is a period of quiet reflection as the student formulates a storyboard, prior to the narrative with the researcher. The students' results demonstrate the importance of space, particularly the university environment and other places in the town which students frequent (see also Chapters 7 and 8).

A recurring student theme through reflection of university experience and common shared space has not only been the social areas (discussed below), classrooms or lecture theatre as might be expected, but due to the rapidly expanding broadcast media degrees offered at the University of Brighton in Hastings, the focal point and attraction for these particular students (mostly of external origin and under 25 years) has been an appreciation of the industry standard facilities and equipment on offer. As Rebecca [Ph.3:E] discussed:

“This is a media heavy university with students using space for filming. Having the studio space is central to being a student here...”

Ph.3:E Rebecca: local origin

Further, she stresses student ownership of space:

“Inside uni’ we have BURST a radio project with live shows and a new music show. We [students] review band and write about new bands. A lot of students get involved: doing admin, radio editing, timings and so on. The BURST Society is student led with radio events and we provide radio for other

University of Brighton events [referring to other campuses in Eastbourne and the city of Brighton]. We do this beyond term time - the interviews etc - not radio shows.”

Ph.E:3 Rebecca: local origin



Figure 6.7: Burst Radio

Ph.E: 3 Rebecca

Brooks (2008) discusses the decisions prospective students undertake, relevant to my research in Hastings, firstly where students choose to apply for university, and only second their subject choice, the broadcast media subjects are the key attraction for many to the University of Brighton in Hastings. This is demonstrated in the fast expansion of student interest in the subjects and accounts for a significant proportion of the rapidity of growth of the university in Hastings (with 2014 entry demonstrating a growth over just over seventeen times that upon opening eleven years earlier). See also Table 6.3 for the survey results from the second year cohort (100 students) demonstrating influencing factors when choosing to study at the University of Brighton in Hastings. 86 out of the 90 students who responded to this question selected the courses offered as very important or quite important.

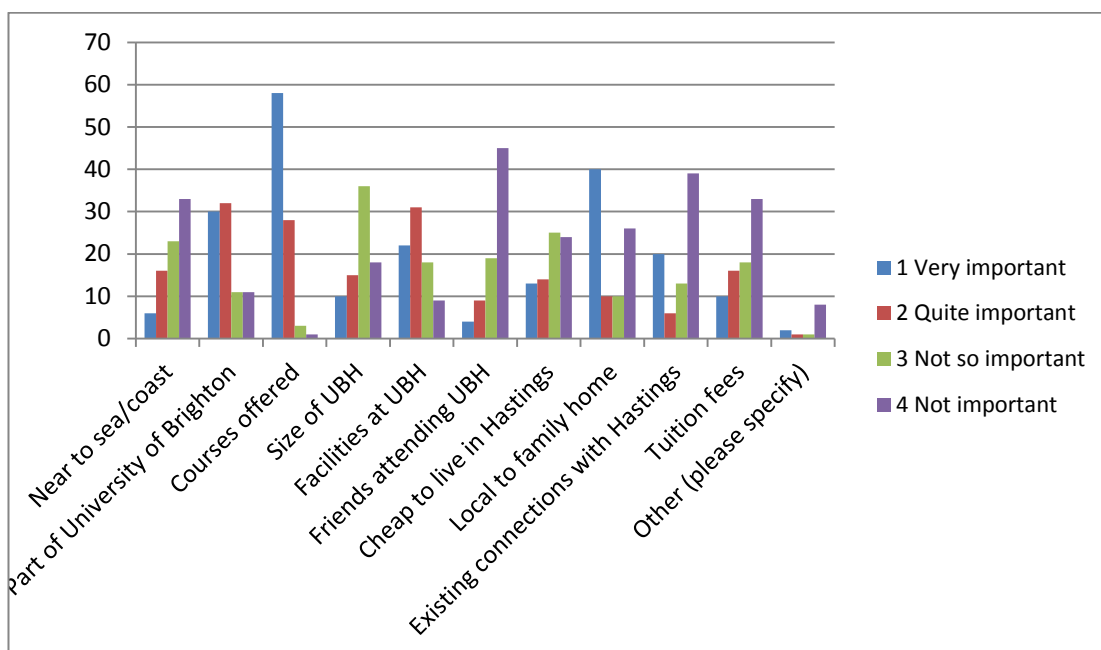


Table 6.3: Q2.2 What factors influenced your decision to come to UBH?
(Students were invited to tick ALL relevant)

Darren [Ph.E:1 external origin], another broadcast media student reflected on university media spaces and prioritised the studios as an important reason for his choice of study at the University of Brighton in Hastings. Whilst arranging the images to create his storyboard, he mentioned:

“The equipment is top quality...erm...industry standard...we’re taking advantage and using equipment in our own time...making use of it whilst it’s free. We won’t be able to afford equipment like this when we have finished here. Facilities should be number one...here...[places photograph into position, see below Image 6.3]..they are the most important...the Mac computers and the sound equipment.”

Ph.E:1 Darren: external origin



Figure 6.8: Facilities Ph.E:1 Darren

Earlier discussions in this chapter referred to home and the university, together with a sense of place from the previous section provides a useful entry point to this section looking at the identity of the University of Brighton in Hastings. Field (2008) used memories and histories in his narratives to create a sense of place for his research similar to the Hastings students' development of attachment and association with university spaces and places. Further, Field (2008) references identification and empathy as essential for a connection with place. Chow and Healey's (2008) attempt to unpick place attachment and place identity (and with reference to Altman and Low 1992) speaks of the bonds people develop, and further, how this is related to positive feelings and creativity.

University spaces need to foster these qualities for the attraction and retention of students as they hold significance for student experience and student identity (Thomas 2002, 2012). A site where place and space are a product of culture for:

“...culture not only takes place, but makes place.”

Hubbard and Kitchin 2011:8

The university common areas importance for socialising is discussed within this context. It is also important to note that at the time of research a new university building was in development. Phase II had further communal spaces planned. The exterior forecourt is also to provide some external space, currently lacking with the original building.

“We had a student takeover to ‘revisit’ fresher’s week in the lounge so that students could find out what’s going on the town. The lounge is the only area where students interact...It was great...I thought, this actually FEELS [emphasis added] like a university.”

Ph.E:3 Rebecca: local origin

Whilst a frustration with a lack of ‘common spaces’, ‘outdoor spaces’ and ‘campus feel’ was often mentioned when I was working in the field it was rarely a feature of conversation during the photo elicitation process and creation of storyboards. This is most likely because the students were selecting individual representations of important spaces as is the nature of a capturing an image, with a focus on what ‘is’ there rather than that which ‘is not’ there or imagined.

The idea of mapping identity onto place is discussed by many, including Massey (1994), Nugent (2008) and Cresswell (2009) who are relevant for this thesis in relation to the notion that is achieved through mapping meanings, memories, attachment and belonging (discussed later). Valentine (2004) explores the imagined identity of place, referring back to the notion of community (in section 6.2) and the imagined meanings associated with this identity. For example, community embodies the notion of place, where everyone knows everyone else and gets along, which Valentine (2004) disputes as unreal, for everyone is not actually known by everyone else in a community. She continues to discuss this as imagined space, much as

students moving away to university imagine the student community they will belong to or local students imagine the place they will enrol as a member of the student community.

Safety can also be considered an essential ingredient for community spaces that form rural idylls (Valentine 2004), and safety could be a consideration for young external origin students and their parents when choosing a university. Related imagined geographies are also at play here. Valentine (2004) and Massey (1994) use theory to consider how place is produced through social convergences and juxtaposition. For Hastings, this can mean the campus' feel, or lack of it, that students imagine. The narrative of place is important again here for developing the positive characteristics of how space and place is read, observed and perceived. For university this has implications for initial responses and reactions through marketing images, literature production, and on open day. How spaces appear upon an early inspection, or on the day of arrival, will influence the students' association and attachment with that place. Positive narratives of the locale and physical space create first impressions and an early sense of belonging that is important for student retention (Thomas 2012). Further, an important sense of belonging is established through the early student networks created within the halls of residence (Holton 2013).

6.4 Place identity: university student spaces

Valentine (2004) discusses restrictions and resistance of space as pertinent to geographies of children and young people. Whilst not extended to higher education students the notions she explores around connection to urban space are interesting. She refers to 'secret' spaces. This is interesting because of the general responses by the students from the neighbouring college to their new building of South Coast

College Hastings, a feeder institution. Feedback included the open plan design around a spacious atrium is appealing to adults but young people do not like the open spaces as they feel constantly on view, without private or hiding spaces. Valentine (2004) asserts that a lack of access (or in this case ownership) of the space leaves young people feeling disconnected and in an attempt to resist spaces in the town centre [or educational spaces] students may respond through activism, graffiti or public art. The frustrations of higher education students around lack of communal space, outdoor, campus, or bar space could be addressed in the new building developments with recognition of the requirement of place for interesting ‘secret’ urban spaces as part of this town centre development. The higher education regeneration project of the University of Brighton in Hastings by the development agency Seospace has been considered as,

“...the jewel in the Seospace crown”

KI:6 2011

As discussed, student ownership of space and use of the university’s common space or student lounge area to host workshops and activities has been identified as important to engage a wider audience of students and perhaps most significantly a cross section of students from the variety of courses. Crossover between external and local origin students has been limited and seemingly this programme had provided the space for such socialisation to fertilise and take place.

“We’ve had lounge take overs, including Mexican Mondays and Sports Wednesdays. The lounge take overs have been well supported but none of the activities have been followed up. But there has been no interest in activities from students beyond the take-over events.”

Ph.E:3 Rebecca: local origin

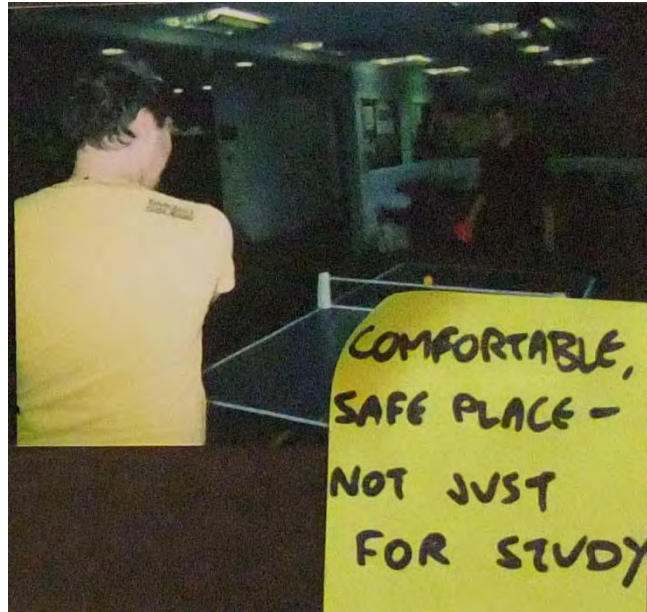


Figure 6.10: Social evenings

Ph.E:8 Tom: external origin

Another focal point of these student evenings on campus has been the pool table in the lounge area.

“We’re the only ones in at night. We use it [the pool table] from about 6 in the evening. The pool table in the canteen is ‘ours’. The space is important to us. We’ve started to bring food in. It started with about 10 or 20 of us. We have socials every other Thursday. The Student Union has helped us; they’ve put the work in. We bring the ‘x-box’ in. There’s probably 20 plus of us now.”

Ph. E:7 Chloe: local origin

There seem to be very few local origin students like Chloe who is performing her identity as an external origin student in that she is living in a shared student house and socialising almost exclusively with external origin students. Chloe had a very clear idea of her student experience and the journey she needed in order to gain this. She was using her local friends who had chosen to move away to university as a model for the experience she wanted in Hastings. Her identity formation was played out differently to other local origin student participants and very much informed through

building social capital and use of collective spaces such as her student home and university social activities and spaces.

Chloe and her friends were in their second year and still committed to developing opportunities to socialise. Chatterton (2009) discussed how student's identities change over their three years as they develop and build confidence and experiences (see also Chapter 2). He discusses an early socialisation phase that involves enrolment into the student 'club', gradually seeking to extend individualised identity. Chatterton's work uses a model of the large established university city of Bristol, with significant numbers of external origin students who move away to university, into an established educational and social setting. The student experience in Hastings is not established in this way, for the town has no history of a university campus or higher education students in the town centre. Therefore, the student 'imagined' student experience is taking longer for them to realise and is played out by the students planning and developing their own social spaces.

“...The ping-pong table at uni, I've spent a lot of time there, between lectures. You meet up with others. I spend a lot of time in uni, it's 5 minutes down the road. I like that about uni, I know a lot of lecturers and members of staff on a personal level. It's more comfortable, more welcoming, not just a place to study.”

PhE:8 Tom: external origin

The students recognise the support they have received in helping to create spaces and appreciate the advantages of belonging to a smaller institution with smaller spaces that also facilitates greater interaction with staff members.

Town governance and local businesses recognise the economic contribution higher education students traditionally bring and are also keen to work with the staff and Student Union to develop mutually beneficial student spaces (the subject of Chapter 7). The Community University Partnership Programme is addressing issues of student/community safety, bringing together various key actors with a responsibility for shaping student experience in Hastings. Further, university staff members have joined the new ‘evening economy strategy’ meetings in the town to assist planning and discussion around this area, working as part of a team with an agenda to improve student spaces in the town centre (for discussion in the thesis conclusion).

“We need to identify where students go, and want to go, separate and apart from where young people go. We have a lack of knowledge here and possibly a lack of numbers. Never the less we want students to feel comfortable anywhere. Community and student safety is important for Hastings and St Leonards.”

KI:1 2011

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced how place and experience have been used by students to shape their own student identities and how spaces of higher education are remade during these processes. The University of Brighton and various key actors have mutual responsibilities for ensuring students in the town have the best opportunities to develop and use safe and student friendly spaces (the subject of a university/town

conference on student and community safety through the work of the Community University Partnership Programme).

Whilst students involved in the photo elicitation activities for this research have not raised particular priorities about safety related to their university student experience, neighbourhood safety was an area of concern during wider field work study and through the student survey. Town governance responsibilities and responses will form discussion in Chapter 8.

However, students have reflected their desire for opportunities for greater student to student networks that build across course subject areas to enable greater opportunities to make new friends and socialise. They welcome the strategies that exist in place to help them to do so such as Student Union, student representatives and student ambassadors. Students have identified the importance of meeting others outside of the group and campus.

Social spaces have been addressed and the importance of secret spaces, and spaces of student ownership, identified as opportunities to 'feel' the student experience that most external origin students seek. To develop a sense of belonging and making student spaces feel their own students have requested spaces which they can territorialise by hanging posters or notices, or regulate space, have space of own, and hang out with like-minded people that can be an important element of building identity (Massey 1998).

'Our attempts to territorialise space can have a range of different motivations. At one level, representing space as essentially organised into compartments – at the extreme as organised into scalar hierarchies – seems simply to be an attempt to tame the unutterable complexity of the spatial: it is a way of

gaining some control – even if only in our heads – by constructing an ordered geographical imagination through which to frame our worlds...What *is* clear is that such strategies of spatial organisation are deeply bound up with the social production of identities.’

Massey 1998:126-7

7.0 Place identity and students' home origins

7.1 Introduction

The analysis of 'home' forms the discussion within Chapter 7 using students' experience of 'family home' and 'university home' (Green and White 2008) as reflected in the survey findings and particularly through the storyboard interviews with photo elicitation participants. The chapter explores the student experience of space and place through place attachment and belonging, that bridge to a sense of place (Massey 1994, Chow and Healey 2008). This demonstrates how students 'speak' about place and home and particularly the many interpretations that are delivered through such a heterogenic group. My approach justifies the selected methodology used to answer the research questions in order to identify key issues and differences between local and external origin students, and to further examine the influences on their identity formation, and how student origin affects the response to place identity.

In section 7.2, I revisit the origins of the cohort as an introduction to the cohort relevant to the analysis. This is followed by a general introduction to the place of 'home' and the various connotations this brings. Chow and Healey (2008) reference Altman and Low (2012) who discuss the home, and the bonds related to places where [students] feel comfortable, secure, calm and private. They explore the significance of home as the place from where students migrate: a place with physical structure and with significant people.

The chapter explores place and student life courses as played out through their explanations of home provided through the participant photo elicitation process. This

is reflected in local and external origin patterns, together with patterns of age and gender.

Section 7.5 continues by looking at students' considerations about home making, whether moving away to university, or living at home whilst a university, to identify some of the priorities and commonalities facing students, especially pertinent in a new space of higher education.

7.2 Where did you come from?

To understand student experience as relevant to place identity it is necessary to once again consider where students have moved from or whether they have remained at home as a local student. The survey asked the question 'Where did you come from?' and again this was followed up in more depth with respondents who identified to participate in the photo elicitation study. More specifically the survey questions gave a range of answers to identify how long the student had lived in Hastings and where they had lived previously. I wanted to map both local and external origin students, identify trends or patterns of migration, and consider the similarities and differences of student experience and place identity construction amongst the 2009 entry cohort. The analysis is discussed in depth in Chapter 5, therefore for the purpose of place identity the focus here looks at where students have migrated from and how long they have resided in the town as an introduction to the student demographic (see Table 7.1 below).

	No response	Less than 1 year	1-3 years	3-10 years	10+ years	Whole life	Commute	Subtotal = %
No response / Always lived in Hastings / Commute	7	3	5	1	3	15	5	39
East Sussex/ Brighton	3	8	2	2	2	0	0	17
West Sussex	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	4
London	0	11	3	2	1	0	0	17
Surrey	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	4
Essex	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	3
Kent	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Hampshire	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Dorset	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
Home Counties / Midlands	0	2	2	1	0	0	0	5
North of England	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
Scotland	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
France	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Germany	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Lithuania	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Cuba	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Subtotal = %	10	37	18	7	8	15	5	100

Table 7.1: Where students have migrated from and how long have lived in the Hastings area (from those who answered survey questions. NB neither question was compulsory).

Of the students surveyed 50% were female and male and 55% had moved into the Hastings area in the last 3 years. Some of those moving into the town had arrived from other areas within East Sussex, whilst others chose to commute from quite a distance notably Brighton, Eastbourne and Crawley, all distances of between 40-90 minutes, and without a direct rail or road route between Hastings and Crawley. Commuters refer to the following reasons for this option: to save money by living at home, retain work commitments, or retain links with friends and family.

Significant numbers of DFL (Down from London) students were selecting Hastings as their place of study but do not appear to be participating in local opportunities, that

is unusual in comparison with the DFL's who are moving into the area, to participate in a developing creative community, although not so unusual for a student population, as identifiable through studentification of neighbourhoods in other towns (Smith 2009). The halls of residence have sea views in St Leonards on Sea, but the ward of Central St Leonards is one of deprivation. This is in despite of the neighbourhood regeneration which led one key informant to describe St Leonards on Sea as:

“...a... *'funky'*, *desirable place to live...*”

KI:2 2011

Taylor identifies accumulated meanings that are taken on within the context of late-modern place identity and knowledge built by new 'experience', 'society and culture' (Taylor 2010:26). In participating in new communities Taylor warns that people [higher education students] are not free agents in moving away and accumulating a sense of place identity, identifying issues with valued loaded judgements [again here, whether the student's sense of place was good or otherwise, and the influences that built their perceptions]. This cognitive, or building approach, involve 'attitudes', 'feelings', 'ideas' and selected 'preferences' that form a symbolic and functional narrative of the place identity (Taylor 2010:40). Valentine (2007, 2008) informs that changing situations bring about changing identities and therefore this place identity as 'told' by the students, is not fixed, as demonstrated through the association to Hastings Pier and the collective place attachment that ensued following the fire .

'The specificity of place produces and is produced by the distinct juxtapositions and convergence of wider and local social relations (Massey 1994).'

Valentine 2004:80

7.3 Location and life course

Within this research, I wanted to establish if there were pre-conceived ideas of place that influenced students' university choice of home: halls of residence, student shared housing, live at home, certain neighbourhoods and so on. Therefore, in addition to the type of accommodation they had selected students were asked if there were specific places they wanted to live and if there were places they knew they did not want to live. The findings show that for the students who have migrated to the town, there were less preference choices prior to arriving in Hastings, likely because they were unfamiliar with the locality. Looking forward to subsequent years, students identified that they wanted to be closer to the town centre and university (two of which identified the Old Town neighbourhood specifically). The Old Town is an area of the town whose heritage is much publicised and has undergone regeneration and economic development (Forte 2009, Truder 2010).

However, there were more definitive answers about where students did not want to live (findings indicated from local or had lived in the town for a considerable time). One response stated Ore (a low socio-economic area to the North East of the town) but 21% indicated that they did not want to be in St Leonards on Sea and specifically identified the neighbourhood of Warrior Square (the neighbourhood where Robert Tressell halls of residence is located). This political ward of Central St Leonards is a deprived neighbourhood on the table of indices as one of the Lower Super Output Areas in the 10% most deprived in the country (www.communities.gov.uk). Further responses to the neighbourhood of Central St Leonards, the political ward in which the halls of residence is based, are central to the research conclusions and the discussion of student responses to community engagement. The final research

conclusions and recommendations offer a practical sense of purpose, or suggested next steps, to build on the outcomes of the research (Chapter 9).

It has been demonstrated that external origin students often moved from the smaller towns and villages within East Sussex (Chapter 5). These are generally from inland rather than along the coast. Therefore, these students had made a decision to move into the town rather than commute, which could be due to weaker transport links across country, because of transport costs, or the attraction moving away from home to live near the sea (a further question also explored below). However, perhaps for very similar reasons, students from Eastbourne and Brighton tend to choose to commute (better infrastructure and already live by sea). The most surprising commute area from students who chose to live at home was from Crawley in West Sussex, not a direct journey by road or rail. One survey participant discussed the importance of maintaining friends and family connections whilst studying. Employment was another reason stated for commuting. One of the photo elicitation participants discussed her thoughts on continuing to commute (see Figures 7.1 & 7.2) or whether to move into Hastings:

“I want to stay in the country but have been considering a move to Hastings. It’s cheaper. I have been looking at house prices and different places in Hastings.”

Ph.E:4 Lucy: local origin



Figure 7.1: Daily journey along the seafront out of St Leonards Ph.E:4 Lucy



Figure 7.2: Living out in the country Ph.E:4 Lucy local origin

As a student with a young family this student's considerations, motivations and inspiration obviously varied considerably to the external origin students who had moved away from home to study. And yet, attracting students to move within the deprived wards of Hastings and St Leonards is particularly desirable. For, as student neighbourhoods develop with the expanding numbers of move away from home

students arriving into university towns and cities, Smith and Holt (2007) describe the students within these enclaves as ‘apprentice gentrifiers’,

‘...considering more explicitly the interconnections between studentification and gentrification....this discussion unpicks the ways in which current student geographies may have significant implications for future forms and expressions of urban transformation, which can be subsumed under the guise of gentrification.’

Smith and Holt 2007:143

A view not at odds with Key Informants who welcomed the growth of the student population in Hastings:

“I was centrally involved in getting the university to the town. We are supporting the growth of the University of Brighton in Hastings. We want to encourage students to come here and to retain graduates locally. This will raise the status of the town and raise attractiveness to investors...”

KI:1 2011

Returning to Lucy’s (Ph.E:4) discussion there are several dichotomies at play to be examined through place identity. Her case study demonstrates a mature woman, home-maker, mother, and student. The challenges she has faced have included her discussion about whether to move nearer to the university campus. In juggling her place identities and multiple senses of home Lucy’s place attachment can be identified in reference to Altman and Low (2012:8)

- i. ‘Attachment as practice’; her daily journey identified in Figs 7.1 & 7.2].
- ii. ‘Places that vary in scale’; the tangibility of moving nearer to university, the affect this would have on her role as a parent, and how this would reduce her mortgage costs.

- iii. 'Different actors and different social relationships'; Lucy discussed her partner, her daughter and her Mother-in-Law as key to the decision making.
- iv. 'Temporal aspect's; Lucy was aware that her travel time would be reduced. She also considered life beyond graduation.

This confers with Hazel's [Ph.E5] situation. She is also a mature woman, had work considerations (several jobs), had lived with her brother and his family, and was a student. Taylor (2010:46-47) questions the role of gender as biological and social constructs, and its essence in identity. She references her participants through the positioning of 'men and women's talk and the associated stereotypes used in 'performing gender'. A third female student at Hastings, Chloe [Ph.E:7], was positioned between her [relatively] local origin, within easy commute, and her decision to move into a shared student house with a male student in her second year. She referred to the messy lifestyle and chaos in the flat, socialising, drinking etc. and positioned her student experience against the experience of her 'home' friends who had chosen to move further away for university (Figure 7.3).



Figure 7.3: Be studenty

Ph.E:7 Chloe

Chloe was party to the hedonistic lifestyle she associated with university and a chaotic home. However, whenever it was someone's birthday she became a home maker:

“We celebrate birthdays quite often. We have drinks indoors. Most Thursdays we go out but on birthdays we stay indoors. I bake cupcakes and we have drinks in our flat.”

Ph.E:7 Chloe local origin



Figure 7.4: Cupcakes

Ph.E:7 Chloe

Chloe's general attitude to home was one of mess and partying, and whilst she did reference studying as "*clever stuff*", she gave books and a place of study at home less focus than other female students. Her attachment to home making was more in keeping with the male students for discussion next.

7.4 Home making

Preparing to leave the shelter of home can evoke different responses by those who desire a more sheltered transition into university halls of residence (Holton 2013).

Further, as students take their memories of home with them,

‘Their memories and lived experiences of home travel with them yet it is up to them to decide whether to adhere to or rebel against them.’

Holton 2013:36

As part of their rebellion, or not, Holton suggests students respond in different ways; home-making domesticity, the recreation of their home-life, belongings, cooking, cleaning and so on, or complete opposite of a break with their home attachment, not tidying, no accumulation of possessions, take-aways and so on. This is apparent in year one of study but is more likely to change as the external student progresses through their university career (Holton *ibid*). In contrast to the female students who struggled to create multiple senses of home, especially given that some were parents as well as students. The male participants generally reflected mayhem in constructing a very different home. Several of the participants in this research discussed their attitudes specifically in relation to home-making in their student homes:



Figure 7.5: Take-aways
Ph.E:1 Darren



Figure 7.6: Empty bottles



Fig 7.7: Microwave & toaster

“ We have pizza take-aways...I don’t know why we waste money on expensive spirits...a microwave and toaster, despite having no money. I’m not sure why we keep the boxes and empty bottles.”

Darren [Ph.E:1] continued with reference to,

“Our mates come over and we get on with socialising and drinking. In this picture [Figs 7.8-7.11] we’re playing electronic games. We stay up very late until 3am in the morning, but we still get up for uni...We’ve made the decision to be sensible.”

Ph.E:1 Darren: external origin



Figure 7.8: Drinking

Ph.E:1

Figure 7.9: Playstation

Ph.E:1



Figure 7.10: Staying up late

Ph.E:1

Figure 7.11: Playing ukulele

Ph.E:1 Darren

In discussion about their home space, the male students were making more effort at ‘individuated [student] homes’ (Taylor 2010:124), whilst also responding to the ‘traditional’ student, messy, away from home for the first time generalisations associated with student housing. They identified contrasts between belonging in their space; as students, having friends visit, home-making, whilst at the same time ‘not

belonging’ or being ‘out of place’ (Taylor ibid); this was a temporary home, not an idealized home with a sense of permanence.

Tom [Ph.E:8] describes his approach to home and home making:



Figure 7.12: Student sitting room
Ph.E:8 Tom



Figure 7.13: Boris

“This is the sitting room in our flat. Look at the student curtains. The rail broke so we drape the curtain over. It looks very different after a few pizzas...it can get very messy.”

Whilst creating his storyboard, Tom labels the photograph of his plant with the word ‘responsibility’ and relates it to his work ethic in the second year,

“This is my plant, Boris. I’ve had ‘him’ since I moved into the flat and went into the second year. Since the second year, I’ve got more pride and independence. Plants help with the work ethic”

Ph.E:8 Tom: external origin

These students describe similar home experiences. Tom and Darren were living in shared student houses and whilst they make different attempts to tidy their space, they

both identified with a preconceived notion of student home sharing and accepting mess. Their attitudes were more consistent with a temporary home, place to sleep, place to keep belongings, with little place attachment (Holton 2013). In contrast below, Hazel is a local origin student who had been living with family but found it difficult to share the home space, which led her to move out (Figure 7.14). She extends the discussion to include the importance of constructing space to study, the subject of other participant storyboards created by female students:



Figure 7.14: Shared space with niece

Ph.E:5 Hazel

“I was living with my brother and my niece... I’ve lived with my niece and seen her growing up. This was important too. It was a difficult space and I’ve moved now. I struggled living with my brother’s girlfriend. I couldn’t make a mess and was confined to my room.”

Ph.E:5 Hazel: local origin



Fig. 7.15: Books 1 PhE:5 Hazel



Figure 7.16: Books 2 Ph.E:4 Lucy



Figure 7.17: Kitchen table study



PhE:5 Hazel

“This is my Mum’s place with books. I do most of my work at ‘home’. I can focus if I’m in one space. When working I can get distracted easily. The table at my Mum’s is clear....At Mum’s I can focus on my work. I’d bring my washing with me. I relied on Mum to help....In Mum’s kitchen I could make a mess.”

Ph.E:5 Hazel: local origin

“I love reading. I keep the books on bookshelves, not shut away. I mostly study at home.”

Ph.E:4 Lucy: local origin

Both local origin students had identified the attachment to home as a new place of study. As with the male students, these examples demonstrate all of the students performing their student life course through their home place identity. Albeit, different approaches as the female students emphasise the conflicting nature of home in presenting study space alongside family commitments, whilst the male students tended to focus more on chaos and rebellion. All are examples that answer the

research question of influences within student construction and formation of identities. Yet, these place identity scenarios do not follow a simple rule of gender as Chloe also presented messiness within her home identity. There were disparities between the place attachment of the external students towards a temporary sense of home and the local origin who adapted home identities to accommodate family commitments. Again, Chloe crosses both groups as a relatively local student who had moved into student accommodation to fulfil what she deemed a more ‘traditional’ student experience.

Darren, the photo elicitation participant [Ph.E:1] discussed pizza take-aways above, and was a student of external origin living in a shared house with other students, focussed further on the importance of relationships in the place construction of a ‘new’ home:

“...I live with my mates...I moved away from home, although commuting was a possibility. I wanted to socialise and go out drinking with them...We’re playing electronic games [Figure 7.9]. We socialise at home and in each other’s houses [other student houses] and we go to the girls’ houses. When our loan comes through, we go out.”

Ph.E:1 Darren: external origin

Darren’s student’s experience of place and the construction of home in Hastings also centred round his student friendships. He drew attention to the demarcation between gendered spaces ‘*each other’s houses*’, referring to the boy’s houses in deference to ‘*the girls’ houses*’.

Geographical fascination and research into home, identity, and place has been phenomenal for over forty years. Hubbard and Kitchin (2011) attempt to share ‘key thinkers’, yet discuss the enormity for inclusion of all space and place philosophers

and hence the requirement to decide eligibility. Giddens is identified for encompassing a sense of social geography from Late Stone Age to post modernism (Hubbard and Kitchin 2011). Although, Taylor (2010) argues that Giddens fails to consider the accumulation of meaning derived through people and society and the influence this has upon global understanding. Her argument is that new opinions, in the construction of thought about place in late modernity, cannot fail to be influenced by older notions. Like Taylor, I have favoured critical discursive psychology to understand and reflect upon new situations of late modernity (Taylor 2010).

7.5 Home, place and identity: local and external origin

The research has set out to establish similarities and differences between local and external origin students; however, through the storyboards created by second year students at the University of Brighton in Hastings, it became apparent that there were patterns in age, gender and life course that students were playing out through home and place identity. Research into the experiences of higher education students has been the subject of much investigation but as identified by Patiniotis and Holdsworth (2005), and Holdsworth (2006, 2009), the focus of such research has tended towards academic experiences more usually linked with social mobility or interests in the financial governance of student tuition and the repayment of fees. Returning to the notion of student experience and the advantages of living at home or moving away, as outlined earlier in Chapter 2, Holdsworth (2006) questioned whether living at home presents a model of participation linked with a preconceived stereotype of an inferior experience. Early research interest particularly in the 1990's has addressed the changing higher education landscape and patterns of student habitation and socialisation with the growth of the post 1992 then so called 'new' universities (Kenyon 1997, Chatterton 1999). This was followed by Smith, Hubbard and

Holdsworth's many papers in the following decade (again see Chapter 2). However, it is the heterogeneity of student experience in relation to home that extends that valuable research for investigation here.

Taylor develops an approach through an understanding of narrative of identity and place, much as this research into the construction of student identities aims to interpret student voice on place through individual narratives that took place during the photo elicitation process in creating individualised storyboards. One participant's narrative discussed a collective sense of place and belonging identified in the days following the large scale fire of Hastings Pier which attracted international attention.

“When the pier burnt down all the students were saddened, they were blogging about it. It helped them to learn more about Hastings through the pier fire.

Researcher: Did the pier fire create a sense of belonging?

“Oh yes. The pier shook the community. Students realised they were part of the local community and began discussing fundraising events and so on.”

Ph.E:3 Rebecca local origin

Through the tragedy of the pier fire, Rebecca identifies a change in sense of place attachment perceived by the students who took new interest in the place of their new 'home' town.

Cresswell (2009) refers to the concept of place and place-making in particular as an encumbrance on individuals making their own meaning. He is interested in the power implications of place construction and the ability to question place and meaning, and further, the role of those in power to influence and bring about place change and the notion of belonging as 'in' or 'out' of place (ibid) (see also the previous section and

refer back to Chapter 2). Dixon and Durrheim refer to the social psychology of place as identified in terminology linked to a sense of place such as ‘community’, ‘ethnicity’ and ‘nation’ (2000:27). They discuss after Rowles (1983) ‘insideness’ as physical, social and autobiographical within a ‘space of being’ as for example created within the place of home (Dixon and Durrheim 2000:29). Darren (Ph.E:1) discusses the desire to be part of a student community:

“I wanted to move away from home even though commuting was a possibility. I wanted to live with my mates...erm...for drinking and socialising.”

Ph.E:1 Darren: external origin

Christie (2007) refers to a Scottish case study looking at reasons why even when moving away from the family home into halls of residence students seem to choose a university near to home, stating the importance of retaining connections, or saving money as they can keep links with home. Holton (2013) identifies the advantages for London stay at home students who have a wider selection of nearby universities from which to select due to the nature of the concentration of higher education institutions in the capital. Holton quotes Christie et al (2005) in suggesting that such ‘day’ students can be identified as ‘doing’ their course, rather than ‘being’ a student (Holton 2013:28). Questioning the notion of student experience if you are home based. However Holdsworth cautions the opposite in addressing the identifiable nature of student identity in some cities:

‘Being a student is emblematic for not being from around here.’

Holdsworth 2009:227

Chow and Healey (2008) focus on place identity and place attachment using student home and university transitions to demonstrate their points. They discuss the erosional dynamic of the loss of place as students leave home, often for the first time, and stress the important symbolism home has of the self. This research identified patterns among the external origin students who had lived in halls of residence in their first year and were living in shared student houses for their second year, as messy, chaotic, and nihilistic.

The term 'home' has multiple geographical inferences locally as 'household', 'community' or 'neighbourhood'; regionally as 'city'; or nationally and internationally as 'nation' (Holdsworth and Morgan 2005, Holton 2013). Further, the sense of belonging can be reduced to 'the physical *private* space where you live', that creates the dichotomy between the material place of 'house' and the emotional place of 'home' (Valentine 2001, Holton 2013). This research reflects much diversity in the participants approach to home from the construction of a place to play and socialise, to fitting in with family commitments and attempts to create a space for study, as seen in the earlier sections. The heterogeneity of the student cohort references differences in gender, age, family ties, and place of origin.

Holdsworth's (2006) study into the experience of the home based student does not directly compare experiences with those of external origin although she identifies with transition from home and how students 'fit in'. There is concern by Holdsworth that students who live at home are perceived to receive a lesser student experience or quality of higher education. This could lead to the sense of 'othering' for these students.

A local origin student participant voiced her concerns during her photo elicitation interview. She was clearly struggling to define her place as a local origin student within the wider student collective.



Figure 7.18: Labyrinth

Ph.E2 Maria

In her image 7.18 the student Maria [Ph.E:2] described methods she had designed to socialise with the external origin students. She identified:

“This picture shows that there are too many holes under one roof, like in the student areas. I have started to see more ways to engage. It was like a labyrinth. I tried to talk with other students in both the pool rooms [the shared computer suites at the university] trying to engage them through things we had in common. It is difficult because I cannot socialise at weekends or night time. I can’t socialise with the students in Brighton [the student has children].”

Ph.E:2 Maria: local origin

Despite a relatively small university building with one shared common social area, this student was struggling to engage within this space. She had clearly thought about places, ways to engage, and strategies which would help her befriend the other

students. She identified herself as belonging to a different age group to the others on her course and said:

“I’m a mature student. I’ve chosen to be here. What they are doing now, going out drinking and so on, I’ve already done...they don’t understand.”

Ph.E:2 Maria: local origin

There are two contradictions with the external origin student at play here: Maria is a home based student on a course with mainly external origin students and she is a mature student who has children. She went on to refer directly to the common room beside the café as a positive space when organised events were taking place.

“On the Open Days in the café there are workshops there. These are with others from outside the group. The space is friendlier then.”

Ph.E:2 Maria: local origin

She gives a personality to the space. The space itself becomes friendlier, rather than those within the space. It could be considered that in having one social space the area could initiate friendships but in this case the student has felt alienated from the social space and it has had an opposite effect. However, when given a personality through events, or notifications within the space, it could be provided with a varied sense of purpose. Leach (2002), along with Hillier and Rooksby (2002) explore the performance and personality of space, creating territories within a space. This links to place identification and the notion of belonging which is important for all students.

Taylor (2010) discusses associations with place further, relating the notion of belonging to narrative and continuity from past to present. Her hypothesis which surrounds the home identity can be lent to the situation of the University spaces for

she suggests in order for people to have a sense of belonging they are required to derive a narrative. It is possible to see that if a student can create an identity for the space where they study, socialise or live then they create a sense of ownership or belonging.

Disruption to this notion of relationship with place and identity is explored by Chow and Healey (2008) through the transition experience between home and university. Students can experience displacement and the associated feelings of loss and disruption. For some in Chow and Healey's study (ibid) it took about a year before the student felt settled and considered university a second home. This time period was associated with the length of time required to create new place ties and for reflexivity and appreciation to take place (Proshanky et al 1983). However, the nature of transience is also pertinent as students of external origin recognise the length of their stay is time bound (Chow and Healey 2008). As they conclude in their paper, belonging and alienation co-exist as part of the move away from home experience as students grapple with the notion that requires them to integrate with both home and university (or two homes).

Holton (2013) considers several aspects of students consciously adjusting their home and university identities. It begins before they leave for university as they join Facebook groups to support their transition, make contacts and learn more about what to expect from their university experience. Holton (2013) suggests whilst students prepare for their new university home identity they do not convey the same approaches to returning to their family home upon completion of their final year.

‘...students living away from home negotiate their student identities when they move back with their parents, there is very little discussion of how students living with parents or in their own homes manage their identities upon completion of their degrees.’

Holton 2013:44

Thus, students can find this period of returning to becoming a non-student once more disruptive as they re-establish home, family and friends’ relationships.

7.6 Conclusion

In drawing together this chapter, place geographies have been considered from the perspective of student’s home, both local and external origin, gender, maturity, and attachment. The student experience and their preconceived expectations are inextricably entwined with their perception of place. This is seen through the various examples of photo elicitation participants that identify the importance of the home place as a place of study, commute, and socialising. When creating their storyboards, and despite my efforts to remain completely neutral, I sensed some of the male participants of external origin were trying to generate the narratives of traditional student performance of place and in constructing the student homes they thought I wanted to see; as demonstrated in their hedonistic approach to socialising, drinking, take-aways, staying up late and so on. Their descriptions of ‘messy’ sometimes aligned them as ‘out of place’ within their neighbourhood, for according to Taylor’s research her participants:

‘...did not choose, on a ‘scruffy road’, position themselves as *not* belonging and not at home, doing identity work by separating themselves from the established meanings of where they live. ‘

Taylor 2010:124

The transient nature of home is considered in relation to the students moving into halls of residence and whether this place is considered a 'home' or a place where they store their university possessions and to sleep (Holton 2013). This raises the question of how we imbue a sense of 'home' with personal emotions of belonging or alternatively reduce 'home' to a physical material space. Another student Kev (see Chapter 6), hardly referred to his flat but used the reference 'home' several times in relation to the Hastings Campus.

Wider meanings of 'home' have been demonstrated in relation to 'home town' or 'neighbourhood' (Holton 2013). The student narratives on place have provided additional rich yet supple resources for the study of women returning to higher education as mature students and with family ties and responsibilities (Wainwright and Marandet 2010), and their positioning of constructing identities in relation to gender and social class (Taylor 2010). The student examples within this chapter refer to a sense of place with reference to the town of Hastings for greater analysis in Chapter 8.

8.0 Town influences on student identity and student influences on place

8.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces how the town of Hastings has responded to the growth of a new higher education student population. Once again student feedback is used from the survey, student participants and key actors with professional responsibilities for shaping mutually beneficial student places. Place construction and identity are explored in section 8.2 through the context and setting of a seaside town undergoing regeneration and examining place narratives through the town's identity and branding. The reasons why external students chose Hastings as the town in which to study are discussed in the subsequent section. This group of students tend to be the younger students who have moved away from home for the first time, for as discussed in the previous chapter there are identifiable differences within the cohort by age and place of origin.

The student experience through spaces and places where they socialise are then introduced, considering how students have 'fitted' into the town with such a short history and minimal critical mass. The empirical data explores the connections of young people's social construction of the town through urban spaces designed for particular uses and how they are (re)made through students use (Horschelmann and van Blerk 2012) further linked to the narratives to how spaces are remade through processes of identity formation.

Student safety has been raised by students and university during the research period and is referred to within this section. Wider safety has been raised within this research although not in the research questions; for had it been thought to be a concern a

different methodology would have been constructed. Feedback and concerns surrounding community engagement (and lack of it) form section 8.5 in relation to the Student Community Safety Open Forum event convened by the University's Community University Partnership Programme. Students' engagement with work opportunities in the town is considered here through questionnaire responses about types of employment and the hours spent at work.

Conclusions in 8.6 are drawn from comparisons and contrasts between the student social experience in Bristol (Chatterton 2000, 2001, 2009 and with Hollands 2003) and this research of the University of Brighton in Hastings. I suggest some recommendations for the town based on the Bristol research and responses from key informants for this research.

8.2 Place construction and identity

Holton (2013:33) refers to the 'seasonality' of students that gives them 'visible presence' in a town, whilst also relating their economic importance for whilst they do not have much money, they do have student loans that arrive at a similar time providing readily disposable income for consumption of place, and again, visibility '*en masse*'. This section looks at the lack of '*masse*' in Hastings and how students are shaping place in Hastings.

Horschelmann and van Blerk (2012) identify the importance for the participation of young people in making spaces in cities. Further, they state those cities are cities because they are helped shaped by young people, this has greater manifestation than young people's presence in an already fashioned place. Whilst urban physical structures and textures limit the scope and the actions young people perform (ibid), former influences of the city spaces is achieved through parents, grandparents,

siblings and others in young people's lives. Matthews et al (2000) present how young people construct their identities through street spaces, expressed as a rebellion to the controlling factors in their lives. In seeking to build youth spaces young people can escape the controls that shape their lives and consequently some adults are frightened by their presence on the streets (ibid). Yet, this construction of space is bounded within these contexts of material goods, physicality (of buildings and themselves), purpose and usage, as demonstrated here by the beach spaces the students in Hastings were using.

The ice cream parlour is on the main promenade to attract tourism. It was an unlikely space to be claimed by students at certain times of the day, and days of the week (early mid-week evenings), to hang out there extending claim on benches and surrounding play areas (see Figure 8.1 below).



Figure 8.1: Hastings seafront

Ph.E:3 Rebecca

This location demonstrates the notion of student territory, whilst designed for one purpose (tourists) it has attracted the attention of students who are developing social and cultural identities in the area. Leach (2002) discusses how space is practised, through walking and re-walking. In the case of students they use the ice cream

parlour as a place to meet, at regular times, and on regular days. Thus, creating, or ‘performing’ within a space in which they create belonging. As Leach (2002 - after Bell 1999) discusses, their actions become almost ritualistic, through the frequent and regular habitation of the space. The students place their personality upon the place as the space becomes ‘practised’ and gives an identity [a different - student identity] to the area (Leach 2002). However, this identity is located within a temporal space, certain times of the day, after lectures, and within the academic calendar, therein creating a temporal belonging within the space. At all other times it seemingly reverts to a conventional tourist seafront attraction. These notions of students’ belonging to a place, creating space and place, demonstrate the idea of space and place being fluid and not fixed, changing frequently during a period of time, over longer term, and through experience or changed meanings. This is being played out in Hastings as space and place changes in response to the student body as:

‘People connect place with a particular identity and proceed to defend it against the threatening outside with its multiple identities.’

Cresswell 2009:8

The ice cream parlour is situated between the main shopping centre and the historic Old Town, yet occupies a liminal space on the coast. Local young people in the town tend to gather more directly within the shopping areas whilst students seem to occupy the space outside or on the edge.

“Uni students are using the beach, particularly the ice cream parlour. You always see them down there, they like the ice creams, it’s one of their favourite places. They don’t use the other small attractions such as the caves or the aquarium [both require an entrance fee] and they only use the theatres or museums for filming. We need more signs in the town to show students things they can do. The signs should be in keeping with the style of the town.”

Ph.E: 3 Rebecca: local origin

This student also photographed a signpost seen in the top right corner of Figure 8.1 to further illustrate her point and her desire to share her home town with external origin students. The student continued to discuss the fire on the pier as a turning point to draw the student and local community together (see Section 7.3). The fire destroyed the pier in October 2010 and made international news. It can be seen at the top of Figure 8.1 as positioned at the start of the student's storyboard.

In her interview, Rebecca [Ph.E:3] chose to reflect upon the town, the students engagement with the town, and community engagement. Further, she referred more specifically to their lack of attachment and the students' use of buildings only in relation to their filming or recording opportunities (see also next section). Holloway (2011) extends an approach of reflection as she credits Beck with developing globalised thought of a 'risk society' which takes into consideration the impact of contemporary politics, mobility, technology and communication accounting for a 'reflexive modernisation'. Creswell (2009) references a description of the world where individual identities are expressed through super-fast communications and the interconnectedness of a globalised planet as an era of 'supermodernity' with reduced place attachment. This underpins the research findings of the new accounts of place construction in a seemingly urgent, progressive world, and pertinent to the student higher education experience as they form their own imagined and real constructs, fuelled by social networks and new forms of social media (White and Green 2008) as discussed further in section 8.4.

8.2.1 Place narratives: a student town?

Higher education students are engaging with Hastings and St Leonards in a variety of ways as the town attempts to construct its own university town identity. Leach (2002)

talks of familiarities, territorialisation and ‘narrativisations’ of place. These concepts can be grasped within Figure 8.2:

- i. The beach is a familiar place; in this spot, popular with local bathers and the fishing community. As mentioned earlier, the sight of students filming around Hastings is becoming more familiar and students use the beach regularly.
- ii. The image captures the territorial use of space as no one external to the filming appears in the frame. There is no one near to the boats (when there is generally net mending and cleaning activity), and no sign of locals using the beach. In this image the students have colonised the beach.
- iii. The students create a new, albeit temporary, narrative for this area of the beach.



Figure 8.2: Students filming on Hastings beach

Source: University of Brighton

University students have become a frequent sight filming and socialising around the town. As a coastal resort the broadcast media students often choose to film shots that include the beach. Mallett (2004) writes about outside spaces as having less definition, with different rules for which in this case the students to engage. Further, she says expectations of performativities in outside spaces differ. The students use the

beach in different or unconventional ways associated with the place. Their use is different to locals or tourists in that their filming is not of opportunistic or popular holiday images, but rather it is a planned use of space, linked to field study.

For another student participant Lucy [Ph.E 4] the space of the seafront was associated with relaxation and solitary reflection (see Figure 8.3 below). Her bus journey took her along the seafront and she used this space to move between places, home and university, and to move between her identities, that of student and mother. She describes this journey as the space in-between the busy town (where her student life exists) and her home life. She constructs her own definition of place:

“The town is busy. I take the bus every day along the seafront and leave it behind. The journey home takes an hour and a half each way. Sometimes I take the bus or sometimes I get a lift. The bus is tranquil. The journey along the seafront is one road... I like the architecture in Hastings...I watch as I travel on the bus.”

Ph.E:4 Lucy: local origin



Figure 8.3: Journey along St Leonards seafront

Ph.E: 4 Lucy

Massey developed the notion of power geometry as a method of positioning individuals and groups within social networks of time and space in place specificity (Massey 1994, Callard 2011). Additionally, Massey recognised mobility and power relations as principles that guide far reaching terms and debates, acknowledging fluidity in the sense of place and its intersections in place construction (Hubbard and Kitchin 2011). Further, she appreciates culture and inclusion in her thinking (ibid; and see also Skeggs 2004). I raise culture as two-fold in that it happens, and it shapes place (Hubbard and Kitchin 2011). For the purpose of this research there was an expectation for student culture to construct student places in Hastings and of students to become recognisable in the town.

“I am pleased the students are right in the town centre...they are more visible...which means that higher education in the town is more visible. If the campus was on the edge there wouldn't be that visibility of higher education existing in Hastings. On the fringe means less interaction... People learn there's the University of Brighton in Hastings. The town has supported the growth of the University; helped by getting money, held regular meetings with the Vice Chancellor. The university raises the status of the town...This will raise the status of the town and raises attractiveness to investors for graduates locally. It also raises educational attainment and local young people's aspirations... The town centre has changed and businesses will adapt. We need to monitor how the town relates to this new dynamic. Shops bars and cafes need to offer student discounts.”

KI:1 2011

However, there is also acknowledgment that there is not sufficient critical mass for the imagined experience of place to have been established as this key informant went on to say,

“There is not the critical mass to identify student pubs or clubs. We [Hastings] are not 'studenty'.

KI:1 2011

Other interviewees also spoke about the visibility of students,

“The town has begun to identify itself with students...now the students will become more visible.”

KI:5 2011

“Strikes me as a student kind of place, cultural, artistic, touristy place. Students need to understand where it’s happening, there’s a lot going on...over and above other places. It [Hastings] will suit some more than others. On the downside, we’ve not got the same reputation for student nightlife such as the campus in Brighton or the reputation for the large night clubs like Eastbourne. We’re working on that. The students and university have raised issues of accommodation, entertainment and lifestyle. We’re working with them through the evening economy partnership to address these.

We must be careful we don’t go too far and become studentcentric. Students are a community resource and it’s right for everyone to use town centre, all different age groups. Do not over-egg the student part. Do not conceive young venues for young people and minimise town centre access for older families. ...Well, it’s a balancing act really.”

KI:11 2011

This key informant clearly values the students as contributors to the community but is anxious about a potential student takeover, or as he put it for the town to become too ‘studentcentric’. He mentions the larger night clubs of Eastbourne with regular student activities, a place to where students were moving to live and commuting back to Hastings for study. Hastings quite simply has not constructed itself as ‘studentcentric’ enough for a considerable number of them. There are not the available large size properties the students wish to rent, where they wish to be near to the town centre and university. Most town centre properties have been converted into flats or bedsits. Darren is currently living a little over a mile away towards the centre of St Leonards in Bohemia where there are larger houses,

“At the moment we live in Bohemia [St Leonards on Sea] but it’s difficult to get a house here the size we want. We want at least 5 bedrooms. So we’re moving to Eastbourne. We prefer to live there because of the nightlife.”

Ph.E:1 Darren: external origin

At the Community Student Safety Forum one participant estimated as many as 85% of students had moved out of halls to Eastbourne (field notes, University of Brighton 2012). However, local property is becoming more attractive to student landlords as properties are now marketed with them in mind as identified in the ‘property description’ of Figure 8.4.

Call 01424 839227

Request Details

Start photo slideshow 1 of 27 Front Aspect

Interested in this property? Call 01424 839227 or **Request Details**

Property info

- [Full Details](#)

Property features

- Hmo
- 7/8 bedroom house
- 2 bathrooms
- 2 kitchens
- Refurbished from ground up
- In stunning order
- Chain free
- Freehold
- Must be viewed
- Call agent now

Property description

Licensed House in multiple occupation - Located in the heart of Hastings town centre, ideally located for access to the mainline station, college and university. The town centre also offers a variety of shopping and the seafront and Old Town. This period terraced home is divided into 8 letting rooms, with communal living room, two kitchens, two bathrooms. The property has permission granted for a house in multiple occupation (student accommodation). Sold chain free. call and view today

Listing history

First listed
£399,950 on 23rd Jul 2014

Asking price changes

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Figure 8.4: Hastings property advert Source: <http://www.zoopla.co.uk/33958295>

Especially within a town the size of Hastings the individual context of place construction cannot be underestimated. However, for most, place is viewed as being without scale and as being defined by the experiences of those who live within it (Hubbard and Kitchin 2011, Taylor 2010). Lefebvre's theory refers to 'made up' space as a result of how space is; a) 'lived in', b) 'conceived', as Dixon and Durrheim (2000) refer to dynamic areas of socialisation as place is conceived and re-conceived; and c) 'perceived' (Hubbard and Kitchin 2011). Valentine (2004, after Massey 1994) discusses place production as a meeting between social connections (both of local and wider networks). Perhaps most importantly, as discussed above, it is generally accepted that place construction is interpreted through individual response and meaning. Cresswell (2009) talks of 'nonplace' or 'placelessness', arguing that place is progressively mass produced and non-descript. These tie into place expectation. Town centres are increasingly sharing strategic aims (Stubbs et al 2002), losing individual identity and hosting similar large brand companies. I asked students about what had influenced their choice to study in Hastings, for it is not a large 'univer-city' campus (Chatterton 2009).

My research investigated students' choices and interaction with Hastings as a new university town and without an earlier history of higher education provision beginning with analysis of why students selected Hastings as the place for their study (see below).

8.3 Analysis: why the place of Hastings?

The student population of the Hastings Campus is approximately 60% local origin and 40% external origin as discussed earlier in Chapters 5 and 6, with many students also commuting long distances. The questionnaire results identified factors that had

influenced students' decisions to choose to study in Hastings identifying overwhelmingly in favour of the courses offered and being a part of the University of Brighton. Local to family home was also identified by a high number of students, as reflected in the approximately 60% who are local origin students, selecting to study close to home, with existing connections.

The 40% external origin students do not have great visibility beyond the campus and where they congregate on the beach, or participate in student focused activities. Much of this visibility has been investigated through student identity construction, how external students achieve student identities through place, and how local origin students had different priorities with family and work commitments, so mostly were not so concerned about the social aspect of student life or the formation of student habitus (Holton 2013).

8.4 Place: socialisation

Socialisation was a recurrent theme or concern of the external students and many of the key informants including several central bar owners close to the university, thus the results extend the literature on the social influences in developing student habitus and the differences between the local and external student experience. The research analysis included references to the student life in Hastings through experience and feelings, and student environments. Nugent (2008) places significance on attachment and belonging through how life is lived [for the purpose of this research – student life in Hastings]. This is played out through stories, or narratives as discussed earlier, and memories. For, what happens in a particular place creates a history and association with that place.

Chatterton (2000, 2001, 2009) and with Hollands (2003) built a new body of literature that focussed on the student impact upon the night time economy largely in Bristol with an established student community (introduced in Chapter 2). Of course, in Hastings the student experience of socialisation is a new phenomenon for the town and therefore a so-called student scene or vibrancy in the evening and night time economy has yet to be realised. However, bars in the town have recognised that students raise potential opportunities and have started to create specialised activities and new marketing that promote their spaces to students. Some of this has been in collaboration with the Student Events Officer and the Student Union. Student engagement positions have also focussed activities within the University of Brighton in Hastings.

As discussed in Chapter 6 with reference to how spaces are remade through the intersection with identity, the use of the common space in the university to host a range of workshops and activities has engaged a wider audience of students and perhaps most importantly a cross section of students from the variety of courses. Some students themselves articulated the importance of these activities and space in developing their student identities. Crossover between external and local origin students has been limited and seemingly this programme has provided the space for such socialisation to fertilise and take place.

“The lounge take overs have been well supported but none of the activities have been followed up. But there has been no interest in activities from students beyond the take-over events.”

Ph.E:3 Rebecca: local origin



Figure 8.5: Student Union activities Ph.E: 3 Rebecca

Rebecca referred to the ‘Freshers’ style activities that have been promoted a couple of times during the academic year (see Figure 8.5). These were organised with support from the Hastings Campus’ Student Union. Another student participant also referred to these University constructed events:

“I have mostly talked to others when there are events in the common room... that works well, there are different people around.”

Ph.E: 2 Maria: local origin

Many students spoke about the importance of socialising and staying up late, despite lectures the following day (as demonstrated in the previous chapter). The survey identified that on average the students say they visit pubs, cafes, and the beach, once a week and go to night clubs once a month, this is different to some of the interviews with photo elicitation participants. The survey showed that the most popular night out was Saturday. Sundays’ outings were reflected by which pub they could find providing a cheap roast dinner, and Thursdays link to attempts by local bars, and supported by the Hastings Campus to offer student nights in Hastings. See Table 8.2 below:

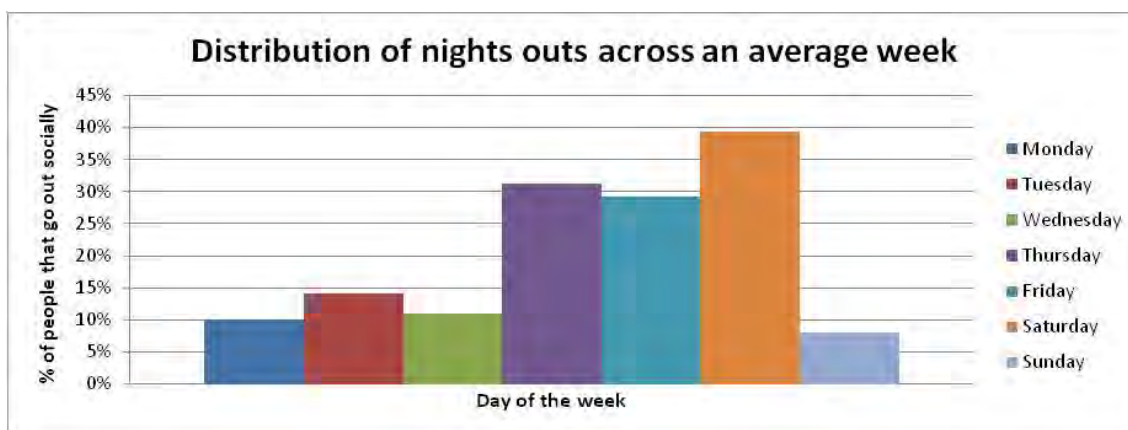


Table 8.1: Q3.4 On an average week, which nights do you go out (socially) in Hastings?

Which bars the students used in Hastings demonstrated some frustrations from the range of Bar Manager interviews who perceived they had made attempts to be ‘student friendly’ and yet students weren’t choosing to go there. However, the bars all said their student promotion night is Thursday (similar to the established Monday student night in Eastbourne) but as discussed earlier there is not yet the critical mass in Hastings to make this viable for all venues. One Bar Manager was thinking of changing student nights to Tuesdays because students have Wednesdays off. As Saturday night is regularly the busiest night of the week in the town centre when students are out socialising in the pubs and clubs they will be mixing with local young people and not so identifiable. This corroborates Holton’s (2013:134 after Massey 2005) idea of ‘throwntogetherness’ as the students ‘chance’ regular spaces and regular town folk with perhaps unexpected contacts and consequences. This can create the potential for tension between the groups, the student economic capital, and hedonistic behavior that students are associated with (Holton2013, Hubbard 2013).

One key informant discussed the “*lack of dedicated student spaces*” together with their concern for student safety (also discussed in section 8.4.1):

“When they’ve received their student loan, they’ve more money than locals who don’t have much money...The students are at risk of being targeted in the

town because of their wealth....Otherwise, not able to identify as a student, everyone looks like a student... There's a lack of dedicated student spaces. I think the students would benefit from a designated student bar or communal area....It would be good to have a multi-surface games area to develop sports...maybe on the beach."

KI:4 2011

This key informant extended the discussion around safety stating:

"Hastings lacks a campus feel. There's a corridor where a group will possibly target students. The students are identifiable near the 'potato shop' and letting agency."

KI:4 2011

Chatterton (1999) identifies the importance of student 'pathways' through certain areas within the nightscapes of Bristol, a city with an infrastructure that is student focused. There is no such direct pathway in Hastings town centre, despite the key informant's notion of a student corridor discussed above, this area is very quiet at night and used during college hours by mostly the further education students who attend Sussex Coast College Hastings. However, the University of Brighton Hastings Campus' Student Union was attempting to form links with the 'Brass Monkey', the bar situated directly between the two main buildings. Together with the extended outside space it is hoped by some interviewees that this could create a student area. Such attempts to define student social space links to Skelton and Valentine (1998) who refer to social ordering of 'studentland', for governance dictates where and which businesses (pubs, clubs, bars, cafes, cinema etc) to attract - and therefore those for students to access. The controls and strategies set by the governance of nightscapes in Hastings include: the licensing hours during which students can drink; the technologies that observe them through closed circuit television, radios and the

Bar Watch scheme; economic controls such as drinks pricing or door entry costs; and social and cultural controls through the types of music the venue operates or the dress code required for entry (Chatterton and Hollands 2003). However, the town centre of Hastings is very small in comparison to the study based in Bristol. Students would share pathways with non-students around a broader, more general, rather than student orientated pub crawl route of the town.

Larger student cities have created identities in association with national chains and branding around the student experience, this is not the case in Hastings (Chatterton and Hollands 2003, Hubbard 2013). Larger universities have seen greater competition in developing the student economy. Large pub and night club chains develop branded student nights. 'Carnage' promote themselves as the number one student event in the UK (www.carnageuk.com). Students buy into a theme, hosted by local pubs and bars with an all-inclusive ticket. They can even buy the t-shirt. The website images fuel the student drinking stereotypes and semi-clad female students. The business has been so successful that Carnage nights are run throughout the academic year. Brighton will witness the Baywatch Beach Party during the Summer Term. Advertising brands this the last event of the year encouraging students to dress in trunks, bikinis and bring inflatable rings. The Hastings Campus is committed to supporting those students looking for this sort of student experience in Brighton by organising transport.

Branding of the university itself is often subconsciously influenced by the scale of local nightlife. For example, the popular night club Cream is based in Manchester and is said to draw interest in applications to the universities in Manchester because of this proximity (Chatterton and Hollands 2003). The authors warn that the heart of the

town centre is being squeezed and stretched. Hastings again does not have the student population or the national bar chains and the student experience (or lack of it) is reflected in this.

There is one national pub chain in Hastings town centre that does put on events to attract the students. Through their own research this pub had identified the days of the week most students use their bar as Thursday and Saturday, when the clients are estimated as 70% student and 30% local. The Bar Manager told me that a lot of the students go home at weekends so he develops themed nights for Thursdays using hired 'staged' props such as a surfing simulator, or running a 'Mr&Mrs' quiz type competition between local and non-local students.

It can be assumed that 'traditional' students still spend approximately 20% of their income on leisure activities (Chatterton and Hollands 2003). I refer here to 'traditional' or external origin students as evident from this research, the social lives of the local origin Hastings students are generally different.

One local student was aware that she achieved her socialising through her work. She had three jobs and was on a full time degree course.

"I work in a leisure complex so I meet lots of people. I get to know some of the regular customers really well. ...then I talk to people more and socialise through work. ...I don't have time to socialise outside of work."

Ph.E:5 Hazel: local origin

My research investigated students' expectations of Hastings, whether local or external, mature or moving away from home for the first time, and male and or female. I was interested in whether they have framed their expectations against those of a larger established univer-city centre where they might expect to find student type

businesses, accommodation and communities. Or, whether their expectations held different perspectives and priorities as particularly the local students have identified. Valentine (2004) considers idyll's surrounding notions of place, which again maybe within some student imagined concepts and expectations of the place that will deliver the 'whole' university experience. Holdsworth's (2006) research identifies that move away from home students are far more likely to be the ones who participate in university led activities and points to the lack of local origin students' involvement. Students participating in group discussions during the survey briefing periods also discussed what appealed to them about the university and the town.

'...I like being by the sea...'

FN:1 - RT

'...Selected UCH because it's a small university...'

FN:1 - RT

'...Best thing so far has been the bonfire celebrations...'

FN:1 - RT

In response to the above quotes and the identification for the importance of coast, and a coastal university town, and in relation to choice and place making - an area for further analysis in other parts of the thesis, it has been demonstrated in Chapter 5 that students do make coastal moves in their choice of university. More specifically, students with a home base along the south and south east coastlines have selected to migrate to Hastings. Secondly, as a local university developed through the then New Labour Government expansion of higher education, Hastings has been developed as a location for education led regeneration to strengthen the town's skills base. What is lacking is the support for social infrastructure in the town to excite and entertain the students.

The students at the University of Brighton in Hastings who had migrated for a wider experience often felt frustrated with the limited opportunities the town and university offered. Some participants in the field survey stated:

'...I expected closer links between Brighton campus and Hastings I never realised the distance between two...' FN:1 - RT

'...I thought it [University of Brighton in Hastings] was in Brighton...' FN:2 - RT

'...I go out in Brighton...' FN3 - RT

'...I wanted the gayness of Brighton...' FN1 - RT

These students were expressing their dissatisfaction with the lack of wider student opportunities they had hoped to engage with when studying with the University of Brighton. They had moved away from home and selected the Brighton association with a socially conscious - party city, description, tag. Their applications were to the University of Brighton but they had not visited 'open days' or interviews (now heavily encouraged by the university staff).

Chatterton and Hollands (2003) provide a warning that 'studentland' is potentially 'for sale' by developers, my research suggests that once the critical mass in Hastings has been achieved, 'studentland' in Hastings is ready for such development.

Finally, the town of Hastings has an existing, vibrant creative community with many free festivals and community events that have a local and regional focus. The 'bonfire celebrations' referenced earlier referred to a local event which attracts audiences of over 20,000, to which the student Facebook site now draws attention and promotes to

students. Unfortunately, many of the town's festivals and events take place over the summer months and outside of the academic calendar.

8.4.1 Student safety

From the field note discussions mentioned above, and the discussion raised by the key informant (KI:4) the importance of addressing student safety was raised. Safety emerged as a theme through the survey field notes but had not been raised as a topic for the research and as such did not appear in the survey questions. It would be useful to conduct an extension to the research with a focus on student safety, with reference to the Student Community Safety Open Forum event convened by the University's Community University Partnership Programme that emerged from early dissemination of this research. To extend the case of the student within FN:1-RT:

Student: *"I wanted the gayness of Brighton. ...I go out in Brighton but I can't get back again because there's no bus and the last train leaves early"*.

Researcher: What do you do?

Student: *"I sleep on the beach and wait to catch the first train in the morning"*.

Researcher: Do you think it's safe for a woman to sleep alone on the beach overnight?

Student: *"I feel quite safe, there's no-one around really. But I do get very cold!"*

FN:1- RT

This story was shared confidentially with the Hastings Campus staff and Student Union, who now support student nights out in Eastbourne and Brighton with transport arrangements arranged by the University of Brighton. Working within other local

governance structures to address personal safety for there is an additional concern for student safety in Hastings too after two recent ‘muggings’ on students:

“...I’m worried people are being targeted for crime. The students are more at risk because of their diversity [ethnically] and their wealth... I wonder if higher education students have replaced language students as targets for crime... There’s a lack of dedicated student spaces.... Hastings lacks a campus feel. There’s a corridor where a group will possibly target students. The students are identifiable near the ‘potato shop’ and letting agency.”

KI:4 2011

This latter concern was mentioned earlier, however, there seems to be a town centre balance needed: Safe student dedicated spaces, near to Hastings Campus to create a campus feel, and a vibrant town centre and evening economy. Hoskins and Tallon (2004) refer to the ‘urban idyll’ of a contemporary feel and attractive centre. Whilst, Holloway and Hubbard (2001) talk of the different encounters of the culturally vibrant town or city centre, likened to a ‘melting pot’. Young people under thirty are attracted to stylish, exciting places and seek out nightlife spots (Tallon 2006).

Local Bar Managers in Hastings were aware of and raised student safety as important, if less aware of the stereotypes they were constructing:

“We always try to be student friendly. If customers turn up in joggers or are too drunk they’re not let in... We’re quite strict which means our venue is safe. Students can come in and have a good night... We value difference - goth, hippy or rock and so on. ‘Chavs’ will get kicked out, even though they have money to spend.”

KI:7 2011

The manager stated that difference was valued and yet on the contrary, if customers don’t ‘fit’ they will have to leave, or are refused entry, even though they have money

to spend. Given the student economic capital this could cause further friction between students and local young people sharing nights out. However another of the town centre Bar Managers said:

“We have a zero tolerance policy for those who are too drunk or have bad behaviour etc. I use regular door staff who get to know regulars on Thursdays and Saturdays... I also have 2 students working here, and others on part time courses, it’s important because they know how old people are and they bring their friends...we get a mix of 70% students, 30% locals on promotion nights....they feel safe here”

KI:10 2011

This Bar Manager discussed ways to engage students through promotional nights, such as various themed nights and discount schemes, stressed the importance of getting to know the students, and communicating with them in a variety of ways and social methods. The importance of social networking for sustained urban living is identified by Horschelmann and van Blerk (2012) who refer to young people constructing in-between spaces, and within spaces using mobile phones. This extends to blogging, texting and social networking sites as new channels of communication. These forms of communication are influencing student habitus as the methods for communication evolve and develop. Students promote event nights where they both produce and consume social activities (Chatterton and Hollands 2003), in Hastings meeting up at the Hastings Campus for a game of pool or Playstation before going into the town centre (as discussed in Chapter 6). One key informant acknowledged:

“We need to identify where students go...and want to go...separate and apart from where young people go. We have a lack of knowledge here and possibly a lack of numbers...Never the less we want students to feel comfortable

anywhere. Community and student safety is important for Hastings and St Leonards.”

KI:1 2011

Some concerns were raised from my research earlier than I had intended, for example the young woman spending nights alone on the beach in Brighton after a night out. This has meant the university staff teams have responded positively by hiring transport, working with local venues, representation on the Evening Economy Group, and supporting the Student Union to build evening sessions. The university identity and marketing (University Centre Hastings, now renamed the University of Brighton in Hastings) has responded to student concerns about their place of study, with students commonly thinking they were in or closer to Brighton, that has been a key frustration for many external origin students. Whilst the University has already identified the problem and responded within marketing materials, the subject will contribute to the recommendations in the final conclusions of this research.

Studentification of neighbourhoods, usually in close proximity to the university campus and very often associated with noise, rubbish and theft (for example of student laptops where there are generally more per household than average) contribute to concerns about student safety (Smith 2005). Pain and Townshend (2002) researched a ‘safer city for all’ with a ‘sense of community safety’. They suggest that situational approaches rarely tackle the causes of crime. Their research worked with a range of groups including the elderly, young mothers and young male students. Those who took the most precautions and were the most careful about their safety were actually the young men who had stronger perceptions about where, when and for whom risk lies. The strategies these young male students adopted were; to walk as though they appeared not to be scared, walk confidently as though they knew

where they were going, avoided certain places at certain times, stayed in large groups of friends, and hid valuables. Some of these young men had been ‘hassled’ by the police and were aware of older people’s perceptions of them. Although,

‘Most crime takes place outside town centres in the home, residential areas or workplaces and does not usually involve contact between strangers.’

Pain and Townshend 2012:103

8.5 Work

As mentioned, student safety has been raised as an issue by students and key informants including community workers with student/youth responsibilities. Students often work unsocial hours that can put them at further risk of crime.

From the research survey 55% of the 100 students who completed the questionnaire have paid work. This is across full time (8%), part time (38%) and holidays only (9%) and leaves 45% not in any form of paid work (see Table 8.3).

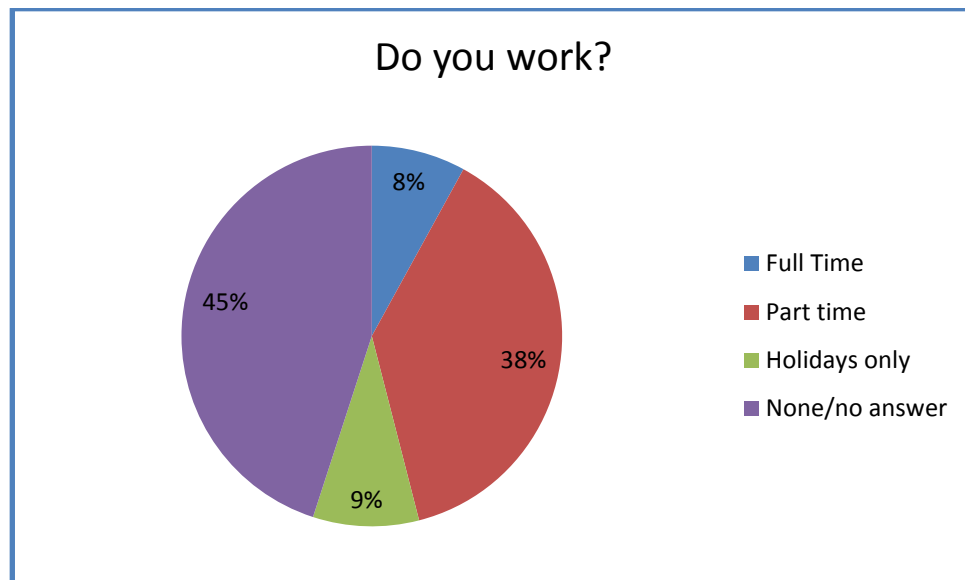


Table 8.2: Q3.1 Do you work? Showing division through hours worked

The students listed the various types of work undertaken with retail work the most popular (10%) followed by bar work (7%). The other category included individual

references that included a job at the cinema, gardening, and teaching. (see Table 8.4 below).

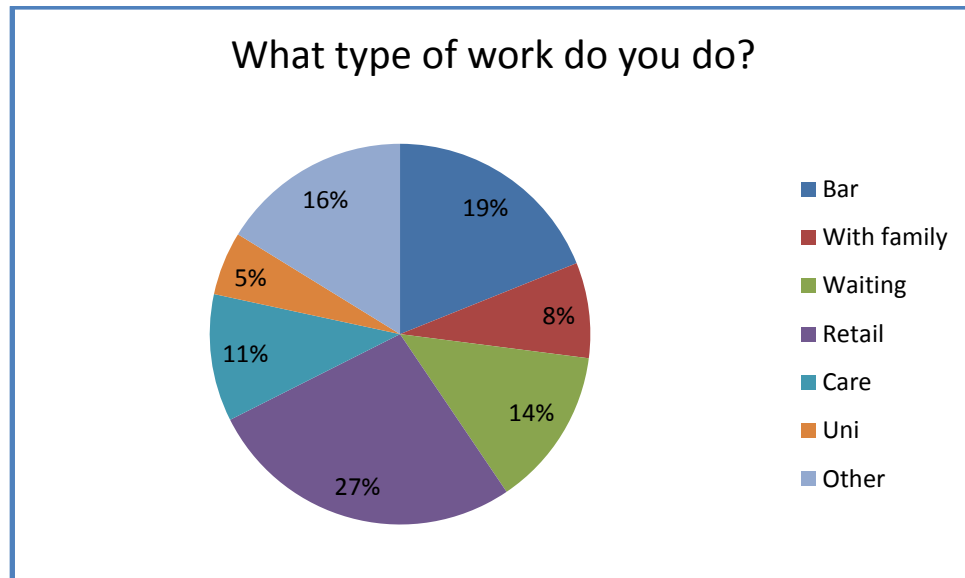


Table 8.3: Q3.1 What type of work do you do?

Munro et al (2009) state that a large percentage of the student population is in employment and that they appear to be successful getting work, very often around social experience opportunities. Their research also demonstrates a correlation that where local young people are in employment similar numbers of local young people tend to be employed (Munro et al. 2009). So, where there is evidence of work opportunities and a higher employment rate of young people, there are likely to be more students working. Bars, clubs and cafes employ students because they attract other students into the bar, are generally no trouble and are friendly to customers (Chatterton and Hollands 2003, Munro et al 2009). As already seen, this was exploited earlier by the local Bar Manager who employed two students in Hastings because they were best placed to identify the ages of customers and to attract friends to the bar.

Further, Munro et al (2009) discuss the reasons for the increase in student employment rates that have risen in response to students' fees and a move from government funded higher education to families and students paying for tuition and maintenance over the last twenty years. As seen in Hastings, 55% of the students surveyed were in employment, mostly working in the leisure (bars, waitressing etc) and retail industry, a few working through family connections, and some working as care assistants in local nursing homes. Of those in work during term time, 77% are local (for, holiday work only this evens between for local and external students). During term time the students sourced employment opportunities which are flexible around their time in university, which again tend to be in the service industries.

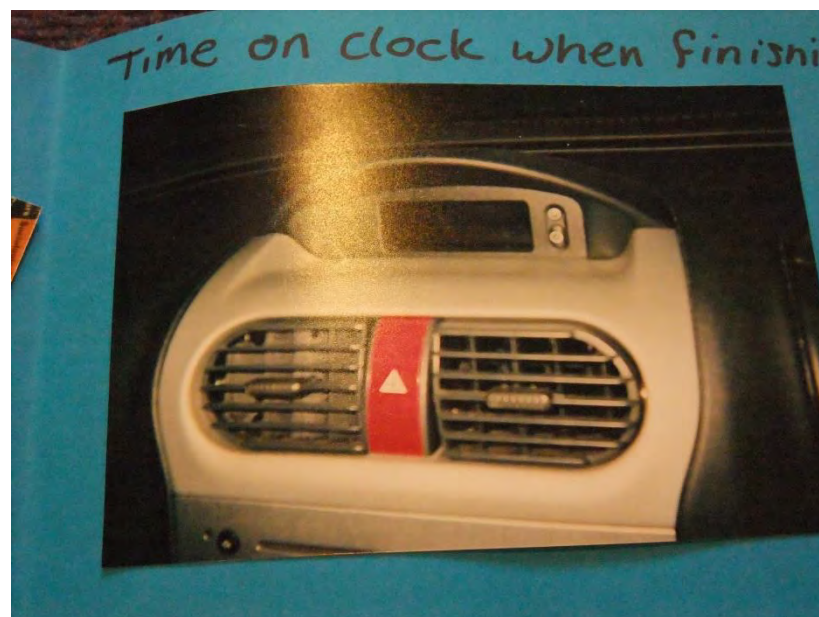


Figure 8.6: Taken on drive home after late night shift Ph.E:5 Hazel

“The time on the car is ten to 12 at night. I finish that late at night. Where I’ve been working I struggle to come in for early hours, especially when we’re busy at work during half term. I work late between March and mid-November. ...I enjoy being with people my own age. ...We did have another second year

working there but he took time off... I've picked up his hours."

Ph.E:5 Hazel: local origin

Duke Williams (2009) researched the processes that take place at the other end of the 'pipeline', following graduation, considering whether the graduates stay on to live in the town where they have studied or move on. He suggests not all graduates gravitate towards London but in order for them to remain in the town where they studied they will be influenced by the local employment market and graduate level opportunities. To sustain growth over the economic decline period and manage the transition to a high value-added or knowledge-based economy, towns and cities need to retain their skilled graduates (Pratt et al 2006). As on Hastings key informant said:

"We have the footfall potential for more trade in the town. We're not seeing the benefits yet of having the students. Longer term we'll have graduates with specialised skills, coming out of university and staying here. This will benefit local people and create a better educational environment. We need to start the process now ... make students feel welcome and provide good accommodation so they will want to stay here in the future."

KI:11 2011

8.6 Conclusion

'The specificity of place produces and is produced by the distinct juxtapositions and convergence of wider and local social relations (Massey 1994).'

Valentine 2004:80

The remaking and creation of student spaces by students and for students has been discussed with relevance to their formation of student identity and to include the views of students and key actors with a responsibility for ensuring mutually

beneficial student experience. Additionally, students have been successful at finding local employment and managing workloads around their commitment to higher education. Some of the local origin students in particular were very hard working, whilst impressively demonstrating their value for study time and space. Most students identified the desire for greater social opportunities in the town.

Chatterton (1999, 2010) discussed the role of students as consumers and producers, to highlight the relevance of cultural production. Art and film students involved in local exhibitions, galleries and community work, students in bands and DJing in clubs and the role of students in managing and producing 'student club nights' working with popular bars and clubs. Whilst some of these examples were taking place in Hastings there are more opportunities to capitalise on these chances and encourage students to explore Hastings in terms of their musical tastes, peer group interests and cultural identity. Chatterton and Hollands (2003) together have undertaken the most significant research into studentland and student nightlife using the case study of Bristol, observing how the city is produced, regulated and consumed. Bristol has a segregated popular culture infrastructure in response to the large numbers of students in the city. This is composed of a series of venues and linked 'pathways' through certain areas (Chatterton 1999). These spaces operate in unique time-space frameworks clustered around the campus and the academic calendar. With lower numbers of university students in Hastings I suggest that a more integrated approach to the student experience should be developed. It cannot be denied that students wish to go out in Eastbourne and Brighton and so there should be continued support to help facilitate these opportunities and make them safer for students.

Chatterton (1999) cites venues that 'tried too hard' to attract students and that generally students prefer the 'soft lived-in look'. Those who gained most from the students took the time to understand the differences in the student market. For the bars in Hastings competing for the student pound, research suggests that the students will gravitate towards those who create relaxed atmospheres but more importantly those who work with the University, Student Union, and students themselves to create employment opportunities, and further to identify and respond to local need. There was a sense of too much university control in Hastings with restricted access to the student Fresher's events that could be widened to include a greater variety of bars, clubs, and other social opportunities for students.

I gathered a sense of frustration between town actors and students; wanting to involve and be involved in local communities. A lack of community engagement within the student neighbourhoods exists, and therefore is likely of students in other student univer-cities, that reflect the demographic of younger students moving away from home both for the first time and to a new environment. The external origin students at the University of Brighton in Hastings that had initially moved into halls of residence were generally more concerned with the distance between Hastings and Brighton and the lack of infrastructure between the towns and wider university campuses. This is also reflected in the slow rail and road links, the expense of travel between the two.

9.0 Conclusions

9.1 Introduction

Chatterton (1999, 2010) talks of the role of students as consumers and producers, highlighting the relevance of cultural production, to include students involved in local exhibitions, galleries and community work, students in bands. My empirical research was commissioned to contribute within the wider context of ‘studentification’ and ‘student geographies’ (after Smith 2009) to offer a case study through students’ place based experiences in a new space of higher education at the University of Brighton in Hastings, and set within the context of New Labour’s policy development to widen access to university (Garratt and Forrester 2012). The findings identify three key areas of contribution:

- i. The practice of place in a university town that identifies manufactured and contested spaces
- ii. The role of habitus as applied to student spaces
- iii. Student and young people’s experiences as they refine, reimagine and redesign space.

Further, input is made through mapping the conclusions on to the following bodies of geographical work: a) identity and the embodied student; b) homes and student home-making; and c) the town - a university town in the making. For student identities were considered through the influences on construction and formation in new spaces, whether origin affected place identity in this context, and the scalar process involved at different stages. These were explored through the student experience as witnessed by a second year cohort, sometimes in reference to their preparation for third year and post-graduation phase that has consequences for the town. The notion of social class and habitus are also explored, taking into consideration the widely diverse nature of

the student population in Hastings. The notion of communal identities and belonging are also relevant to the analysis.

This moves to the role of institutional habitus played out by the university and through the campus' spaces; that restrict and control the student culture as relevant to operational space, time frameworks. The university was also regarded as 'home' and a place of regularity and security for students. Student safety was an emergent implication of the thesis to which early responses have already been undertaken.

The role of the town and governance in shaping the student experience creates opportunities for student 'pathways' (Chatterton and Hollands 2003), and new development prospects are also considered. The final conclusions illuminate some of the remaining gaps and how the debate of student identities in new spaces of education can be advanced.

9.2 Practice of place in new spaces: manufactured and contested

The University of Brighton in Hastings was referred to affectionately by students who looked to the campus to provide recreational opportunities and was even termed as 'home'. Home is subject to theoretical debate as Verstraete and Cresswell (2002) categorise various notions that are influenced by the author's positionality. This is true of the students (taking into consideration the heterogeneity of their backgrounds), and of the feminist perspective that is critical of Tuan (Verstraete and Cresswell 2002:19 after Pratt 1999:152), that of the cosy nature which is celebrated, stating this perception is far 'easier to make from the position of someone who has a secure one'.

The fluidity of such position should also be respected when referring to the student's comments of home in Chapter 7.

My research contributes a valuable resource of empirical data set with new policy contexts that develop Thomas's (2002:436) reference to the relationship of 'familial' and 'institutional' habitus and how students use this within the transitional phase of moving away from home to university. Whilst her research is set within the context of student retention and identifies the importance of social networks, it is relevant to my findings for the University to reflect the diversity of student backgrounds and the percentage of students who are the first in the family to attend university that depend on this support, gathered within this data set. Jackson (1999:185) discusses how 'context, action, and structure' form part of geographical process,

'...how working class history is appropriated and symbolically transformed in the course of urban redevelopment...These processes might be theorised in terms of the concept of 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, Bourdieu 1984).'

With:

'...a range of theoretical perspectives that stress the social and political construction of culture.'

Jackson 1999:185

My research into how spaces of higher education are remade in the process of student identity formation found student resentment to dominant construction of university

spaces, particularly as there were few spaces 'owned' by students, and only then within the temporal framework controlled by the University; namely Thursday evenings. General social spaces in the university where posters or flyers might be expected to be messy were 'controlled'. Posters advertising local events were not permitted on the walls and flyers were orderly arranged in controlled areas. 'Freshers' week was a further example of control commented on from bar owners who were interviewed as part of the research and complained that they were denied access in favour of others in the town. Significantly in access to student controlled spaces, it is clear that Hastings lacks a campus feel, although it was hoped the new developments and outdoor space would respond to this need in some way.

Participants expressed determination for Hastings to succeed as a university town. Chatterton's (1999) early research around the success strategies in Bristol to embrace student popular culture expresses how the infrastructure operates a strong desire for association. In manufacturing these student 'pathways' key areas have been accomplished: a) a commitment to determine local student identity b) creation of particular student areas c) local businesses working within student economy d) significant effort to meet the needs of students e) the operation of a mini student community (Chatterton 1999:118).

It is necessary to take into account the number of students in Hastings as a starting point, given that there is not the preferred concentration, and to factor the seasonal changes and university term dates, thus identifying the transiency of space and place (Horschelmann and van Blerk 2012). Students are identified in my thesis as contributing to place identity and are ideal research candidates given the demographic in developing a sense of place in a single location (Holton 2013:206).

My research identified a mini exodus of students towards Eastbourne where there is a larger established campus of over 3000 students and the associated social events in the town. Hastings bar owners were aware that Hastings students were attracted to Eastbourne for a 'younger vibe', despite the wider perception of the town as a retirement resort. Crucially students were more successful in accessing larger accommodation units in Eastbourne than in Hastings for those wanting to share student housing.

Very early developments are currently being explored by private investors in town; the old Observer Building has already opened a 'comfortable' space with the 'relaxed' atmosphere to attract students (Chatterton and Hollands 2003) and there are plans in progress to develop over 200 individual trendy student units on the roof of this complex, that could develop a student corridor into the town centre.

The University of Brighton in Hastings is recruiting most students from London and Sussex. Again, there is evidence of the desire on behalf of the town to retain graduates, therefore clear retention strategies need to be publicised and career opportunities maximised. With a majority of local origin student recruitment Hastings has been successful in dispelling 'Uni is not for people like me' (Chatterton 2010:510).

Hastings remains the most deprived area in the South East (ESIF 2015) and has been ambitious in embracing education led regeneration through the creation of the Hastings' Campus and a commitment to widening participation. Vice Chancellor Julian Crampton argued,

“Here is a town of about 100,000 where the university has really brought together education from primary school right through to secondary, sixth form and vocational or higher education.” This provides a “road map” for children to progress right the way through the education system’

Else 2014: www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/news/regeneration-through-education-in-hastings/2011561.article

9.3 The role of habitus applied to student spaces

Place and habitus were used as ways in to research student identities. Within my research I wanted to ensure to contribute new policy and student perspectives and for the process to be reflexive (Taylor 2010) and include ‘student voice’ to identify the influences on student construction and formation of identities in a new space of higher education and whether student’s origins affected their response to place identity. The rich photo elicitation methodology contributes to this field using methods of visual representation that enabled this influence of the ‘student voice’. In this way student identities contributed narratives that demonstrated fluidity and process. Mostly these were individual stories but time was given to explore collective identities for what it meant in ‘becoming’ a student. As to be expected with a heterogeneous student cohort the study revealed differences in approaches in the articulation of student identities between local origin and external origin, age, gender and ethnicity.

Most students conform to a collective identity; increasing their social habitus through socialising and hedonism. Influences upon the external student concern in Hastings tended to be socially related (Woodward 2002) set between relationships of the self and others. However the local diversity encompasses around 60% local origin

students who were often mature women with children, and almost always had work commitments described a different narrative of the need for positioning their many identities and roles within home, family, work and so on. The narratives from these students have provided evidence to support how place of origin does affect response for local students demonstrated less concern with socialising and a greater presence of study within their home that conduces to act as building blocks for their wider families to ignite aspirations for their own children to enter higher education (Wainwright and Marandet 2010 after Aldridge 2004).

Student interviews highlight preparations for the upcoming third, final year, and even post graduate preparation extends Holton's (2013:211) illustration of this phase as a transitional phase with a growing sense of place and a reduced development of habitus. Chatterton (2000:122) refers to the 'unlearning' of student 'rules' and a move to 'distance' themselves from other students during the final year. Tom [Ph.E:9] referred to this phase through his own expression of changes in his student identity, through clothes, his planned use of social media, and preparation for work post-graduation.

9.4 Student experience: refined, reimagined and redesigned space

Most student narratives referenced 'home' or 'home-making' as represented in the analysis within Chapter 7. These student stories extend the work of Holdsworth (2006, 2009) who identified the need for further research of the local student experience, for as she states there is a lack of enquiry aimed at the (non)mobility of students declaring when the issue is addressed the greater interest is with social class and background.

Holdsworth's (2006) debate of the 'typical student' whether 'home-based' or external is extended through my contribution of visual representation data findings for students who had moved to Hastings to study or chosen to stay at home for financial, family, friends, or work reasons. This research furthers this discussion through photographic representation of individual journeys to 'studenthood' as they reimagined and redesigned the sometimes fragmented transitions they took in the construction and formation of identity.

Social and spatial mobility has proved a useful trajectory to explore both student habitus and the accumulation of cultural capital (Holdsworth 2006). These concepts were framed by the student experience within a new higher education policy setting that have linked place and cultural capital as a useful construct for working with students in offering a new perspective for understanding student identity. The concepts of identity and place also further extend the recent research of Hopkins (2010) and Horschelmann and van Blerk (2012) exploring young people, place and identity, and youth and the city respectively.

The photo elicitation participants who responded to the role of the university in the formation of their student identity stressed the importance of facilitated events that were redesigned to meet students from outside of their own field of study. One student appreciated the social events in shared social spaces that thereby gave performance and personality to the space (Leach 2002, Hillier and Rooksby 2002). Again, this effort on behalf of the University builds place identity and a sense of belonging that is particularly important once more with the absence of a notable campus space to provide this framework.

The marketing of the University of Brighton in Hastings has already responded to earlier dissemination of the findings of this research as students had clearly expected a much closer relationship with Brighton and to be nearer to Brighton for social opportunities. The University has also responded positively to student need for transport links at night to facilitate social outings to Eastbourne and Brighton (Chapter 8).

9.5 Wider implications of the study

The responses to student demand for transport links to social places came in response to some of the unanticipated concerns identified through the research into student safety. Other important responses have been to facilitate a Student Safety Conference (April 2013) that brought together invited agencies with responsibility for student safety in the town including Sussex Police and representatives from Hastings Borough Council. A further outcome was the formation of a Student Safety Society to meet regularly, report and respond to student concerns as a representative body, and a Student Community Safety Forum to meet less often but to provide a portal for feedback to local agencies. It could evolve that the police have recognition early in the student career through a presence at the induction events.

The University has also become a member of the Evening Economy Group for the town centre so that the students are once again represented at this level when planning decisions are made between town governance and local businesses. Two of the bar owners interviewed for this study had undertaken some modest independent research to be responsive to student safety, identify student numbers, and develop their student income.

Student identity is interrelated to a sense of belonging, particularly in the early phase of 'becoming' a student. Thomas (2002) discusses 'belonging' in relation to the importance of student retention framed by important issues of widening participation, increased student diversity, especially from lower social class background; a demographic that fits with the Hastings Campus and which my narratives add new perspectives from working women, sometimes with children, entering university as mature students and links with the work of Wainwright and Marandet (2009, 2010).

Thomas recommends early relationships with students, even prior to enrolment through open days, visits and interviews. Student participants referred to a sense of communal belonging, particularly in response to the large scale fire on Hastings Pier that took place at the time of this research. The students were motivated by the town's response and saw themselves as part of the wider community participating in fundraising events and so on. The University has expressed a hope to capitalise on community engagement opportunities, promote community events, and develop a Student Neighbourhood Panel to represent those moving into halls of residence.

The Hastings student experience and belonging was referenced in my research through additional agents of habitus including well-being and happiness, developing self-confidence, adopting student dress codes, progressive successful relationships with their chosen course and course leaders, the university itself, and in Hastings being part of a seaside community. As demonstrated, the University of Brighton in Hastings through the role of institutional habitus is a key agent of power for fuelling many of these fields (Holdsworth 2006), through marketing, presentation, and early student engagement and so on. Bourdieu uses the analogy of playing a game and as I have stated in this case the University is the games-maker (Friedmann 2005).

9.6 Advancing student geographies

In contributing to student geographies the research into the case study of higher education in Hastings within the policy context of neo-liberal growth and the widening participation agendas, the findings can be employed by the university itself, town governance, and the local business sector.

The results have been defined in three key areas:

- I. Practice of place through a range of concepts: manufactured, a university town, and contested spaces.
- II. The investigation of student habitus through place, and how place identity informs the accumulation of student spaces.
- III. Young people's experiences of the social production of identity: refined, reimagined and redesigned.

The research extends the consideration of student construction of place and the formation of student identities where local origin and external origin students have been considered with equal importance, against most former literature that has the exclusive focus of mobility or non-mobility. Consideration was given to the terminology most frequently encountered as 'traditional' or 'non-traditional' and the preference for this place based study of identity was given to the context of origin, that is to say 'local' and 'external'.

Holdsworth (2006) identified the need for further research with a focus on non-mobility of students and social class whilst Smith (2008) recommends the input of data involving retail and service infrastructures framing student communities. This empirical study provides rich data that has used Skeggs (1997, 1999) framing of

Bourdieu's social spaces, as applied in this context to student spaces, considering access to education and recreation through age, ethnicity, gender and social class. The study considers whether student identities are 'forced' through the sense of 'belonging' or 'becoming' a student and what typical identities are couched in the presentation of what it means to be a student. Broadly external origin students wanted to realise nihilistic expectations of 'studenthood' whilst local origin students largely focused on creating a scholarly identity within the wider context of juxtaposing family and work commitments.

Student habitus offered an alternative perspective to the enquiry into place and student identities in new spaces of higher education. The key contributions of the research are demonstrated through the following four areas: empirical contribution; methodological contribution; policy contribution; and conceptual contribution. New research areas are anticipated in the identification of changing effects upon hierarchies and the academic response within the current political context of wider access, student fees, and new town provision of higher education in the United Kingdom.

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Student Survey

Student Life in Hastings 2010/11

Mandy Curtis

School of Environment and Technology

As part of my PhD research, I am conducting a questionnaire survey that explores student life and student experiences in Hastings.

This short survey is voluntary, and will not take long to complete. The data will be collected and treated anonymously and securely: the hard copy of each survey will be stored in a locked filing cabinet; and the data will be stored on a secure PC with password protection. The hard copy will be destroyed following completion of the project and no identifiable personal data will be collected (i.e. name, address etc.).

Participants will be given the opportunity to receive feedback on the results of the survey by contacting Mandy Curtis via email (m.l.curtis@brighton.ac.uk).

By agreeing to commence with the survey, each participant is agreeing to the storage and treatment of data set out above.

Please return to:

Mandy Curtis

University Centre Hastings

Havelock Road

Hastings TN34 1BE

Student Life in Hastings 2010/11

To answer this survey please tick the relevant boxes and where appropriate, write any additional information in the spaces provided.

Section 1 · About where you live

1.1 What is your type of accommodation for this year?

- University halls of residence []
- University managed accommodation (e.g. shared house) []
- Private shared house with other students []
- Private shared house with some other students/non students []
- Reside in/buy your own home []
- Reside in family home []
- Other (please specify)

1.2 Was this type of accommodation your first choice?

- Yes (go to Q1.4) [] No [] Don't know []

1.3 How much would you have been prepared to pay per week to obtain your first choice of accommodation?

- £70 or less [] £71 - £80 [] £81 - £90 []
 £90+ []

1.4 What are the key benefits to residing in your present type of accommodation?

(Please tick ALL relevant)

- | | | | |
|--|-----|------------------------|-----|
| Social aspect (meeting new people) | [] | Sports nearby | [] |
| Good room size | [] | Communal areas | [] |
| Public transport | [] | Security | [] |
| Amenities nearby (shop, supermarket etc) | [] | Cheap | [] |
| Night time activities (bars, clubs, restaurants) | [] | Parking | [] |
| Internet access | [] | Location | [] |
| Other (please specify) | [] | Other (please specify) | [] |

1.5 What is your present weekly rent?

- Less than £70 [] £71 - £80 [] £81 - £90 [] £90+ []

1.6 What type of neighbourhood is important for your accommodation? (Tick ALL relevant)

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----|------------------------------|-----|
| Local shops | [] | Supermarket | [] |
| Internet access | [] | Bars/clubs | [] |
| Gym/sports facilities | [] | Pubs | [] |
| Student community | [] | Close to campus | [] |
| Doctor's surgery/Dentist | [] | Public transport | [] |
| Close to Hastings town centre | [] | Close to central St Leonards | [] |
| Close to the sea | [] | Sense of freedom | [] |

Sense of wider community (clubs, arts, events, music venues) []
 Others (please specify)

1.7 When choosing your present accommodation, did you know specific places/areas in Hastings and St Leonards where you wanted to live? Yes [] (please specify)..... No []

1.8 Did you know specific places/areas in Hastings and St Leonards where you did NOT want to live?
 Yes [] (please specify)..... No []

1.9 What type of accommodation would you prefer for your subsequent years of study?

	Yr 2	Yr 3
Halls of residence	[]	[]
University managed accommodation (e.g. house)	[]	[]
Purpose-built private student accommodation	[]	[]
Private shared house with other students	[]	[]
Private shared house with some other students/non students	[]	[]
Reside in family home	[]	[]
Other (please specify)		

1.10 Were the services of the Uni. of Brighton helpful when searching for accommodation? Yes [] No [] Don't know []

1.11 How long have you lived in the Hastings area?
 Less than 1 year [] 1-3 years [] 3 – 10 years [] 10+ years [] All your life []

1.12 Where did you live previously? Please write up to 3 places (the most recent first)

Section 2 · About university

2.1 About university:
 Do you have a brother, sister or cousin who has attended university? []
 Did either parent (carer) go to university? []

2.2 What factors influenced your decision to come to UCH? Please answer ALL.

What influenced your choice to study at UCH Please answer ALL below	1 Very important	2 Quite important	3 Not so important	4 Not important
Near to sea/coast				
Part of University of Brighton				
Courses offered				
Size of UCH				

Facilities at UCH				
Friends attending UCH				
Cheap to live in Hastings				
Local to family home				
Existing connections with Hastings				
Tuition fees				
Other (please specify)				

Section 3 · About your work and leisure

3.1 Do you work:

Full time [] Part time [] Holidays only [] Not at all []

What type of work do you do? (Please specify).....

3.2 Which of the following retail and transport services do you use locally?

(Please tick ALL relevant)

	Daily	3+ days per week	1-3 days per week	Once per week	Once per month	Never
Supermarket						
Post office/local shop						
Health food shop						
Antique shops						
Second hand shops						
Clothing/shoe shops						
Bookshops						
Music/games shops						
Bus						
Train						
Other (please specify)						
Other (please specify)						
Other (please specify)						

3.3 Which of the following leisure services do you use locally?

(Please tick ALL relevant)

	Daily	3+ days per week	1-3 days per week	Once per week	Once per month	Never
Gym/sports						
Pubs						
Restaurants/cafes						
Local clubs/drama/dance etc						
Night clubs						
Festivals						
Music venues						

Sea/beach						
Cinema						
Galleries						
Complimentary therapies						
Other (please specify)						
Other (please specify)						
Other (please specify)						

3.4 On an average week, which nights do you go out (socially) in Hastings?

	Tick if yes	Please state factors that influence your chosen nights out? (e.g. work, student offers, promotional nights etc)
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

3.5 Please specify the main ways in which you engage with local people in Hastings

.....

3.6 What has been your experience of engaging with local people/businesses in Hastings?

.....

3.7 What would enhance your student experience in Hastings?

.....

3.8 Please sum up the main features of your student life in Hastings in no more than 10 words.

.....

Section 4 · About you

4.1 Your year of study:

Year 1 [] Year 2 [] Year 3 [] Other (please specify).....

4.2 Are you:

Female [] Male []

4.3 Are you:

Under 20 [] 20-24 [] 25-29 [] 30+ []

4.4 Are you:

UK student [] International student [] EU student [] Other (please specify).....

4.5 Are you :

Full time [] Part time [] Other (please specify).....

4.6 How do you prefer to describe your ethnicity?

White British [] White Irish [] Any other white background []

Mixed - White and Black African [] Mixed – White and Black Caribbean []

Mixed – White and Asian [] Mixed – any other background []

Asian or Asian British - Indian [] Asian or Asian British – Pakistani []

Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi [] Chinese []

Any other Asian background []

Black or Black British - African [] Black or Black British – Caribbean []

Any other Black background []

If you have ticked any other background or wish to describe your ethnicity in another way (please specify)

.....

And finally...

If you are prepared to take part in follow-up research to discuss student life in Hastings further, please provide your email address or contact details:

.....

.....

.....

.....

Thank you for taking part in this research.

Mandy Curtis · PhD Researcher · University of Brighton · UCH · Hastings · TN38 1BE

M.L.Curtis@brighton.ac.uk

APPENDIX B Participant Information Sheet

Study title

'Student Life in Hastings'

Invitation

'You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Talk to others about the study if you wish. Please ask Mandy Curtis if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.'

What is the purpose of the study?

The aim of this student research project is to explore the construction and formation of student identities at University Centre Hastings. Investigating the effects of home-based student populations on student identities and examining the impact of new 'student experiences'.

Why have I been chosen?

Participants have been selected either as a student to take part in the photo elicitation research because you have self-identified an interest following the completion of the survey. Or, for interview because you are considered to be a key informant relevant to the Hastings' student experience. This may be: private (letting agents, developers, employers) or public sector (university, local authority, local councillors) agents who can help to further the research analysis. It is envisaged that participants will identify current, and proposed, practises for student identification and/or engagement. Further, they will identify the processes underpinning the student experience.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. You are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. A decision to withdraw at any time, or a decision not to take part, will not adversely affect the level of support given to the research.

What will happen to me if I take part?

The *photo elicitation research* will be undertaken with a disposable camera to take images which reflect student life in Hastings as pertinent to the individual participant. This will be supported by a short introductory and follow up meeting.

The *interview* should last no longer than one hour and further follow up should not be necessary, although should you wish to make contact with me you are very welcome to do so. An initial summary of findings will be made available. The information you provide will be used within the dissertation available in 2012. Unless you indicate otherwise, I shall audio-record the interview for future reference. All data will remain confidential and destroyed at the end of the research project.

You will be asked a series of prepared questions to follow up from the earlier student survey. These are designed to further identify student experiences in Hastings and any local provision (current or planned). There will be an opportunity at the end of the interview for you to provide any further information which you feel is relevant.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

The questions are designed for you to answer in your student/professional capacity but should you feel uncomfortable, in any way or at any point, please indicate and the meeting/interview can be terminated.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

It is hoped that the findings can influence student experiences in the future through opportunities to follow up and plan for 'Student Life in Hastings'. Therefore, any direct beneficiaries will be future students themselves.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

You can withdraw from the study at any time without incurring any negative effects.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Your confidentiality will be safeguarded during and after the study. Interviews and surveys will remain anonymous and no data which could identify an individual will be used. Once completed, hard copies of the transcripts will be stored in a lockable cabinet. The data will be input to Excel, with all files being stored on a secured PC (as opposed to networked file space), protected by password access. Hard copies will be destroyed at the end of the research project. Any information that you provide will be kept private in discussions about the project.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

Participants will be given the opportunity to receive a summary of the results by emailing the researcher. An email request to express interest from the participant is necessary. The final publication of the dissertation will be completed in 2012. You will not be identified in any report/publication unless you have consented to release such information.

What if there is a problem?

Should you have a complaint please contact Professor Andrew Church, School of Environment and Technology, University of Brighton. Telephone 01273 600900

Contact Details:

Mandy Curtis
m.l.curtis@brighton.ac.uk

Thank You!

APPENDIX C(i)

Student Life in Hastings

Participant Consent Form: Key informant interview

Name of Researcher: Mandy Curtis

1. I _____ agree to be involved in this research which investigates 'Student Life in Hastings'. I give my permission for Mandy Curtis to use excerpts from the comments/interview I provide.

2. Mandy Curtis has explained to my satisfaction the purpose of the study. I have been informed of the nature and purposes of the study and have read the information sheet. I understand the principles and processes of the study.

3. I am aware that I will be asked to respond to questions and provide stories related to 'Student Life in Hastings'. Unless I indicate otherwise, an audio recording of the interview may take place.

4. I understand that my personal details (including my contact details) will remain confidential. Data will be stored in a secure area and destroyed at the end of the research project. I understand that relevant (anonymous) sections of any of data collected during the study may be looked at by the supervisors of this dissertation, for teaching and research purposes.

5. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without my rights being affected.

6. I understand that the data collected will be used as part of a dissertation project. I understand that the data will be used in writing up and disseminating the 'Student Life in Hastings' research (including in a dissertation which will be held in the School of the Environment & Technology University of Brighton). I understand that only anonymous excerpts from the research will be used in this write up and dissemination.

7. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

APPENDIX C(ii)

Student Life in Hastings

Participant Consent Form: Photo elicitation research

Name of Researcher: Mandy Curtis

1. I _____ agree to be involved in this research which investigates 'Student Life in Hastings'. I give my permission for Mandy Curtis to use excerpts from the comments/interview I provide.

2. Mandy Curtis has explained to my satisfaction the purpose of the study. I have been informed of the nature and purposes of the study and have read the information sheet. I understand the principles and processes of the study.

3. I am aware that I will be asked to respond to questions, take photographs and provide stories related to 'Student Life in Hastings'. Unless I indicate otherwise, an audio recording of the interview may take place.

4. I understand that my personal details (including my contact details) will remain confidential. Data will be stored in a secure area and destroyed at the end of the research project. I understand that relevant (anonymous) sections of any of data collected during the study may be looked at by the supervisors of this dissertation, for teaching and research purposes.

5. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without my rights being affected.

6. I understand that the data collected (including the photographs) will be used as part of a dissertation project. Further, I understand that the data will be used in writing up and disseminating the 'Student Life in Hastings' research (including in a dissertation which will be held in the School of the Environment & Technology University of Brighton). I understand that only anonymous excerpts from the research will be used in this write up and dissemination. The use of photographs has been discussed and I agree for the final agreed selection to be used in dissemination (including presentations).

7. I have read the Risk Analysis and I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

APPENDIX D

Photography guidance:

Guidance for taking photographs as part of the research project: *Student Life in Hastings*

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the research. You are free to withdraw from the process at any stage.

As you know as part of the research I would like you to take some photographs. The images you select should reflect your experience of being a student in Hastings and St Leonards. As part of the review process you will be asked to create a storyboard. This can include whatever content you wish but please do not produce any pictures or write anything that could be attributed to any individuals or personal property, and avoid taking images which could cause embarrassment. For privacy, please do not include your name. The storyboard will be made during the review session, after you have taken the pictures, and will help to refine, order and reduce the number of images used to select those which best reflect your life as a student in the town.

You can use whatever method(s) you wish for your storyboard. The following list gives you some suggestions but please feel free to do whatever you think works best.

Photographs

Words / phrases

Collage

You will be given some A2 and A3 card that you can use to produce your storyboard. Do not feel that you have to use all the space and you can decide what size you wish to make it. There are also some other materials such as pens and glue sticks available so please help yourself.

The content of your poster will not be judged in any way and whether you have artistic ability is not relevant. The storyboard will be used as a prompt for discussion during the review session.

If you have any questions about producing your poster or you want to discuss participation in the project please do contact me on 07708 479362 or m.l.curtis@brighton.ac.uk.

Thank you and enjoy taking the photographs!

APPENDIX E

Student Life in Hastings - Interview Schedule: key informant

Mandy Curtis, School of Environment and Technology, University of Brighton

Interviewees will be recruited through roles relevant to 'Student Life in Hastings' including approaches to: council personnel with a brief for young people and regeneration in the town; key personnel at the university and local landlords with responsibility for student life and accommodation; businesses people and local councillors who have expressed an interest in ensuring students have a beneficial experience in the town will also be approached.

Introduction:

- A. State name, reason for study and explain confidentiality ethics.
- B. Confirm participants' consent to commence and record the interview.

Proposed question outline:

Section 1 · About where university students live and identifiable student spaces

1. Please sum up your understanding or vision of the main features of 'Student Life in Hastings' in no more than 10 words.
2. What is 'studenty' about Hastings? And can you describe student spaces and identifiable places used by students?
3. Are there any places in Hastings and St Leonards which you feel are defined by students?
4. How do you think students fit into the town?
5. What has worked well for the town, having students, and why?
(Economically/culturally/socially)
What hasn't worked well for the town, having students, and why?

Section 2 · About university

6. What is your image of a typical university student?
7. How is this similar/different to Hastings students?
8. What do you think defines a student in Hastings? (varied body/type)

Section 3 · About students' work and leisure

9. Where do students go out? Why?
10. Where would students feel comfortable? Why?
11. Where might they feel unwelcome? Why?
12. Can you comment about where students work in the town?

Section 4 · About you and your engagement with students

13. In what ways (if any) do you feel you construct Hastings as a student town?
14. What do you think students would say works well for them in Hastings?
What do you think students would say doesn't work well for them in Hastings?
15. Do you/your organisation have any plans to improve 'Student Life in Hastings'?
16. Have you/your organisation attempted to improve student life in the past? How and why?

Thank the participant and explain how further information regarding the research can be obtained