Students' decision making process when making choices for Post-16 education in Guernsey

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I, Nicola Papworth, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

This thesis explores the experience of Guernsey students making their decisions around Sixth Form education, with particular reference to how they evaluate the associated risks and benefits when making their choice. The Expectancy Value Model of Motivated Behavioural Choice (EV-MBC) is used as a theoretical lens through which data is analysed and interpreted.

This thesis takes the form of an embedded mixed method case study, with twelve in-depth conversational interviews taking the primary role. Participants are interviewed twice, so allowing for reflection and a changing perspective over time. The secondary role is taken by data from two quantitative surveys; these allow a whole cohort overview and comparison point. This case is bounded by time and circumstance, with all participants originating from Guernsey's state secondary sector during the same academic year. The case has a sequential design; this allows the latter strands of the research to build on the earlier. The interviews are guided by vignettes matching different facets of the EV-MBC, so this model both shaped and is explored through the research. Data analysis is primarily completed through the creation of conceptual maps which allows a portrait of each participant to be built up in a similar fashion that encourages comparison.

Themes emerge from the data, although it is clear that for each participant this decision is a very individual process. Important factors shift over time for most, depending on their experiences. The EV-MBC model provides a thorough way to describe and explain the choices made. Guernsey's independent and isolated position, combined with its strong local employment market for young people, provides an unexpected confounding variable which is not predicted through theory. As a professional working in Guernsey's Sixth Form Centre, this thesis provides a substantial contribution to our local professional knowledge.

Impact Statement

The benefits of this thesis are both inside and outside academia. In modelling choices for Sixth Form using the Expectancy Value model of Motivated Behavioural Choice, this research demonstrates that this model can be used effectively to explore this process for a diverse range of young people, showing that for each it is a very individual process on which they expend a considerable amount of energy and time. This research benefits future scholarship through suggesting a future route to examine what works to influence choice, and how to encourage students to make the best possible choices for them.

The primary benefit of this research is outside academia, and whilst it is primarily based in its contribution to professional knowledge and discourse within Guernsey, it would be of interest to all professionals working in recruitment within the Sixth Form sector. At this time in Guernsey, research and discussion is taking place at a strategic and political level into the future of secondary and Sixth Form education. My professional contribution to this discourse is sought by policy makers, and has been shaped by the knowledge gained through this research, so the impact is far reaching within this educational jurisdiction. Dissemination to public policy makers and politicians means that the benefits of this research are substantial, and should help shape the future of this sector of education on Guernsey over the next decade.

Within my more immediate professional context, the benefits of this research are substantial. The knowledge gained through conducting this research has been disseminated to my team, and is shaping the way we work with young people making their decisions. It has allowed us to identify misconceptions we held, and has therefore facilitated us to reflect and shape our actions and behaviours to mean that we are both more effective and more sympathetic to students' needs and ideas. Further dissemination within my professional context is planned, both through internal CPD and through presenting my findings at Guernsey's 2020 ResearchED event. This latter event, although currently postponed due to the Covid19 Pandemic, is aimed at local professionals, and would allow me to reach a wider variety of those working with young people locally, so increasing the understanding of how young people reach their decisions for Post 16 education amongst those working with students as they begin to make their decisions elsewhere on Guernsey.

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Reflective Statement

Within this reflective statement I seek to summarise and synthesise my learning experience over the whole EdD programme. I moved to Guernsey just before I began the EdD programme, so all my work has been based within Guernsey's Grammar School and Sixth Form Centre. I have worked within the Sixth Form Management Team throughout this time, now leading the team as the Director of Sixth Form. Guernsey education has been in a state of flux since 2011, when poor GCSE results in some local schools prompted a comprehensive independent review of the provision (Mulkerrin, 2011). This review highlighted the problems within the system, and prompted the Education Committee to set out their response to the review (Guernsey, 2012) and their vision for the future (Guernsey, 2013). This eventually led to the States of Guernsey questioning the concept of education selection at age 11, leading to a vote in 2016 to end this practice. Since this date various models for Guernsey secondary education have been unsuccessfully put forward by Guernsey's Department for Education, Sport and Culture, and it has been a turbulent experience for all working within the sector, and for the wider community. The Sixth Form Centre launched its alternative Sixth Form curriculum, the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP), against this background in 2012. My research throughout this programme has taken place during this period of change, where the Sixth Form Centre has needed to work increasingly carefully to ensure that students from the feeder schools are not perceived to be disadvantaged due to their background compared to students from the selective school to which it is attached.

My first assignment, written for the Foundations of Professionalism module, explored a phenomenon new to me: the Guernsey School Inspection. I aimed here to discuss whether this process supported or undermined teacher professionalism and trust. Within this piece of work I explored the themes of accountability and identity; the latter from a local, institutional and professional perspective. Through exploration of the process, I concluded that Guernsey teachers' professionalism status was fragile at that time, undermined by the lack of autonomy from those setting the political agenda and by the managerial agenda originating from the States' Education Department. This assignment was my only piece of work that did not have clear links to the others; this was both due to the coincidental timing

of this assignment with my School's inspection, and with the nature of the topic of the assignment.

The next two assignments, Methods of Enquiry 1 and 2, were used to design and pilot a research investigation into how potential Sixth Form students made their decision of whether to study A Levels or the IBDP. These assignments led directly to my Institution Focused Study (IFS), and informed this Thesis. Methods of Enquiry 1 (MOE1) took the form of a qualitatively driven, mixed methods research design, and on re-reading and reflecting on this element, it is clear that my understanding of research methodology has significantly developed from this starting point to become far more nuanced and exact. The literature discussed within this piece of work became the starting point for all further literature I discussed in other elements of this programme. One of the examiner feedback comments discussed the need to further develop my understanding of the literature; as I moved through the programme I can clearly see that I have expanded my exploration of relevant literature and refined the discussion to increase relevancy.

Methods of Enquiry 2 (MOE2) allowed me to undertake MOE1's pilot study, and complete a report on this study. The pilot was adjusted to act on the examiners' feedback, and consequently I addressed a simplified research question compared to that initially proposed. In the taught element for this module I was introduced to the idea of using vignettes as a neutral tool to prompt a conversational interview, and this inspired me to explore this as a research methodology. As this was a pilot study, at the end of the interview the participants were asked evaluate the procedure with me; this allowed me to gain a practical understanding of what potentially worked with students of this age using this methodology. When processing and analysing the data, I primarily took a conventional approach, and created an analytical coding catalogue to use with NVivo to code the interviews to create charts. However, through my reading on qualitative data analysis I had met the idea of conceptual mapping (Grbich, 2007) as an analysis tool that would allow me to map out and summarise an unstructured interview. I experimented with this idea, creating conceptual maps for each interview to allow direct comparison between them. MOE2 also required a self-reflection on my role as an interviewer; through this I became aware that I needed to simplify my role in an interview to ensure that I did not overcomplicate matters through asking multiple questions at once.

MOE1 and 2 served as the research proposal and pilot study for my IFS. The IFS built on lessons learned in the previous elements of this programme, and had a clear focus of seeking to understand choice, especially in a situation where the available choices have evolved. The literature review reflected this focus, discussing innovation, change, and the cultural and individual response to change and challenge. I discussed choice in some depth, although particular models were not used or explored in a similar fashion to this Thesis. Theoretical ideas around academic risk were explored, however, in a greater degree of depth. The methodology built on MOE2, using those vignettes to prompt a conversational interview that were found to be successful in the previous assignment. This gave me the opportunity to further hone and develop processing and analysis skills for this type of interview. However, on reflecting on the use of these vignettes within this assignment, it became clear to me that those extracted from theoretical writing were less effective that those drawn from less formal sources such as student websites, or student quotes. Whilst some of the interviewees found it straightforward to unpack and understand the theoretical vignettes, others found this more challenging; they were not equally accessible by all. Overall, I found this interview tool to be effective, and it allowed me to overcome the reticence some of the interviewees initially displayed due to the power relationship originating from my professional role. The analysis was primarily completed using NVivo, with conceptual maps created as a secondary analysis tool for each interview. These conceptual maps were used to provide a clear overview for each participant, which allowed connections and patterns to be seen, and themes to emerge from the data. This worked well, and on reflection after the IFS I believed that this tool was underutilised here. The primary data analysis tool of analytic coding using NVivo allowed visual comparisons through charts to be produced. This was effective, and through a detailed coding catalogue, allowed a wealth of data to emerge regarding each participant's experiences. These different methods of data exploration helped develop my understanding of the many different ways data could be treated and compared to extract meaning, and about the complexity of each individual's choice process. The findings were summarised within the conclusion, and, on reflection, this summary lead directly to the approach taken within this Thesis as it fitted well with the Expectancy Value Model of Motivated Behavioural Choice (Eccles, 2009).

The topic and research questions posed by this Thesis are broader; I examine students' decision making process when making choices for Post-16 education in Guernsey. The theoretical review of literature concentrates on mechanisms of making a choice, identifying Eccles' (e.g. 2009; 2011; 2018; 2002) Expectancy Value Model of Motivated Behavioural Choice (EV-MBC Model) as the most significant and appropriate for this piece of research, and unpacks the contributing factors in depth. The Thesis methodology builds on the IFS by using vignettes to stimulate conversational interviews; these vignettes are extracts from the IFS interviews chosen to fit different parts of the EV-MBC, having therefore a greater accessibility for all participants than some of those used within the IFS. The data processing and analysis also builds on the IFS as conceptual maps, using the different columns of the EV-MBC as headings, are used here as the main data analysis tool for both the interviews and the survey conducted as part of this research. I had received feedback on an earlier assignment questioning whether I would use NVivo in a similar way in the future; essentially, did it produce anticipated results, or was it a lengthy over-complication. On consideration of this question, I had come to the conclusion that it would not be the most effective way of presenting results, and I chose to explore this less conventional data analysis tool in greater depth. The use of conceptual maps here demonstrates that my thinking was correct; this is a far more powerful analytical tool than I had previously realised, which allows themes and patterns to emerge to effectively shape my conclusion.

My work within this programme has therefore taken a sequential approach. With the exception of the first, each assignment has led to the next with a clear overall theme, culminating in the Thesis. This single line of enquiry has allowed my thinking, analysis, reflection and understanding in relation to the exploration of choice for Post 16 education to progressively develop. My focus also developed and shifted as I moved through this programme. When writing the reflective statement for the portfolio after completing the taught modules I discussed my focus as change management, but with further reflection came the understanding that MOE1 and 2 were less about managing the change of introducing an alternative qualification for Sixth Form students, but instead were focusing on gaining an understanding of how students made their choices at Post-16. This aim of seeking to understand how educational choice for Sixth Form is made became the focus for my EdD.

When I began this qualification, I had just moved to Guernsey and joined the Sixth Form Centre's Sixth Form Management team. My focus came from some of the assumptions the team made about how students made their choices for Sixth Form, and I wanted to explore and understand how these choices were made in depth. This research has changed my and my team's understanding of this transition; the latter as my role within the team has changed from being a member of the team, to Assistant Director and then Director of Sixth Form Studies. With the change in professional role has come a change in ability to influence direction and beliefs, and therefore our Sixth Form Management Team has developed a far greater understanding of the choice process: we have moved from a position of dealing with students making these decisions as generic objects to be moulded to acknowledging them as 'subjects in their own right; subjects of action and responsibility' (Biesta, 2013, p. 18), who are influenced, both consciously and subconsciously, by a large variety of factors that they may not be able to describe. This research has therefore reflected the demands of my professional life, allowing me to change the way we approach our work with students and parents looking to join the Sixth Form so we are able to work with them in a more sympathetic but effective manner.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The Context for this study

Guernsey is a small island with around 600 students each year who must choose their path once they have finished compulsory education at age 16. Students have two options for state education from age 16: to attend either the College of Further Education or the Sixth Form Centre. There is no cross-over of courses offered between the two institutions, with the College of Further Education (GCFE) offering vocational courses, and the Sixth Form Centre (SFC) offering academic courses of either A Levels or the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP). Historically, Guernsey has had a selective education system for those in secondary education. This uses an exam at the end of primary school to divide the students into the top 25% who are able to attend the Grammar School or a private College with a scholarship, whilst the remainder of those in state education attend a High School. Both the GCFE and the SFC are comprehensive, and although the SFC shares facilities and teachers with the Grammar School, it accepts any student who achieves its entry criteria. The Sixth Form aims to provide a uniform experience for all potential students, so all receive the same information and have the same opportunities to explore their options. My professional role is within the SFC; at the start of this piece of research my role was Assistant Director of Sixth Form, and I then moved to become the Director of Sixth Form Studies. This research is therefore closely linked to my professional role, and the findings will shape and develop our future work with Guernsey's young people.

Guernsey, as an independent educational jurisdiction, is fairly isolated from its two nearest neighbours: France and the UK. It forms its own educational laws and has its own curriculum, but due to the size of the school population does not have its own educational qualifications. Regardless of the relatively small number of students entering Post-16 education each year, students have a wide range of courses they can take. The SFC is the only state provider of Post-16 academic study, so if a student does not like what is on offer there they do not have the option to study elsewhere without leaving Guernsey or paying for their education. The private colleges have a more restricted choice of sixth form provision than the SFC, and many of the students who are educated privately up to age 16 choose to move to the SFC for Post-16 provision. This context has not changed in living

memory, so the island population has no frame of reference to compare the current Sixth Form course offer with an alternative, apart from historically what we have been able to offer. Therefore students have no option but to process and work with any changes made to the Sixth Form offer. My professional role places me as the public face of the SFC, leading me to liaise with the States of Guernsey's Department for Education, Sport and Culture to formulate and agree our offer, then present and explain this to teachers, Careers Advisors, students and parents across the island, and to provide guidance to the young people looking to join the SFC.

The Sixth Form offer has changed twice in recent years. Historically the offer has included A Levels, with AS Levels being added in 2000. In 2012 the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) was added to the offer; my previous piece of work for this Doctor of Education degree, the IFS (Papworth, 2016), explored how this qualification was received by the student body. The IBDP has since grown, and around 15% of students in year 12 now take the qualification. In September 2016 the SFC made the decision to stop offering AS Levels and instead to only offer linear A levels and the IBDP. This was prompted by the change to A Levels driven by the English Department for Education, whereby AS Level examinations became a standalone qualification which no longer counted towards the A Level qualification. Consequently the SFC's bill for examination fees would have increased significantly if AS Levels were offered, and students would be taking external examinations which did not benefit them for progression into employment or Higher Education. Additionally, some of our largest and most popular subjects decided to stop offering A levels so students who would have wanted to study an A level would now need to take that subject as an individual IBDP subject; around half of A level students were in this situation. This change was unexpected, and was driven by teachers' dissatisfaction with the content and structure of the new A levels rather than management. This had implications for the way students could choose their subjects as most HE Institutions advise that students choosing an A level pathway ensure that at least half their program is made up of A levels, which limits the amount of these subjects a student could take without choosing the whole IBDP. The IBDP significantly expanded its subject offer, and the school was showing a clear preference for the IBDP over A levels. These changes altered the parameters within which Guernsey students could make their decision, and meant that much of the parental

knowledge gained through prior or self-experience within the system was rendered obsolete. I became interested in how students navigated this new situation, made sense of their options, and came to their final decision. This interest, linked with the professional imperative from my role, provided the motivation to develop this study.

Schoon and Heckhausen (2019) describe the changes within most Western countries' employment markets in the last four decades to have included substantial restructuring and changes to the labour market, with an increased emphasis on participation in education and training. Guernsey fits this pattern, with the higher status local jobs now requiring the completion of Post-16 education. Whilst many other Western countries see an increasing number of young people participate in higher education, Guernsey sees less due to the availability of professional jobs and training for young people at 18. This also means that the trends described by Schoon and Heckhausen of employment markets with an increased number of insecure jobs and rising unemployment is not seen in this context. Schoon and Heckhausen also address the transitional educational paths provided by different countries. The one best fitted to this context is a combination between an employment-centred transition regime, where students are selected to follow different routes at the start of secondary education, which tend to guide their future educational options and therefore their possible occupations, and a universalistic transition regime, where there are diversified post-compulsory routes, with many students combining work and study, with a strong emphasis on equal opportunities and counselling. Guernsey's education system combines a selective system for those students aged 11-16, and a broad comprehensive post-compulsory offer from 16-19, with inclusive entry requirements that aim to open up opportunities. The selective system encourages social stratification, whilst the post-compulsory offer works to combat this, with students being supported to reach their potential regardless of their previous schooling and achievements. Therefore the young people in this study face a multifaceted challenge when approaching this transition; for me, this lack of simplicity provides uncertainty in my professional role.

1.2 The research problem

This research explores the experiences of Guernsey students entering the Sixth Form, who find themselves in 'unchartered territory'. For these students, the Sixth Form offer had remained constant from the time that they entered secondary school until they reached

year 11. This means that the sixth form students that they may have had contact with throughout their secondary school career had been either studying the IBDP, 4 AS levels, or 3 A2 levels. The issue faced by these students is that where they might have logically expected to have had the same choices, they were now faced with a different scenario.

This thesis has clear links to my IFS (Papworth, 2016) where I explored how the first two cohorts of Guernsey students who had to assimilate having a choice between the traditional offer of the A level and the new addition of the IBDP chose their path for Sixth Form Study. I found that the IBDP was viewed as an academic risk by many in the student body, and as such was dismissed without further thought by most. I found that A level students harboured many misconceptions about the IBDP and had not completed much research around their subject choice, instead tending towards the traditional route they had always assumed they would follow. These students had a greater tendency to foreclose on their choice, indicating that they committed to a study path quickly, but with little thought past acting on their preconceptions of what this choice would look like. In contrast the IBDP students were more likely to experience a moratorium when making their choice, partly because they saw this decision as a statement of their identity and who they wished to be.

This research builds on the IFS as whilst the focus of choice remains similar, the context within Guernsey's Sixth Form Centre has changed and developed. By this I mean that the IBDP has moved from being the unknown new addition, to being the more stable option. Potential IBDP students will have seen their choice become more normal and accepted by their peers, with the solid support of many of their teachers. A Levels continue to have the more recognisable appeal, but have changed significantly from expectations, so providing a challenge to students' preconceptions about their choices. This research examines how 15-16 year old students make choices when faced with unexpected changes to their options, and also examine how students' ongoing narratives about their choice change over the academic year after they have made their decision and embarked on their course, and consequently how they shape their reality. This research differs from my IFS in its scope, as it consists of a fine-grained and meticulous study in comparison to the broader-brush approach taken with the IFS.

1.3 Theoretical Perspectives

The aim of the literature review is to seek to make sense of the reactions and behaviours of students faced with making choices, and to gain an understanding of how they make their choice of study at sixth form. Making a choice is a mechanism which has been the subject of a variety of different models. Within the literature review I discuss several of these, notably Ajzen's (1991; 2011) Theory of Planned Behaviour, Hidi and Renninger's (2006) four-phase model of interest development, Achievement-goal theory and Expectancy-value theory (Tuominen, Viljaranta and Salmela-Aro, 2018), and Eccles' (e.g. 2009; 2011; 2018; 2002) Expectancy Value Model of Motivated Behavioural Choice (EV-MBC model). This literature review identifies the EV-MBC model as the most significant and appropriate for this piece of research, and unpacks the contributing factors in depth. The EV-MBC model assumes that individuals are continuously making choices, whether these are conscious or not, regarding how energy and time is expended. It is pertinent both to the educational choice of the type under discussion here, and to wider life choices. However, these different models have similarities, with each emphasising important factors such as the influence of society, or the suggestion that through an educational choice an adolescent is able to further develop their sense of personal identity. Eccles' model incorporates aspects of all the other models, but differs significantly from the others through the addition of time and the concept that this is a continuous ongoing process (Eccles, 2011). This addition of time allows the decision to be seen as an ongoing narrative which can be refined and changed, as opposed to a single fixed event.

As an individual moves through life, they situate themselves between two narratives; one a past narrative that supports their current decisions and the other a current narrative that justifies decisions made about the future (Henriksen, Dillon and Ryder, 2015). The EV-MBC Model's way of combining the factors that influence a choice, showing how they work over time to influence each other and the ongoing decision, is one which works well with this piece of research. The student subjects of this research are making an important decision over a number of months, and reflecting on it at different points in the following year. These individuals will therefore construct a changing narrative about their personal and social identity and the choice that they have made. When a decision is revisited over time, Holmegaard, Ulriksen and Madsen (2015) discovered that these narratives can change

substantially. They highlight how language can be used to justify these renegotiations, in particular with the use of the words 'I always'. Linguistically, this phrase should signify a stable and well-thought through choice, and they found it was frequently used when a choice narrative or perspective had changed dramatically over time. They also noted that over time, disruptive elements disappear from our choice narrative, often leaving the individual to declare that they had always wanted to make that particular choice. This highlights that a choice is not an isolated event in time, but instead a formal point when a decision is taken, but preceded and followed by a process when the student continues to make meaning of their reasons for making that particular choice. Young people making this choice normally have a particularly malleable identity, both due to their age, the changing context of their academic life, and the perceived consequence and meaning of this decision on their future (Eccles, 2009). Eccles contends that the choice process is a continuous loop, where current experiences feed into further deliberations, construction of identity, and decisions.

There is a substantial body of work around student choice, some of which I briefly discuss within the literature review. Different research traditions tend to emphasise different aspects of choice, and I have found that Scandinavian literature that relates young people's choice to the construction of their identity to be particularly pertinent to both my IFS and this thesis. Throughout the literature review I link in works such as Holmegaard *et al.*'s (2012) Danish longitudinal study of student choice, Luyckx *et al.* (2008)'s work on identity formation in late adolescence, Henriksen, Dillon and Ryder (2015)'s work discussing how young people make their educational choices, *Lent et al.* (2010)'s work on predicting occupational interests and choice, and Vidal Rodeiro (2007)'s study about patterns of uptake and preferences for A Level choices in England. These studies, and others, will be used to demonstrate theoretical perspectives used to substantiate the EV-MBC Model and its use in this context.

1.4 Research Question

The aim of this study is to examine students' decision making process when making choices for Post-16 education in Guernsey.   This leads to two more detailed research questions, namely

1. *How do young people evaluate the risks and benefits when making their choice for Sixth Form study?*

2. *How can the Expectancy Value Model of Motivated Behavioural Choice (EV-MBC) be used to describe and explain choice in this context?*

1.5 The value of the study and its contribution to professional and academic knowledge

Whilst there has been a substantial amount of research in the area of choice for Post-16 education prior to this, the context of this study is unusual and allows it to make a contribution to academic knowledge. The context is unusual and interesting due to the combination of a very isolated single state provider of education, whose size is substantial as is the choice of courses offered; when we think of an isolated provider we commonly think of a small institution with limited choice. This context, allied with a relatively swift and unexpected change to the provision by the Sixth Form Centre, mean that Guernsey students entering Sixth Form education in 2017, engenders the contribution to knowledge. Furthermore, Tuominen, Viljaranta and Salmela-Aro (2018, p. 167) identify that further research is needed when exploring 'the complex, concurrent relations between achievement goals, expectancies and task values, and academic and socio-emotional functioning in adolescence', despite the significant amount of research already accessible for this area.

This study will make a contribution to Guernsey's professional knowledge as the findings will be presented to the Sixth Form Management team and the island's Post-16 Strategy Group so we are able to enhance the guidance provided to students making this choice, and better support students whilst they are in our care.

1.6 The Methodological Perspectives

This mixed methods study examines students' decision making process when making choices for Post-16 education in Guernsey. An embedded design is used in which a quantitative data strand collecting data from all first year Sixth Form students is embedded within a qualitative case study. This qualitative data was collected in two phases from a group of 12 students who form a representative random sample of their whole cohort. The phases are i) towards the start of the participants' Sixth Form study, and ii) towards the end

of their first year of study. The qualitative data tool is an in-depth conversational interview, using a series of prompts to keep the conversation on particular topic areas. The vignettes prompting the first interview are chosen from the IFS interviews to represent many of the different facets to choice, according to the EV-MBC model. The two strands of the design are connected through the quantitative data. This has two purposes; firstly it provides an overall broad picture of the year group's experience, and secondly it is used to provide prompts for use within the second set of qualitative interviews. Therefore the quantitative and qualitative data are linked together through the use of participants, and because the second set of interviews builds on the first. Critically, this design requires the quantitative data to be holistically integrated into the qualitative case study, so allowing the detailed responses to be compared to the whole year group's summarised opinions. A pragmatic approach is taken to this piece of work as I retained an awareness of the timescale over which this research could take place, partially to ensure that all students where still studying at the Sixth Form Centre, and secondly to ensure that this thesis was completed in a timely fashion. Furthermore, each element of this research complements the others by providing an insight from a different view point, with the aim to fully investigate the topic under question. For the final analysis, the data from all elements was considered and compared to allow a clear overall picture to emerge.

My role within the Sixth Form, firstly as Assistant Director of Sixth Form and then as Director of Sixth Form meant that my role in this study had to be carefully balanced in order to ensure that students felt able to freely participate or not to participate and give their opinions.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

2.1 Introduction

The need for students to make a choice of what to study in the closed system of education in Guernsey after a substantial change to the available courses was a move that engendered a range of different reactions and behaviours within the student community, as they sought to make sense of the situation. Within this literature review of relevant theory I aim to interrogate the influences, conscious and unconscious, that influence an individual's choice. I start by introducing some of the more relevant models on how a choice is made, then use the framework of the final model, Eccles' EV-MBC Model (Wigfield and Eccles, 2000), to examine the different aspects of the choice process. This model underpins this whole thesis as in addition to its use in this literature review, the data collection instruments were designed to prompt the emergence of data covering all aspects of this model, and this data was then analysed and interpreted against the background of this model. Finally aspects from this model are linked to Weiss, Wiese and Freund's (2014) discussion on mastering school transitions, so ensuring that this literature review remains embedded in the context of this study.

2.2 Theoretical Models around Choice

Within this section I aim to introduce some of the most relevant choice models, culminating in a detailed discussion of the EV-MBC model.

2.2.1 The Theory of Planned Behaviour

The first model which appears pertinent to this study is the Theory of Planned Behaviour as it links an individual's attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control to intentions and behaviours (e.g. choice).   This model, as summarised in Figure 2.2.1, shows how an individual's attitudes, combined with the attitudes of the society in which they live (the subjective norms) and their perceived ease of conducting the behaviour (the perceived behavioural control) forms their intentions and subsequent behaviours (Ajzen, 2011).

Theory of planned behaviour

(Figure contains: Attitude, Subjective Norm, Perceived Behavioral Control, Intention, Behavior)
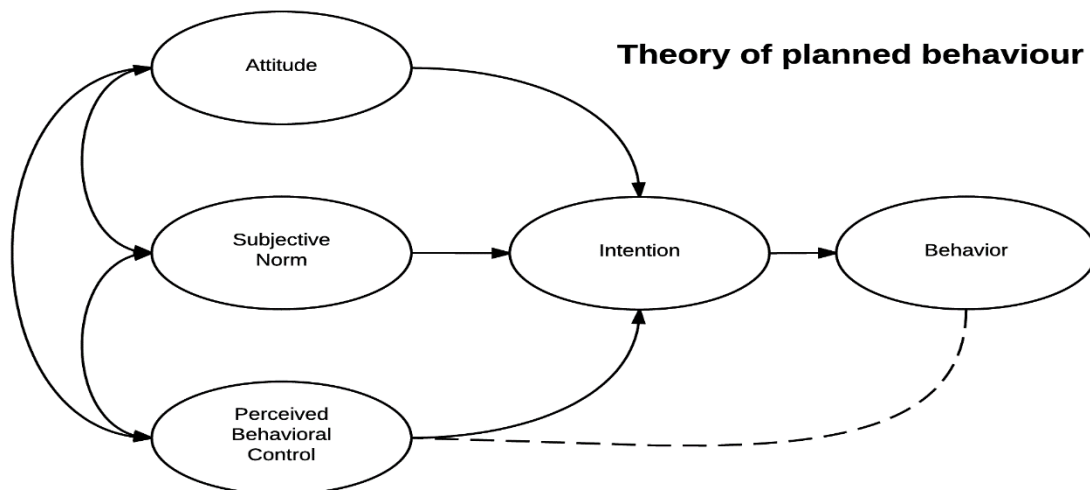
<div align="right">Figure 2.2.1 (Ajzen, 1991, p. 182)</div>

This model suggests that an individual's choice may be significantly affected by cultural norms, so a new or different option such as IB may be very difficult to accept. If an individual has a limited supply of self-efficacy, or they are unable to commit to the decision making process, their experience benefits their development. Research shows that this theory is a relatively poor predictor of behaviour, with a correlation coefficient of about 0.60 (Ajzen, 2011, p. 1114). Various explanations have been suggested for this, such as the participant's inability to control their own behaviour and impulses. The rationality of this model is at odds with reality as it ignores the factors beyond an individual's control and assumes that the information individuals are acting on is complete and accurate. Furthermore emotion, whether sustained or momentary, plays a role that can further distort reality (ibid). These confounding factors can produce behaviours which are at odds with the model.

2.2.2 Achievement-Goal Construct

The reason for considering the link between achievement goals and choice is that achievement goals are thought to influence engagement so an individual makes a considered choice. This link is related to the differences between the two types of goals considered within the achievement-goal construct. These are mastery goals and performance goals, and both have a different focus as mastery goals focus on the *development* of competence and knowledge, whilst performance goals focus on being able

to *demonstrate* these relative to others (Elliot and Hulleman, 2017). These two goals can be separated through the aim of mastering something new, as opposed to demonstrating one's competence. This last can be framed in a variety of different ways, both positive and negative. As an example, Tuominen, Viljaranta and Salmela-Aro (2018) suggest this is framed in terms of avoiding situations where an individual fails or makes a mistake, or to demonstrate a greater level of competence than their peers, or to get good grades. However, Elliot (2005) is clear that realistically goals are a blended combination of these two, and that it is not always possible to make such a binary distinction between the two. Another point of view is that we need to distinguish between the reason and aim of a goal, rather than simply categorizing it as mastery or performance. An example of this is that the aim of a mastery goal is to improve or master a skill, with the reason being to develop ability. A performance goal differs as the aim is to do better than others, with the reason being to demonstrate ability within a skill (Elliot and Hulleman, 2017). Whilst opinion is divided in which out of reason or aim should be emphasised, it is clear that both are an important consideration when discussing the motivation behind an individual's choice.

One of the important consequences of looking at achievement goals in this way is the development of performance-avoidance goals, where an individual seeks to avoid being put in a position where they are measured against others. Ability, or perceived ability, can influence the type of goal chosen. Those with high perceptions of their ability are likely to choose through mastery or performance goals, where those performance goals are taking them to approach the task; they are motivated by the idea of increasing competence or being able to demonstrate their competence to others. Those with lower perceptions of their ability are likely to choose through performance-avoidance goals (ibid); the possibility of demonstrating incompetence motivates them to choose differently. Here we can see that an individual's perception of self, their previous academic experiences, and others' perceptions of their ability can influence the type of goals they conceptualise and therefore the way that they make their academic choice. Pragmatically, we could envisage that a student making a choice for Post-16 education could conceptualise several goals, some positive, and some negative, based on their previous experiences and their own and other people's confidence in their abilities. This model leads me to question the link between

goals and choices, but its narrow focus, although reasonable, prompts the need to explore further influences on choice and decisions.

2.2.3 The four-phase model of Interest Development

Models that focus on 'interest' have potential relevance, as this has been shown to be influential to subject choice. Hidi and Renninger (2006, p. 113) separate interest into 'situational' and 'individual'. These differ in that situational interest is triggered by a stimulus, and may or may not fade once the stimulus has gone. Individual interest refers to an individual's predisposition to undertake a given activity or engage with a particular content, and is not dependent on a stimulus. Both could be considered to involve two phases; for situational interest situations, the first phase is a trigger, and the subsequent is a maintenance phase. For individual interest, the first is an emergence of the interest, and the second is a demonstration that this interest is well developed; consequently this model considers the degree of positive feelings, stored knowledge and engagement which lead to interest development. Furthermore, variables such as effort, self-efficacy, goals, and self-regulation of behaviour are able to be observed as interest is developed or recedes through these four phases. As shown in Figure 2.2.3 below, an individual can move through all 4 phases consequentially, so moving their interest from situational to individual. However, moving through the subsequent phase for each type of interest is not guaranteed, and can take place from differing knowledge levels. In some cases it is clear that the individual needs further support, whether this is from peers, parents, or a facilitator, in order to maintain or develop their interest. Whilst this model acknowledges the importance of factors such as belief in one's own competence, autonomy, and an individual's interaction and place within their social structure, it does not see interest as an outcome of these factors (Hidi and Renninger, 2006; Renninger and Hidi, 2016).
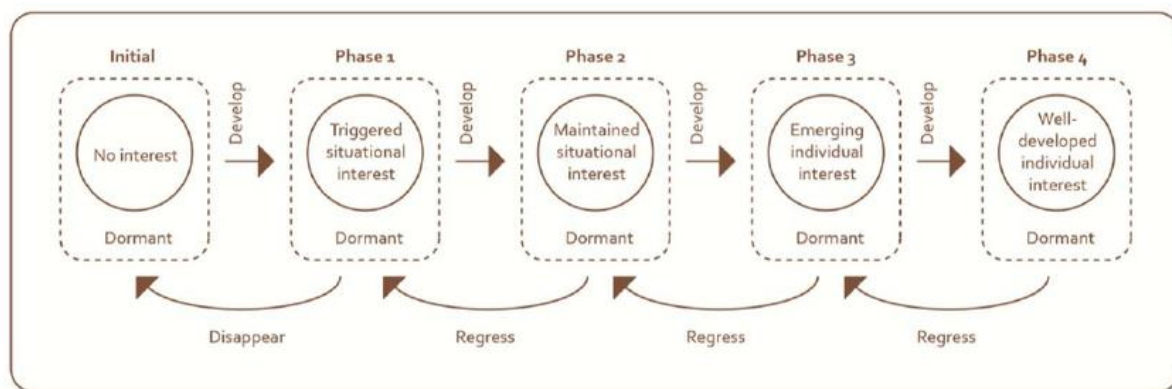
Figure 2.2.3: The Four-Phase Model of Interest Development by Hidi and Renninger (2006) interpreted and illustrated by Beh (Fig 1, Beh, Pedell and Doube, 2015, p. 3)

This model leads me to question the relationship between choice and interest development. Once an individual's interest is triggered by a stimulus, they can begin to form an interest in an area, which they are then supported to maintain. The individual is then able to make a choice to re-engage with that content, so starting the first phase of an individual interest. In this way, an individual is able to progress through all four phases, starting with the situational interest phases, then making a choice to exhibit behaviour that allows them to move into the individual interest phases. Therefore using this model, educational choice is able to take place after the prompting and maintenance of an initial interest. On the surface this seems very reasonable, but leads to the question of whether educational choices are always driven by interest, or whether there are other important factors at play.

2.2.4 Self-Efficacy Theory

In self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997), an individual's beliefs about their ability to produce successful outcomes and meet their goals is vital to increasing achievement motivation and their performance.   When discussing self-efficacy, Bandura (1997) distinguishes between efficacy expectations and outcome expectations. Efficacy expectations are the belief that the individual is able to complete a task; this contrasts with outcome expectations, which are the belief that the task will lead to a particular outcome. Bandura argues that efficacy expectations are a greater indicator of choice, which is in agreement with Eccles' model with its inclusion of ability expectations (Wigfield and Eccles, 2000).

Agency is connected to self-efficacy through the ability to self-reflect, leading to a judgement about one's capacity to act to complete a task and the development of resilience

(Bandura, 2018). An individual's belief in their efficacy will affect the type and difficulty of goal that they set for themselves, as well as their commitment to achieving this goal. Agency manifests through three main properties: forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness. Forethought includes the ability to plan ahead, and to visualise success, whilst self-reactiveness includes the ability to manage one's own behaviour to best prepare for the conditions for success. Therefore these two lay the foundations for self-efficacy, and the ability to set effective future goals. Self-efficacy and forethought are connected to past experiences, as a favourable outcome will lead to positive future expectations, with a negative outcome leading to the opposite (Bandura, 2018). Strengthening an individual's belief in their capability through developing their agency therefore benefits them when making a choice, as they approach this with a belief that a wider range of options are permissible for them.

Self-efficacy is connected to an individual's memories and reactions to previous experience. Bandura and Locke (2003) describe a study where feedback on an individual's performance raised or lowered their perceived self-efficacy, which in turn changed their subsequent performance, perseverance and motivation. Self-efficacy is therefore both influenced by an individual's experiences, and influences the individual's ability to perform. Efficacy beliefs work on both an individual and a group level. Groups who are told their collective performance is good compared to others show heightened aspirations and performance (ibid, 2003). This in turn links to a group's chosen identity, and therefore the behaviour of its members. Bandura and Locke link self-efficacy to the formation of more or less ambitious goals, and academic achievement. Efficacy beliefs therefore heavily influence choice through the raising of aspirations, but also receive an ongoing influence from an individual's experiences of the choices they have made.

2.2.5 The Expectancy Value Model of Motivated Behavioural Choice

Expectancy-value theory is the other dominant theoretical framework used to discuss motivation in the context of this study. This theory centres on the expectations of being successful, and the value given to the task in question (Tuominen, Viljaranta and Salmela-Aro, 2018); both of these are important when defining motivation in a particular context. Expectancy-value theory also incorporates beliefs such as personal confidence, perception of difficulty, goals and self-schema, and the influences of key socialisers and family. Eccles

breaks the values in the model into four components: interest-enjoyment, attainment, utility and cost. It leads us to question whether the idea of a free choice is a fallacy, and instead suggests that our choices are made under a variety of constraints, whether or not we are conscious of these. The EV-MBC model can be summarised through saying that expectancies, values and social cognitive variables directly influence motivation and choice, and the model shows a visual descriptor of the process. It provides a developmental framework for considering how these variables work together over time to influence each other, and influence academic choice, motivation and performance. The relevancy of this model is demonstrated by linking core constructs of the model to the context in which this research is set. There are various different diagrams of this model, but in the form given within this literature review in figure 2.2.5 (Eccles, 2009) causal influences move from left to right (Column 1 to 5), whilst constructs within a column influence each other reciprocally. Time is shown as an arrow completing the loop to signify that all of these factors have the ability to shift with feedback, situation, and time, so influencing the ongoing decision (Eccles, 2009).

Defining the constructs within the model allows us to gain a depth of understanding of how the model works. Within column 3, an individual's ability beliefs are shown to directly influence their expectations of success in column 4. These ability beliefs are their perceptions of competence at the current time, which are then used to extrapolate to their expectation of competence and therefore success in the future (Wigfield and Eccles, 2000). Ability features strongly in many different motivation theories, and the perception of an individual's ability as something they are powerless to change both effects their motivation and impacts on self-worth. In particular, the need to demonstrate competence provides a motivation for many to seek challenging opportunities (Wigfield and Eccles, 2000, p. 71).

 One of the foundations of Expectancy-Value theories such as Eccles' is that choice, persistence and performance can be explained by an individual's belief in their ability to succeed, and the value they place on the choice (Bøe and Henriksen, 2015). In this context, it means students choose options they believe they will be successful with, and those that they attach value to. These beliefs are influenced by their thoughts about their identity, and how they wish this to develop.

Eccles' EV-MBC model has a variety of strengths. Bøe and Henriksen (2015) identify its basis on empirical evidence and its comprehensive and inclusive nature as some of the most important strengths of the model. Its comprehensive nature is demonstrated as all those factors discussed so far in this literature review are included in the model, as demonstrated in figure 2.2.5. Furthermore this model incorporates motivational theories from other models, such as Bandura's self-efficacy (1997; 2001). This model is dynamic, acknowledging that all these influential factors develop and change over time, and that at a specific decision point a decision is made which may be made differently if it was taken at a different point in time. Indeed many choices are renegotiated as the student gains experience or go through a cultural change, even if they do not have an actual change as their outcome. We often emphasise, particularly in the context in which I am based, that young people have a free choice and should make the choice which best fits their needs. There are multiple constraints preventing this, ranging from cultural constraints to gender (Bøe and Henriksen, 2015).
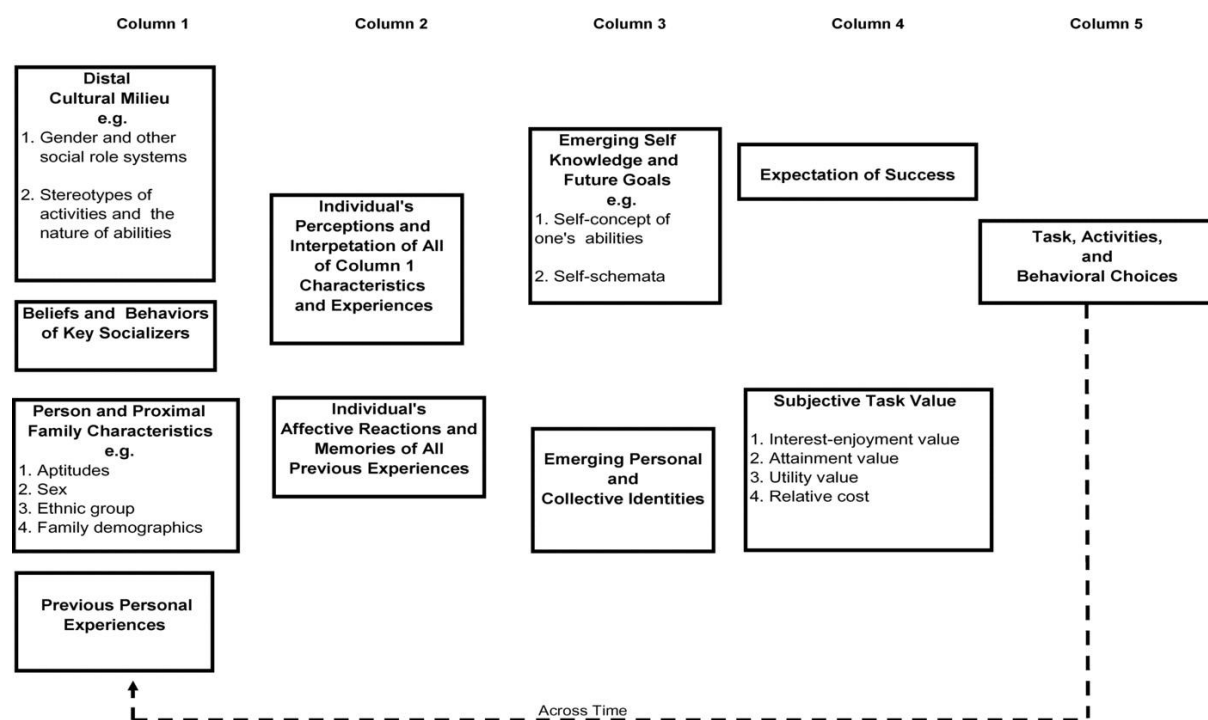
Figure 2.2.5, the EV-MBC Model (Eccles, 2009, p. 80 (fig 1))

A student's goals are not derived through their educational choices, but normally precede them. Therefore when considering subjective task values, those tasks that sit well with personal goals will matter more to the student. However, Tuominen, Viljaranta and

Salmela-Aro (2018) claim there is little evidence showing whether or not goals predict task values, or vice versa.

2.2.6 In summary

These different models about choice have similarities, with each of the first four summarised here emphasising important factors such as the influence of society, or the suggestion that through an educational choice an adolescent is able to further develop their sense of personal identity. The EV-MBC model differs significantly from the others through the addition of time, which allows us to see the decision as an ongoing narrative which can be refined and changed, as opposed to a single fixed event. This model forms the theoretical foundations to this piece of work, as it provides a visualisation of the decision examined here as a narrative that changes over time and is thus used to shape the analysis and interpretation of the data collected. This review of the literature will now examine different aspects of this model in depth, drawing on other sources to discuss each relevant aspect of the model, whilst maintaining a focus on the particular context of this thesis.

2.3 Personal and cultural factors

Personal and cultural factors are incorporated into the first column in the EV-MBC model (figure 2.2.5). The incorporation of these factors suggests that choice can be gendered, and can be heavily influenced by societal pressures and previous experiences, although these influences can be conscious or unconscious. Eccles (2011) identifies the difference between parental influence, which guides young people's views on how work and family integrate, and peers, who influence by providing reactive feedback to choices. This is substantiated by Head (1997) who suggests that, regardless of the degree of friction within the relationship between parent and young person, the perception of the parent as the primary source of career guidance and approval persists. Once decided upon, the choice of career will provide a clear and direct influence on educational choice. However, this does not negate the role of the school in influencing a young person to make a decision. Blenkinsop *et al.* (2006) identify that effective schools are able to support young people with choices, through providing clear and impartial advice, time for individual conversations, and information about pathways. Young people in these circumstances are less reliant on external support from their parents, and are more likely to seek parental approval as opposed to relying on parental advice.

Educational choice can be heavily influenced by the immediate resources that a young person has to draw on, whether these come from their socio-demographic background or their individual resources. Individual resources include prior attainment, school motivation, and belief in ability, all of which give confidence when considering a future educational choice. Those lacking in these resources, or whose socio-demographic background contains examples of lower aspirations and attainment, are less likely to be certain about their future, and therefore more likely to suffer the negative consequences of this (Gutman, Sabates and Schoon, 2014).

Family characteristics and social influences form strong subconscious factors when considering choice. Those a young person spends most time with, their parents, teachers and peers, will shape their expectations of gender norms, characteristics and career aspirations, and these can intensify during adolescence as a young person's identity develops (Weiss, Wiese and Freund, 2014). It is worth questioning where an adolescent's perceptions of gender roles come from. Personal observations of parental behaviour and personal reflections of the impact of that behaviour on them provide the basis for many young people's attitudes regarding work choices and familial division of labour (Weiss, Wiese and Freund, 2014). Interestingly, many girls look to move away from traditional gender roles at this time, whilst boys are more likely to endorse them, although this move to or from tradition has also been shown to be connected to how open a young person feels with regard to change, and whether they feel powerless or in control. Those feeling powerless appear to be more likely to embrace traditional roles, and experience a lower level of wellbeing (ibid, p135). Does gender affect educational expectations? Viljaranta *et al.* (2009, in Tuominen, Viljaranta and Salmela-Aro, 2018, p. 163) suggests that boys use narrower, objective criteria, such as academic achievement or parental modelling, when formulating expectations, whilst girls use wider considerations such as their values.

Role models, whether these are older peers, family members, or another member of an individual's cultural milieu, have long been thought of as an important influence, although this can be hard to quantify (e.g. Hazari *et al.*, 2010). It is important to question whether role models can override a student's preconceptions about their abilities and what would suit them when it comes to making a choice of what subject or course to choose. When discussing why female students choose for or against studying Physics, a traditionally male

dominated subject, Hazari *et al.* suggest that many factors come into play, although one negative aspect is that young women cannot picture themselves in the future as a person who is studying Physics and identifies with the subject. Buck, Clark, Leslie-Pelecky, Lu, and Cerda-Lizarraga (2008, in Sjaastad, 2012) describe how providing an interpersonal relationship with an individual modelling that choice can change a student's perception of the choice by serving as an example embodying characteristics the student wishes to emulate. In a study discussing the role of significant others to influence students, Sjaastad (2012) noted that women are more likely to rely on the examples provided by others, and to rely on others to develop their self-efficacy. He provides empirical support for the claim that that women use significant others to help them to define themselves, their interests and their choices on a more frequent basis than men.

A young person's family demographic influences their ability to make educational choices in a variety of ways. A young person's prior attainment and the prior attainment within their familial context will also shape aspirations and therefore educational choice. Aspirations rise with attainment, and lower when a young person is surrounded in their home context by those who have achieved to a lower level. Furthermore, those from a lower socioeconomic status are likely to be less certain about their choices, and less aspirational (Gutman, Sabates and Schoon, 2014). Additionally, their parents are likely to be less aspirational about their son or daughter's educational choice, which tends to depress the young person's aspirations. It worth noting that there is a gendered trend in this also, whereby boys are more likely to find these trends exaggerated than girls (Schoon, 2010, in ibid). How can this be overcome? Evidence suggests that effective careers advice can lower uncertainty and raise aspirations, as can encouraging a young person to be motivated at school and gain confidence in their abilities (Gutman, Sabates and Schoon, 2014).

Anders and Jerrim (2018) also contend that there is a link between parental education and their children's educational attainment and consequently their employment choices. They postulate that there are two reasons for this, with the first being a genetic factor, and the second being the parental investment in the child. They suggest that the genetic factor is related to a predisposition to academic skills, so that parents who are predisposed in this way are more likely to have children who share this predisposition. The parental investment can take many forms, from ensuring that their children have access to high quality

educational resources, to increasing their cultural capital through visiting museums, reading books, and discussing these. A society with social inequalities will find these factors exacerbated, and though it would be a mistake to assume that a correlation between parental socioeconomic status and children's outcomes tells us much about their home environment, there is a link between the two. Anders and Jerrim (2018, p. 35) use the PISA 2009 reading test scores for 15 year olds to illustrate this, where they show that there is a substantial gap between the highest achieving children from disadvantaged and affluent backgrounds; in England this equates to 2 years and 5 months of schooling. Clearly a young person's family characteristics have a big effect on their ability to succeed at school, and their consequent ability to make a wide range of educational choices at 16.

A cultural influence that is particularly pertinent to this context is that of selective education. All the students in this study experienced educational selection at age 11, and Pensiero (2018) argues that this cultural norm widens the inequalities between students who succeed with the selection exam and those who do not. She goes on to argue that it produces unequal learning opportunities, as although it is beneficial to the high achievers, others experience both lower quality education and lower expectations so restricting their educational attainment, skill formation, and their aspirations. Chmielewski (2018) agrees with this, noting that the early onset of selection, combined with the difficulty in moving from one stream to the other and the divergence of instructional tracks produces a significant degree of inequality. A further social aspect of this is the peer environment in which a young person will find themselves; if streamed onto a less academic path, a young person will find themselves surrounded by those with lower academic aspirations and expectations, which is likely to lower theirs and influence the choices they make in the future. Chmielewski (2018) goes further with this, finding that a larger proportion of those on the less academic path have decided against university study early in their secondary education compared to those on a more academic pathway.

Rodeiro's (2007) study about patterns of uptake and preferences for A Level choices in England aims to explore the important factors considered by students. The study explores factors such as personal characteristics, social class, and type of school, as well as the perception of subject importance and the impact of introducing new subjects. Whilst Rodeiro's study took place prior to the most recent changes to the structure of A Levels, its

findings remains relevant as students continue to need to choose their subjects. The students in Rodeiro's study, like mine, came from a variety of social backgrounds, schools and ability. Rodeiro finds that personal and family characteristics influence whether students opt for the more traditional academic subjects, and also changed how students perceived the importance of subjects. He also highlights the importance of a student's past experiences and perceptions of their own ability, with this being more important to them than whether they thought the subject was difficult. Importantly, the study found that students approached this decision in different ways, and used advice differently depending on their social background, ability and school background. They valued the advice they received from family and other knowledgeable sources, but received differing levels of advice dependent on their school and family characteristics. Whilst Rodeiro does not position his findings using Eccles' EV-MBC model, his findings fit well within the model, hence its relevancy to this piece of work.

The EV-MBC model notes the importance of an individual's cultural milieu as an influence. Oyserman (2017) describes culture as the all-pervasive lens through which we interpret our experiences; to an individual, this lens feels like reality. Within our cultural milieu, we understand how to act and think, so allowing us to identify those who belong in our social group, and those who do not. Perceptions, judgements and behaviour stem from cultural cues, so allowing a wider group to share a cultural mind-set. Various mind-sets can be activated within this, including an individualistic, an honour and a collectivistic mind-set. The individualistic and collectivistic appear incongruent, as one encourages uniqueness, which the other encourages individuals to find commonality (Oyserman, 2017). The themes of individualistic, honour and collectivistic scaffold how each individual reacts and thinks in a new situation, so providing a useful viewpoint to help understand why some individuals are so keen to frame themselves as unique within their cultural milieu, whilst others are reluctant to do so, wishing to maintain strong connections. The students within Guernsey's Sixth Form Centre originate from all different subcultures within the Bailiwick, and whilst studying assimilate into the culture of the Sixth Form Centre. This is not always a willing assimilation, and as such some students struggle with tensions between the two cultural milieus as they discover that there are other perspectives. This shift is permitted by the EV-

MBC model through the acceptance that choice is an ongoing process that develops and shifts as time passes.

2.4 The effect of previous experiences, personal factors and cultural factors

These factors are incorporated into the second column in the EV-MBC model (figure 2.2.5), and are influenced by those in the first column discussed in the previous section. A choice is not a static or fixed occurrence, but instead a process that develops and changes with time and situation. The premises upon which choices are made, such as life goals, identity, and the self-schema that describes an individual's beliefs, experiences and generalizations about themselves, will all change in response to the further experiences, feedback and information that an individual collects as they continue through life (Eccles, 2011). This fluidity can leave young people floundering as they get close to a traditional decision point, such as those regarding Post 16 education, and University or career choices. Adler (Head, 1997, p. 18) gives a contrasting argument for this fluidity of choice, suggesting instead that we create a 'guiding fiction' about our life and our future, and use this to shape our choices. Whilst the foundations of this guiding fiction are not clear, it is likely that this too must develop and change as described above, so giving a further dimension to the choice process.

2.4.1 Gender

A young person's affective reaction to their experiences of gender stereotypes and gender inequality is likely to have an explicit role in making a choice. Indeed Eccles (2011) advises that rather than gender itself, the gender stereotyped socialisation encountered by young people leads to differences in subjective task values. For example, Freund and Wiese (2010, in Eccles, 2011, p. 198) find that young women place a greater importance on family and affiliation, whilst young men rated power and education as more important. Furthermore, socialisation can engender different long term goals and expectations about adulthood. This type of socialisation can be cultural, familial, or through peer groups, but results in gendered experiences and leads to gendered self-perceptions and beliefs around competency and success in particular fields.

There is a long established gender disparity in some areas of study. STEM subjects have long shown an uptake bias towards young men, which continues through into related careers (e.g. Bøe *et al.*, 2011). The question is whether this phenomenon is due to nature

or nurture; in other words, does social conditioning explain why young women are under-represented in studies involving mathematics and physical sciences? This leads to a further ethical question relating free access to education to mental and cultural barriers. Are societal norms, stereotypes and expectations discouraging women from accessing this area of education? Bøe *et al.* (2011) suggests that young men develop a stronger interest in these areas due to a greater degree of related childhood experiences, whilst girls are exposed to influences that encourage them towards topics that help them in their relationships with others and in their social settings. These different motivations encourage students in different directions. Other gender differences also play a role in enabling these different academic trajectories; most notably the different responses by gender to stress and competitive learning environments (Salmela-Aro, 2014). Salmela-Aro discusses school burn-out, finding that girls are more likely to suffer burn-out than boys, and more likely to feel inadequate. This again can influence the subjects girls commonly choose to undertake, as they will be less inclined to tackle those perceived to be more difficult. Nagy *et al.*'s (2008) research on gendered course selection contributes further to this point when they show that the foundations for these different decisions are laid at a far earlier date than the time over which the choice is formally prepared and made. They argue that the perceived gender choice serves to perpetuate young people's perceptions of gender differences, as this becomes a time when gender differences in abilities, values and self-concepts become more pronounced and therefore continually relevant to those younger students preparing for the decision. Nagy *et al.* examine this phenomenon in different national settings, finding that it is one which is widely observed.

2.4.2 The effect of educational selection

A young person's self-concept of their abilities can link to the institutional context. Ability streaming within an institution will have a different impact on a student as opposed to a selective education system where a student is streamed to a particular institution after sitting a selection exam. Students in a selective education system show less difference in their self-concept of their abilities for the same subjects (Chmielewski, 2018) than those in a mixed-ability school, where they are exposed to all ability ranges. Therefore a selective education system has the effect that low ability students are more confident in their ability to succeed, perhaps because they are surrounded by students of a similar ability and

therefore see themselves as succeeding amongst their peers. This can, however, give them a false premise on which to make a choice, as whilst their self-concept of their ability may be high, their actual ability may be relatively low. Conversely a mixed ability school is likely to provide high ability students with a greater self-concept of their own abilities, primarily because they are exposed to the full range of abilities and therefore are able to make a comparison (Chmielewski, 2018).

2.4.3 Personal and Cultural Factors

Young people gain information through a variety of sources, including a range of different types of media, education, and family. Information gained through media sources can lead them to question whether those in a position of authority (e.g. teachers, parents, politicians etc) are trustworthy; are they telling the truth? Traditionally a young person's identity is defined in terms of aspects such as socioeconomic status, but with the wider variety of sources of information comes a breakdown of traditions, leading to a cultural liberation of the individual (Bøe *et al.*, 2011). Bøe suggests that this can lead to individuals being less dependent on their social milieu, and more able to make free choices around aspects such as lifestyle, education and profession. However, Bøe also highlights that this idea has been challenged by some and that in reality a student's choice may be unconsciously influenced by their home background. When discussing the reasons girls may continue to study physical sciences, Bøe discusses research showing that girls who choose this path learned their appreciation of the subject through the influence of a parent or grandparent. This further supports the argument that independence of choice is illusionary.

Socioeconomic status and a student's experiences related to this form a subconscious influence on their decisions. Whilst Oyserman (2013) finds that low income students and their parents in America have a high level of aspirations and expectations, students from a low income background are less likely to graduate from high school on time, and if they do so, are less likely to graduate from college, regardless of their racial background. Oyserman reminds us that although we know there is a clear correlation between educational outcomes and family background, the mechanics of this link is unclear. Oyserman focuses on whether low economic resources influence a young person's identity-based motivational processes, that is, whether they are able to imagine their future self and whether they can formulate effective strategies to get there. She makes a convincing argument that where

strategies are put in place to facilitate a young person to do these things, to read the necessary cues to succeed academically and engage, they have a higher level of success. Oyserman uses identity-based motivation theory to explore how race and socioeconomic factors relate to motivation by influencing how young people think and behave over time. This predicts that they will act in ways that fit their important identities such as race and social class, but these are situation-sensitive and can clash with identities that facilitate success at school, through the implication that people with our background do not succeed at school, go to Sixth Form, or study at University. Therefore although the aspiration is to do so, the path to get there is unclear and distant, and it becomes easier to behave in a way that means these aspirations become meaningless. Simple economic steps can be taken to counter this, such as starting a savings account (regardless of the amount in it) to pay for university fees. Oyserman finds that this increases the odds of attending college by a factor of 6, suggesting that this may work as it brings the student's future-self closer, so bringing in a further important identity that facilitates future study (Oyserman, 2013).

2.5 Identity and Self-Concept

Identity and self-concept are incorporated into the third column in the EV-MBC model (figure 2.2.5); and their formation is dependent on earlier columns within the model. There are two types of identity that influence personal choices: personal and collective / social. Eccles (2009) defines these as follows. Personal identity consists of the aspects of the self that make one feel unique. The collective identity consists of the aspects that strengthen ties to the social group. Identity is commonly seen to be an important factor in choice as it gives the vehicle through which an individual can enact and validate their identity (e.g. Eccles, 2009; Nurra and Oyserman, 2018). Within Eccles' theoretical framework, over their lifetime an individual can have multiple personal and collective identities. These develop over time, and are particularly malleable when the context around the individual changes (Lykkegaard and Ulriksen, 2016). They change importance with changes of situation. Choices and activities are then categorised by the individual as either a successful enactment of their identity or a challenge to their identity, thereby providing a motivational aspect to choice. For a young person, the lack of a firm individual identity with career aspirations can be disturbing, leading to an inability to make a firm choice in this area (Erikson, 1950 in Head, 1997).

2.5.1 Identity Development

Identity development must be taken into account when seeking to understand educational choices. Thoughts about interest, favourite subjects to study, future career, extracurricular activities and personal views make up a young person's identity, which is a permanently developing entity. This idea of identity as something which will develop and change over time lends itself well to the notion of choice as something which is negotiated and renegotiated over time (Bøe and Henriksen, 2015). Holmegaard, Ulriksen and Madsen's (2015) analysis of the research examining the link between student identity formation and educational choices found that choice is used to construct a personal identity, and is part of the narrative about who that young person wishes to be. Another way of describing this is as a meaning-making process that allows them to make sense of who they are and who they wish to be. It is a way of structuring the world, to make clear the complexities they have experienced. A narrative can then be constructed that gives an explanation of who, what and why, and this is constructed in relation to the individual's sense of self. This approach limits our ability to be infinitely flexible, as in doing so we would lose coherence and lose our perceived reliability and validity. However this narrative and therefore identity must develop over time, but the narrative must ensure that the individual's identity is recognisable (Holmegaard, Ulriksen and Madsen, 2015). This choice narrative must be embedded in their culture and societal surroundings, although they are frequently renegotiated after being tested in an individual's social interactions. Holmegaard, Ulriksen and Madsen (2015, p. 37) highlight how language can be used to justify these renegotiations, in particular with the use of the words 'I always'. This phrase is used to signify a stable and well-thought through choice, and they found it was frequently used when a choice narrative had changed dramatically over time.

Identity as a perception of 'who an individual is' is continuously developed as we develop new knowledge and undertake new experiences. The youth phase on which this piece of research focuses is particularly linked to the formation of identity as choices, whether they are of clothing, music, or what to study, demonstrate who an individual is, and who they are not. In this way, Bøe *et al.* (2011) tell us a choice is an expression of identity. Nurra and Oyserman (2018) suggest that it is only when one's future feels imminent that it becomes central to action, and I suggest that it is this feeling of imminency that prompts some to

make such a careful consideration of their choices at 16. Nurra and Oyserman highlight that for young people, one's future does not always seem relevant or immediate, in which case engagement with educational choices is lost. They were able to show experientially that young people can be manipulated to experience a connection between their current self and their future adult self through linguistic cues, and this in turn can be used to improve how seriously they take their education. If a young person's chosen future identity is to be used to prompt this, they recommend that it must be a close future that is considered, rather than a far future, as they postulate that distance can lessen this effect as far future rewards are less desirable than close ones.

A student's ability to identify with their choice is a key contributor to their decision. Hazari *et al.* (2010) observe that the student's identity with respect to their subject choice is only one part of their identity, and is dependent on the complex interplay between their personal and collective identity as suggested through figure 2.5.1 below. These different aspects mutually influence the way in which they identify with a subject choice, and can be in conflict or agreement with each other. Figure 2.5.1 also shows how subjective task values, the individual's self-schema, and their expectation of success act as key contributions to a student's identification with their choice. These influencing components will be developed through a student's experiences in the classroom, and as such these perceptions will provide a further interplay between the other aspects to their identity.
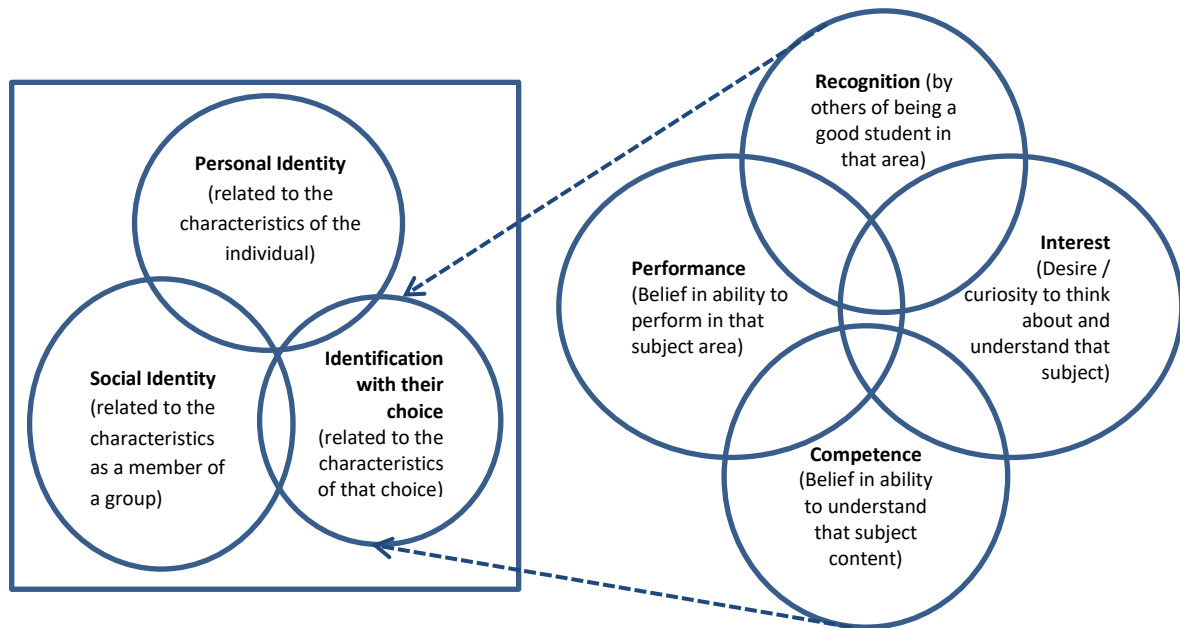
Figure 2.5.1. Framework for students' identification with their choices, adapted from Hazari *et al*. (2010, p. 982 fig 1)

2.5.2 Engagement

Student engagement is a multifaceted construct that describes those characteristics and behaviours that aid learning. Engagement is important to consider here as it influences which educational pathways a student will choose to follow. It is related to intrinsic motivation, which can help to explain a student's voluntary engagement with an activity that they do not have to do. Engagement differs in that it includes further behaviours such as the ability to persist and concentrate (Moeller *et al.*, 2018). Engagement can be effected by contextual influences such as family context, social expectations and gendered expectations, especially when reinforced by influencers such as the parents, school or peers. Teachers are able to influence student engagement enormously through supporting them academically and emotionally; their interpersonal relationships with their students contribute to engagement within a subject. Engagement and therefore motivation is strongly affected by the tasks set within the classroom; ensuring the level of challenge remains such that learners are able to cope and thrive with the resources available to facilitate engagement. Within the school context peers are the other influence on engagement. Peer values and attitudes can encourage activities that both promote engagement or are detrimental, and are often subject specific (Moeller *et al.*, 2018).

2.5.3 Self-concept

An individual's self-concept is continuously informed and developed through behavioural choices that provide feedback to the individual leading them to consolidate or modify existing beliefs. This can be divided into two parts: the self-concept of one's own abilities, and self-schemata (Eccles, 2009). Once confirmed, the self-schemata, or beliefs about themselves, will form part of the individual's personal identity. Eccles suggests that an individual's beliefs about their abilities are also shaped by ongoing feedback as they interact with activities and choices that test this. However, an individual's subjective interpretation is also key: did they believe they were rewarded for hard work, let down by their teacher, or perhaps simply lucky? Self-concept of ability influences how a student perceives success; if they believe they are good at a subject, achieving an average mark may be seen as a failure, whilst others would claim that as a personal success (Henriksen, Dillon and Ryder, 2015). A student's beliefs about their ability also influences whether their choice of what to study would include a given subject; if their self-concept is strong in that area, they are much more likely to seek to continue to study it when it is no longer compulsory. When investigating student participation in post-compulsory science, Ulriksen, Madsen, and Holmegaard (in Henriksen, Dillon and Ryder, 2015) discuss how students' self-concepts and perceptions of the subject can work together to encourage or discourage students from studying a given subject. Regardless of whether a young person believes they are good enough at a subject to continue studying it, the perception of whether that subject matches how they see themselves in the future also dictates whether they consider continuing (Schreiner and Sjoberg, 2007).

Self-concept, or how one sees oneself, is an important part of commonly accepted definitions of personal identity (e.g. Ehle, 1989 in Henriksen, Dillon and Ryder, 2015), and is related to perceptions of agency. Oyerserman (2013, p. 184) expands on this to describe identities as 'nested in self-concepts', which can be divided into individualistic, relational and collectivistic self-concepts. An individual switches between these categories when prompted by subtle cues, whether these are written, oral, visual or contextual. Shifting between these can prompt how an individual thinks at any given time, and whether they are primarily identifying as part of a social group or as an individual. This then influences how they consider future goals and decisions, especially within a school context where what is

best for them as an individual may not directly correspond with the expectations from the different social groups they belong to. Luyckx *et al.* (2008) warns that those with an inadequately defined self-concept often struggle with making a clear decision, feeling overwhelmed by the options and struggling to commit.

Self-efficacy, or an individual's belief that they are able to succeed, forms part of their self-concept. Bandura and Locke (2003) review the experiential effect of self-efficacy on the ability to succeed, showing there is a correlation between increased self-efficacy and success, observing that this effect can be both collective and individual. The link between self-efficacy and self-concept comes as the belief that one can succeed is linked to an individual's self-image. The belief in one's ability to succeed can alter over time, depending on experiences, feedback and mastery of a topic. Collective self-efficacy can be manufactured through creating opportunities for groups to effectively work together, and through providing both individual and collective feedback showing how the group performed compared to the norm. Young people's career aspirations are not simply a product of their self-efficacy, but strongly influenced by their cultural milieu, socioeconomic status, and parental self-efficacy and aspirations; there can be a disjoint between their self-concept and their self-efficacy. High self-efficacy can, however, be debilitating when the individual's performance does not allow them to reach their goal, and as such can provide a challenge to their self-concept (Bandura and Locke, 2003).

2.6 Subjective task values and belief in success

Subjective task values and expectation of success are incorporated into the fourth column in the EV-MBC model (figure 2.2.5), and are influenced by the previous three columns.

2.6.1 What are subjective task values?

A further aspect to choice is that of subjective task values; these are the motivations an individual considers when making a choice. These consist of *Utility Value* or potential usefulness for one's goals, *Relative Cost* which can include time or effort expended and the negative impact, *Attainment Value* or the importance for the individual's identities, and *Intrinsic Value*, which includes interest and enjoyment (Eccles, 2009; 2011; 2002). Individuals differ in their personal hierarchy of task values, and choice strongly depends on what, for each individual, has the greatest subjective task value. That said, subjective task

values have been shown by Wigfield and Eccles (2000) to be the strongest predictors of intention regarding a choice. Blos (1962, in Head, 1997) describes an adolescent as someone who is deriving their own moral code, separate from their parents', which needs to meet the demands of the new situations they experience. They are starting to develop their ideas of who they are, and who they want to be in the future, and perceive choices in terms of the potential to deliver this future, or to be a burden (Eccles, 2011).

Traditional concepts of the choice process are often based on subjective task values and ideas such as self-interest, information collection, and a rational thought process that links these factors together (e.g. Foskett and Helmsley-Brown, 2001, p. 29). Whilst this applies to a certain extent for students of this age, it feels to be a rather simplistic way of conceptualising this. Utility relies on the student having a clear idea of their future after Post 16 education (e.g. Bøe *et al.*, 2011), but many are undecided or unrealistic. Self-interest also poses difficulties, as this is reliant on a student's sense of self-efficacy, which has been formed through their previous experiences. The third base for choice was that of information collection. Holmegaard, Ulriksen and Madsen (2012) cast doubt on whether it is reasonable to expect students of this age to do this effectively, as it is an activity that is time consuming and often requires a substantial level of initiative and independence. The ability to rationally consider all the options, then make the best choice, is one that many struggle with. Foskett and Helmsley-Brown (2001) suggest that the majority will settle for an option seen as acceptable, rather than deciphering the available information objectively whilst attempting to ignore our preconceptions.   When making an educational choice, Lykkegaard and Ulriksen (2016) suggest that subjective values have a greater influence than expectancy of success, so underlining their importance to the decision process.

2.6.2 Utility Value

Utility value can be described as how helpful that choice will be in allowing the student to achieve their external goals. In this context this could be access to Higher Education or a particular career; these are often found to be an important influence on Post-16 educational choices (e.g. Bøe, 2012). Relative cost is a related concept, which is the negative impacts of the choice such as fear of personal failure, or the time and effort needed to complete the option chosen. Consequentially a student must consider whether the cost of undertaking their choice outweighs the advantages it can bring; often this is done relatively simplistically

without the realisation that there are wider influences at work (Bøe and Henriksen, 2015). Utility value can be influenced when a student is brought to realise the relevance of the material studied, whether this is that the subject is a means to an end, or of direct relevance to a future career; the role of the teacher in facilitating this learning process is paramount (Dicke, 2018). There is also a gender divide in the perception of utility, with the OECD (2007, in Bøe *et al.*, 2011) finding that young women are more likely to attend high performing academic courses than young men, suggesting that utility is more heavily considered by them. Hazari *et al.* (2010) supports this view, finding that young men are more likely that young women to want jobs that are easy, pay well, make them famous and give them control. The type of utility provided through academic choices is unlikely to meet these requirements in a conventional manner.

Nurra and Oyserman (2018) use identity-based motivation theory to provide a further aspect on why utility value, when framed in terms of a long term goal, is not more motivational. They predict that when a young person's adult future self feels disconnected to their current self, it becomes less central to judgement, so lessening the utility value of the long term goal. Distant events or goals are believed to be less likely to influence current actions or choices due to their uncertainty: they can have a dream-like quality. Furthermore the length of time before they happen can imply that the individual has time to act, especially when they haven't realised their relevancy to the current choice. Nurra and Oyserman are in agreement with Gallaa *et al.* (2018) when they argue that individuals prefer immediate and smaller rewards to distant, larger and less certain ones. However, they demonstrate that if a third person is able to mediate a path between the individual's current self and their future self so it becomes more vivid, this effect can be lessened.

2.6.3 Relative Cost

Relative cost is a negative phenomenon, where an individual considers what they will have to give up in order to succeed with their choice. This could be time or effort, but could also be aspects such as the certainty of passing or achieving highly, needing to give up another choice, the potential of disappointing parents, or needing to dealing with negative stereotypes (Bøe *et al.*, 2011). Essentially, it is the consideration of the risks associated with that choice. The perception of risk can alter with the perception of whether their choice is voluntary; Trimpop (1994) emphasises that where an individual perceives that they have

control over the choice, and that they are not experiencing coercion in any direction, they are more likely to accept any inherent risk and downgrade its severity. If the individual trusts their advisor, they are also more likely to decrease their perception of associated risk connected to their choice. If put under stress when making their decision, or if they feel persuaded or coerced, an individual's perception of risk will increase. Here we see that there is a link between emotional state and the relative cost associated with a choice. If an individual believes they have made a free choice, and it is their own choice, the relative risk associated with this choice can also increase, leading to an individual experiencing difficulty in making their decision. They become responsible for the outcome, cannot blame others, and must deal with the consequences if their decision does not work (Bøe *et al.*, 2011). This can be an unhappy scenario, which can lead to a moratorium, or an uneasy period when the individual spends a significant amount of time worrying about the decision and its impact before making a commitment (Erikson, 1994).

2.6.4 Attainment Value

Eccles (2009, in Bøe and Henriksen, 2015) describes attainment value as a combination of the fit of the choice with the student's identity development and the importance that the student places on achieving the goal associated with that choice. The implication of this is that identity development is at the heart of an educational choice, both explicitly and implicitly through its influence on other aspects of the choice process. Identity development happens constantly as students negotiate their place in society, assimilating the available information, options and trends. Thus there is a strong relationship between the information received about the choice, its associated utility value, the decision that it is important to achieve that choice, and the development of identity.

When considering how a subject can be made attractive to a young person, it is beneficial to consider ways to encourage students to picture themselves studying the subject or undertaking a career in that area. Hannover and Kessels (2004) suggest encouraging students to imagine the prototype student who would make that choice, then comparing themselves to that prototype. This is potentially problematic as it not only assumes that all young people have a firm idea of who they are, but also that their image of the prototype is not based on inaccuracies. Bøe *et al.* (2011) takes this into account through the suggestion of profiling courses to correct stereotypes and introduce the possibilities, in conjunction

with introducing mentors in those professions. The point of this would be to ensure students are able to see how their personal needs and goals could be fulfilled through a potential choice, so they do not erroneously ignore an option, believing it to be in conflict with their desired identity. Bøe puts this in the context of choosing a science subject, and discusses the various misconceptions students develop about science that lead them to picture it as in conflict with their desired self-image. Young people are constructing their identity through their choices and actions, and subject choices at 16 allow a firm indication of who one is. Hannover and Kessels found that students do indeed match an imagined prototype student to themselves, and suggest that these prototypes are closely linked to students' experiences within a given subject classroom; if an experience is negative, the prototype will be negative. Taconis and Kessels (2009)'s study of Dutch students' choices investigates profile matching further, finding that students who choose against a subject after imagining a prototype are making a decision that they do not wish to be associated with that particular subculture. Students continuously elicit their own feedback regarding whether any given choice will facilitate the development of the characteristics they seek to develop to fit their self-image. This process is particularly pertinent when we look at what is happening in areas such as science that demonstrate a decreasing attraction to students. Taconis and Kessels observe that science is perceived as a subject with little intellectual freedom as you are unable to argue or debate a different answer, and involvement with science goes against the development of a young person's more fluid identity. Therefore if a young person cannot see how a choice will help them to develop their desired identity, and they place little importance on the final product of taking that subject, the attainment value associated with that choice is likely to be very low.

2.6.5 Interest-Enjoyment Value

Interest-enjoyment value is a subjective task value that concerns the interest and enjoyment a student is likely to experience with the task in question. Bøe and Henriksen (2015, p. 23) describe the job of a school as 'an arena for self-realisation, where talents are developed and interests fostered'. This leads to a consequence that students expect to be passionate about their choices, so when these do not prove to have the expected level of interest or enjoyment they become a betrayal to their sense of personal identity, and are often dropped. Therefore interest and enjoyment are linked, but are different states.

Ainley and Hidi (2014, in Renninger and Hidi, 2016, p. 21) explore these differences, and suggest that interest is connected to the motivation to further explore, whilst enjoyment is connected to experiencing pleasure. However, individuals with a strong individual interest in an area will experience both of these simultaneously.

Interest levels, and interest development, are clearly a strong influence on academic choice. These can be seen as both a motivational factor and a psychological state, often starting with the psychological state which, if triggered enough, can then develop into a motivator. Situational interest, as the earlier phase in the four-phase model of interest development, can be triggered in a variety of ways including reading, seeing, or being introduced to something of interest, and may be maintained or disappear depending on the trigger's connection to other interests and its repetition. Individual interest, as a later phase of interest development, is a psychological state signifying that the individual is likely to self-sustain their motivation and engagement in that area (Renninger and Hidi, 2016). As shown in figure 2.2.3, interest can be sustained and developed through from a situational trigger to a well-developed individual interest, and if this is the case, it becomes associated with positive engagement, deepening knowledge, and a feeling of value (ibid). A wish to independently engage with a topic becomes an important individual factor in choice.

How an individual's interest is characterised can have an impact on the way they perceive the choice. If their interest is narrow and focused but the area of study is broad, or vice versa, they can become frustrated and give up. Renninger and Hidi (2016, pp. 15-17) illustrate this phenomenon through the discussion of a case, particularly highlighting that the point at which interest development can be thwarted with an individual becoming disillusioned and losing enjoyment is when they encounter difficulties in progressing; if sufficient support is not experienced at this juncture, interest levels decrease. This has the consequence that whilst intrinsic value is a factor that is clearly considered when making a choice, it is not a stable factor and will change, in some cases substantially, with time.

Interest can also be used as one of the predictors for academic success. Renninger and Hidi (2006) discuss a variety of studies demonstrating this, showing that well-developed interest can provide a motivator to overcome a variety of different difficulties in order to succeed, as the interest prompts a greater level of engagement. External factors such as the level of

teacher support are also important here, both to stimulate and sustain interest in the face of challenge, and to stimulate students' feelings of self-efficacy; it is important to realise that interest is unlikely to develop in isolation. This underlines the importance of encouraging students to follow their sustained interests when making a choice, as this is most likely to provide them with the best outcome for their future self.

2.6.6 Expectation of Success

Ariely (2009) gives an alternative when he suggests that rather than considering each available option individually, we compare them to each other, and follow the one that scores best on the properties we individually believe are the most important. This property, according to Bøe, is the student's expectation of success (Bøe *et al.*, 2011). However, Sison (2014) argues that we are often unaware of which option would actually be best for us, and that we struggle to decide when given too many options, which leads to us entering a state where we are unable to make a decision. Complete freedom of choice rarely enables us to make the best decision. We struggle to make choices that will make us happier as too often we simply adjust to our choice, especially when our choice is based on a short term materialistic gain (Sison, 2014). This effect appears to be negated if we look instead to make pro-social choices to benefit others; we notice the benefits associated with a choice when they apply to others far more positively than we do when they benefit us. Scitovsky (in Sison, 2014, pp. 84-85) goes further to challenge the idea that an individual is able to make the best rational choice for oneself when he acknowledges that individuals make mistakes, partly as we rarely work having all the necessary information, and partly because personal and social ideas change with experience. Secondly, our desires do not always match our needs and are not always good for us in the longer term; Scitovsky identifies these as a 'lack of self-control' or a 'weakness of will'. Together, this means that whilst we may think we are making rational choices based in our values, we may instead be acting irrationally. Furthermore Sison suggests that an effective way of combatting this would be to give far limited choices, but give expert opinion whilst making the choice, so we can be nudged into making a good choice for us as an individual. This, he claims, works as we understand and value the choices better, and remain contented.

An individual's expectations of success can be thought of as the extent to which they believe they could be successful with the choice or task under consideration (Eccles and Salmela-

Aro, 2018), and is strongly linked to the process of making an academic choice. Self-control has a strong link to expectancy of success, and is a reliable predictor of academic performance (Gallaa, Amemiyab and Wanga, 2018). Self-control can be defined as 'the set of processes by which individuals regulate attention, motivation, and behaviour to pursue higher-order goals despite momentary impulses and desires to do otherwise' (Duckworth, Gendler, & Gross, 2014 in Gallaa, Amemiyab and Wanga, 2018, p. 23). When examining value based decision theories, we assume individuals consciously and subconsciously evaluate and weigh up different facets of a choice option, and use this to make a decision. The facets used to consciously make the decision include expectations of success, utility value, and intrinsic value. The difficulty comes when the individual needs to make a choice between an option which meets longer term goals, and an enjoyable short term option that does not help long term success; it is at this point that self-control is needed. Gallaa, Amemiyab and Wanga (2018) find that intrinsic value, or enjoyment, matters more for self-control than utility value; essentially we struggle to maintain motivation to complete options we have chosen if we do not enjoy them, regardless of the long term benefit.

Expectation of success includes both an individual's self-efficacy or self-concept of their ability, and their impression of the difficulty of the task. Individuals therefore perceive success differently for different tasks. For a task perceived as difficult in an area where they have little ability, success could be to simply complete the task. Students making course choices have been given a free choice within the constraints of previous achievement and timetabling, and therefore feel responsible for the outcome of their choices. Their expectation of success must be strong enough to overcome the potential costs or fear of failure (Bøe and Henriksen, 2015).

2.7 The effect of time

The EV-MBC model contains an implicit time component when it shows the decision process moving from left to right through the different columns, but the explicit inclusion of time to the model through a feedback loop was a later addition. Eccles (2011) clarifies the inclusion through explaining how self-schema, goals and identity will change over time as the individual undergoes new experiences and gains new knowledge, experiences social and biological imperatives (for example in relation to relationships and children), changes within their social sphere, and has time to reflect on the consequences of their previous decisions.

Taking these factors into account, an individual's choices must change over time. However, Lykkegaard and Ulriksen (2016) suggest that the time frame in question for the model's feedback loop remains unclear. Do students use their experience of one transition point to inform another? Is this a short-term or long-term feedback loop? Lykkegaard and Ulriksen's 2016 study aimed to examine the possibility of using the EV-MBC model to examine ongoing changes in students' thinking when making an educational choice, through sampling a student's opinion on their future educational trajectory up to 5 times over the course of the year. Their findings underlined the importance of collecting different types of data, as on its own their quantitative data (a survey using the EV-MBC model) could not provide an explanation for the observed changes over time. They postulate that this is a serious shortcoming for the model and that it is, with the inclusion of time, a complex explanatory tool.

2.8 Education Transition points

The transition from school to employment is a crucial point for young people. This transition spans the time from the end of compulsory education to entry into continuous full-time employment, therefore including the decision around non-compulsory Sixth Form study. Central to this decision is individual agency, reliance on self-direction, and the ability to take responsibility for the choices made. Schoon and Heckhausen (2019) indicate that this agency is not unbounded, and decisions are taken within social constraints and constructs. They argue that there are multiple socio-cultural influences shaping the development of agency in relation to this transition, including family, society, control perceptions, goals and intentions. The action-phase model of developmental regulation (Schoon and Heckhausen, 2019, p. 38) describes the different phases a young person encounters when making this transition. During the final year of compulsory education, they consider the alternative possibilities; in the context of this study this includes employment, and academic or vocational Post-compulsory education. The individual will need to consider the opportunities, constraints and consequences associated with each choice. Once the choice is made, the individual needs to progress to invest in their chosen path, remaining committed and focused, especially when difficulties are encountered. They may need to adjust their goals, and even change paths. In the Guernsey context, many of

those who chose to continue studying at the end of compulsory education will repeat this process as they approach the end of school-based non-compulsory education.

A young person in the school context can demonstrate agency in a variety of ways. Within the classroom, they can demonstrate 'agentic engagement' (Cambria and Dicke, 2018, p. 143), where they take a constructive approach to contributing to their learning. This type of agency links closely to constructs such as motivation, interest and enjoyment, therefore aiding the decision process. However, many studies suggest that there is an overall downwards trend in academic motivation and achievement during adolescence, particularly when going through an educational transition (Tuominen, Viljaranta and Salmela-Aro, 2018). There is individual variability within this, with some young people not experiencing this, but it is worth questioning how this affects a young person's feelings of agency through a transition. Schoon and Heckhausen (2019) claim that agency can encourage a young person to strive for success and encourage meritocracy, although they warn that it is important not to overestimate these by neglecting the effect of socioeconomic factors. Agency is less important for those individuals who are moving through traditional and regulated paths. Within this context this would include those who were selected at 11 to receive a more academic education, who are then looking to continue with academic post compulsory education, but individual agency would become more effective for those looking to leave a pre-structured path. Individual agency is most effective when timed correctly. If manifested in the year prior to the end of post compulsory education, a young person has time to consider options, and ensure that they do not simply foreclose.

School transitions such as this are important life decisions, which can challenge through the need to plan and begin to make a clear decision. Weiss, Wiese and Freund (2014) describe the possibilities facing a young person as 'overwhelming', especially when they are still in the process of mastering the skills such as optimized selection, self-regulation and delayed gratification which will let them commit to longer term goals. An overview of these is given in figure 2.8 below.

Self-regulatory strategies	Gender role stereotypes
elective selection and optimization loss-based selection and compensation	adoption of gender-related attitudes ascription of prototypical attributes
Personality and motives	**Parental work participation**
e.g., closed-mindedness e.g., power motive	evaluation of parents' behavior perceived and ideal work–family engagement

Mastering the transition

goal selection and pursuit
clarity of career- and family-related goals
self-efficacy and wellbeing

Figure 2.8 Mastering School Transitions (Weiss, Wiese and Freund, 2014, pp. 127, figure 5.1)

Adolescence is a difficult time, with increased susceptibility to risky behaviour, peer pressure and egocentrism, whilst developing self-efficacy and other self-regulatory strategies. These, combined with familial examples and socialisation, provide many of the factors a young person needs to develop, overcome and contend with in order to master this transition effectively. Weiss, Wiese and Freund (2014) tell us that developing the ability to effectively set a goal, pursue it, and rethink as appropriate is one of the most difficult steps in making this transition. Whilst adolescents become more realistic with age, others will struggle and either foreclose on their decision or become stuck in a moratorium where they become frozen, unable to effectively move forwards (e.g. Head, 1985). This seems exacerbated for young people from a lower socioeconomic context, who, according to Kerckhoff (2003, in Gutman, Sabates and Schoon, 2014, p. 165), may start to 'flounder' when faced with uncertainty. Freund (2002, 2008, in Weiss, Wiese and Freund, 2014, p. 131) contends that the benefits for developing these skills are high, with positive outcomes in adulthood including wellbeing, career success and personal growth, self-reporting a meaningful life. Conversely, Arnett (2004, in Gutman, Sabates and Schoon, 2014) argues that this uncertainty may be formative and positive, so allowing adolescents to explore a variety of options without negative consequences, although this is more true for those from

a higher socioeconomic background who are less concerned about the financial impact of taking the time to explore different options.

2.9 Summary

This literature review of relevant theory seeks to establish the reasons for using the EV-MBC model within this thesis. The various aspects of this model have been reviewed and discussed within the context of educational choice at age 16 at the end of compulsory education to establish and explore how this choice could be made. The influence of time on the narrative that an individual constructs to justify their choice is an important addition to the framework of the EV-MBC model that is not present in others, and helps us to understand why a student's narrative regarding their choices can shift during the period of their exploration prior to making their choice, and continue to shift once the choice has been made and they experience it. The transition point explored through this thesis is a crucial stage in their identity development, particularly as they make choices at this point which directly affect who their future-self will be.

This exploration of relevant literature fosters an understanding of the research design and the instruments used for data collection. These are designed to ensure that all aspects of choice can be explored with the participants, and the analysis and interpretation tools used substantiate this further.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Epistemological Assumptions

This mixed methods embedded design consists of a qualitative case study concentrating on the experiences of twelve students, with a secondary quantitative data strand collecting data from the whole year group embedded within the case study (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). Twelve students were used as this not only fit the scope of this study, but was a sufficient number to allow comparative analysis and the detection of patterns, while being the smallest number that allowed proportional representation between the sample and the population of relevant students. In this design, the quantitative data takes a subsidiary position to the qualitative in-depth interviews. I first collected and analysed qualitative data using an in-depth interview methodology from the twelve students. The quantitative data was collected and analysed next, and was then used to inform a second set of qualitative interviews with the twelve students. Thus the second part of the qualitative phase builds on the secondary quantitative data, and the two phases are connected in the final part of the study through discussion. My rationale for this approach is that the qualitative data, based on the students' perceptions of their experiences and the realities they faced, is then effectively and individually compared to the overall perceptions of the experience of the whole year, so providing a check point for each individual student as they discuss their individual perceptions whilst allowing me to examine the whole case. This mixed methods study has as its theoretical foundation Eccles' (2009, p. 80) Expectancy Value Model of Motivated Behavioural Choice, which provides the framework through which the responses are analysed and interpreted.

The philosophical assumption underpinning this research is one of Pragmatism. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003, in Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011) argue that pragmatism is the worldview that best suits mixed methods research as it places a central importance on the research question, allowing any possible type and combination of the methods to answer it. This is further substantiated by Minichiello *et al.* (2000) who suggest the use of in-depth interviews, which form part of this study's methodology, as a pragmatic and appropriate response within the context of needing to understand the experiences of a broad range of participants in a limited time frame. This epistemological stance also allows for the

integration of the findings from all phases of the study, allowing them to be merged to come to a holistic response to the research questions.

Pragmatism best fits this research as when each element of the worldview is examined, it fits well. From an ontological point of view, pragmatism allows both singular and multiple realities: the research can discuss multiple perspectives. This is seen to be important as this study examines participants' experiences of making an important educational choice; their experiences will be subjective, leading to multiple realities due to their differing individual experiences. This allows the research to explore the participants' different interpretations, and explore how the individual's wider environment impacts on their constructed understanding of their experience. In terms of axiology, pragmatism allows the researcher to include multiple perspectives, so acknowledging different levels of bias in the various responses. Furthermore this mixed method study suits pragmatism as it encourages the researcher to ignore the forced dichotomy between constructivism and postpositivism by giving the research question central importance.

3.2 Research Design

This study takes the form of an embedded case study, which primarily uses in-depth conversational interviews to investigate the social phenomenon of making a choice. As a mixed method design it incorporates two sources of quantitative data to support and substantiate the data derived from the interviews. The quantitative surveys take a secondary role, and the different strands are organised sequentially with the surveys embedded within the qualitative case study design. The data produced by the different strands is mixed both through data collection and through interpretation.

This case study uses an analytical framework based on Eccles' Expectancy Value Model of Motivated Behavioural Choice (Eccles, 2009, p. 80) to examine students' decision process when making their choices for Post-16 Education. I will examine how their perceptions of their experiences change over time and in doing so appreciate that a decision of this type is subjective, multifaceted and cannot be perceived as an isolated event.

The case under investigation is the Post-16 transition decision experienced by the group of students who entered the Sixth Form Centre in September 2017. Within this, a unit of analysis is defined as an individual student or a quantitative survey, so forming an

embedded case study design (Yin, 2014). The boundaries of this case are set as it includes only those students who entered Guernsey's Sixth Form Centre from the local secondary sector in September 2017; they therefore all shared a common experience as they made their decisions at the same time, experienced the same landscape shift while making their decision, and received the same information from the SFC. This case is also bounded by time: I investigated the choices made by the first cohort of students who are faced by a substantial change to the courses on offer, and track how they shaped the reality of their choice during the academic year after they entered the Sixth Form Centre. This case study contains 14 embedded units of analysis as shown below.

Embedded Case Design: How do Guernsey students reflect on and experience their choices in a changing landscape?

Embedded Units of Analysis 1-12: 12 Students

Embedded Unit of Analysis 13: Year 12 Survey

Embedded Unit of Analysis 14: Data from the Sixth Form Centre's annual Year 11 survey
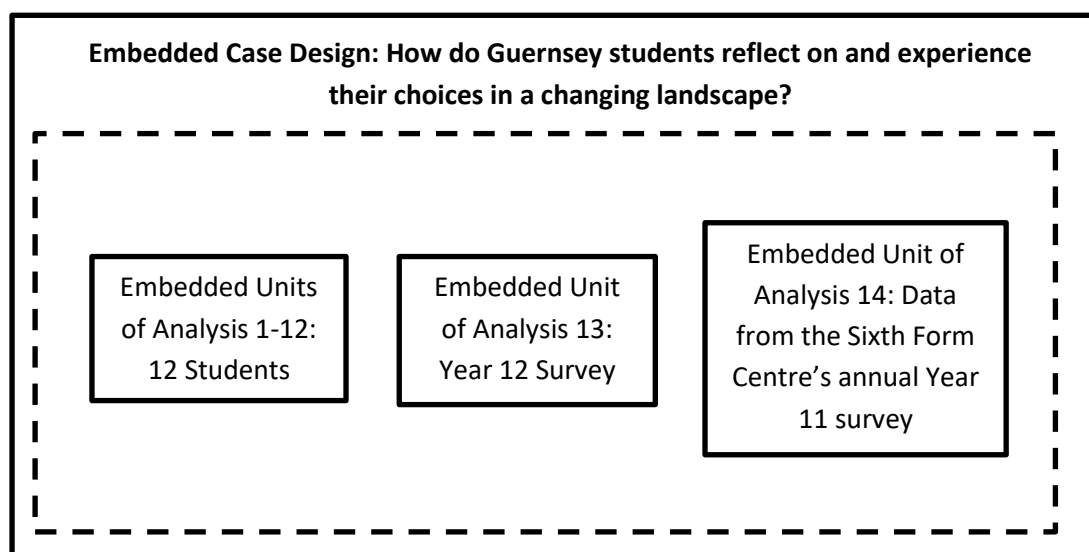
Figure 3.2: The Embedded Case Design

A dynamic approach (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011, p. 59) was taken when designing this study, as the different strands and units of analysis were selected to meet the study's purpose, the use of the theoretical lens, and to best answer the research questions whilst maintaining validity. Units of Analysis 13 and 14 are secondary in nature, and have multiple purposes, including aiding the development of the interview instrument, allowing for triangulation and corroboration to increase validity, and to enhance interpretation and support a comprehensive account of the case under investigation.

3.3 Case Study and Mixed Method Research

An advantage of using an embedded case study is the ability to combine quantitative data in a mainly qualitative study. This allows both an intensive and extensive view of the case to

be taken, so balancing the detail of the participants' individual experiences with the wider statistics of the whole cohort of students bounded within the case. Furthermore, changes to the participants' interpretations of their experiences over time can be tracked (Grbich, 2007). This approach is suitable for focusing on contemporary real-life phenomenon, especially in a case such as this where it is hard to distinguish between the phenomenon and the context in which it happens (Yin, 2014). The case in question is an unusual case; Yin (2014, p. 51) takes this to mean a case which deviates from everyday occurrences, and I argue that the singular, involuntary and isolated context within which Guernsey's Sixth Form operates deviates from the more normal context of other Sixth Form providers.

Whilst the embedded case study approach encourages a holistic approach when answering the research questions, it allows for data to be produced through a variety of means. Three main strands of data were collected, with first and third strands being qualitative in-depth conversational interviews, and the second being a quantitative survey. Quantitative data from one of the SFC's annual surveys was also used within the case study. The quantitative strand clearly has a secondary role, with the qualitative strands being of primary importance. The temporal relationship within a mixed methods study must be settled prior to the start. This study takes a sequential approach as given in table 3.3 below, so the data for each strand was collected and analysed prior to the next strand commencing. There are differing levels of interaction (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011) between the three strands. The 2nd quantitative strand was independent of the 1st strand, but the 3rd strand interacted with the 2nd strand through using data collected there as interview prompts, and with the 1st as the data was combined during the analysis stage. Consequently a variety of data integration methods were used to mix the qualitative and quantitative strands, and there are several points at which this takes place. 2nd and 3rd strands were mixed through data collection, as the quantitative data collected in the 2nd strand builds to the collection of the qualitative data in the 3rd strand. The 1st and 3rd strands were mixed during data analysis, and the qualitative data from each strand was mixed to build a portrait of each participant. Finally, all three strands were mixed through the interpretation stage, and then compared to earlier quantitative data collected by the school for this cohort of students.

When?	Phase / Embedded Unit of Analysis	Further Detail
May 2017	Embedded Unit of Analysis 14	The annual Grammar School Year 11 Feedback Survey of the Post 16 decision process. Data from this is used in this research.
October / November 2017	Embedded Unit of Analysis 1-12, Phase 1	Qualitative in-depth conversational interviews with 12 students in Year 12
November 2017	Embedded Unit of Analysis 13, Phase 2	Year 12 Survey – whole cohort
May 2018	Embedded Unit of Analysis 1-12, Phase 3	Follow up qualitative in-depth conversational interviews with the previous 12 students in Year 12.

Table 3.3; the timetable for this research

This methodology is designed to be persuasive and rigorous, and to allow the research to answer the research questions from a variety of viewpoints to address the primary purpose of the research, which is to examine students' decision making process when making choices for Post-16 education in Guernsey.

3.4 Limitations of Mixed Methods Enquiries

The embedded case study design has several specific advantages, most notably that it allows the researcher to investigate this specific context-driven situation using both qualitative and quantitative methods, within the constraints of a specific timeframe. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) suggest a further strength is that the supplemental data, in this case the quantitative survey in the second data strand, is used to improve and enable the overall mainly qualitative design.

However, there are challenges associated with a mixed methods case study of this type. Primarily the researcher needs to use a variety of analytical methods, and be able to sensitively integrate the findings from the different types of data in order to make sense of the whole. The researcher must ensure that the purpose of gathering the supplementary data is clear, and time the gathering of this carefully so it is at the right phase in order to

support the qualitative data without affecting it (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). Yin (2014) expands on these points further, warning against becoming too focused on the sub units, and losing sight of the whole case. Perversely Yin also warns against addressing the case at too holistic and abstract a level, so leading to a loss of sufficiently clear data. It is clear that the researcher must walk a fine line to ensure that a holistic overview is kept whilst also maintaining thorough data.

Yin (2014) identifies that the other main limitation of this type of study is whether the findings can be generalised to the wider population experiencing a similar event in their lives, or whether it is only applicable to this particular context. This is further complicated through the assumption that all minds will process experiences differently, even if the difference is only subtle; each member of the population would have their own explanation of their experiences (Minichiello *et al.*, 2000). Therefore the findings will only ever be partially generalizable, even to a similar context such as the population of students in the same school the year following this research. I will address this further in section 3.10.

The primary tool used in this embedded case study is in-depth conversational interviews. This means that the case study is primarily relying on the participants' verbal accounts of their experiences, and their interpretations; there are no checks, and therefore it is hard to exclude their self-deceptions or their purposeful deception of the interviewer for any reason (Minichiello *et al.*, 2000). The only way the researcher is able to cross-check the participant's story is through identifying inaccuracies within the interview, or between the first and second interview. However, this is considered to be unproblematic due to the nature of the second research question this work addressed, which asks how the EV-MBC model can be used to describe and explain choice in this context. Therefore these inconsistencies become interesting, and in identifying them the researcher is able to address this research question.

3.5 Phase One: First Qualitative Interviews

3.5.1 Conversational Interviews
Unstructured conversational interviews were chosen as the main data collection tool. These were a controlled or guided in depth conversation, prompted at by a series of eight vignettes. This tool was used to allow the researcher to elicit a detailed understanding of

the process of making a decision about Post 16 education with the vignettes prompting the conversation to focus on different facets to the decision making process as detailed by the EV-MBC Model. Eight vignettes were used, each describing one of the IFS participants' experiences of the following areas:

1. Influence of previous personal experience on their decision
2. Family characteristics
3. Perception of distal cultural milieu
4. Future goals and self-schemata
5. Self-concept of their own abilities
6. Emerging personal identity
7. Expectation of Success
8. How their thoughts / beliefs / behaviour change over time

The vignettes were taken from interviews conducted by me when undertaking the IFS (Papworth, 2016). The IFS, as the piece of EdD research preceding this thesis, was also on the topic of Post-16 choice, albeit concentrating on making the choice between A Levels or the IBDP. These interviews were therefore with students with a similar cultural milieu, from the same schools, regarding making the same decision. As such they provided a very relatable prompt to each section of the interview, which worked well to stimulate conversation in the relevant areas. The vignettes were short, ranging between 131 and 260 words, and were selected from across the IFS interviews. Each was identified with a label 1 to 8, and introduced in that order when the conversation about the previous vignette had come to a natural finish. The participants were not made aware of the aspect of choice that the vignette related to, and if the participant did not start discussing the vignette when they had finished reading it they were prompted to do so by being asked how the vignette compared to their own experience. Further probing during the resulting conversation led them to explore this area thoroughly as it arose through their own conversation. An example of vignette 3 is below; this vignette focuses on the individual's perception of their Distal Cultural Milieu, and their resulting behaviour when making this choice. Clearly this vignette also mentions other facets of the choice, such as the individual's identity, so allowing for an exploration of a variety of facets of the participant's choice. The remaining vignettes can be found in Appendix 3.

R: Do you feel like you made a mature choice of what to study? Were you worried about being different from your friends?

I: That could be taken very philosophically, but I don't think it changes your identity. I think it changes your attitude to other people and other things in the world, - doing IB. Making this choice and branching out to something different, so people talking at you and saying I can't believe you chose whatever…. But if you look beyond what people were saying, and you could use this as a metaphor for life or whatever, that if you actually look beyond what people are saying who don't know anything about the course other than what they have heard through other secondary or tertiary sources, which is just gossip, you realise once you look at just the facts you can make your own decision quite a lot better without the help of other people whose opinions are probably quite poorly formed.

There was no predetermination of the questions asked surrounding each vignette, which meant that whilst the same topics were discussed in each interview, the questions asked were relevant to that participant and encouraged the conversation to flow and expand. Therefore whilst these interviews were able to be both targeted and insightful, they demonstrated the limitation that different information was gathered from different participants; if the topic did not arise naturally, it wasn't forced into the conversation by the researcher.

Minichiello *et al.* (2000, p. 70) describe this as a 'case study approach', as the sociological autobiography that emerges through this method describes the interviewee's subjective experience. Consequently, the researcher's definition of this choice experience is dependent on how the interviewee is interpreting and presenting the situation verbally, and cannot be directly observed. However, the researcher, as an insider to the institution, is still working within an ethnographic context as suggested by Cicourel (Minichiello *et al.*, 2000, p. 73): the researcher has access to the cultural milieu, the meaning and significance of statements, and can gain a sense of the self-identity of the interviewee.   As an insider, I chose this interview methodology as I found it worked well in the IFS, allowing me to establish a rapport and move my relationship with the participant from a questioning

Teacher to a Researcher, thereby allowing them to be less defensive of their choices. Indeed, Robson (2011, p. 368) suggests the use of vignettes in this type of scenario, as they provide emotional distance between my dual roles. Establishing a good rapport and to sympathetically listen is seen by Silverman (2014, p. 168) to be vital, or this method will not elicit an honest and detailed response. The probes must be carefully judged to ensure that they are not biased, are friendly and non-threatening, they do not interrupt the flow of the conversation, whilst allowing the interview to follow the line of enquiry (Yin, 2014, p. 110). It is hoped that these pitfalls were avoided; especially as the subsequent interviews generated a large amount of data and the transcripts show a flowing conversation.

3.5.2 Participants

The student sample was a stratified random sample. This resulted in quotas of particular types of students being filled through random selection, so having the advantage that students from each feeder school were proportionally represented, and balanced for gender and type of course they had chosen to follow (Minichiello *et al.*, 2000, p. 161). The student cohort was arranged into groups in a spreadsheet sorted by feeder school, gender, and type of course taken (A Levels or IBDP). The Sixth Form has 6 feeder schools, but each school does not send the same amount of students to the Sixth Form; for example, the largest number of students, 83, came from Feeder School 6, whilst 6 students came from Feeder School 4. Therefore the number of students from each gender taking each type of course from each school was looked at as a percentage of the total, and then the number of students from each group was calculated so that the ratios from each background roughly matched those found in the school on each course, whilst allowing all feeder schools to be represented. A school was designated a feeder school if the Sixth Form Centre acted as its only Sixth Form, and was able to provide comprehensive information and guidance to the students from that school looking to study at the Sixth Form Centre. Feeder Schools 1-4 are non-selective state schools, which take students based on catchment area. One of these is on a neighbouring smaller island, and due to its location struggles to ensure that its students access a similar level of support and information compared to students at other Guernsey schools. Feeder School 5 is a private girls' school that does not have Post 16 provision, and Feeder School 6 is a selective school that is attached to the Sixth Form Centre, and therefore shares many of its resources, including teachers and classrooms. Although there are further

students in the SFC who have not come from these schools, they were unable to access the same information at school and therefore were excluded from the selection of interview participants.

The result is a planned sample consisting of 9 A Level students (3 boys and 6 girls) and 3 IBDP students (1 boy and 2 girls), with no 2 interviewees of the same gender studying the same course coming from the same feeder school. My supervisor was then presented with 12 groups of students, and randomly chose 1 name from each group. I then spoke to each student to invite them to take part, and gave them an information letter and consent form. All but 1 returned these, with that student declining to take part. I then asked my supervisor to choose a different name from that group, and invited a new participant. The students were then interviewed for the first time during October and November 2017.

For ease of reading and discussion, once the interview was completed, the participants were renamed with a 1 syllable name of the correct gender, starting with A for the first participant interviewed, B for the second, through to L for the final participant interviewed. The participants were from then on referred to by the pseudonym name. Details about the participants are given in table 3.5.2 below.

Name	Feeder School	Studying?	Gender	Special circumstances
Ava	5	A Levels	Female	None
Bea	6	IBDP	Female	I teach Bea one of her subject lessons
Carl	6	IBDP	Male	None
Dan	3	A Levels	Male	Did not respond to invitations to take part in interview 2.
Eve	1	A Levels	Female	Did not respond to invitations to take part in interview 2.
Fern	6	IBDP	Female	Fern changed route after the sample was selected before the interviews, so should have been an A Level representative.
Gia	3	A Levels	Female	Very dyslexic. Has coloured glasses but still has an extremely slow reading speed. Didn't cover

				the last few vignettes due to time constraints.
Hope	4	A Levels	Female	feeder school 4 is very small, and operating in challenging circumstances
Ian	2	A Levels	Male	None
Jake	6	A Levels	Male	None
Kat	2	A Levels	Female	None
Lou	5	IBDP	Female	Wider wellbeing issues surrounding student. Student suffered a severe hip injury from playing rugby in the past year which continues to be problematic. Student had has some time off Sixth Form prior to the first interview.

Table 3.5.2: The Interview Participants

3.5.3 Data Collection

Each participant was asked where and when they would be willing to be interviewed. All chose a time convenient to them during the school day, and asked me to find a location. All the interviews were audio-recorded and fully transcribed prior to analysis; I did not take notes during the interviews to keep the conversation more natural. After each interview the participants were asked if they wished to read their interview after transcription, but none wished to do so.

During the interview the participant first read the vignette, and was then asked how it related to their experience. This led into a discussion about their experiences in relation to that facet of the EV Model. The questions asked to each interviewee were not predetermined, so whilst each section of each interview started from the same point, each interview responded to the individual circumstances in a flexible and relevant manner. The interviews had a conversational tone, with questions appearing more natural. Despite this, the interviews were in-depth; aiming to thoroughly probe that area of the student's choice and not moving on to the next vignette until it was clear that there was no more to say in the previous area. The first two interviews were treated as a pilot, to assess whether all the vignettes stimulated conversation and were interpreted clearly by the interviewee. They were seen to be effective, and none were changed at that point. This research method

worked well in this context as using the vignettes, and introducing them as quotes from previous students about their choices, allowed me to probe and discuss issues which would otherwise be difficult to introduce. Byrne (2004, in Silverman, 2014, p. 171) tells us that 'open-ended and flexible questions are likely to get a more considered response than closed questions and therefore provide better access to interviewees' views, interpretations of events, understandings, experiences and opinions…. when done well is able to achieve a level of depth and complexity that is not available to other, particularly survey-based, approaches'. However, this style of interviewing has the limitation that each interview was complex, full of very dense data, and covered slightly different areas, leading to less straightforward data analysis.

3.5.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis strategy used here was to follow the theoretical propositions (the EV-MBC model) on which this case study was based. Yin (2014, p. 136) proposes organising the analysis in this way when the theoretical propositions have significantly influenced the data collection methods, the literature discussed and the research questions, and this was deemed appropriate for this case. Throughout the analysis process I maintained a research log, detailing the chain of evidence going from the initial data through to the ultimate conclusions.

Prior to undertaking data analysis, each interview was fully transcribed. Each transcript was then explored through a careful reading to develop a general understanding, then by recording initial thoughts as notes in the margins, and through starting to create a face sheet for each participant. The face sheet, as suggested by Grbich (2007, p. 25) provided an overall summary sheet of identifiers for each participant, giving organisational detail in addition to a brief summary of the emerging issues; this section was completed after the data analysis was complete. These can be found in Appendix 4.

Each transcript was then analysed through searching for themes from the EV-MBC model as expressed in the transcript. To do so, I looked for the expression of an idea which matched an EV-MBC model theme, irrespective of its location within the interview. This could therefore be a series of concepts or words linked across a response-question-response link between myself and participant, or a standalone statement from the participant. Minichiello

et al. (2000, p. 254) suggest that it is appropriate here to code through latent content analysis, which involves analysis according to meaning. The ideas in the text were then identified through labels in the margin of the text signifying meaning, which were then grouped into the themes or concepts described by the EV-MBC model. An example of this process is given in Appendix 5.

This process was followed throughout the text so each part of the interview was assigned a conceptual meaning. Once this was done, a portrait of each participant was created that would allow the reader "to look at the world through the researcher's eyes, and, in the process, to see things (they) might not otherwise have seen" (Donmoyer, 1990, p. 196 in Bachor, 2002, p. 6). These portraits act as 'condensed snapshots' (Bachor, 2002, p. 6), and the method chosen to do this is that of conceptual mapping as suggested by Grbich (2007, p. 32). This gives us a single page summarising the participant's affective memories of their experiences. The format of conceptual map is shown is figure 3.5.4, and is set out so that we can first see the effect of ongoing time on participants' choices; the three boxes are read from left to right along the top. Other data is grouped in concepts according to the different facets of the EV-MBC model (figure 2.2.5), and should be read anticlockwise underneath the *time* boxes. Themes are summarised in the central sphere, underneath the conceptual map title. Participant versions are given in Appendix 5.
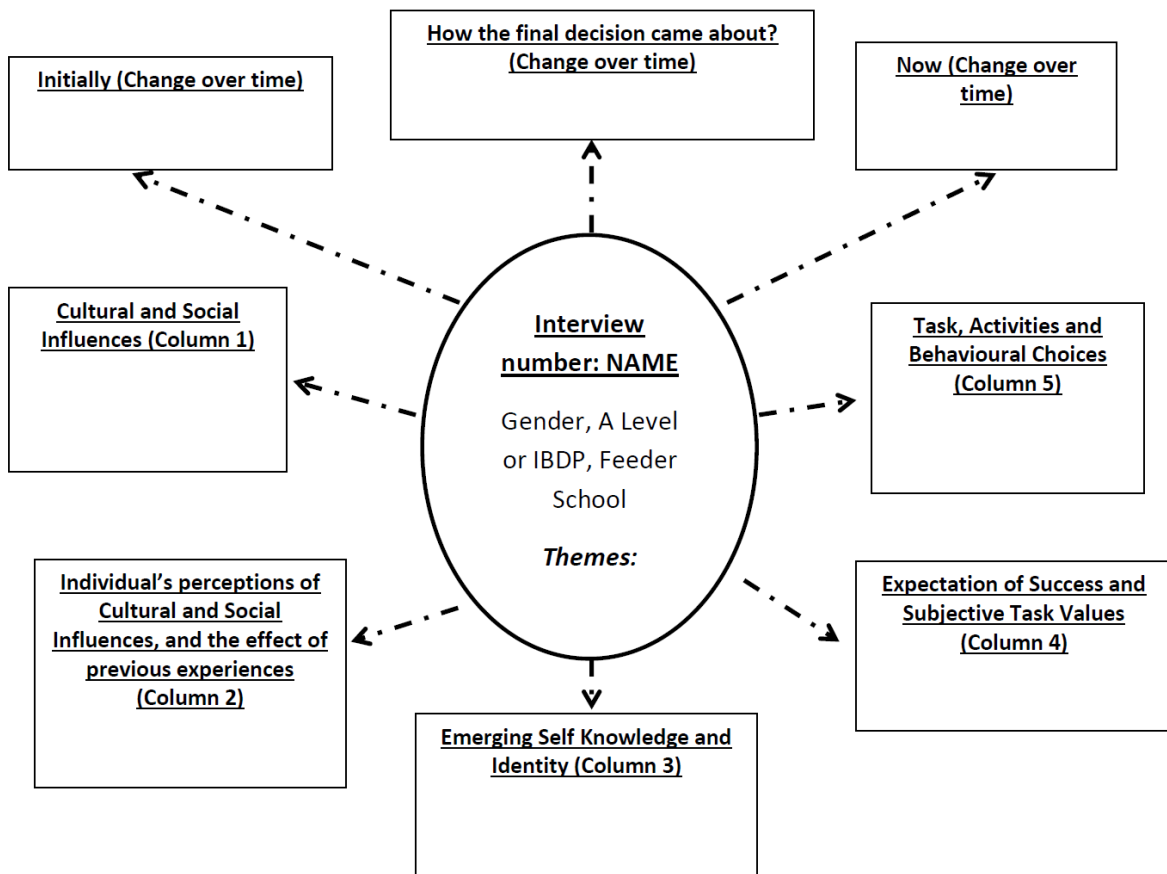
Figure 3.5.4: The Conceptual Map template

The final stage in the analysis of these interviews was the creation of memos. These were created to summarise issues emerging from the data across all the interviews to support each particular aspect. Conflicting and confounding evidence was recorded in the same way. These memos are discussed in more detail in the interpretation section.

3.6 Phase 2: Quantitative Surveys

3.6.1 Instrument

The instrument for this part of the case study (embedded unit of analysis 13: year 12 survey) consisted of a structured questionnaire, containing a series of 20 compulsory open and closed questions. These questions aimed to cover all the different facets of the EV-MBC model, so getting a simplified picture for the whole year group. The open questions allowed the respondent to write any answer they chose. The closed questions either required the participant to select an answer, or use a Likert Scale to rate a statement. Figure 3.6.1a below is an example of a closed question which aims to discover whether the student's choices changed over time.

Are the subjects and courses you are now studying the same as you expected to be studying.... (tick all that apply) *

☐ A year ago?

☐ When you made your Post 16 application?

☐ At the start of year 12?

Figure 3.6.1a; example of a closed survey question

Figure 3.6.1b below is an example of an open question. This question could give responses from a variety of different areas, including the respondent's affective memories of previous experiences, subjective task values, or their expectation of success. The amount of space to write expanded as students responded, so their answers were not constrained.

What assumptions did you make about studying at sixth form a year ago? This could be about the different subjects, or the different courses, or in general. *

Your answer

Figure 3.6.1b; example of an open survey question

Figure 3.6.1c is an example of a closed question using a Likert Scale. A series of questions of this nature were used to discover attitudes towards subjective task values and attitudes towards personal and collective identities.

Was this a consideration when you decided what to study: how much you thought you would enjoy it *

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| not at all | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | very important |

Figure 3.6.1c; example of a closed survey question using a Likert Scale

This instrument can be found in Appendix 6.

3.6.2 Participants and Data Collection

The sequential nature of the different phases of this case study meant that this survey was timed to take place once the phase 1 interviews were complete in the first term of Sixth Form study. The survey questions were included in the Sixth Form Centre's December 2017 End of Term Feedback Survey administered to all year 12 students. Completing this survey was a compulsory exercise, and it was administered through a google form completed in

classroom conditions, which logged their username and only allowed each student to access the survey once. The questions for this part of the study formed a separate non-compulsory section of the survey, which was preceded by a statement explaining the purpose of the research and a question asking whether students wished to take that part of the survey. Students were not able to view or answer these questions without signifying that they wished to do so, and if they did not the survey simply completed at that point. If they signified their agreement, they had to respond to every question in order to be able to complete the survey. 179 students agreed to do so, which was 94.2% of the total respondents, and 85% of students in the cohort which indicates some were absent on the day. Whilst the total respondents included the 25 students who would not have been included in the sample for the interviews, this is not problematic as they make up a relatively small proportion of the Sixth Form at 10.5%, and there was not a practical way of excluding them due to the agreed method of distributing the survey questions.

I was then provided with an anonymised spreadsheet of the responses to each question. It is unclear from the available data whether the 5.8% of the respondents who did not agree to participate and the absentees came from a particular subgroup, gender or feeder school, but it is presumed that the remaining 94.2% of respondents provide a good representation of the cohort.

3.6.3 Data Analysis

The open and closed questions from this survey needed a different initial analysis approach to the interviews. The google form produced instant pie and bar charts so providing a visual summary of the responses for the closed questions, meaning that the general trend of the data was immediately clear. Figures 3.6.3a and b give examples of these.
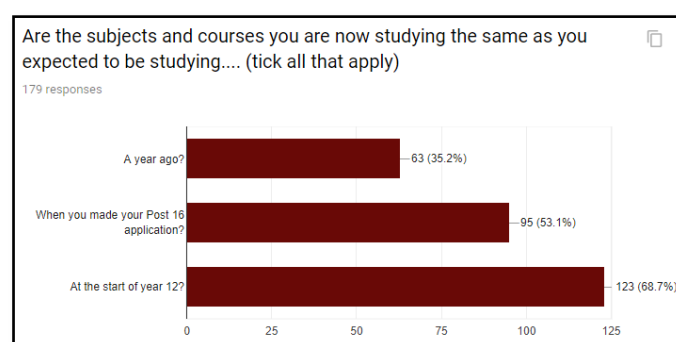
Figure 3.6.3a; response generated by closed question shown in Figure 3.6.1a
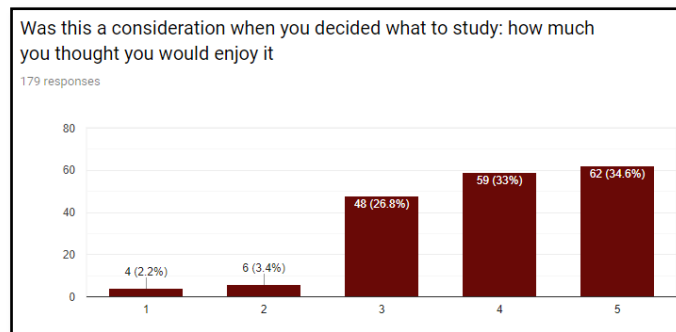
Figure 3.6.3b; response generated by closed question shown in Figure 3.6.1c

The survey included four open response questions, which prior to analysis needed to be coded. These coding categories were generated using the responses. Category generation was straightforward, and if a new response that did not fit into any prior category a new one was generated. For example, in response to the question *who helped you make up your mind about what to study?*, students were able to give any response, and identify as many or few influencers as they wished. An example response is *parents and sister who recently left,* so the student's response was placed in two categories: 'parents' and 'sibling'. The resulting pie chart to this example question can be found in Appendix 6 (figure 6.6.5.), along with all other charts for this instrument and the coding key for the open questions.

Once visual forms were generated for all questions, the data needed to be interpreted in a meaningful qualitative fashion which both complemented the analysis of Phase 1 and 3, and also answered the research question. To obtain the larger meaning of this quantitative data the results and graphs were used to produce a portrait of the whole cohort similar to the conceptual maps produced for the qualitative interviews. The data was categorised under the same headings, so giving an immediate comparison between the detail of the individual experiences and the patterns of influence emerging from the whole cohort.

3.7 Phase Three: Second Qualitative Interviews

3.7.1. Instrument

The instrument was designed to produce significantly shorter follow up interviews, which required the participants to reflect on their subjective and expectancy values, their self-concept of their ability, and to reflect on the last 8 months to prompt a discussion on how or whether their expectations have changed over time.

The methodology used for these interviews was the same as described in 3.5.1, although different vignettes were used. The purpose of this second interview was to stimulate a reflection on the efficacy of their choice and their beliefs about their choice, now the participants had experienced their first year of study. The vignettes were chosen to prompt this direct reflection, with four prompts used. The first two were visual precis of the data found through the Year 12 survey in Phase 2. The participants viewed these charts, and were then guided to discuss whether their personal experiences were reflected through this. The first prompt (figure 3.7.1) consisted of four bar charts relating to Columns 3 and 4 in the EV-MBC model, giving the responses to questions asking whether the following things were a consideration when they were making their choices:

1. Whether they thought they would enjoy it
2. Whether they thought they would do well
3. How useful it would be in the future
4. How much work they would need to put in

The final part of this first prompt was a pie chart asking students whether, after being at Sixth Form for a term, they thought that their assessment of the last four questions was accurate when making a decision. This prompt was compressed onto 1 A3 page, so participants were able to view this easily. The participants were asked to discuss their current position in relation to their cohort's opinion, and whether they agreed or were surprised by the whole cohort results.
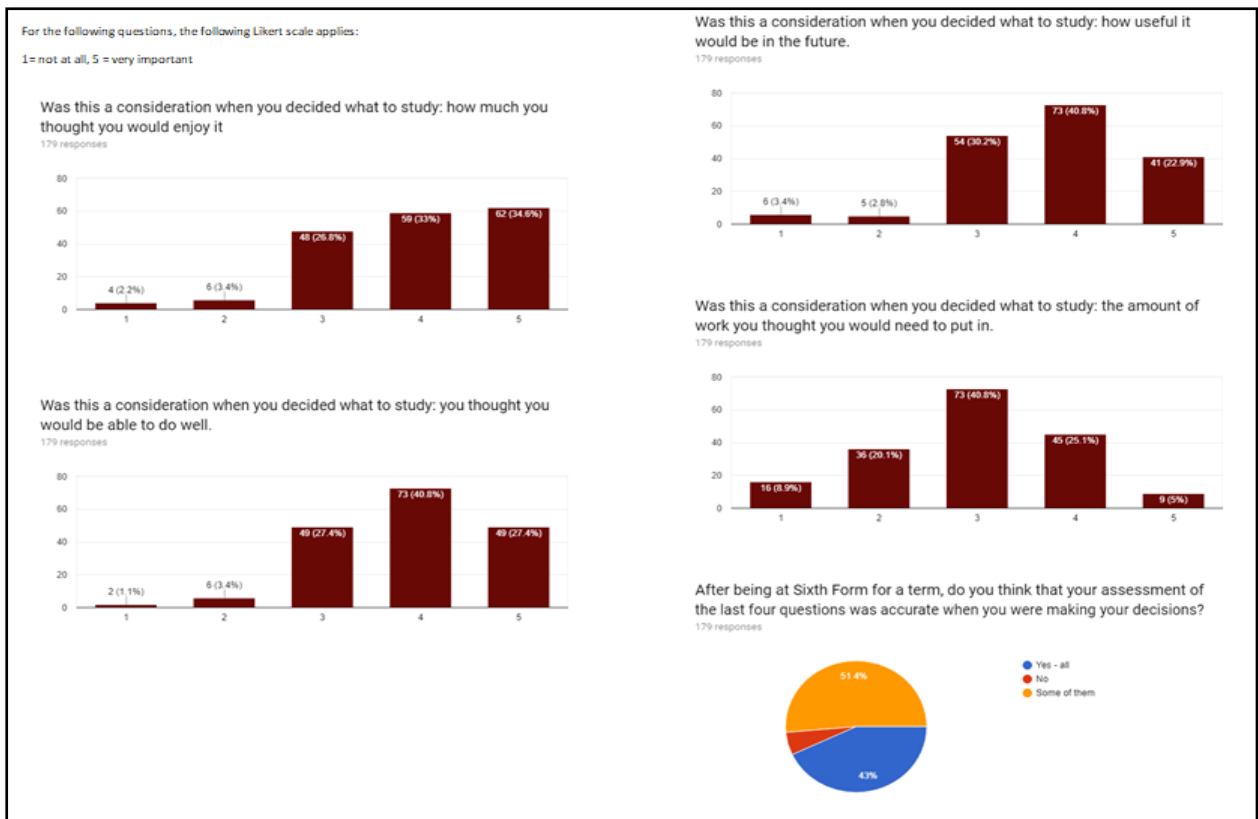
Figure 3.7.1; Interview 2, First Prompt

The second prompt consisted of 3 charts from the data gathered in Phase 2 relating to whether students had changed their mind about their choices over the year preceding their survey, and whether these choices and changes were related to a potential future career. Again students were asked to discuss their feelings about their current choices and compare them to the data given.

The final two vignettes were different from those used in the first set of interviews and had a different focus but came from the same source. One was chosen to prompt a reflection on the past year, whilst the other was chosen to prompt participants to discuss where they were hoping their studies would take them, and allow a discussion about whether this had changed over time; had they always had a fixed future in mind or was this developing? This final vignette was chosen to prompt a discussion over whether their original choices were serving them well, so allowing a comparison with their first interview which allowed me to track both their unconscious and conscious changes of opinion. The instrument for this phase of the case study can be found in Appendix 3.

3.7.2 Participants and Data Collection

The student sample here was planned to consist of the same students as in Phase 1, so these interviews were able to act as a follow up to the previous interviews. These interviews took place 8 months after the initial interviews, so in preparation the participants were contacted to ask if they were willing to continue to take part. A follow up meeting was then arranged when contact was established. Two participants, Dan and Eve, dropped out of the case study at this point. Dan had agreed to continue, but then did not turn up to two appointments, whilst Eve ignored all attempts to establish communication. In trying to arrange these two meetings I was conscious of the power relationship, as this was shortly before my professional role changed to Director of Sixth Form. Both Dan and Eve were struggling with their studies, and I judged that it would be unwise to pursue their participation further.

Prior to each interview I re-familiarised myself with that participant's first interview using the face sheets created at that time, so preparing myself to probe areas of interest. As in Phase 1, the first two interviews were treated as a pilot, so the process could be adjusted as necessary before embarking on the remaining interviews. This was found to be unnecessary. Data collection followed the same form as described in 3.5.3.

3.7.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis strategy used here followed the same steps as that described in 3.5.4; the research log was extended to include this phase, each interview was fully transcribed, carefully read, the face sheets were extended to include this phase, then coding and analysis took place to extend the portrait of each participant by producing a summary under each of the following headings:

- Student's current perception of their decision process
- Student's current assessment of factors from columns 2-4 of the EV-MBC model
- The effect of time when looking back at their decision

The final stage of analysis of these interviews was the creation of memos. These summarised the issues and themes arising from the data, looking for similarities and differences between the participants' experiences over the year. The memos from phase 1 were extended to show developments over time.

3.8 Interpretation

To aid interpretation, the conceptual maps were compared and contrasted with each other to allow the interview findings to be presented under the EV-MBC model's thematic columns using the memos created during analysis; this allowed similarities and contrasts across the interviews to be extracted. These were compared to the findings from the Year 12 Survey / Embedded Unit of Analysis 13, and the data from the Year 11 Survey / Embedded Unit of Analysis 14. This allowed changes over time to emerge and become clear, both in connection to each column of the EV-MBC model, and overall. Non-conforming data was also identified and discussed. As this discussion took place, further memos were created to identify and track overarching themes. This was done using a spreadsheet, so allowing points to be tracked via interview, time frame or theme, with connections clearly identified.

Patterns of influence within the data were identified through looking at the numbers of students responding in certain ways; these were discussed against the theoretical viewpoints so allowing points where the theory and the experiential findings differed to be highlighted. Differences between interview participants were highlighted, and theory was used to illuminate these further where possible. The different research phases / units of analysis were also discussed, to both identify whether different types of research tool allowed different themes and patterns to emerge, and whether themes or patterns forming part of the conclusion were supported by all data sources.

As part of the interpretation, limitations were identified, both within the data and within the themes. Validity was also discussed, to allow the strength and generalisability of any possible conclusion to be clear.

3.9 Data Validity

Validity within a case study can be established through considering the construct validity, the internal validity, and the external validity. Construct validity is concerned with validity and reliability of the data and the initial analysis. Reliability can be increased through a consistent approach to each interview, which can be aided through the use of a case study protocol as shown in Appendix 2. A case study database (Yin, 2014) also enables reliability, as by organising all data and the initial analysis in a clear way, and through creating a

comparative spreadsheet as described in the analysis section, the researcher's thought process leading to the conclusion can be clearly and logically followed. In addition to this, Yin (2014) suggests that construct validity is gained through including multiple sources of evidence, establishing a chain of evidence, and asking key participants to review the draft case study report. Taking Yin's points in turn, we can see that this case study includes a variety of sources of evidence, which can be compared within the final data analysis stage to identify patterns and explore explanations, so working to gain internal validity. The chain of evidence is maintained in this case through saving each analysis step as noted in the case study database, so the interpretation of the findings can be tracked back step by step to the original transcript or quantitative survey data. Yin's final point asking the participants to review the draft report was not followed in this case as the draft report was not completed whilst the students were still at the Sixth Form, so access was lost. However the participants were asked to discuss and review some of the supplementary quantitative data collected in Phase 2 in their final interview, so some checking and comparison by the participants took place.

When considering validity and reliability, the nature of qualitative data is different to that of quantitative data. The first phase of this study included in-depth conversational interviews. Interview validity relies on the honesty of the participants, and their willingness to give answers that are both complete and accurate (Breakwell, 2012). The use of vignettes discouraged the participants from being intentionally incomplete as each focused on a different facet of making this decision. Due to the nature and length of the interviews where the transcripts were in the region of 12-14 pages, it was deemed to be impractical to ask the participants to validate their transcripts. Instead, the initial data validity was established probing areas of uncertainty, especially when a contradiction was apparent during the interview, and cross checking facts in the initial analysis phase whilst producing the conceptual maps. The participants discussed their experience from multiple angles, meaning that contradictions and inconsistencies could be spotted when analysing the interviews. Minichiello *et al.* (2000) suggest that these discrepancies are a matter of interest as they highlight the participant's cultural reality and beliefs, and can be discussed as such. Furthermore discrepancies can highlight the participant's misunderstanding of the question, which in many cases can be identified through careful reading of the data

combined with cross checking. Qualitative data of this type has less focus on reliability than quantitative data, due to the multiple perspectives which demonstrates the variety present in real life (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011), but the points given in the previous paragraph act to increase the reliability of the interview phases of this study.

The quantitative data's validity can first be discussed in terms of construct validity, or its ability to measure as intended. As discussed in 3.8, the data from Phase 2 / Unit of Analysis 13 was compared to that gained from Unit of Analysis 14, the Grammar School's Year 11 survey the preceding May. Diverging findings were identified, and explanations discussed. Within the analysis, questions which produced wildly differing answers were identified as possible points of misunderstanding, and the proportion of the year group which took the survey was found to allow a discussion of representativeness. These steps, as discussed in 3.6.4 and recommended by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), allow us to conclude that the data here is both reliable and valid.

Yin (2014) recommends four steps which must be covered to gain internal validity: pattern matching, explanation building, addressing rival explanations and the use of theoretical models. Eccles' (2009, p. 80) Expectancy Value Model of Motivated Behavioural Choice has underpinned the analysis of this case study, and in comparing and pattern matching the data to this model, whilst seeking to examine and test rival explanations, the data can be said to have internal validity. As the first stage of analysis for the interviews in Phase 1 and 3, a conceptual map (Grbich, 2007) for each participant was produced. Bachor (2002, p. 6) notes that whilst these maps clearly illustrate the important, unexpected and unintended details elicited from the participant, they also allow the reader to understand the researcher's interpretation of the interview. He suggests that a case study which combines this type of portrait with the use of ratios as described in 3.8 is one in which the reader can have confidence.

External validity relates to the study findings' ability to be analytically generalised to other cases, so that the findings are seen to be true beyond the bounds of the case in question. Whilst the generalisability of this case will be discussed further in 3.10, it is worth raising Yin's (2014) claim that the use of a clear theoretical model enables external validity. Eccles' (2009, p. 80) Expectancy Value Model of Motivated Behavioural Choice threads throughout

this case, and its use in interpreting the findings facilitates the claim that this study has external validity.

3.10 Generalisability

The ability to generalize is related to the ability of the case study to extend knowledge beyond the specific context of the case in question. Bachor (2002, p. 6) concludes that 'if the goal is to generalize, it is necessary for the author(s) to reveal to the reader the evidential base around which conclusions are based'. The evidential base covers both the theoretical propositions underpinning the study, and the ability to follow how a conclusion has been drawn from the raw data. The theoretical propositions relevant to this case (e.g. Eccles (2009)) has been linked in to each stage of the data analysis, so showing the relevancy of these theoretical ideas to the conclusions drawn. This methodology section demonstrates how I built explanations from the data whilst identifying other possible rival explanations, therefore allowing the reader to understand how the conclusions are formed.

Yin (2014, p. 40) expands further on this point, claiming that case studies should be taken to be generalizable only in terms of theory, and are an opportunity to shed an 'empirical light' on the theoretical concept in question, so advancing knowledge regarding their veracity. These ideas are further substantiated when we consider the types of methods used in this study. The interviews rely heavily on the participants' memories, perceptions and interpretations of past events. Each participant is a distinct individual, with an independent mind. The ideographic approach needed allows us to relate each participant to the theoretical model so we can modify, reject or confirm our understanding of the model (Minichiello *et al.*, 2000). Any summary of participants' experiences must therefore be individual to the study, so the study's ability to generalise is related to the associated theory rather than by assuming a similar empirical situation should reveal the same results.

3.11 Reflexivity

Before undertaking this research I needed to reflect on my own social values and biases to ensure that I did not unconsciously impress these on the participants or look for their confirmation in the data. Yin (2014) is clear that case study researchers are particularly prone to having a preconceived position due to their need to understand the theory underpinning the study, but I needed to take care that this did not influence me to

automatically look for corroborative evidence and ignore contrary evidence. To combat this I deliberately sought out and identified rival theories within my data, so showing that I working against the inherent bias produced through the literature review. When discussing the validity of this research I raised the point that these conversational in-depth interviews allowed the students to express their perception of the reality of their choice experience. Mimetic elements, or the transformation of events into text, can be found in both the language the participants use and in my interpretation of the interview transcripts (Flick, 2005, pp. 86-87), leading me to be involved in the construction of the participant's reality as I seek to gain an understanding. This gave a further reason in addition to validity and generalisability to continue to question the data, make explicit the process of comparing and pattern matching the data to Eccles' EV-MBC model, whilst seeking to examine and test rival explanations.

The participants all knew me in my role as Assistant Director of Sixth Form, which meant that the power relationship between us before the research process began was skewed towards me. To allow the qualitative phases of this research to take place, the participants needed to be empowered so they did not feel pressured to take part or to answer in a certain way. The participants needed to feel comfortable and confident, which led me to schedule interviews out of my normal office and where possible in a more private support room with informal comfortable seating. To ensure that this was a true exploration, leading questions were avoided and I strived to consistently use neutral unbiased language and not react to provocative or incorrect statements (Denscombe, 2010, p. 108). The school's decision to make changes to its Sixth Form offer was a big change to the continuity provided by the Sixth Form for many years, with the last substantial change having been in 2012 when the offer began to include the IBDP in addition to A Levels. Unhappiness at these changes had been expressed by feeder schools whilst these students were making their decisions, with many questioning the underlying motives. I needed to maintain my awareness of our relevant roles for the purpose of this study, so repressing my professional role which could inhibit honesty.

This awareness of the impact of my dual role was also applicable to the survey described in Phase 2; in order to encourage honesty and discourage deliberately provocative responses, the students were asked to consent to their answers to the survey being used for this

specific piece of research without explicitly identifying the researcher as a key member of their management team. May (2000, in Delanty, 2005, p. 135) declares that 'the explanatory power of social science is obtained methodologically from the relations between an understanding of social actions, including the points of view and attributes of those involved and how they are seen by others, in relation to the explanation of conditions under which those actions take place'. The students needed to respond to me as a researcher for the survey, rather than as one of those responsible for enacting the changes.

This conflict between my dual roles meant that I was meticulous in explaining the voluntary nature of their involvement to the participants, and requested that they took twenty four hours to consider whether they participated and gained their parents' approval to do so, rather than simply agreeing instantly as they would to a person in authority within the school. I was careful when following up their responses to my request that they took part to ensure that I did not put them in a potentially uncomfortable position. In addition I negotiated the time and location of each interview so that it was convenient for the participants.

3.12 Ethics

Prior to beginning this research the following steps were taken to ensure that the study met ethical guidelines. Ethical approval following the BERA guidelines (BERA, 2011) was gained from the UCL Institute of Education, as was permission to undertake empirical research within the Sixth Form and use existing data about Year 11 students' experiences from the Guernsey Grammar School and Sixth Form Centre (see Appendix 8).

This research is supported by the results of the Sixth Form Centre's annual survey for Year 11 students about their experiences of making this choice. The survey is anonymous, and was completed in tutor time in May 2017. This is a standard questionnaire administered annually which allows students to withhold permission for their data to be used for any external research. With this in mind, permission was sought from the Sixth Form for permission for use rather than from each individual respondent. As the completion of this survey was a supervised classroom activity, it could be argued that the students are coerced into participation into this research. However, as the survey was anonymously completed for a different purpose, this was judged not to be the case.

The interview participants were selected carefully to ensure that no feeder school or students who made the decision in a particular way were unfairly excluded or included from this research. To ensure that the participants were able to give informed consent, each was given a letter describing the purpose of the research and a consent form (see Appendix 1). The letter was clearly endorsed by the school, who had requested that the school's crest was on the letter to demonstrate their support. Confidentiality and discretion are extremely important as students can express unpopular or contentious views, and should be able to do so honestly in the knowledge that their contribution will remain anonymous. Hence the consent form guaranteed anonymity, and provided clarity regarding who could be granted access to their anonymised raw data. Furthermore they were asked not to discuss their participation with their peers or teachers, with the exception of the Headteacher or Director of Sixth Form if they wished to raise any concerns. In addition, my records of their identities, the interview timetable, the transcripts and the recordings were treated as secure documents, and in order to meet data protection requirements were not stored on the school system.

The second interview instrument was partially composed of processed data from embedded unit of analysis 13: the survey of the interview participants' year group. This survey was also used to support the findings from the interviews. The questions constituting this survey were included in a standard feedback questionnaire administered to Year 12 to gain feedback for the Sixth Form Management Team regarding their experiences on joining the Sixth Form and in their first term. This questionnaire is administered through google forms, and is completed anonymously. The questions for this research formed a separate section of the questionnaire, which only opened if students answered *yes* to a question explicitly asking students to consent to answering questions for a piece of external research. This question was designed so it was the only question on the screen, lessening the likelihood that a student could simply click the same answer as the previous question. If students answered *no*, the questionnaire simply omitted the questions for this research.

Anonymity of schools and students was maintained as they were all, with the exception of the Sixth Form Centre in which I am based, given pseudonyms. The schools were called Feeder School (FS) 1, 2, 3 etc, and further details about each school were only included if these were particularly relevant to the study. The students were each given a short

pseudonym name of the correct gender, starting with a letter of the alphabet corresponding to the order in which they were interviewed. Therefore the first participant was Ava, the second Bea, and the third Carl etc. As the starting initial did not correspond to their real name, and the individuals were unaware that this arbitrary naming system would be used, I was able to discuss the findings in a more natural manner whilst maintaining the participants' anonymity.

3.13 Summary

In summary, this research was designed to allow students' decision making process when making choices for Post-16 education in Guernsey to be thoroughly examined from a variety of viewpoints. Embedded units of analysis 1-12, the interviews, allowed the thorough exploration of the more detailed question of '*how do young people evaluate the risks and benefits when making their choice for Sixth Form study?'* This question needed the rich data and detail provided by the interviews, as without this an exploration of young people's decision making would be insubstantial. The survey data from embedded units of analysis 13 and 14 allowed macro trends within the data to be identified and an exploration of the representativeness of the interviews to the cohort of students they were drawn from. The use of the model in all stages of the research facilitated the response to the question '*how can the Expectancy Value Model of Motivated Behavioural Choice (EV-MBC) be used to describe and explain choice in this context?',* which in turn contributed to the overall examination of Guernsey students' decision making process.

Chapter 4: Empirical Findings

The research findings are presented using the EV-MBC model as a framework. The results are first examined individually and sequentially, then compared thematically. I start by analysing how representative the interview participants were of their whole cohort, and how data were collected. I move on to describe conceptual maps created for each interview, and discuss how the EV-MBC model was practically used to interpret the interview data. I then link this to the student survey and the second interviews. The findings are then discussed and linked to the research questions. Finally the quality of the findings and the validity and reliability is discussed.

4.1 Participant Demographics

On starting Sixth Form, students complete an enrolment form which is designed to gain information to allow the Sixth Form to better understand and support its cohort. Table 4.1 gives us an indication about how representative the interview sample is of the whole cohort, discounting socioeconomic factors.

Indicator	Whole cohort	Interview sample
Living with both parents	69%	50%
Living with carers	2.8%	8.3%
Significant caring responsibilities (daily)	4.6%	0%
Regular part time employment	70%	75%
Currently accessing mental health support	8.3%	8.3%
First language not English	0.9%	8.3%
Lived on Guernsey less than 5 years	2.8%	0%
Take part in regular physical activity (at least once / week)	37%	83%
Takes part regularly in a uniformed group / youth club / musical group (at least once / week)	74%	33%
Do not regularly undertake any volunteer work (at least once / week)	36%	67%

Table 4.1: Further information about the participants in comparison to the cohort (The Sixth Form Centre, 2017)

This table shows that whilst the sample was balanced as outlined in section 3.5.2, there were areas where this sample deviated from the overall cohort. These areas are not worth considering unless the differences are large, as 1 student within the interview sample is 8.3% of the total. It is therefore worth being aware that the sample was both less likely to be part of an organised group, and less likely to undertake volunteer work. As my analysis is qualitative in nature, and these differences are not relevant to this study, this will not affect the reliability and validity of my findings and conclusion.

4.2 Research Questions

The aim of this study was to examine students' decision making process when making choices for Post-16 education in Guernsey. This leads to two more detailed research questions, namely

- *How do young people evaluate the risks and benefits when making their choice for Sixth Form study?*
- *How can the Expectancy Value Model of Motivated Behavioural Choice (EV-MBC) be used to describe and explain choice in this context?*

This research uses data from 2 surveys within Phase 2. The first, described as the 14th embedded unit of analysis in section 3.2, is the 2017 annual survey administered by the Sixth Form Centre to gather feedback from Year 11 Grammar School Students about the process of choosing their Post-16 pathway. 43 students (52%) agreed within this survey that their anonymous response could be used for purposes other than feedback for the Sixth Form Centre, so I was able to access their data for use in this study to gauge initial trends or patterns of behaviours around choice, and to highlight how the perceptions of these change over time. The second survey, described as the 13th embedded unit of analysis in section 3.2, was administered to the whole Year 12 cohort. 177 responses were received, which was 85% of the total possible responses. This survey had three objectives:

1. To discover what in their programme of study had lived up to their expectations, what is different, and their personal response to this.
2. To further elicit responses around any suspected trends or patterns in the data provided by the Year 11 survey some of these students filled in (14th unit of analysis).

3. To probe the relationship between a student's subjective values, expectancy values, and the choice that they made.

In addition, this survey was used to provide the interview prompts for the second interviews. This survey provided the wider overview of the whole cohort, so substantiating the interview findings when answering the research questions.

Embedded Units 1-12 are the 12 interview participants, 10 of whom were interviewed twice. The data from these interviews was, when combined with the overview of trends provided by the surveys, used to answer the research questions.

4.3 Data Collection and Treatment

Both sets of interviews for embedded units of analysis 1-12 were conducted and analysed as described in sections 3.5 and 3.7; the resulting conceptual maps are given in Appendix 5.

The survey making up embedded unit of analysis 13 was conducted and analysed as described in section 3.6. To make comparison straightforward, the results were summarised in a conceptual map in the same format as those for the individual student interviews; this is given in figure 4.4 below.

Figure 4.4's conceptual map is set out so that we can see the effect of progressing time (*change of time*) on these students' choices; the three boxes are read from left to right along the top. Other information is summarised under the EV-MBC column titles (figure 2.2.5), which are read anticlockwise underneath the *change of time* boxes. Themes are summarised in the central sphere, underneath the conceptual map title. This pattern, used for all conceptual maps, allows a swift visual comparison between all interviews and this whole cohort data.

The data making up the embedded unit of analysis 14 pre-existed this piece of research. However, the data could not be used in its original form as not all students had agreed for its use in this research, so some responses were extracted prior to the use of the resulting graphs. Those relevant to this piece of research can be found in Appendix 7.

Figure 4.3: Conceptual Map for Embedded Unit of Analysis 13: Year 12 Survey

Central node:

Embedded Unit of Analysis 13: Year 12 Survey

179 students responded, and 11 chose not to. 20 were absent and therefore did not get the opportunity to do this.

Themes: social identity did not shape choices, but neither did personal identity. Friends / peers were not an influence on this choice. Enjoyment was the most important subjective task value.

Now (Change over time)

- In December of Year 12
  - 35.2% of students are studying the courses they expected to be studying a year ago
  - 53.1% are studying the courses they applied to study
  - 68.7% of students are studying the courses they started at the beginning of year 12
- On reflecting back over whether their assessment of the importance of enjoyment, expectation of success, utility value and relative cost / workload was correct when making their decisions, 43% thought they were, 5.6% thought they were not, and 51.4% thought some of them were correct.

How the final decision came about? (Change over time)

- Students gave the reasons to the right why they changed part or all of their programme of study:
- During the decision process
  - 38% of students changed their mind once on what to study
  - 16.2% changed their mind twice on what to study
  - 14.5% changed their mind many times on what to study

no changes	36%
did not enjoy a subject	12%
GCSE results changed whether subjects could be accessed	12%
not coping with workload	9%
subjects were not as expected / had not conducted enough research	8%
initial choice unavailable due to timetable	5%
changed between A Levels & IB	4%
Unable to remember why the changes took place	4%
changed ideas about future	3%
initial choices didn't fit well together	3%
restarted Y12	2%
still making up mind about choices despite having applied	1%
Changed due to the teachers delivering the course	1%

Initially (Change over time)

- 27.4% students didn't change their mind on what to study throughout the whole process

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Task, Activities and Behavioural Choices (Column 5)

- When asked how having a potential future job / career / degree in mind helped them to make their decision, students replied:

prompted me to choose particular subjects / course	49%
no response or no future job or degree in mind	32%
provided the motivation	6%
future aspirations did not aid choice	4%
made the decision easier	3%
unknown future prompted choices through enjoyment or interest	3%
unknown future prompted choices that would keep options open	1%
prompted me to go to Sixth Form	1%
made the decision more rational / logical	1%

Expectation of Success and Subjective Task Values (Column 4)

- Importance of enjoyment when making the choice:
  - 34.6% of students said rated this as 5 / very important   o 33% rated this as 4
  - 26.8% rated this as 3   o 3.4% rated this as 2
  - 2.2% rated this as 1 / not at all
- Importance of expectation of success when making the choice:
  - 27.4% of students said rated this as 5 / very important   o 40.8% rated this as 4
  - 27.4% rated this as 3   o 3.4% rated this as 2
  - 1.1% rated this as 1 / not at all
- Importance of utility value when making the choice:
  - 22.9% of students said rated this as 5 / very important   o 40.8% rated this as 4
  - 30.2% rated this as 3   o 2.8% rated this as 2
  - 3.4% rated this as 1 / not at all
- Importance of relative cost / potential workload when making the choice:
  - 5% of students said rated this as 5 / very important   o 25.1% rated this as 4
  - 40.8% rated this as 3   o 20.1% rated this as 2
  - 8.9% rated this as 1 / not at all

Emerging Self Knowledge and Identity (Column 3)

- 65.4% of students had a potential future job or degree in mind when making their decisions, 34.6% did not. 50.3% are still aiming for the same job in Dec Y12 as they had in mind initially.
- Personal identity: my choice of what to study reflects who I am or who I want to be
  - 14% rated this as 5 / completely   o 37.4% rated this as 4
  - 37.4% rated this as 3   o 7.3% rated this as 2
  - 3.9% rated this as 1 / not at all
- Collective identity: I worried about what my peers would think when I made my choice
  - 1.1% rated this as 5 / completely   o 6.1% rated this as 4
  - 14% rated this as 3   o 15.1% rated this as 2
  - 63.7% rated this as 1 / not at all
- Personal Identity: I made the choices other people expected me to
  - 0.6% rated this as 5 / completely   o 8.9% rated this as 4
  - 26.3% rated this as 3   o 21.2% rated this as 2
  - 43% rated this as 1 / not at all
- Personal Identity: I made the choices I always thought I would make
  - 7.8% rated this as 5 / completely   o 27.4% rated this as 4
  - 38% rated this as 3   o 16.8% rated this as 2
  - 10.5% rated this as 1 / not at all
- Collective identity: I made similar choices to my friends
  - 1.1% rated this as 5 / completely   o 7.8% rated this as 4
  - 26.3% rated this as 3   o 22.9% rated this as 2
  - 41.9% rated this as 1 / not at all

Cultural and Social Influences (Column 1)

Students identified the following as helping them to make up their mind with their study choices.

parents	36%
teachers	20%
no one	16%
sixth form management team	10%
friends	5%
careers teacher	3%
siblings	3%
older students	3%
GCSE grades	2%
Work Experience	1%
HE Requirements	1%

Individual's perceptions of Cultural and Social Influences, and the effect of previous experiences (Column 2)

- 36.9% of students based all their subject choices on what they had enjoyed studying at school. 10.6% did not base their subject choices on this, and 52.5% based some of their subject choices on this. 91.9% of students felt that this was a good basis for choosing what to study.
- Students made the following assumptions about Sixth Form study before starting:

more work / concerned would not have time to do work	41%
none	9%
more / less free time	8%
difficult to make transition	7%
more independence	6%
more mature environment	5%
very different from school	4%
be the same as school / as easy as school	4%
would enjoy it more as had chosen subjects	4%
would be taking different study choices	4%
difficult to make friends	3%
smaller year group	2%
smaller / bigger classes	1%
be viewed negatively due to coming in from a different school	1%
less stressful than GCSE	1%

4.4 Cultural and Social Influences (EV-MBC Column 1)

Interview results: Embedded Units of Analysis 1-12

All the students within this study recognised that their peers influenced their decisions, but to different degrees. It was more common to be influenced by those slightly older who were already experiencing Sixth Form or had recently experienced it, and for many this included family members in their generation. Ava tells us:

> *I definitely spoke to my older cousins as they all did A levels here, and I kind of got their opinions on the subjects. (….) I think my cousins definitely were the people I went to the most. I think my mum asked a few of her friends whose children did A levels or IB, and that helped me make a decision on how they found the workload and things like that (extract 4.4.1, Ava interview 1).*

This collection of different opinions was a common theme; some, like Ava, were fairly indiscriminate about who they listened to, whilst others such as Bea deliberately sought out opinions from those who were taking the course she was considering.

More than half the students discussed the influence of their immediate peers on their choices. Only one student, Dan, actively sought to make the same subject choices as his friends, and another, Kat, made her choice of institution partially to ensure she was studying in the same place as her friends. Although 5 others discussed their choices with their friends, finding them supportive whilst making their choices, they did not feel they influenced their choices. Hope demonstrates this when she discusses her interactions with her peers:

> *Yeah, we definitely talked about it a lot because I mean you never really talked about it with teachers so we were kind of – we talked about it a lot and what we were planning to do and like we'd help each other out because if you knew this person wanted to do Biology, then you'd like push them and stuff (extract 4.4.2, Hope interview 1).*

All students discussed their parents and immediate family as influences on this decision. A third of parents were not helpful influences, either as the young person avoided their opinion, or they were negative, or they gave unconditional approval without further consideration. Regardless of the level of education of the remainder of the parents, which ranged from degree level to GCSE level, the other parents were described as being actively involved in the decision, and seeking

further clarification for themselves to support their son or daughter. Lou gave a clear example of a supportive parental relationship, where she discussed in depth how she amended her program of study after a physical injury during her GCSEs affected her final grades which meant that she needed to adjust some of her courses:

> *I haven't done Art in years but I've got a really strong portfolio to take in there, talk to whoever, talk to Miss (XXX), see if I can go and do the course. One day she said yes and then I went to speak to my Mum and I said, "Look, I can do this course as well but I can take it into Architecture," and she looked at me and she was like, "Okay, yeah okay, let's try that." And when I got to Sixth Form and I put my initial – my initial sixth subject which was Physical Health and Exercise Science, that I wasn't able to do it because I didn't get the grade. So I went back and I said to my Mum, "Look, I can't do it." She was like, "Okay, let's think about it again." (extract 4.4.3, Lou interview 1)*

Five students discussed the impact of previous experience of making educational choices; these students had either faced barriers to their choices at GCSE, or who had not taken those choices seriously. All who reflected on previous choices were keen to ensure that this choice was made in a different, more effective, way. Fern demonstrates this in the following extract:

> *so I think that when you choose your subjects, like at GCSE, I didn't really think about – I had no idea what I wanted to do in the future so I didn't really have anything to aim towards in – so you could say I didn't care as much because I wasn't aiming for anything if you get me. (…) Yeah so then I think I did choose the subjects I did at IB so I could do something… (extract 4.4.4, Fern interview 1).*

Fern later tells us that she would now like to aim for a career in a medical profession, although she is unsure exactly what this would be.

The influence of school, whether this is the careers teachers, subject teachers, or Sixth Form team, on this choice was perceived to be minimal. Five students did not discuss school as an influence when given the opportunity, four were clear that their influence was limited or unhelpful, and only three discussed school as a positive influence on the decision. Students who found the school a helpful influence were marginally more likely to have attended the school with a Sixth Form than not, but those who attended the school with the Sixth Form also

identified negative aspects of their interactions. Hope's extract 4.4.2 above demonstrates how limited school's influence could be, and she later expands on this by telling us that the school forgot to book transport for students to attend the Sixth Form Taster Day. Jake attended the school attached to the Sixth Form Centre, so had a greater ability to access advice from experienced Sixth Form teachers than many of his peers. Whilst he made some positive comments about advice from subject teachers, he was less positive about the careers advice he received:

Jake: *Yeah, we got – we got sort of given ideas of what we can do after Year 11 and further on; I think it was more about that though, the paths that you can take rather than what it is going to be like if you choose this path.*

Interviewer: *Did you get any help on how to actually make the decision?*

Jake: *Yes, yeah, they did – they definitely gave us – in Year 11 they definitely gave us help on how to choose what we think is right for us and…*

Interviewer: *Did that help you? What did the – what did it entail?*

Jake: *It sort of – I personally didn't find it very useful.*

(extract 4.4.5, Jake interview 1)

Year 12 Survey: Embedded Unit of Analysis 13

In comparison, the whole year group responded differently, with only 36% identifying parents as an influence on this decision; this contrasts with all the interviewees discussing their parental input. Another notable difference was the influence of school; 20% of the whole cohort identified classroom teachers as those who helped make up their mind, with a further 10% identifying the Sixth Form team, and a further 3% highlighting their careers teacher. In total, this gives a similar percentage to those who identified parents as an influence, and contrasts heavily with the interviewees who saw school's influence as minimal.

Peers, whether friends, older students, or siblings, had a relatively limited influence on the whole cohort, with only 11% of responses highlighting these three influences. Again, this contrasts with the interviewees, many more of whom discussed the influence of peers.

It was noticeable in the survey data that 16% of respondents claimed that no one had influenced their decision. The response of no one did not arise in any of the interviews, all of whom

discussed their influences in depth; statistically, we should expect at least 1 or 2 of the interviewees to have answered in a similar way if the sample was truly representative.

Chart 4.4.1 Year 12 Survey: who helped you make up your mind about what to study?
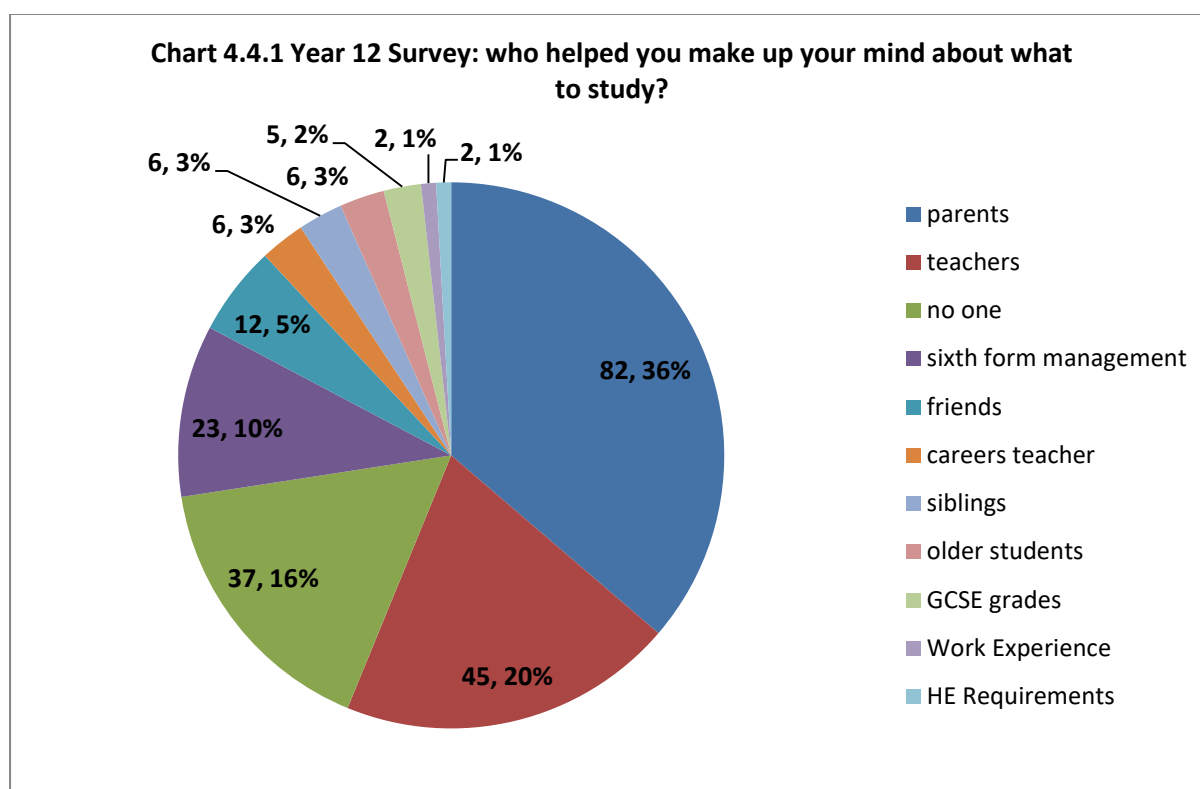
Embedded Unit of Analysis 14: Data from the Sixth Form Centre's annual Year 11 survey

When the Grammar School students where asked about their influences in Year 11, 63% of students found discussing their choices with a member of the Sixth Form team to be beneficial to some extent (Charts 7.13 and 7.14 in Appendix 7). Furthermore they identified a number of other influences (Chart 4.4.2) many of whom were school based; it is worth noting that the largest number of responses indicated that current teachers were the greatest influence, with family coming a close second. Interestingly, 34 students indicated that peers, whether older or the same age, were an influence; this is substantially more than the 11% (20) of students who gave the same answer when asked in year 12.

All students who responded to the Year 11 survey were asked to take part in the Year 12 survey, and logically we should expect that the number identifying a particular influence should either be the same or greater in year 12 than in year 11. This drop in the number of responses for a

particular influence is therefore interesting, as it shows the change in perception which has taken place over the 8 months between surveys.

Chart 4.4.2 Year 11 Survey: from what other sources did you receive guidance in making your post-16 choices?

A bar chart titled "Chart 4.4.2 Year 11 Survey: from what other sources did you receive guidance in making your post-16 choices?" The y-axis shows "number of responses" from 0 to 30. The bars are:
- Personal tutor: 11
- Careers / PSHE: 16
- current teachers: 27
- friends in year 11: 19
- older students: 15
- family: 26
- Work experience: 7
- UCAS or University websites: 13
- CFE: 3
- Parents' friends: 3
- no other sources: 3

4.5 Individual's perceptions of Cultural and Social Influences, and the effect of previous experiences (EV-MBC Column 2)

Interview results: Embedded Units of Analysis 1-12

Previous experiences of studying either at GCSE or pre-GCSE influenced how 7 of the interviewees approached their subjects, either through influencing which subjects they chose, or by influencing their approach to the choice and their studies. Not all of their thinking is accurate; for example Dan discusses how he enjoyed English at GCSE, and therefore chose English at A Level. He gives further reasons for doing so, such as *"I think English is something that would be really good for like university" (extract 4.5.1 Dan interview 1)*, and describes how he looked at the UCAS website for courses he was interested in, saying *"I looked at the – like what grades were required and it didn't really affect like my choices or anything like that. Like I was quite set on the ones that I wanted to do" (extract 4.5.2 Dan interview 1)*. From reading the full exchange, it was clear he chose English because of his experience of studying it at GCSE, and had then convinced himself it would be useful in the future; this belief appeared to have arisen from

the underlining of its importance at GCSE by his secondary school, rather than any other validation.

Another theme of conversation centred on an interviewee's reaction to their parents' contribution. 8 discussed this, with 2 clearly distrusting or finding the parental contribution difficult. For example Jake described the way his parents 'persuaded' him to take a mathematics course that he didn't want to do as *"they definitely wanted me to keep my Maths good because well it's kind of a key subject, it's a useful subject to have, so I think they did want me to keep a base level up" (extract 4.5.3 Jake interview 1).* He was next planning on having a difficult conversation with them as he wished to drop the course. The other 6 who discussed parental influence generally found the parental influence to be positive. Parents were both proactive and reactive, but their engagement was valued. For example, Eve tells us:

> *I had an idea of what I wanted to do, obviously spoke to my parents and they said the old, "Oh, well you do what you feel is best," but I don't know when – when actually going into depth and speaking to them about it, they would ask me questions like, "Why do you want to do it? What – what do you think this would help you do in the future?" And I would tell them, I wouldn't be too sure, because obviously I've never been in that subject before, I've never done it but they would – obviously when I had to make my decision at the end, my Mum in particular, she would always be like, "So you're sure that's what you want to do? Are you sure? Are you sure?" I would be like, "Yes, yeah, that is…" and she was very helpful. Like she didn't kind of leave me on my own and she didn't – she didn't want me to do anything that wasn't right for me and what she thought was going to be too difficult.' (extract 4.5.4 Eve interview 1)*

It is clear here that whilst her mother is with her throughout the decision; her role is supportive rather than proactively seeking information. Students discuss barriers to their parents being proactive as including difficulties in accessing accurate information, and lack of experience of education at this level.

Interviewees' perceptions of friends and older peers varies from seeing these as biased and un-knowledgeable sources of information, who have their own individual agendas, to wishing to seek out the same choices so maintaining their established friendship group and roles. More

commonly interviewees reported using their peers as a sounding board to discuss ideas, whilst accepting they were committing to different subjects and courses. For example, Gia tells us "*I feel like in a way we're all very – we're very like a mature group of people. I think I'm actually the most kind of like clingy if that makes any sense – but the – yeah, we just did what we wanted to do and I still see them around so again it doesn't really matter*" (extract 4.5.5 Gia interview 1). Interviewees appear to have a limited amount of trust for older students, recognising that the decision is personal to them, and difficulty levels vary for each individual.

Interviewees who had experienced difficulties at KS4, whether with subject choices or wider issues, tended to have less belief that the school or teachers would effectively help them with this choice, and clearly had an emotional response to this, whether it was anger or disappointment. Ian's resentment of his teachers' belief in his ability to cope at Sixth Form was clear, and he was determined to prove them wrong. This extract from Ian's interview demonstrates some of the opinion barriers he had to ignore in order to move to Sixth Form:

> *Yeah, they – I mean I had teachers say to me, they didn't – they didn't – I don't know, I think the expectation of me wasn't as great as what I would have wanted it to be. Because I think they said like, you know, because I said I'm looking at Sixth Form and they would say, "College and Sixth Form?" Like in my interviews – and I would be like, "No, just Sixth Form." And they'd say, "Well what if you don't get in?" And I'd be like, "Well I will focus on that," but I think Sixth Form has always been the – like that's been what I've pursued, so… (extract 4.5.6 Ian interview 1)*

Finally, there was clearly a perception from those who considered courses at both the Sixth Form Centre and the College of Further Education that the Sixth Form courses were better. Kat considered a Btec in Business rather than A Levels including Business, and was strongly influenced by her mother who felt A Levels would give her a better qualification to enter into a career in the local financial services industry at 18. Kat was clearly swayed by this, and having achieved the entry grades for Sixth Form, took up her place. Ian reported a perception gap in academic rigour between his studies and his friends who were studying at the CFE:

> *we're quite different now. Like I see them – I saw my friend in town, I'm in my Sixth Form suit with all my folders and stuff and he's there in his high viz jacket and his work boots*

and what not and it's different now. And everything is just so different (extract 4.5.7 Ian

interview 1).

Year 12 Survey: Embedded Unit of Analysis 13

Whilst the data from the whole cohort survey suggests that students recognise that Sixth Form would be a very different experience to secondary school, relatively few responses highlighted negative aspects of this apart from a concern that they would struggle to find the time to complete work (41%). 89.4% of respondents based some or all of their subject choices on what they had enjoyed studying at school, with 91.9% reporting that their method of choosing formed a good basis for choice. Clearly this doesn't go into the detail of their thought process, but it is clear that previous positive or negative experiences strongly influence the next choice.

Embedded Unit of Analysis 14: Data from the Sixth Form Centre's annual Year 11 survey

Year 11 student responses mirror the Year 12 whole cohort findings; in that enjoyment, interest, and prior belief in ability in a subject were clearly the strongest factors in deciding which subjects to study (Chart 7.4, Appendix 7). These factors, based as they are on prior experience, demonstrate the importance of an individual's perceptions of their prior experiences when making a choice.

Charts 4.5.1 and 4.5.2 give an indication on Year 11 students' perceptions of their key socialisers and influencers. The low level of responses on both graphs show that none were perceived to be outstandingly helpful or unhelpful, so contrasting with the Interviewees whose family and school influences appeared to be far more significant. It is interesting that over time, the level of support of these key socialisers appears to be perceived to have increased.

Chart 4.5.1 Which source (other than your guidance meeting) was the most useful for receiving guidance?

The bar chart (y-axis "number of responses", 0–9) shows:
- Personal tutor: 2
- current teachers: 8
- UCAS or University websites: 8
- Work experience: 2
- Careers / PSHE: 8
- older students: 6
- friends in year 11: 3
- family: 3
- CFE: 0
- Parents' friends: 0
- no other sources: 3

Chart 4.5.2 Which source (other than your guidance meeting) was the least useful for receiving guidance?

The bar chart (y-axis 0–12) shows:
- Personal tutor: 6
- current teachers: 1
- UCAS or University websites: 3
- Work experience: 2
- Careers / PSHE: 2
- older students: 4
- friends in year 11: 5
- family: 3
- CFE: 3
- Parents' friends: 4
- no other sources: 10

4.6 Emerging Self-Knowledge and Identity (EV-MBC Column 3)

Interview results: Embedded Units of Analysis 1-12

The interviewees appeared to be able to make a clear distinction between their social or collective identity and their personal identity, with 9 students discussing this clearly. 3 of these, Ava, Dan and Kat, were heavily influenced by their peer group or collective identity when making their choices or when formulating their future goals; it is worth noting that these students all

came from 11-16 schools with no Sixth Form provision. For example, Dan's choices at Sixth Form were more a statement of fitting in with his perceived social identity within his peer group. These two extracts from his interview demonstrate his dependence on his peer group, and how the collective identity he has embraced affects his perception of his personal identity:

1. *I did do a bit of a check round to see what people were doing; I was interested but I was just looking for the people that were doing the same subjects as me to see if I could get an idea of the sort of people that were…. ((pause)) Well there's – not many of my friends are in my Sociology class at the minute and when I first got there and realised that there wasn't many people that I was friends with in the class it didn't really affect like – make me think, oh I want to drop this subject, do something else because of that. I just wanted to try and make new friends in the class and stuff – but it didn't – it didn't really… It was kind of a downer because I've heard like most of my other friends are like in a different Sociology class so it kind of sucked a bit knowing I have to do like two years without any like other friends in the class (Extract 4.6.1a Dan interview 1)*

2. *If we have like an independent study lesson I usually go round to the group that are doing the same subjects as me and if I didn't do the same subjects I'd be with probably an entirely other group of people during independent studies and they – I think getting to know them and doing – like doing that it like changes who I am. (Extract 4.6.1b Dan interview1)*

However, Dan has since observed that his subject studies have influenced his behaviour and his interpretation of events outside his lesson, so starting to aid him in his development of his individual identity. This observation has surprised him, and whilst he appears interested in his emerging personal identity, he appears detached and more engaged with his collective identity.

The things we've been doing in Psychology I've found like very interesting and I've gone round in my day-to-day life and I've been noticing things about like the way people behave and a lot of the things about the way they are. And just – I've been picking up on things like that but I don't think it would be if I didn't do Psychology, I just find it interesting. Like I – we had a real talk about it in like lessons and stuff, things we've noticed, and I think that changes how I – how I see things outside of Psychology. (Extract 4.6.2 Dan interview1)

All the interviewees discussed the link between choice and personal identity. Interestingly some such as Gia and Hope see the choice of what to study as more of a public statement of what they like, are interested in, and who they want to become, whilst resisting any suggestion that this choice is linked to their personal identity. This contradictory view point tells us instead that their perception of personal identity does not encompass study choices and school. Others, such as Bea, used this choice to demonstrate her individuality, telling us:

> *I quite like it because I am actually the only girl in my year doing Physics, so I think, yeah, I'm going to show these guys that it's not a male-dominated thing. I'm going to one up them, or at least try to, and do everything I can and just show them that it doesn't matter at all. (extract 4.6.3 Bea, interview 1)*

For others, such as Ian, the process of studying at Sixth Form has accelerated the development of his personal identity. He has clearly found it quite a lonely process, as much of his previous social group chose to move to the CFE, so he lost his previous collective identity. In order to be successful he has had to change his way of working, which has been quite isolating. This situation began when he unexpectedly underperformed at GCSE, and consequently had to change his Sixth Form choices. He has rejected his previous identity of a creative student, and is clearly finding this transformation quite lonely:

> *I kind of wish I could literally just sit next to someone, like even if they don't say a word to me, just to make it look like I am – I have got something in common with people (extract 4.6.4 Ian interview 1).*

Seven of the interviewees focused on their knowledge of their own abilities and strengths when discussing their choices. For most, this was a positive discussion, focusing on how to work with their abilities, but for others such as Dan and Ian, this was a move away from perceived weaknesses. Fern is an interesting case, as she made several changes over the course of this study. She had first selected A Levels, but came to the realisation that she had chosen her subjects to be with her friends. Having achieved better grades than she expected to at GCSE, she rethought her options and moved courses to the IBDP, including a subject, Chemistry, that she had previously thought she wasn't capable of taking. This extract from her first interview describes the reaction she got from her father on making this decision:

Fern: So I think it was the right decision to change. My Dad was like, "Why are you doing Higher Chemistry, you hate Chemistry?" And I was like, "No, I love Chemistry now," but I think in the end that they…

Interviewer: So did you ever hate Chemistry?

Fern: Well I didn't – I've always preferred like Biology and Physics over it but then I think he was just shocked that I was doing Chemistry but then…

(extract 4.6.5, Fern interview 1)

During Fern's second interview, it became clear that her initial perception of her ability within Chemistry was correct, as she had failed her end of year examination, and was planning on picking up a new subject and taking a further third year to complete her studies.

For me its not that I don't enjoy chemistry, I do find it interesting and when I do finally get something I feel really happy. But then there is so much that I don't get compared to what I do get, that its not like I don't enjoy it, but that I find it really difficult. (extract 4.6.6, Fern interview 2)

Four of the interviewees discovered that their initial perception of their ability was flawed, and reflected on this in their second interview. Whilst ability was clearly an important consideration when choosing a subject with seven students discussing it, this highlights that it wasn't a reliable basis for choice for those interviewed in this study.

Future goals guided the choices for seven of the students, with a further two students having a future goal whose entry qualifications were broad so did not guide the choices. The remaining three students were unclear as to what they wanted to do once they had finished their studies, and two of the students remained unclear when they were interviewed for the second time, whilst the other, Dan, did not accept the invitation to take part in the second interview. Carl was the student with the most definite future goal; he aimed to study Physiotherapy in Australia. He had undertaken a substantial amount of research into this goal prior to Sixth Form, including work experience and looking into how realistic his plan of moving to Australia would be in practice. During the second interview it became clear that he had considered his plan further prompted by some of the school sessions about this next step, and continued to feel that his goals were appropriate for him. Others were not in this position; for example Bea had begun her studies with a clear future plan that had been disrupted by the second interview through

discovering her initial perception of her ability to succeed with Physics was flawed. Extract 4.6.3 expresses her initial pride in studying Physics, and extract 4.6.7 demonstrates that in finding the subject challenging, she has then changed her future goals, and is struggling with her ideas about the future, to the extent that she has become stuck in a moratorium.

> Bea: Well I am thinking about going to study philosophy and maths at university, but I'm also thinking where would that actually lead me and what would be the purpose of spending 3 years at 9 grand a year doing that. But if I don't do that what else could I do and where else do I want it to lead to? And stuff like that so I definitely agree with that. Over the last few weeks especially, and after end of year exams, I've gone through this.
>
> Interviewer: okay. Is that quite hard to go through?
>
> Bea: yes it sucks. It sucks really bad because you end up focusing all your time of worrying about that and then you get further behind and then you start doing other things, then you end up in a downward loop that is difficult to get out of. But it gets to the point, because everyone in sixth form is like you could do this as your future, you could this, or look to this to many weeks ahead, and what is needed is to look at what we are doing now rather than anything else. Because if you are constantly looking ahead you forget to do the things you are doing now. (extract 4.6.7 Bea Interview 2)

Whilst Bea and Carl are at the two extremes when considering the effect of future goals on decisions, the other interviewees whose choices were based partially about their future goals all continued to consider these over the year, and continued to consider the link between these and their choices for Sixth Form.

In the first interview, all the students had adopted the self-schema of a Sixth Form student, and most had adopted further schema associated with their study choices; Ian is a good example of a student who has defined himself as different from others studying the same creative subjects, Media and Film. Others had different reasons for not adopting this type of schema; for example Kat's future goal of owning her own bakery had little to do with her studies, and little to do with the type of financial service job she pictured herself taking once she finished her studies. For some, the schema they had developed was strongly communicated and associated with some of

their experiences that had had a greater impact on them, whether this was Lou's sports injury, or Carl's Physiotherapy work experience. By the second interview, many of the students' self-schema had shifted or developed. Many had experienced challenges with their studies over the year, which had consequently meant they needed to rethink future plans, or had challenged their thinking about their personal identity. For example Ian was clearly regretting his decision to not consider studying at the CFE, and was considering finding out if he could do so once he finished his Sixth Form studies. His self-schema of himself as a Sixth Form student had clearly become less secure over the year, as extract 4.6.8 suggests.

Obviously everyone has those days when you're like ah, I should've gone to the CFE, I shouldn't be doing this, but then it gets back on track and its fine. The only thing I think I should've done was I should've had a look at the CFE and stuff like that. I did wish I'd had a bit of a look just to be certain, because there are times when I find the work difficult. (extract 4.6.8, Ian interview 2)

Year 12 Survey: Embedded Unit of Analysis 13

Charts 4.4.1 and 4.4.2 suggests that the cohort of students that the interviewees belonged to overall made their study choices decisions independently of their peers. Figure 4.3 and Charts 6.6.17, 18, 19 & 20 (Appendix 6) tell us that very few were significantly concerned about what their peer group would think of their decision, with only 8.9% of students claiming to have made completely or fairly similar choices to their friends. 11.2% of students rated themselves as a 1 /not at all or 2 on the statement that *my choice of what to study reflects who I am or who I want to be* (Chart 6.6.16, Appendix 6), with 35.2% rating themselves as a 5 / completely or 4 on the statement *I made the choices I always thought I would make* (Chart 6.6.19, Appendix 6). Here we see agreement between trends in the whole cohort, and with the interviewees.

Within the whole cohort, 65.4% of students had a potential future job or degree in mind when making their decisions, while 34.6% did not (Chart 6.6.7, Appendix 6). 50.3% of the participants were aiming for the same job in Dec Y12 as they had in mind when making their choices the previous April (Chart 6.6.8, Appendix 6). Again, this is in agreement with the interviewees, where 75% of students were able to discuss their end goal. With respect to these aspects of the choice process, the trends within the interviews were similar to those revealed by the whole cohort survey.

Embedded Unit of Analysis 14: Data from the Sixth Form Centre's annual Year 11 survey

A similar picture emerged from the Year 11 Grammar School survey for students within this cohort, where in figure 4.6.1 we see that for students choosing which program, A Levels or the IBDP, their future career was the more important factor, and rated significantly higher than any other possible factors. Interestingly, students did not continue with this trend when making subject choices, with most citing enjoyment, interest, and perceived ability as the most significant factors (figure 4.6.2). It is clear that a student's self-concept of their ability to succeed is an important aspect to consider here, with this trend matching that found within the interviews.

The survey instrument, both for this unit of analysis and for the 13th, does not lend itself to exploring self-schemata, and therefore it is difficult to substantiate the trends found within the surveys.

Chart 4.6.1 The deciding factors in making your choice of post-16 programme

Chart 4.6.2 The deciding factors in making your choice of post-16 subjects

A bar chart titled "Chart 4.6.2 The deciding factors in making your choice of post-16 subjects" with the y-axis labelled "frequency of response" ranging from 0 to 40 in increments of 5. The categories and approximate values are:
- high level of interest in that subject: 36
- Career: 3
- Enjoyment of that subject: 38
- Had to choose something from that block: 6
- feel that you are good at that subject: 32
- looks good on CV: 1
- gives me a coherent programme: 6
- something new for you: 9
- advice from current 6th form students: 6
- advice from family members: 7
- advice from teachers: 6
- Guidance meeting discussion: 6

4.7 Expectation of Success and Subjective Task Values (EV-MBC Column 4)

Interview results: Embedded Units of Analysis 1-12

Expectation of success was a consideration for eight of the students. Some took this very seriously, and used this to guide their choices. For example, Bea considered this in depth when choosing her subjects, and was heavily reliant on her teachers' belief in her ability to cope; she took a lot of confidence from this. However, she also ensured that she had considered options in case she was not capable of succeeding in Mathematics, and linked a possible new option to a future career.

I did think of it obviously when choosing what I wanted to do, I'm thinking, okay, if I start

finding those really difficult I should pick up – because I was thinking, if I got into Maths and

like within the first month I thought, wow, I can't do this at all. I was looking at the text

book and I was like, I can't – I can't even pick up on the basis of where I would start from. So

I would think okay, I will go down to Standard Maths and then take up another Higher,

which I was thinking to take up a Higher English and then that would support Philosophy to

go into it and then go into something like teaching or lecturing or something like that.

(extract 4.7.1, Bea interview 1)

Dan's expectation of success was also an important factor in deciding, although his lack of confidence in his abilities meant that he struggled to believe himself capable. He described his experience of having a guidance meeting with the Director of Sixth Form, which is an individual meeting all students applying to the Sixth Form have to discuss their course choices, where he was concerned he would be told, despite being predicted the entry grades, that he would not have a place.

> Dan: I felt quite nervous going into it as if it was an interview, but no, it didn't turn out to be much of an interview. He just went through like my grades and like looked at what I was going to do and stuff like that.
>
> Interviewer: Because when you went in then, were you thinking this was a – we could possibly say, you are not allowed to darken these doors, go somewhere else?
>
> Dan: I did mention that but my friends were like, no, no, it's not going to happen, but – yeah, but it did cross my mind yeah.
>
> *(extract 4.7.2, Dan interview 1)*

For all students who considered how likely they were to succeed when making these choices, the consideration was personal. Sometimes it was linked to confidence in a particular skill, such as reading for Gia, or to their personal doubts about their capability, or to their enjoyment of success, but this was clearly a facet that many considered.

Interest-enjoyment was the value explicitly discussed by the least number of students, with this only being discussed by six. Even so, this was clearly not an important consideration for all, with Carl telling us "*I mean obviously the subjects that I enjoyed I tried to carry on, but it's been more about where I want to end up*" *(extract 4.7.3, Carl interview 2).* Interestingly, Carl is more concerned about his future career; he has a clear goal of Physiotherapy, which he has chosen through interest and because he thinks he will enjoy working in this area. Therefore although interest-enjoyment is an important factor in the choice, it is not an immediate concern. Jake's view point contrasted with this, as he chose for enjoyment, although he clearly has doubts about his ability to succeed in all his subjects as this exchange demonstrates.

> Jake: But if you are good at what you do, or you enjoy it, then I don't think you can go far wrong, because there's a career path, you can do a lot of variation of

> *subjects and still sort of take the same route with bridging courses and stuff*
>
> *and I don't think it's that – I don't think it matters that much as long as you're*
>
> *doing what you enjoy.*

Interviewer: *Did you enjoy the Biology at GCSE?*

Jake: *I enjoyed it – I just wasn't that great at it.*

Interviewer: *Okay, so actually then you were picking something you enjoyed, you were just*
worried you were going to be – you weren't going to cope with it?

Jake: *Yes, exactly, yeah.*

(extract 4.7.4, Jake Interview 1)

Others chose primarily for enjoyment, and appeared more likely to go down this route when they had no clear goal in mind.

Attainment value was one that most students discussed, albeit without explicitly calling it that. A student was considered to have discussed attainment value when they both discussed how their choice fit with who they were or who they wanted to become, and the importance of achieving that end goal to them. Ten out of the twelve discussed this, and as such it was the most popular value. Eve's ambition is to have a career in Journalism, and although she has chosen her subjects at Sixth Form to facilitate this, recent work experience has made her realise that it is a tough, competitive career, and she needed to work hard. Throughout the first interview, Eve kept returning to this theme from different angles, and is clearly concerned that she may not get there, despite having fully embraced this plan. This focus was interesting, as the different vignettes were planned to prompt discussions in different areas, but clearly for Eve this focus was overwhelming when she reflected on her choices. For example, Vignette 4 prompts her to say:

> *I think becoming a bit more mature about it and kind of realising that I'm going to have to*
> *work hard and if – if that's really what I want to do then I have to – I have to take*
> *everything that comes with it (extract 4.7.5, Eve interview 1).*

Vignette 5 then prompts her to tell us that:

> *focussing on one thing through two years of Sixth Form is a good thing because it kind of*
> *– it keeps you in one place and it doesn't like bring the stress of, oh I don't like doing this, I*

need to find something else quick. It doesn't do that. Like you're still in this place, you're still studying and it's still almost like a checkpoint until the next thing (extract 4.7.6, Eve interview 1).

Both students, Ava and Bea, for whom attainment value didn't appear to be a strong deciding factor, found the decision of what to study quite challenging. Both describe getting towards the application deadline and experiencing panic and neither had a clear future goal to help guide them. This was a difference from the other interviewees, all of whom had firmer future goals in mind.

Utility value was discussed by nine students; and whilst their ideas of usefulness were sometimes based in belief rather than factual research, this was something that many clearly considered. This did not always have a positive outcome. For example, Jake's parents felt that taking the Core Mathematics course would benefit him in the future, and he therefore agreed to do so, and is now struggling with this as he has not enjoyed the course. Kat's mother persuaded her to try Sixth Form as she felt the courses available there would be more useful for Kat than those at the CFE. In interview 1, Kat tells us that after the start of term at the Sixth Form she went to the CFE's open day to find out more, but on talking to staff there discovered the course would be different to her perception. She spoke to her mother:

I told her that I'd really enjoyed this and college wasn't what I thought it was actually going to be and what I'd heard so I was just going to stick here because – and see what it was like and I really enjoy it so… (extract 4.7.7, Kat interview 1).

During her second interview, it was clear Kat did not regret this decision, and was doing fairly well with her studies, although she lacked motivation. In contrast, Ian's experience was exactly opposite. He received advice to investigate the CFE courses as well as the Sixth Form, but was convinced he would benefit more from coming to Sixth Form. At the end of the first year, it was clear he had some regrets:

The only thing I think I should've done was I should've had a look at the CFE and stuff like that. I did wish I'd had a bit of a look just to be certain, because there are times when I find the work difficult (extract 4.7.8, Ian interview 2).

Utility value as a driving factor was therefore more reliable when combined with ensuring that it was based in accurate information, as without this it could prove to be a poor basis for choice.

Seven students considered relative cost when making their decision of what to study. Carl had a clear future goal of moving to Australia to study Physiotherapy, and had ensured he had researched entry criteria. On doing so, he found that the IBDP gave him more straightforward entrance to his desired undergraduate course, without the need to do entrance examinations. He then considered the choice between A Levels and IBDP, acknowledged that he would have a broader program with a greater content on taking the IBDP, and chose it as he tells us here:

> *I was going to – yeah, I was going to do A level before I looked at International Unis and things and saw that you have to do SATs tests and things like that to get in, so I decided just to choose IB and then the subjects that they – so, for example, a lot of Unis said that they wanted Biology and English, so I thought I'd just do them at the Higher level and then I can fill in the rest (extract 4.7.9, Carl interview 1).*

The common way of discussing relative cost was to discuss how much work each individual would need to do in order to be successful, particularly when they had chosen a subject that they had found challenging in the past. Fern's confidence was bolstered by achieving better GCSE grades than expected, and she chose to pick up some challenging options within the IBDP. For her, some of the factors to be considered were around her family, and included changing the perception of her brother as the intelligent one, and her as less so. She acknowledged she had chosen some challenging options, but was prepared to work hard, especially as she felt the relative broadness of the program she had chosen was taking the pressure off to decide on a particular path in the future after Sixth Form. For Fern, the relative cost of working hard was optimistically seen as unproblematic, especially when compared to the benefits. During the second interview, Fern reviewed this choice, and acknowledged that her decision was not made well:

> *well, choosing what subjects to do was probably like a big decision, but I didn't really look at it like a big decision, so I just chose chemistry, and then didn't think about all of those factors (extract 4.7.10, Fern interview 2).*

For her, the benefits had not come through, as she was failing part of her studies and had struggled to a large extent; she now felt even more inferior when compared to her brother.

Year 12 Survey: Embedded Unit of Analysis 13

When looking at this on the macro level, enjoyment, expectation of success and utility value were rated by students as either 5 / very important or 4 by approximately two-thirds of students (Column 4, figure 4.3) when asked to rate the importance of these factors to their choice. Out of these, enjoyment is rated as very important by the largest number of students, at 34.6%. Substantially less – 30.1% - gave the same weighting of 5 or 4 to relative cost and potential workload.

The interview participants' first interviews were broadly in line with these percentages when considering the proportion to discuss each factor in this area. Graphs of these values were used as the first prompt in the second set of interviews (see Appendix 3), so these values were discussed by 10 of the 12 interviewees. Six were clearly in agreement with the majority on these graphs, whilst the remainder did not discuss their perception of the accuracy of these graphs.

Embedded Unit of Analysis 14: Data from the Sixth Form Centre's annual Year 11 survey

Graphs 4.6.1&2 demonstrates that the picture emerging from students surveyed whilst in Year 11 at the Grammar School is broadly in line with the priorities emerging from the whole cohort survey. It becomes clear that a young person's future career is one of the largest deciding factors, alongside interest, enjoyment, and expectation of success. A young person's future career contributes to several of the subjective task values, particularly attainment value, utility value, and relative cost. Here we see consistency between all units of analysis.

4.8 Task, Activities and Behavioural Choices (EV-MBC Column 5)

Interview results: Embedded Units of Analysis 1-12

An individual's expectancies and values directly influence their choices, and their performance and persistence when carrying forward their choices. In this section I will discuss behavioural choices such as performance and persistence, the influence of a student's self-schemata on their perception of their choices, and their acceptance of the value placed on their choices by those who influenced them.

When looking back, Ava appears to now be discontented with those who she allowed to influence her decision, and in starting to consider whether she should look to go to university is feeling increasingly lonely and isolated. Higher Education has not been part of her familial and cultural milieu, and her influences are shifting. She has settled in to her choices, and has little empathy with those whose experience has been different and have wanted to change. This extract shows how Ava has started to identify as different from her family, and formulate new goals and identity:

> *the majority of my cousins haven't gone to uni, and my parents only did up to GCSE level and things like that, but, yes, I'm a lot different from them and I would be capable to go to uni and do something that… (extract 4.8.1, Ava interview 1).*

Bea makes the choice to see difficulties she experiences in her studies as opportunities to improve, and so far this has helped her to progress smoothly with her studies. She has little empathy for those who have wanted to make changes to their study program after starting, as she sees this as poor preparation. She clearly identifies with her mother, who is one of her main influences and shares many of the same values with her regarding education. However, she also wishes to actively avoid making the same choices as her mother, seeing them as poor. This rejection has led her to make a firm commitment to have a different life to her mother, despite having many of the same talents, and this dictates many of her choices. She actively seeks influences that she can identify with and would like to emulate. These two extracts demonstrate this:

1. *I am like a rabid dancer and stuff and I like doing it but I will never go into teaching. Like my Mum did it for 22 years and I just saw her like diminish and like she had to do so many other jobs with it (extract 4.8.2, Bea interview 1).*
2. *So people who were doing – were doing similar subjects to what I wanted to do, such as like (Name), and she said that it was actually pretty okay. And I was like, okay, these are things I want to go into, I will possibly find it okay as well and I spoke to more people on that course and stuff like that. (extract 4.8.3, Bea interview 1)*

Carl has a clear self-schema of himself as a student, both now and in the future. His family are supportive of his future goal, as are his peers and teachers. This steadiness allows him to work smoothly towards achieving his future goal, and consequently he appears to have been making

clear progression over the year. In his second interview, he reflects on a recent session all students in his year have taken which asks them to match their personal values to future careers. This session appears to have had a significant impact on him, particularly as he came to the realisation that his future goal matches his personal values.

Dan's behavioural choices prompt him to foreclose on big decisions, and be unprepared to rethink at any point. He is heavily influenced by his friends, with his family being unprepared for these choices. He describes his parents as not very involved in his choices, with their approach being to leave him to choose what he thought was right. He is accepting of this approach, even though his decision as to what to do once he finishes Sixth Form appears to be repeating this pattern when he tells us:

> *I've spoken to them about university and they just tell me, focus on like getting the grades first and have a couple like – a little idea about where you're going to go next (extract 4.8.4, Dan interview 1).*

Consequently Dan relies heavily on his friends, both when making the decisions and to be an effective learner. He struggles to work without social support, and demonstrates little individual persistence.

Eve's self-schema and future identity have led her to the clear future career of journalism. Despite this, she is reluctant to check whether her chosen A Levels will take her forward in her career, and is falling into a moratorium regarding her future. Her initial attitude towards her studies was to try hard, but is finding that a degree of failure is causing her to question everything. She felt well supported by her family and past school to make the decision to study at Sixth Form, but is now in the position where her confidence in her ability to succeed has decreased, and that is effecting her ability to make study choices to support her to succeed. This extract described how Eve's attitude about her future was shifting:

> *Yeah, yeah, it's quite scary because you feel like if you fail this then you are going to ruin your entire life. Everybody feels that, everybody – everybody has that kind of fear that if they don't make the right decision they are going to mess up everything and then they are not going to be happy or – you know, like everybody does think that and I think… (extract 4.8.5, Eve interview 1).*

This pattern clearly continued throughout her first year of study, as by the time I approached her to participate in the second interview, Eve's attendance to school was such that this was not possible to arrange.

Fern made a very late change to her program of study, which meant that she changed course and changed all the subjects she intended on studying. This shocked her peers and some of her family, and it became clear during the first interview that she was still struggling to defend this abrupt rejection and change to some of those around her; she described her friends asking *"what's wrong with you? - it's going to be so hard!"(extract 4.8.6, Fern interview 1).* However this change, which left her open to a wider variety of options in the future, was a big relief for her, as she appeared very unclear about what she wanted to do in the future. Initially she persisted with all her studies, but found Chemistry, a subject she had changed to, very difficult, and it was clear by the second interview that the challenge had overcome her. Her family attitude that she had chosen the wrong subject did not encourage her to persist with this, and with their support she was looking to restart some of her studies.

Gia's self-schema is constrained by her severe dyslexia, and the difficulties she had faced and overcome whilst studying. This heavily influenced her choices, as did her father's perception of what was a 'proper' A Level. Whilst she is a talented artist, she chose not to follow a completely creative route, in part due to familial influence, and in part as she appears to have no clear goal in mind. It also becomes clear during the first interview that Gia's family are not supportive of university study, and she feels that this is not an option for her; she gives the impression of resenting being asked to consider this. Sixth months later during the second interview, Gia gives a different and contradictory picture:

> *When I was making my sixth form decision I knew what career I wanted to do, but I didn't know whether I needed to go to university or not. Now I don't know what career I want to do, but I know in that field I'll be favoured more if I go to university, so I think I'm a bit clearer in the future education part, but not in the future career part (extract 4.8.7, Gia interview 2).*

She appears to have rejected some of her familial values, although it also becomes clear in the second interview that her parents are not yet convinced to support her. Despite her difficulties, Gia is persevering with her studies, and by the second interview it is clear that she is doing this

successfully as she is now aided by coloured glasses to help her read; this has increased her confidence and persistence.

Hope made very late and substantial changes to her program of study when she arrived on Guernsey for Sixth Form study. She had found the process of working out what to do very confusing, in part due to the poor level of information she had received through her previous school on a different, much smaller, island. Whilst Hope did not rush her decision to change, the decision process did not appear to be logical; one decision in particular was made as she could not find the member of staff she needed for a discussion at the time she looked. She described her mother's confusion at these changes, and it appears that little consultation between them took place. Hope's influencers clearly shift during her studies; she clearly describes how her experiences at her previous school reduced the options she had at Sixth Form and the lack of consistent teaching was very isolating and worrying, and then moves on to discuss the support she now has at the Sixth Form Centre. This clearly influences the way she approaches her studies, and she is able to remain persistent in her drive to be successful.

Ian's choices were strongly influenced by two past events rather than by particular socialisers. Firstly, he struggled to pass GCSE maths, and successive teachers did not manage to help him effectively. Secondly, his GCSE Drama coursework was moderated down substantially, and he underperformed in the subject. This changed the way he approached the choice, and provided a severe blow to his self-schema and identity as a Drama student. It has coloured the way he approaches his studies in Sixth Form, as he now seeks consistency from his teachers and is less prepared to take unsubstantiated advice. He has embraced his studies, and is clearly persisting. During the second interview it became clear that Ian was still struggling to formulate a new identity and future goal for himself, with his options ranging from finding employment in the local finance sector, to a creative job, to studying something practical at the CFE. Instead he tells us:

> I don't want to commit to something and find that I go oh, I want to do this instead (extract 4.8.8, Ian interview 2).

Jake was heavily influenced by his parents to make certain choices of subjects to study, and as he moves through the year he appears to be rejecting some of their influence through changing options they persuaded him to take, and then does not mention them at all in the second

interview. Likewise, he seemed to have a degree of interdependence with some of his peer group when initially making his study choices, but over the year, that has faded and his confidence has increased. His longer term goal provided the motivation he needed to persist with his studies as this extract shows:

> *Like me, I wasn't great at biology, I didn't think I'd do well, but I knew that if I wanted to be a physio I needed biology, so I took it (extract 4.8.9, Jake interview 2).*

Kat's initial indecision and lack of forethought in making her choices, combined with foreclosing on her choices, continued to influence the way she approached her studies and further decisions as she progressed through her course. From an observer's perspective, she looked to have made her institution and course decisions arbitrarily, and to have foreclosed on her decision of what she will do once she finishes studying as this extract tells us:

> *I've always had an idea of what I want to go into, and because all the work experience I've ever done has been in those areas, like office work and that kind of thing to see what its like, and I suppose I've noticed my strengths are more in that area so I've kind of gone with it. I've never thought of university either (extract 4.8.10, Kat interview 2).*

Kat's future does not provide her with motivation to persist with her studies and to attempt to do well; she does not see a link between her current studies and her future career.

Lou was heavily influenced by her experiences at GCSE, when after a bad injury she was unable to continue to play rugby and felt very isolated by her school due to needing to use crutches for some time. This meant she needed to change her options at Sixth Form as studying Sports was no longer practical. She also needed to convince her parents of the virtue of studying some of her options, particularly Art, as they saw this as non-academic. Despite this, she continues to accept her parents as a strong influence as this quotation from her second interview shows:

> *They know that I've been doing well and I'm proud of myself as well. I don't really like to feel proud but I feel like I should for the amount of work I've put in and the amount of time I've dedicated to it and that kind of thing (extract 4.8.11, Lou interview 2).*

Lou struggled with her studies, acknowledging in the second interview that her mental health had deteriorated, in part due to the injury and the further operation needed after the start of

Sixth Form, and worked hard to be disciplined with her work. She also clearly worked hard to develop a new goal, and her self-schema shifted to incorporate architecture as a career, and loose her identity as a rugby player.

Through discussing each participant separately; it becomes clear that for each, their expectancies and values directly influence their choices, and their performance and persistence when carrying forward their choices. There is no pattern between students as each undergoes a very individual experience, but we can show how their choices around their studies are clearly influenced by the other facets of the EV-MBC model.

4.9 The impact of time

Ten out of twelve of the participants agreed to a follow up interview six months after the first, at the end of the school year; I was unable to arrange an interview with Dan or Eve. Nine students had clearly seen a substantial shift over the year, and their attitudes, influences, goals or emerging identity had developed, as had their affective reactions to their experiences over the past year. Carl was the exception, as his experiences had only confirmed that his goals were right for him, therefore further confirming his self-schema. Carl was able to discuss how experiences had further confirmed his decision as correct for him and, as his decision was made with the full support of his social and cultural milieu, he had not experiences any challenges to it.

> Interviewer: *have you ever thought about changing your mind?*
>
> Carl: *yes, I have thought about a few other things to do with medicine and physiology and things like sports science.*
>
> Interviewer: *so they've not really appealed?*
>
> Carl: *not really (…) I've definitely looked at a few other things. Things like sports science would I think be enjoyable but I would just prefer physiotherapy and think I'd get more out of it.*
>
> *(extract 4.9.1, Carl interview 2)*

The other nine students demonstrated a change in their thinking over the sixth months between interviews. There was no pattern to their changes, and the changes reflected all parts of the EV-MBC model, with the exception that none of them described changes to their appreciation of subjective task values. The second prompt in the second interview (appendix

3) included a graph showing the number of students who were still aiming, halfway through year 1, for the same future as they had envisaged in year 11. This prompted the interviewees to discuss their future goals, and whether they had changed. Seven of the ten described changes to their thinking, which included those who were now starting to formulate a future plan. A further change that a number experienced was a rejection or lessening of their previous familial or peer group influences. Hope found this particularly challenging to process, as to access Sixth Form education she had needed to leave her home and enter the local host family system, which is part of Guernsey's Social Care system privately funded by parents on the more remote islands. She found this challenging, as this extract demonstrates:

> I think with all Alderney students we have had more difficulties with the moving away from home, then how we live isn't the best situation for us, so for me, especially as I haven't been getting on with my hostie lately, but that has been harder I guess (extract 4.9.2, Hope interview 2).

Whilst all the students interviewed intended on completing their Sixth Form studies, not all their experiences during their first year of studying were positive. For some, it became clear this was affecting the way they approached their next choice of what to do after their studies, as predicted by column 2 of the EV-MBC model. Bea expresses this by first telling us that:

> At this point especially, the motivation is because… I'm not doing it because I enjoy it. I'm doing it because I need to do it, not because I really really want to do some of this (extract 4.9.3, Bea interview 2).

She then discusses her confusion about exactly what she could now do next, and where it would take her:

> It sucks really bad because you end up focusing all your time of worrying about that and then you get further behind and then you start doing other things, then you end up in a downward loop that is difficult to get out of (extract 4.9.4, Bea interview 2).

Here we see an example of how the current experiences are effecting future decisions.

4.10 Nonconforming Data

Three interview participants did not conform to the expected pattern. Fern and Hope both made very late and sudden substantial changes to their course choices at Sixth Form, which did not allow for research time and due consideration. They have very different backgrounds and

did this for different reasons, but their decision process differed substantially from the other participants.

Gia's severe Dyslexia provided an additional factor that affected the decision process. Whilst it could be argued that the experience of undertaking formal education whilst having little support for a learning disability simply adds to the individual's affective reactions and memories of all their previous experiences, in accessing effective support at the start of her Sixth Form studies her experience of studying changed substantially, as did her self-schema. Furthermore, Gia struggled with the interviews in a way that none of the others did, as her slow reading and comprehension speed meant that the way the interview was conducted had to change. Rather than giving Gia the vignettes to read and then allowing her to start to talk in the way they personally prompted her to do, she asked me to read and interpret them to her in both interviews. This changed the interview process as by requesting me to assist her to do this; I was potentially influencing the way she thought about each. Due to the length of time the first interview was taking, we were not able to discuss all the vignettes, which potentially decreased the depth and areas of exploration of her choice process, as well as the reliability of findings regarding Gia's experience.

4.11 Findings Summary

The aim of this chapter was to summarise the findings using the EV-MBC model used to analyse the interviews. It is clear that the choice process all participants had undergone fits well with this model, and it can be used to clearly summarise different aspects of their choice. It can also be used to summarise the findings from the whole cohort survey. In the next chapter I aim to analyse and discuss the meanings of these findings in depth, to answer the research questions given in 4.2. I will also discuss the implications of this research for practitioners, particularly those in my context.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Discussion

5.1 Introduction and Emerging Themes

What subjects do I enjoy? What could I possibly go into with these subjects? Does my family or friends think I can do it? Is it 'me'? Does this leave me with options for the future? Will it be too much work and effort? These are the types of questions that young people ask themselves when considering their Sixth Form educational choices, and their answers lead them towards or away from particular courses and subjects. In this chapter, I aim to make sense of the findings of this research, and to understand how this decision is made in more general terms. The twelve cases forming the majority of this research allow a considerable insight into the individual experience, allowing us to clearly see students' different experiences and influences. Due to the low number of cases within this study it would be unwise to use these to form a generalised assumption regarding choice at this educational stage, despite their very similar experiences. Instead this research allows an examination of whether the model used is able to effectively describe choices, and pulls out the main themes in these cases.

The EV-MBC model was used throughout this research. Choices such as this one are made in each student's individual context, with a wide variety of different influences adding to the decision over a length of time. This decision is continually refined and renegotiated, even once education at this level has started. On reflecting back, students see the decision differently as they reshape their reality using their current experiences. The EV-MBC model acknowledges the importance of a wide variety of influences and time as a decision is made.

On reflecting on the use of Eccles *et al.*'s model, it is clear that its use as a framework in research design, data processing and data analysis has helped to further clarify its ability to clearly describe this type of complex educational decision-making. The EV-MBC allowed me to connect this piece of research securely to the IFS (Papworth, 2016), both by using excerpts from those interviews that fit different parts of the EV-MBC as prompts for the first set of interviews in this piece of research, and secondly by providing a framework to use when conceptually mapping out each interview, using the same tool as in the IFS. This provided a clear shape when discussing the data, and allowed the significant amount of interview data to be coherently discussed.

The underlying premise of the EV-MBC model is that choice is based on a variety of factors that are personal to the individual, including their cultural milieu, key socialiser's beliefs, past

experiences, future goals, memories, personal subjective task values and self-schema. Furthermore the EV-MBC model acknowledges that all of these factors will change over time, and therefore choice will always be a fluid process. Within Chapter 4 where the findings of this piece of research are presented and discussed, I show that all aspects of this model are relevant to this choice. This becomes clear as all interviews can be summarised using the EV-MBC model, showing that in all the interviews, discussion took place which could be classed under the subheadings provided by each aspect of the model. The use of this model in this way demonstrates that amongst its strengths are that it provides a comprehensive overview that is inclusive of a variety of different individuals, and that it works with empirical evidence. The constructs the model includes overlap with other theories on choice, such as self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), intrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2000) and interest (Renninger and Hidi, 2016), and therefore simplifies the process of examining choice in this way.

Within this study I have discussed how the students' choices change over time, both as the whole cohort by using survey data, and through a comparison between the first and second interviews on an individual level. It became clear that the choice process is fluid, as an individual's expectations and values shift and develop over time. On a micro level, the interview findings supported this, with 9 out of 10 of the students who participated in both interviews showing a substantial shift and development of attitudes, influences, goals or identity between the two sets of interviews, which influenced the way that they discussed and thought about this decision. Henriksen, Dillon and Ryder (2015, p. 20) substantiate this when they discuss how expectations and subjective values are brought to the fore and influences course choices at specific decision points. They suggest that the choice process continues beyond the decision point, and the choices continue to be negotiated as the individual begins on and experiences their study choices. This matches the findings from these 9 individuals, with the exception to this case being the student, Carl, whose future goal was strong enough to override these other developments. On a macro level the findings also support this renegotiation over time; this becomes particularly clear when comparing the findings of the Year 11 data used in Embedded Unit of Analysis 14 to the Year 12 survey / Embedded Unit of Analysis 13. All students who took part in the Year 11 survey took part in the Year 12 survey, so results such as a decrease in the number of students who identified their peers as an influence to the decision from Year 11 to Year 12 aptly demonstrates this renegotiation of the choice. Bøe tell us that we should expect to

see that a young person's educational choices are changed in a variety of complex ways over time; with the experience of undergoing the choice affecting their perception of this choice (Bøe and Henriksen, 2015; Bøe *et al.*, 2011). Another way this happens is through a young person's changing cultural milieu; the views and people surrounding a young person change over time, and their expectations and subjecting task values shift, often unconsciously, to accommodate this (Weiss, Wiese and Freund, 2014). Examples of this included Gia's shift in mindset regarding university study, which changed over time once she started Sixth Form from stating that it was not an option for her to deciding by the second interview that she wished to go, whilst being concerned about persuading her parents to support her. These ongoing changes pose a challenge as I seek to understand how these decisions are made as the results and perceptions will shift over time.

The EV-MBC model does leave some areas to be explored further. As Bøe *et al.* (2011) tell us, one limitation is that it demonstrates the link between cultural changes and changing perceptions of choice, but does not explicitly consider variables such as socioeconomic class and ethnicity. These structural constructs influence choice, and many individuals fail to recognise the extent to which their background matters when they are making these decisions. Furthermore, there is no way of checking whether factors such as utility value are real or perceived, instead it is about the individual's perception. This was demonstrated through the interviews, as whilst the utility value of their choice was discussed by all students, the information that this was based on was not accurate in all places. One student in particular included a substantial amount of supposition and stereotyping without any factual checking; their subjective perception of the utility of their choices had guided their choice, although their perceptions were faulty. Utility value has a close connection to a student's future goals, and the choice's utility in facilitating a future pathway often emerges as an important reason for that choice (e.g. Bøe, 2012; Lyons, 2006; Olsen and Lie, 2011). One theme that emerged from this research was the importance of future goals, and their ability to override any other factor to become the dominant driver for a choice. Only one student, Carl, had a very clear future goal that was both achievable and needed substantial planning, whilst playing to his strengths and interests. This then became the driving factor in the choice, with all others either contributing to it or being ruthlessly discarded. This was the only occasion when a particular facet of the EV-MBC model was observed to override all others. It is interesting to note that in those cases where the students had no future goal related

to their studies, they struggled to motivate themselves to succeed with their studies, so further demonstrating the power of an extrinsic motivation. There is an observed link from future goals, self-image, future identify and values to personal identity, which can lead us to see how a student who lacks these things can start to feel lost and demotivated (e.g. Bøe *et al.*, 2011; Nurra and Oyserman, 2018).

The most central agency-related constructs of the EV-MBC model are expectation of success and subjective task values. These are related to the individual's sense of agency as they are constructs that the individual will consciously consider, as opposed to constructs such as social milieu which influence an individual unconsciously (Henriksen, Dillon and Ryder, 2015). Expectation of success includes both the individual's self-assessment of their ability to succeed with their choice, and their estimation of the difficulty of their choice. For this piece of research, expectation of success was clearly an important factor, more often framed as a concern over whether their choice and their aims were realistic. GCSE results were an important factor consolidating several of the students' initial thoughts regarding their ability to succeed, despite having needed to apply and make course choices before sitting their examinations. Expectation for success is clearly a construct that remains under consideration over time as students proceed with their choices, and its direct connection to their academic experiences make it an influential factor (Bøe and Henriksen, 2015). However, some of the individuals in this study struggled to recognise and process their changing experience, finding this a challenge to their sense of identity and worth.

Interest and enjoyment value demonstrates the initial engagement students have with their chosen courses. Whilst this was explicitly discussed by only half the students, it was apparent that for all it was implicit within their choices, regardless of any other factors discussed. Henriksen, Dillon and Ryder (2015, p. 23) suggest that students 'expect to be passionate about their chosen education; tediousness is perceived as betraying their identity'. This is certainly true here as whether interest-enjoyment was explicitly identified by the participants, they all talked passionately about their studies, regardless of whether they see the connection between their choices and their personal identity.

A further theme of significant influence on this choice was the student's reflection on past experiences. Students only explicitly discussed how their previous experiences had affected

their choice process when their memory of their previous experience was traumatic. This trauma could have involved a school related factor such as no specialist teacher leading to a difficult experience in studying a subject at GCSE, to understanding that their method of choice of GCSE options was poor, to a personal circumstance such as a bad injury affecting their ability to take part in GCSE PE. These difficult circumstances led students to consider how they could avoid being in the same situation at Sixth Form, and then formed a clear part of the decision process. It became apparent that those students whose GCSE experience was smooth did not consciously consider their previous experiences in depth when making their decision. Whilst this did not override all other factors, it influenced how the individual considered many aspects of their choice. For some, this became something that they regretted in the future when it became clear that the relative cost for their choice was higher than anticipated, as it could lead to decisions being made in haste without time for deliberation and clear consideration, so demonstrating that this could be both a positive and negative influence on choice.

Prior to starting this research, I made the assumption that a student's social or collective identity would have a substantial impact on their choices. This aspect is included in the model, although Bøe et al. (2011) aver that each individual will have a different personal hierarchy of importance of values and expectations. Consequently personal identity will take priority for some, while for others social identity takes priority; each individual will assign different nuances of significance. Within this research, there was only one case where a student's social identity took a clear precedence and acted as a significant factor in his choice. Furthermore this case was the only one where there was little parental involvement in the decision, as all other students appeared reliant on their ability to discuss the choice with their parents, siblings, or cousins. Therefore a theme to draw from this research was the lack of influence of the individuals' social identity when there is a strong family influence.   Overall it was challenging to quantify the effect of others on the interviewees, although it was clear that many had a single person who knew them well and was willing to help them explore and clarify what would work best for them; this is borne out by Hazari et al. (2010, in Bøe et al., 2011, p. 52).

A further theme that arises from the results surrounds the influence of the school and the teachers. Perhaps it is symptomatic of a system where the majority of students attend schools without a Sixth Form that the students do not commonly find their school to be a helpful

influence in a decision of this sort, and only 25% of the interviewees found at least some aspects of their interaction with their school helpful enough to discuss. Two of these were from the school with a Sixth Form, which also meant that only half the interviewees whose school had a Sixth Form discussed the positive influence their teachers had to support their choice. These two students also identified minor negative aspects of their school's influence, with the overall effect being positive. Only one out of eight students who went to a school without a Sixth Form felt that their school provided a positive support while making this decision. Therefore a theme arising here would be that the students attending the school with a Sixth Form were much more likely to find their school to be an overall positive influence on the ability to make their decision regarding Sixth Form study.

There was no clear link between the depth of consideration that went into a student's decision process and whether they later regretted their choice. Within the interviewees, there were students who had simply foreclosed, considered carefully and logically, rushed through a late muddled decision, or entered a muddled state of moratorium. Nearly all appeared to have taken part in the many information events prior to making their decision, so had had the opportunity to undertake significant research. During the second interview, students reflected on the success of their choice, and their responses ranged from being pleased with the way their year had gone to regretting having come to the Sixth Form. There was no clear link between the way they made their decision, and whether they later regretted it.

The students within this study were studying a wide range of different subjects, and it is worth discussing whether any particular socio-cultural factors or constraints were active here. One particular area of interest is the choice of science courses, especially amongst girls. Bøe *et al.* (2011, p. 39) found that very small percentages of students within a cohort take science subjects, with the total numbers taking Physics in 2010 being 3.8%, and Chemistry being 5.2%, and a small proportion within this being female; the numbers within Guernsey's Sixth Form Centre reflect this trend. It is therefore unexpected to find that the sample includes three female students studying Physics or Chemistry and no males making these choices. Ceci, Williams and Barnett (2009, in Bøe *et al.*, 2011) suggest that socio-cultural factors are a large factor in explaining female under-representation. Only one of the female students discussed this, and celebrated the fact that her studies challenged these factors, whilst the other two's discussion appeared

unaware of these factors. In other ways these students all concurred with the theory in this area, particularly in the reasons for their enjoyment. Angell *et al.* (2004, in Bøe *et al.*, 2011) describes how males are intrigued by the implications of the science, whilst females enjoy having knowledge of an unexpected topic, and relating their knowledge to their world. All the female students subscribed to this viewpoint.

Guernsey's cultural context does not automatically lead to Higher Education for many students at 18. Local employment laws, combined with a lucrative offshore finance market, lead to very low levels of unemployment with more trainee jobs available for young people than there are young people interested in these roles. Therefore parts of the EV-MBC model become less important. Trainee jobs commonly require students to have completed their Post-16 studies, with the more competitive requiring higher grades. This can lead to prominent parts of the model becoming less relevant, with students focussing less on the long term expectation of success in the areas that they choose to study, and more regarding their studies as a necessary stepping stone to employment. Although this goes against some of the more prominent research, Bøe *et al.* (2011, p. 44) reminds us 'that mechanisms involved in decision-making may vary across cultural settings and subgroups and that the model may need to be adjusted to fit conditions that differ significantly from the conditions in which it was developed'. Guernsey's individual cultural context therefore means that students like Ava and Kat were relatively un-bothered about their subject choices, as their focus remains on achieving good passes to allow progression into employment. The EV-MBC model assumes that there is a positive link between expectation of success and subjective task values, which can be summarised by saying that people value choices that they believe they will succeed with, and the greater value they place on a choice, the greater their expectation of success (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002). This is a trend seen in this piece of research, with students such as Carl placing a high value on both their choices and the outcome, whilst others, like Ava and Kat, showing very little concern past the need to achieve a good pass.

The final theme relates to the impact of relative cost, and how students process this factor. Relative cost was clearly considered when making choices, and for some students the actual relative cost was far greater than the initial perceived relative cost. Bøe *et al.* (2011, p. 55) define relative cost in a variety of ways, ranging from the time and effort needed to succeed, to

the fear of failure, to the opportunities lost by making a particular choice, to the need to deal with negative stereotypes. Another aspect of relative cost is the need to put in effort to meet the needs of a more distant future self; Gallaa, Amemiyab and Wanga (2018) point out that most individuals prefer to meet their current needs, and struggle to make sacrifices for a more distant self. All these factors were observed in different students, but did not appear to hold the same significance as each other with fear of failure holding the greatest importance. Several students discussed the need to commit time and effort, lost opportunities, and negative stereotypes, but these only appeared to become a significant issue with the way that they processed and thought about their choice when failure became a very real prospect; this was clearly observed with both Fern and Ian.

The education transition points students experience at the start and end of their Sixth Form education are crucial, giving them the opportunity to explore possible futures, test their own agency, and consider various different options for their future selves (Schoon and Heckhausen, 2019). This did not hold true for all the students; for example, Ava remained unengaged and relatively unmotivated throughout the duration of this research, whilst Kat was unwilling to explore other futures than the one she had initially decided upon. Others were clearly going through the process of considering various options, even if, like Carl, any explorations led them more firmly back to their initial future plan. Weiss, Wiese and Freund (2014) suggests that some could find the possibilities faced through a transition point overwhelming, and this was observed with Fern, who expressed her relief in needing to partially restart her studies after her first year as this postponed her need to make a decision about the future.

This leads me back to the question of what is the value of using this model. The model provides a framework for explaining the decision process, to tease out the different influences, and therefore gain an insight into their individual experiences. No two students had the same experience, but this framework allowed their experiences to be contrasted and discussed in relation to each other, and in relation to the experience of the wider cohort. Whilst a substantial number of themes emerged from the data, as discussed above, many fitted the expected pattern from theory. Some, however, I found surprising or less expected, and these are summarised in the following three paragraphs:

The choice process is fluid, with individuals showing a shift and development of attitudes, influences, goals or identity over time, except in the circumstance where there is a very firm and achievable future goal. If this is the case, all other factors will either contribute to it positively, or be ruthlessly discarded, as the drive for the future goal overrides all other facets of the choice.

When considering the students' personal hierarchies of importance of values or expectations, four unexpected themes emerged. Firstly, social or collective identity appeared not to be important. The exception to this was the case where there was little familial involvement, and then the individual's peers' importance rose in their hierarchy of values. Secondly, past experiences are only a significant influence when they include a traumatic or difficult event. If this is not the case, students reflect on their interest or enjoyment instead. Thirdly, relative cost only becomes a significant influence where students perceive failure as a real and possible outcome. If this is not the case, little consideration is given. Finally, no link emerged between the depth of consideration which went into a choice, and whether an individual later regretted their choice.

Two factors were observed that were particularly pertinent to the context of this study. Firstly, students attending a school with a Sixth Form are much more likely to find their school to be an overall positive influence on the ability to make their decision regarding Sixth Form study. Secondly, the strong local employment market for 18 year olds in off-shore finance changes the perception of the importance of subject choice. It becomes more important to achieve a good pass for students looking to go straight into employment, with the link between expectation of success and subjective task values being diminished for these students.

5.2 Comparison of different types of units of analysis.

The different types of units of analysis worked well together, particularly in allowing me to move between an analysis of the macro and the micro. The surveys allowed an overall picture to be formed, and gave an indication of how the cohort's perceptions of their choices changed over time. The level of detail that emerged from the interviews was not able to be replicated through the surveys, which gave a much broader overview. The conversational design of the interviews meant that the interviewees disclosed aspects of their choices which would not have been extracted through a straightforward question, so providing a wealth of rich data. This very different level of detail meant that when the different types of units of analysis were compared,

we could sometimes see similarities or differences in the broad overview in area, so allowing comparison and triangulation to take place.

When considering the two surveys, it was interesting to note that all the students who completed the survey taken by Year 11 Grammar School students (embedded unit of analysis 14) would have been requested to complete the survey in Year 12 in the Sixth Form Centre (embedded unit of analysis 13), and, given the high rate of response to this survey, were highly likely to have completed it. The Year 12 survey had a large number of additional respondents who did not get the opportunity to complete the Year 11 survey as they came through a different feeder school. This is a point worth discussing as the decrease in number of participants responding in a particular way between the two surveys is surprising, as whilst the percentage responding in a similar way could be expected to potentially decrease if none of the additional respondents were in agreement with the original students' viewpoint, the absolute number of responses could be expected to remain constant. This decrease shows how time is allowing these respondents to change their perception of the decision process, as predicted by the EV-MBC.

An example demonstrating the previous point is the change in perception regarding the strength of influencers on this decision between Year 11 and Year 12. The surveys demonstrate a drop in numbers of respondents who saw themselves as influenced by a range of other people, leading to a significant proportion of Year 12 students who stated that their decision was not influenced by anyone. Whilst it is possible that this is a trend amongst students from the other schools, the more probable explanation is that it demonstrates a change in perception over the seven months between the two surveys. The interviews allowed me to explore the nuances of influence, showing that not all influences were identified as positive, helpful or desirable, although the interviewees acknowledged that the intent to help was there from the influencers. Here we can clearly see the difference information provided by the different units of analysis with respect to Column 1 of the EV-MBC.

Column 2 of the EV-MBC centres of students' perceptions and interpretations of their key socialisers, family context, and cultural milieu, as well as their affective reactions and memories of their previous experiences. This area was hard to explore through the two surveys as to elicit this type of data a far more detailed and sensitive approach was needed that could be provided

with a whole-cohort survey. The most straightforward way these units of analysis linked to the detailed data provided through the interviews was when the survey asked whether the respondent's subject choices were based on their previous experiences of having enjoyed or not enjoyed a subject or type of subject.

The different types of tool revealed information differently in respect to Column 3 of the model, which looked at the effect of self-knowledge, future goals and collective and personal identity on educational choice. Through the interviews, it became obvious that the students had all adopted by the first interview the identity of a sixth form student, with most also adopting the self-schema associated with their course or subject choices. A significant minority's collective or social identity was rooted in their peer group. This information emerged through piecing together information taken from different points in the interview, and the students themselves were likely to be unaware of the extent to which these points became apparent; it would be a difficult topic to ask direct questions about and therefore unsuitable for questionnaires. However there was clear agreement between the trends revealed through the different types of units of analysis, although not all areas could be effectively explored through either of the surveys.

Column 4 of the EV-MBC model looked at the effect of the individual's expectation of success and their subjective task values on the choice in question. All types of units of analysis revealed similar trends, with interviews revealing the fine detail, whilst the questionnaires demonstrated overall trends. This match between all 3 different types of unit of analysis aptly demonstrated the interview sample's fit with the cohort, with a depth of rich detail to flesh out the facts from the surveys.

Column 5 of the EV-MBC model, focusing on task, activities and behavioural choices was one that could only be effectively explored using the interviews, with no relevant data to this column emerging from the surveys.

The final aspect of the EV-MBC model was the impact of time on the choice process. Using different tools over a timescale of 15 months allowed me to demonstrate how a student's perception of their choice changed, and how they interpreted their reasons for their choice and developed their arguments around their choice changed with their experiences. When looking at all the facets of choice as suggested by the EV-MBC model, it was clear that there was

agreement throughout for some aspects, but in other areas the response rates changed, and the trend changed over time. This could be separately detected both through the survey responses, and through the interviews. The analysis of the second interview elicited the fact that all but one of the students who participated in both interviews saw a substantial shift in their attitudes towards their choice due to their experiences during their studies. Carl was the only exception, as his overriding goal, which had always been an ambitious but realistic fit for him, remained his overriding driver.

5.3 My understanding of this decision process in this context / contribution to knowledge

Guernsey students making their decision for Post16 education behave both in ways predicted by theory, and in less expected ways. The EV-MBC model allowed a valuable insight as their choices could be examined from a variety of viewpoints, and the findings substantiated the model's claim that all of these factors contributed to the decision, which was reviewed and refined over time, both before and after the decision itself took place.

Interviewing and analysing data using this thesis' method demonstrates that the method is a suitable tool to help structure and interpret the interviews, and further demonstrates the comprehensive nature of the model. The model and this methodology allowed themes and issues to come through which would have remained hidden with a more conventional interview tool. The complementary nature of the two very different research tools used within this thesis that allowed the intricate detail of the individual's experience to be discussed against the backdrop of the whole cohort was key to confirming that the more general findings and trends arising from the individuals fitted the pattern from the whole cohort. This was a further point confirming the utility of the conversational interviews and the analysis method. The methodology used to conduct and analyse the interviews strengthened my ability to understand this decision process, and provided a contribution to methodological knowledge. This contribution comes from the analysis method, using summary diagrams based around the model to make sense of a conversation interview, in a way which allows clear comparison between different participants, despite the different conversations that took place.

The EV-MBC's strength lies in its focus on the whole range of factors, ranging from efficacy-beliefs, through to social variables and identity. This allows it to match a whole range of

different contexts and still provide an understanding of how a decision can be made. For this research, it highlighted some of the factors relevant only to Guernsey, which included trends such as the effect of a strong local employment market negating the importance of subject choice for those students looking to go straight into a professional career after their Sixth Form education. This too provided a contribution to knowledge through increasing the understanding of how young people make decisions when faced with this type of future goal.

5.4 Confounding Factors within the Guernsey Context

The Guernsey context includes two unusual factors, especially when compared to its nearest neighbours. Firstly, the school leaving age was raised to ensure all students sat GCSE examinations in 2008; prior to this, students could leave at the end of the term in which they turned 14. This change took place 36 years after the UK made it compulsory to stay in education until this point. Whilst it was claimed at the time (e.g. The Guernsey Press, 2009) relatively few students left before sitting GCSE examinations, data from the States of Guernsey's Education Department suggests that this was a significant minority. Figure 5.4.1 below (fig 3.7 in States of Guernsey, 2008, p. 89) shows the percentage of students achieving 5 or more GCSEs in Guernsey compared to Jersey and the UK. Two rows of data are given for Guernsey, with the top row showing the percentage out of all young people of this age, and the second row showing the percentage out of those remaining in the school system to sit GCSE examinations. We can see the difference is between 10% and 15%. It is difficult to quantify this data in absolute numbers as the number of young people this referred to was not published by the States of Guernsey at this time, but if put in the context of the 2008/9 cohort of 740 Year 11 students (The Guernsey Press, 2009), we can extrapolate to approximate that around 75 students left with no qualifications at secondary school each year.

	Percentage of pupils achieving 5 GCSEs (%)						
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Guernsey (all pupils)	55	58	57	63	64	57	61
Guernsey (exam entrants only)	66	73	72	76	74	68	71
England	50	51	53	53	56	58	62
Jersey	67	66	67	68	64	68	68

Figure 5.4.1: the percentage of students achieving 5 GCSEs prior to 2008

In addition, a substantial minority of young people did not remain in education after GCSEs. Figure 5.4.2 below (fig 3.8 in States of Guernsey, 2008, p. 90) shows the proportion of young people who remained in Post-16 education; we can see that prior to the school leaving age being raised, commonly less than 70% of this section of the population stayed in education. After this change took place, between 85% and 90% of students moved into Post-16 education (States of Guernsey, 2020, p. 85).
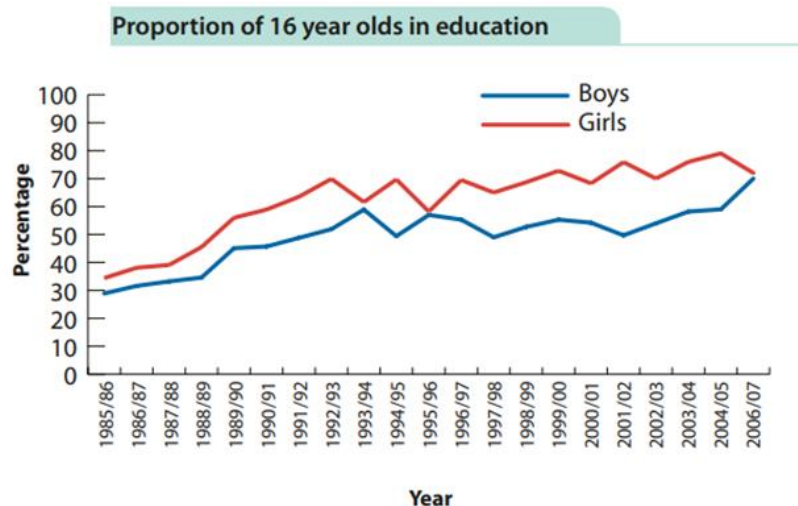
Figure 5.4.2: the proportion of 16 year old Guernsey students progressing into Post-16 Education prior to 2008

The EV-MBC model does not explicitly consider the implication of different socio-cultural effects (Bøe *et al.*, 2011), and therefore the effect of a substantial minority of current parents who either did not complete secondary school or did not move into Post-16 education provides an unexpected variable. These parents are likely to have a lesser understanding of how to navigate the educational choices under discussion within this thesis, and, as Oyserman (e.g. 2013) suggests, may have less academic aspirations for their children as it is likely that their personal experience has led them to place less value on formal education. This unpredictable socio-cultural effect is one that the EV-MBC model would struggle to incorporate.

The second unusual factor within the Guernsey context is the influence of the finance sector on educational aspirations. A substantial proportion of Guernsey young people do not choose to go to university at 18. There are several reasons for this, ranging from a reluctance to move to either the UK or Europe for Higher Education, to concern over financing higher education, to readily available professional employment for school leavers that will incorporate further

training. Guernsey's finance sector provides 19.2% of the total number of jobs on island (States of Guernsey, 2019), and is a significant employer of school leavers. There is low unemployment for young people, further substantiating that there are jobs available for school leavers; in 2019 only 1.0% of 16-24 year olds were unemployed (States of Guernsey, 2019, p. 19). This results in fewer students than expected undertaking university study when compared to surrounding jurisdictions. For example, in March 2019, only 39% of all 18 to 22 year olds ordinarily resident in Guernsey were in full-time education or training, either on or off the island; it is worth noting that this figure includes the relatively small number of students who have taken more than 2 years to complete Post-16 education (States of Guernsey, 2020, p. 87). To access jobs within the finance sector, students are typically expected to have successfully completed their Post-16 studies, with the more competitive schemes for school leavers expecting higher grades. Sixth Form students would not normally be asked to study specific subjects to access these jobs. As demonstrated in the interview sample, students like Kat who plan on taking this route after their Sixth Form studies can approach their Sixth Form studies with a lack of interest in their subject choices, instead prioritising their expectations of success as they know the final grades provide them access to the job opportunities. Making choices in this way can, as with Kat, lead to a lack of motivation to succeed in their individual subjects, as they lack interest in their studies. Therefore this aspect of the Guernsey context can act as a confounding factor, distorting the decision process in an unexpected way. The EV-MBC model does not allow for this type of factor, especially as it does not affect students considering this type of employment as a school leaver in the same way; this is a limitation in modelling this choice using the EV-MBC model.

5.5 Response to the Research Questions

The aim of this study was to examine students' decision making process when making choices for Post-16 education in Guernsey.   This leads to two more detailed research questions, namely

- *How do young people evaluate the risks and benefits when making their choice for Sixth Form study?*
- *How can the Expectancy Value Model of Motivated Behavioural Choice (EV-MBC) be used to describe and explain choice in this context?*

Theory tells us that a wide variety of different factors influence choice, and these shift and change over time. Within this research I found that students' perceptions of the benefits of their

choice and the associated risk changed as time advanced from the point at which they made their choice, to starting their courses, to finishing the first year of their studies. This change occurred as they re-evaluated the benefits and risks in light of their experiences. The exception to this was where there was an overriding driver from one of the factors, which in this research emerged as a student with a very firm and achievable future goal. This guided him, and skewed his evaluations of benefits and risks as anything which did not contribute to his goal was ruthlessly discarded. This future goal linked strongly to the student's future and current identity, so also demonstrating the importance of identity on this choice process.

Risks were considered in far more depth and consciously evaluated when making the decision when students had a difficult experience with their studies or their choices earlier in their academic career. If this was not the case, students appeared to concentrate far more on the subjective value of interest / enjoyment.

It was clear that identity shifted through the course of this study for nearly all students, and they took on different identities as they progressed through their studies. All had different identities that they prioritised at different points in this study. For some future identity shifted as they progressed through their studies, especially when their perception of the relative cost and risks of their choice shifted.

Guernsey's local employment market leads to many students looking for employment directly after their Sixth Form studies in the thriving offshore finance sector, and this changed the way those students approached their risk / benefit evaluation. Their risk / benefit analysis concerned achieving respectable grades in three suitable A Levels, rather than a long term outcome or any other aspects. Due to this, these students lacked intrinsic motivation to succeed with the subjects they had chosen; enjoyment / interest did not appear to be a guiding factor. Whilst this was not predicted theoretically, we are reminded (Bøe *et al.*, 2011) that the EV-MBC works differently in different cultural contexts, so I can conclude that this is an effect of the cultural context. Future identity is key to this as these students are acting to realise their future identity as a school-leaver trainee, even though in some cases the students have not embraced this enthusiastically, more acting due to the influence of their distal cultural milieu.

Within the EV-MBC model it is not the actual facts that necessarily influence the choice, but instead the individual's perceptions, interpretations and affective reactions and memories of

what they have been exposed to through their cultural milieu or taught within school. Therefore it is not necessarily facts about the choice that influence students, but their perception of the facts surrounding these choices. This is true regardless of how well-informed they are, and can at times feel illogical, especially when it emerges that their choice hinges on a set of incorrect perceptions. This might seem to be at odds with the EV-MBC model, which sets out choice as though it is logical and rational, but these preconceptions can be broken down into a number of components found in the model, or sourced back to the influence of family or peers. This becomes problematic when we understand that the education level within many Guernsey families is relatively low; some of our students are the first generation within their family to complete GCSE level education, let alone continue their education at Sixth Form. This was true for students within this study, leading to preconceptions around sixth form education, university, employment or their individual subjects which are questionable.

The EV-MBC model was found to be a clear and thorough way to describe and explain choice, both on the macro and the micro level. The model was used throughout this piece of research, being used to not only inform the methodology, but to also shape the analysis tool, and then frame the discussion. Whilst its limitations are discussed in section 5.6, overall its importance to this thesis cannot be overestimated. The analysis tool of summary maps, using the EV-MBC column headings as summary headings, allowed the interviews to be summarised in the same way, so comparisons could be drawn across all the interviewees. This same analysis tool was used to summarise the findings from the whole cohort survey, displaying an overview of the whole cohort in the same way as for individuals. This facilitated the discussion of the findings, allowing clear themes to be drawn from the data. Working in this way provides a contribution to methodological knowledge, providing a different way to explore a topic such as this. A further contribution to knowledge is suggested by Lykkegaard and Ulriksen (2016) when they tell us that the EV-MBC model has been mainly employed in studies using a single EV-measurement, thereby being too simplistic. This study collected data at various points so allowing the pattern to emerge from multiple data points over time, allowing a contribution to knowledge surrounding the practical application of the model.

Further contributions to academic knowledge come from gaining a better understanding of some of the factors that influence students in this type of context. Guernsey's independent and isolated position, combined with its strong local employment market for young people, provide

an interesting and unusual backdrop against which to explore choice at Post16. Whilst the surveys provided an indication that the cohort's choices were based on many of the expected factors, with the students influenced in the ways suggested by theory, the interviews provided the rich data that demonstrated that the cultural context influences many of these factors so that trends are able to emerge that are not predicted by theory.

5.6 Recommendations for the future for Guernsey's Sixth Form Centre

This research will have practical applications as well as providing a far greater depth of theoretical understanding of this question. A greater theoretical understanding will aid me when working with Year 11 students in the future, to understand when guiding them in making their choices the type of influences which are important to them, particularly in this context, so making a contribution to professional knowledge.

It is clearly concerning that so few young people see their secondary school as a positive influence on their Sixth Form choice, both when questioned just after the decision has been made, and when questioned six months later. The school sharing a site with the Sixth Form has a staff body who's Sixth Form knowledge is current and wide-ranging, which suggests that this information resource is being underutilised by year 11 students in the school. All secondary schools participate in the information and decision making process, where the schools provide support and dedicated sessions to support students, with substantial contributions from the Sixth Form. This therefore leads me to question whether these sessions are effective, or whether students do not count the input from the Sixth Form when they are considering whether or not their school was an influence on the decision. This leads me to recommend that further work is done to establish the perception of the effectiveness of the Sixth Form input after the in-school sessions, and a stream of work is developed with all the feeder schools to establish a more respected process in school to support the decision process.

Further attention should be paid to those with no fixed future aim past 'employment'. This could act to encourage them to engage more fully with the choice, to ensure that they are choosing after fully considering the relevant subjective values, rather than concentrating simply on the expectation of average success. Increasing their consideration of subjective task values, particularly interest-enjoyment, should increase some students' level of engagement with their Sixth Form studies, leading to both a more enjoyable experience and to greater levels of final

achievement. Greater consideration should also lead students to ensure that they choose subjects that carry an identity which matches theirs, or the identity they wish to assume. Attention should be given to reduce the perceived costs for students in doing so, and to support those for whom fear of failure becomes overwhelming early on. One approach to doing so could be courses prior to the start of Sixth Form aiming to support students to prepare for Sixth Form, and at the start of the academic year initiate study groups and peer mentoring to reduce concerns about fear of failure, and increase expectations of success and interest-enjoyment.

Guernsey's secondary school structure is currently undergoing a transformation. The last students who sat the selective 11+ exam entered secondary school in 2018, so all the state schools now have comprehensive students in Key Stage 3. The only certainty is that the eventual school structure we are working towards for secondary education will be non-selective and aims to provide a better quality of education for all, but all other details are unclear. As professionals working within the system, we do not know how many secondary schools there will be, whether these will be 11-16 or 11-18 schools, and consequently if the Sixth Form will remain as a single institution either attached to an 11-16 school or completely separate, or if it will be split up so more than one school has a Sixth Form. Guernsey secondary education is, therefore, facing an uncertain future. This thesis should form part of this review, and will be provided to the Committee for Education, Sport and Culture for further discussion regarding the final structure. The findings regarding issues such as some of the students' perceptions of a lack of expertise regarding Sixth Form education from their secondary school teachers and the level of parental or community knowledge on this topic are clearly issues which need to be addressed through the transformation project. Whilst it might seem tempting to assume that the former could be minimised through ensuring that all future Guernsey state schools were 11-18 schools, I counsel readers of this thesis to remember that students within this study placed a substantial degree of importance on subjective task values, and relatively little importance on the location of the Sixth Form or whether they studied at the same institution as their secondary school friends. The population of Sixth Form students allows the Sixth Form Centre to offer a wide range of courses at a single location, so allowing students to make choices following the pattern discussed within this thesis, rather than introducing the disruptive facet of navigating a much reduced subject offer as students would need to do if the Sixth Form Centre was split up to form two or more smaller sixth forms within 11-18 schools.

5.7 Limitations, Reliability and Validity of Findings

Validity of empirical data is the first, and perhaps the most important, limitation that must be discussed. Interview validity is always reliant on participants being open, accurate and complete when answering questions. The vignettes and conversational style of interview encourages this, as with each vignette concentrating on a different aspect of the EV-MBC model, their individual experience was discussed multiple times from different angles. In addition, I was able to probe areas where contradictions were emerging during the interview without disrupting the flow of questions, or probe areas where information was less forthcoming. This, combined with the method of analysis through a summary diagram, allowed their entire experience to be displayed in such a way that inconsistencies or contradictions were spotted, and their story was built up using layers of information from different parts of the interview. Quotations were then used to illustrate the findings to provide depth, and to demonstrate their basis in the interviews. Divergent findings were not discussed as this wasn't relevant in this piece of research, as whilst different interviews gave very different findings, all can be shown to demonstrate the EV-MBC model in different ways.

Whilst the sample was a stratified random sample, and work was done to demonstrate the main characteristics of the sample accurately represented the patterns within the wider student population, it became clear when looking at the sample in more depth that there were aberrations. A clear example of this was that 25% of the interviewees, all of which were female, were STEM students. No male students studied STEM. This proportion is not representative of either the Sixth Form population or the wider population of young people. It was hoped by choosing the sample in this way that the characteristics of the sample should match the survey data, and therefore the findings should be able to be extrapolated to Guernsey's entire cohort of students looking to participate in Sixth Form education. These aberrations suggest that this may only partially be the case.

Survey data, by its very nature, is unable to provide the same rich depth of detail as the interviewees. Therefore there were parts of the model that survey data was unable to illuminate to any great extent. The questionnaires were majority closed responses to direct questions, which provided a very different experience to the unstructured interviews. Whilst the interviews revealed facts and trends that the participants are unlikely to have been consciously aware of, the questionnaires demonstrated self-reported trends. Hence the type of data and the

validity of the data were different from the different types of tools. Furthermore the first survey, Embedded Unit of Analysis 14: the Sixth Form Centre's annual Year 11 survey, was not written for this piece of research. Instead relevant data was drawn from the responses of those that had given permission for it to be used in this way. Consequently the effectiveness of its data for this use varied, and for some aspects of the EV-MBC model it provided far less information.

The reliability of the findings can be taken from the consistency of approach throughout. With the exception of Gia's interview as discussed in section 4.10, the interviews were conducted in a consistent manner. All were transcribed in full, then analysed in a consistent way using the EV-MBC model as a framework to produce a summary diagram. This work was all done by myself, so ensuring there were no difficulties in agreement of processing methods.

The validity of the findings was increased as for each facet under consideration in sections 4.4-4.7, the interview findings were directly compared to both surveys, with differences and similarities highlighted. Furthermore, the strategy of summarizing and presenting the year 12 survey data (embedded unit of analysis 13) using the same template based on the EV-MBC model as was used to summarise the individual interviews allowed direct comparability.

This research essentially reveals the participants' own perception of the reality of their decision process. The research process itself acted as a check on the credibility of some of the interview findings, as the use of some of the data and graphs from the year 12 survey within the second interviews meant that students within the year group commented on the findings. Overall, students recognized the findings from the year 12 survey, and were in agreement with them. There were some surprises, such as several of the student participants were surprised that so many of the year group stated that they had held the same long term goal throughout the choice process, but overall they were in agreement. Whilst elements of the findings of this thesis are generalizable to future cohorts of local students, the importance of the local context to some of the trends revealed means that it is less generalizable to the wider population of students of this age elsewhere. The changing nature of the local cultural milieu, although small, poses a challenge to generalising these results in future years past the short term.

The EV-MBC model does not address the role that chance plays in choice. It was clear that one participant, Hope, made her final choice after a conversation with a member of staff. She had

been advised to talk to two different members of staff about two options, but by chance only one was available when she went to find them, and she made the choice directly after. If the two members of staff had swapped places, the outcome could have been different. As Schreiner, Henriksen, Sjaastad, Jensen, & Løken (2010, in Bøe *et al.*, 2011) tell us, choice can sometimes be largely coincidental, with individuals being influenced by someone they have met, or a timetabling aberration which means they cannot access their preferred options. Many young people will not be conscious of the chance-led nature of some of their influences when making this choice, but the reason that young people in the same context can make very different decisions must be partly due to chance.

5.8 Concluding Summary

This thesis has not attempted to provide a description of what works when making these choices, and why it works, but instead attempts to provide an exploration and modelling of the process as experienced by a group of young people whose attributes meant that they generally fitted the cohort of Guernsey Sixth Form students. I have shown that each student undergoes a very individual decision process, on which they expend a considerable amount of energy and time. A next step for future research could be to examine what works to influence choice, and how to encourage students to make better informed choices that lead to the best possible outcome for them.

The value of this study is primarily based in its contribution to professional knowledge, and the way it will influence the way I and my team within the Sixth Form Centre work to inform and support students making their choices for Post 16 education within Guernsey's Sixth Form Centre. The theoretical understanding gained through completing this thesis will be used to underpin I and my team's understanding of the student process, whilst the empirical findings, particularly those specific to our context, will be used to guide our practical work with young people making this choice.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Information Letter and Consent Form

Institute of Education

How do Guernsey students experience and reflect on their choice for Sixth Form?
September 2017 – July 2018

Guernsey Grammar School & Sixth Form Centre

Information sheet for student participants

Who is conducting the research?
My name is Mrs Papworth and well as working at the Grammar School and Sixth Form Centre, I am a Doctoral student at the UCL Institute of Education. As part of my research I am interested in finding out more about how our students make decisions around their course of study at the Sixth Form Centre. In the long term, this research may influence the way the Sixth Form team works. Our Director of Sixth Form, Mr James, has agreed for this research to take place in the school, and I am inviting you to take in part in my research project.

I am hoping to find out how your cohort of students coming to the Sixth Form Centre made their decision of what to study, what factors were important to you, what considerations made you rethink, and how you feel about your choice and this process as you move through Year 12.

I very much hope that you would be happy to take part. This information sheet will try and answer any questions you might have about the project, but please don't hesitate to contact me if there is anything else you would like to know.

Why am I doing this research?
This research will form the basis of my Doctoral thesis, which aims to discover how your cohort of students makes sense of the choice of what to study at Sixth Form, and what influenced this process. In addition, this research will have a wider impact for future Guernsey students, as the findings will be presented to the Sixth Form Management team so may change the way we do things here.

Why are you being invited to take part?
I am asking a range of students if they are willing to take part, to make sure that I hear from students from all of Guernsey's state secondary schools and from students now studying a variety of different courses. You have been invited to make sure this can happen.

What will happen if you choose to take part?
If you choose to take part I will need to interview you twice, once in the next few weeks, and once towards the end of year 12. Each interview should take no more than 30-45 minutes, and would be held within the Sixth Form Centre at a mutually convenient time. These interviews would consist of you reading a short statement about this type of process, and then we would discuss how what you had read relates to your experience and feelings. I would like to digitally record interviews for the purpose of accuracy. You will not be identifiable and I will not share your individual data. The recording of your interview and my notes will be securely stored then destroyed when they are no longer needed.

Will anyone know you have been involved?

You will be completely anonymised within this research, and I will not reveal who has taken part at any time. The only exception to this is if you disclose any information which makes me concerned about your welfare, when I will have to inform Mr James. To help maintain this anonymity, I ask that you do not discuss this within school with your friends and teachers. If you or your parents would like to discuss this project, or your participation in it, at any point, please contact me or Mr James.

Could there be problems for you if you take part?

Your involvement in this study is completely voluntary, which means you can stop taking part at any time or ask me not to use your interview at any time before the 1st of August 2018 when I will start to write the report for the Institute of Education.

What will happen to the results of the research?

The results of the research will form the basis of my Doctoral thesis. In addition, they may be used for a report or other form of publication or presentation for use within the school or the Education Department, but nothing will be disseminated within Guernsey while you are studying here.

Do you have to take part?

It is entirely up to you whether or not you choose to take part. If you tell me you do not want to take part I will not ask any further. I hope that if you do choose to be involved then you will find it an interesting experience.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet.

If you would like to be involved, please complete the following consent form and return to Mrs Papworth by the 10th October 2017.

If you have any further questions before you decide whether to take part, you can reach me at npapworth@web.grammar.sch.gg.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the UCL IOE Research Ethics Committee.

Institute of Education

How do Guernsey students experience and reflect on their choice for Sixth Form?
September 2017 – July 2018

Guernsey Grammar School & Sixth Form Centre

If you are happy to participate, please complete this consent form and return to Mrs Papworth by 10/10/17.

	Yes	No
I have read and understood the information leaflet about the research	☐	☐
I agree to be interviewed twice, once at the start of this academic year, and once towards the end.	☐	☐
I am happy for my interview to be audio recorded	☐	☐
I understand that if any of my words are used in reports or presentations they will not be attributed to me, and my contribution will be kept anonymous	☐	☐
I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time before August 2018, and that if I choose to do this, any data I have contributed will not be used	☐	☐
I understand that I can contact Mrs Papworth at any time if I have questions about my involvement.	☐	☐
I understand that the results will be shared with Guernsey's Education Services and the UCL Institute of Education.	☐	☐
I have discussed the information sheet with my parents	☐	☐

Name _____

Signed _____   Date _____

Researcher's name _Mrs Papworth_____   Signed _____

Appendix 2: Embedded Units of Analysis 1-12, Interview 1 Protocol

All vignettes taken from IFS interviews (Papworth, 2016).

Vignette 1. Influence of previous personal experiences (column 2)

> *R: How do your previous studies impact on the way you make your choices for sixth form at all? Are you thinking what are my safe choices?*
> I: I think that definitely goes through people's mind when choosing. I think they think that subject is going to have a lot of writing in it, and I'm not great at writing, then they are probably going to steer away from that. And oh that subject is really hard to get high grades, and I don't feel as confident in it, I don't feel confident that I am going to get those top grades; people tend to steer away from those. And obviously listening to people who are a year or so older than you, who will tell you that this is really difficult, some people may think maybe I'm not good enough and tend to not do those subjects.

Vignette 2. Family characteristics (column 1)

> *R: Do you talk to your parents about your choice of what to do next?*
> I: Well I would definitely say it was my opinion to do this. My parents often try and, I'm sure it happens to a lot of other people, your parents try and lead you without you noticing towards certain things, which is very obvious, but it can have an impact. But ultimately it was my decision that they agreed with. They had the same reasons as I did really, because they knew I enjoyed certain subjects and would be interested in certain subjects.
> *R: So what happens when they try to lead you in certain directions?*
> I: Well I'm talking very, like subtle ways, I mean they might suggest that this is, you could do, say for example if they wanted to do further maths, or go on to do maths at university or whatever, they could say, well, maths – are you thinking about doing maths? Constant little reminders that are very subtle.
> *R: Did they try that on you?*
> I: Well, it's what everybody does.

Vignette 3. Perception of Distal Cultural Milieu (column 1/2)

> *R: Do you feel like you made a mature choice of what to study? Were you worried about being different from your friends?*
> I: That could be taken very philosophically, but I don't think it changes your identity. I think it changes your attitude to other people and other things in the world, - doing IB. Making this choice and branching out to something different, so people talking at you and saying I can't believe you chose whatever…. But if you look beyond what people were saying, and you could use this as a metaphor for life or whatever, that if you actually look beyond what people are saying who don't know anything about the course other than what they have heard through other secondary or tertiary sources, which is just gossip, you realise once you look at just the facts you can make your own decision quite a lot better without the help of other people whose opinions are probably quite poorly formed.

Vignette 4. Future Goals / self-schemata (column 3)

> *R: So you said that you were quite shaken up about your destiny at the end of last year, when you worked out you might not get the grades you need to let you apply for medicine. How did that shake-up affect you?*
> I: It made me take a step back and think okay, I can still aim for medicine, and go home for the holidays and do a lot more work. It also made me thing what else could I do if I didn't get into medicine, but something similar to medicine, possibly pharmacy or something similar to that. Because obviously I had to think what I could do, what I need to do for all of those as well, so I had a

lot of different aims. It made me think or rethink about what I was going to do, and how I can get experience to try to make up my mind.

R: So really it really made you think about the next big decision you had to make about what to do after sixth form. Was that also difficult to talk about at home?

I: I think so, because obviously I wanted to do medicine for so long, and my parents supported me in that, and I think they are uncomfortable with the fact that I might not be able to do it, and they are worried as I have wanted to do it for so long, and if I couldn't get into it, but they are also supportive. Chatting about what I could do instead.

Vignette 5. Self-concept of own abilities (column 3)

I don't think anyone has really had the type of the decision you have to make at the start of sixth form at any other time in their life. It's such a big specialisation, and does shut off so many more routes, because if you come out of the two years of your A levels, or IB, or whatever, and not taken the subject you need to have taken to do the degree you want, you either just can't do it, or it's a year to a foundation, or two years to do another level 3 course out of your life again, and that's just too big a commitment for too many people to make at that time. So I think this kind of…. a lot of people only think about it for a few months in the summer or whatever before they make their choices, and then that's something that could affect the rest of their life a lot, in a time when I don't think that any 16 year old is ready to make that type of decision about something that's going to shut off so many avenues.

Vignette 6. Emerging personal identity (column 3)

R: Do you think you making a choice of what to study at sixth form was making a choice about who you are?

I: Yes and no, because yes I want to be, well I am and want to be a more rounded person, and know a lot about a lot kinda thing, but it was also wanting to get, or not having a personal identity and wanting to achieve one.

R: Okay. So you were more thinking what sort of person do I want to be and will it get me there?

I: Yes, instead of the person I am, as I still struggle with that I guess.

R: So you are working towards..?

I: The person I want to be, and my choice will help me on that journey

Vignette 7. Expectation of Success (column 4)

Well for quite a long time I've been sure I was going to do the sciences but I got really into literature and reading political essays and some by a lot of people in the telegraph and things in the few months before I made the decision, and that really swung me out. I was really, and still am really interested in that, but I've found out now that you don't have to have done History and English to end up in those kind of careers, whereas for maths and physics you obviously have to do the other way. So I ended up plumping for that but it was a tough decision. Then about half way through the year, approaching Christmas, I started thinking about what I was going to apply for at uni in the end, and flicking through I saw, it was actually the oxford prospectus, the physics and philosophy course, and I saw it and knew by looking through the content that that would be the best course for me at some university, and about 2 or 3 days later I came in to see the Director of Sixth Form to say I need to switch to Physics. When I took on the Physics I was quite sure I could catch up and get a good grade in it, because I have never really struggled with Physics. So I thought if I put the time in, and I knew I would, I would get the grade I deserved.

Vignette 8. Change over time

I: When I was making this decision, I think at first it was a bit of 'oh the IB'… I was open to the idea of the IB Diploma, I think mainly because my sister was doing it. I think at the start it was you know, it

seems like quite a good course, but I didn't know much about it. So it was swaying. At the same time it was thinking what sort of A Levels I could do. But I guess when I started thinking about it in a more mature choice manner, I started thinking about how I liked to learn, what I liked to study, where I would like to go, and it sort of made more sense for me to take the IB.

R: So did you changing your mind at all?

I: Maybe a few times. Once or twice I was convinced that A levels were better to do, I was going to go down a more scienceier route, but by the time I made the choice I was fairly set.

R: Did it at all cross over with who you were talking to?

I: Maybe. I don't think that was such an impact on me. Obviously there are influences, but peer-wise, I wasn't too bothered about what my friends would say about my choice.

Influences – complete individually at the end

Smallest influence

Greatest influence

You have mentioned some people (such as parents or teachers) or things (such as a lesson or television programme) which may or may not have been useful in influencing your decisions. Place these people or things in concentric zones in the circle to reflect the extent of their influence on your decision.
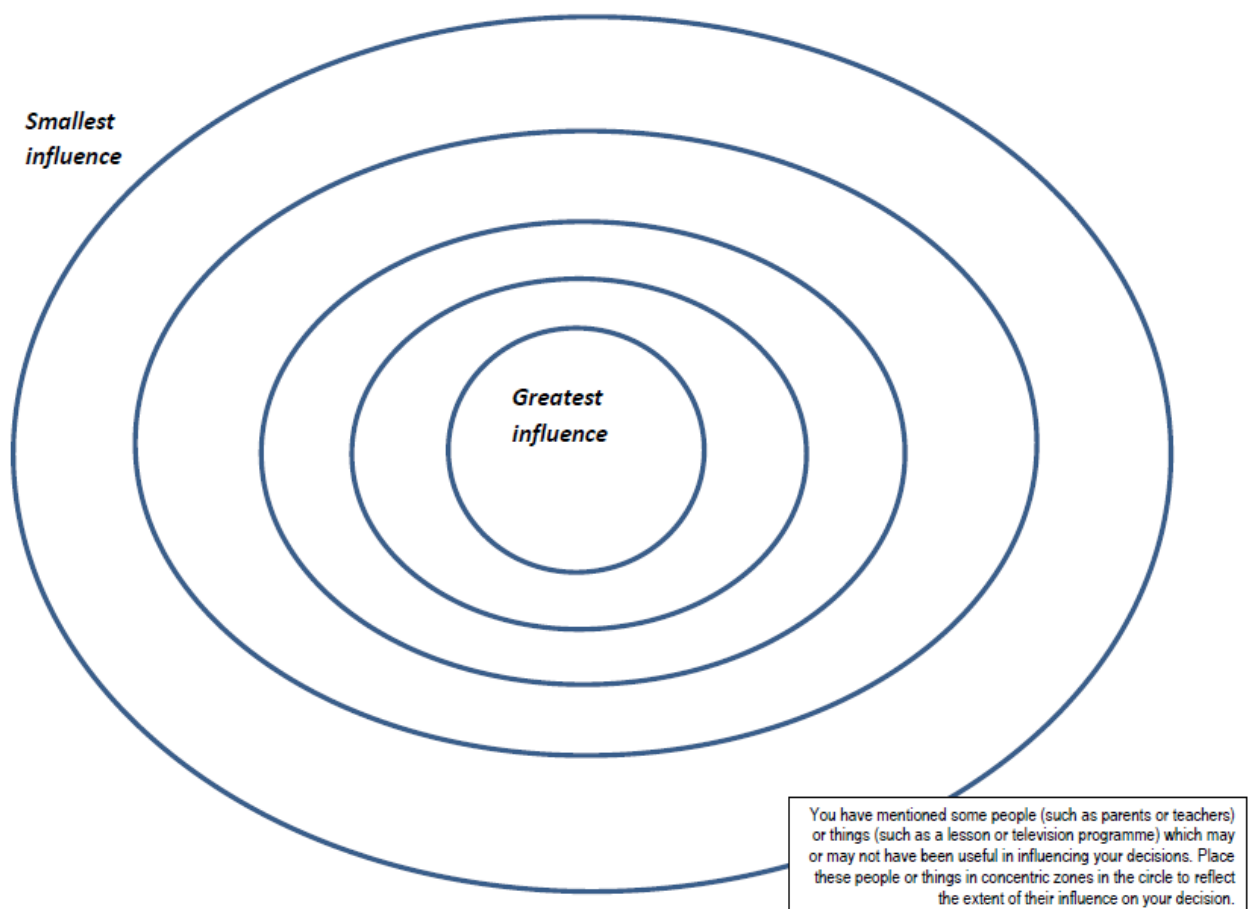
Appendix 3: Embedded Units of Analysis 1-12, Interview 2 Protocol

Prompt 1

Prompt 1: Overview of year 12's views last November. How do you relate to this now?

For the following questions, the following Likert scale applies: 1= not at all, 5 = very important

Was this a consideration when you decided what to study: how much you thought you would enjoy it
179 responses
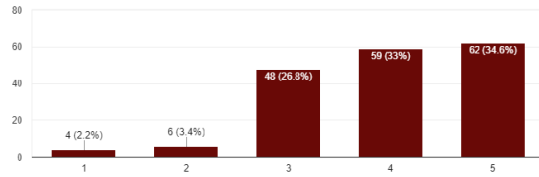
Was this a consideration when you decided what to study: how useful it would be in the future.
179 responses
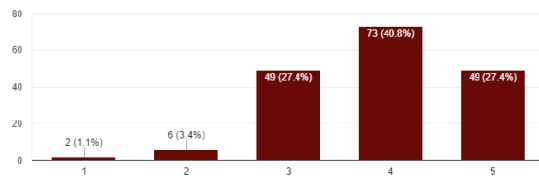
Was this a consideration when you decided what to study: you thought you would be able to do well.
179 responses
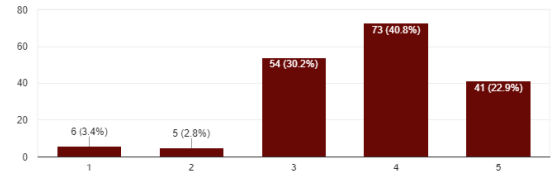
Was this a consideration when you decided what to study: the amount of work you thought you would need to put in.
179 responses

After being at Sixth Form for a term, do you think that your assessment of the last four questions was accurate when you were making your decisions?
179 responses

- Yes - all
- No
- Some of them

51.4%

43%

Prompt 2

Do you still want to aim for the same future job or degree as you did in year 11?
179 responses

Are the subjects and courses you are now studying the same as you expected to be studying.... (tick all that apply)
179 responses

A year ago? — 63 (35.2%)

When you made your Post 16 application? — 95 (53.1%)

At the start of year 12? — 123 (68.7%)

- Yes — 50.3%
- No — 17.3%
- Didn't have any future job / degree in mind — 32.4%

When you were deciding what to study in year 11, did you have a future job or degree in mind?
179 responses

- yes (this could be more than 1 possible idea) — 65.4%
- no — 34.6%

Prompt 3: Vignette taken from IFS interview to prompt a reflection on the past year (Papworth, 2016)

For everybody there could be a subject that they don't particularly enjoy that they have to do. I enjoy it though. You have to see beyond the actual subjects and think what am I going to get out of it at the end. If you are going to sit there and be grumpy about it then you aren't going to enjoy it. And if you don't enjoy it, you know I didn't always enjoy last lesson on a Thursday, one on one french, it was quite tough, especially if you have a cold, and you have to do speaking practice one on one, its not always fun, but you know what you are going to get out of it at the end. If you quit stuff just because it's a little bit hard… I mean we will see next week how everything goes, but I think we should all be quite proud of how much work we've done. And I may sit here and think I wish I'd done more revision, but actually we have all worked hard, well some of us have, over the past year.

Prompt 4: Vignette taken from IFS interview to prompt a reflection on their future plans (Papworth, 2016)

I: I don't have a route I want to go down specifically, and any careers advisor I don't think could tell me. Because just going by my strengths and my preferred subjects, I don't think it helps that much. I still don't feel I have any purpose at the moment. I just don't see any way of working through it at the moment. There is probably some miracle somewhere which means I will know what I want to do next by this time next year. I'm in an existential crisis at the moment. I keep thinking what should I choose that will really get me somewhere. For example, art, being the thing that I am best at, but where will it get me? I am worried that if I go to university to study art, what will I do after that really? And other people, other adults I've talked to, even if they went to university, they couldn't find work after the degree they've studied, to do with their degree. I'm just kind of stuck on everything, and I don't know if I can do what I love or even if I'm good enough to do it.

Appendix 4: Participant Face Sheets

Participant 1: AVA	
Details	female, Feeder School 5, A Level route
Date	16 Oct
Length of Interview	42 min
Special Circumstances	None
Major Issues Emerging	Informal support network (peers, older friends, cousins), rather insecure about own judgement. Parents perceived to be very insecure about their knowledge of education / subjects. Secondary school teachers ditto! Considers decision for a long time, then panics when actually has to make it. Now recognises that many of her worries about P16 were unfounded and she was unnecessarily worrying. However, she moves on to say that she takes a laid back approach to this type of thing – very contradictory. Recognises in terms of university that her thought process has changed over time during the last few years from def not as not needed for my future finance career, to useful to gain extra skills even though this step wouldn't fit the family pattern. Not concerned about the public nature of the decision. Clearly considered and thought deeply about subject choices and how they fit together. Enjoyment important. Clear connection of choice to who I am.
Issues to be followed up in interview 2.	Future goals – have they developed over the year? Bought into idea that less subjects are better, despite having chosen her four to fit IB groups – is having a holistic approach still better.
Themes	Reliance on peer (inc older) informal support network. Parental incompetence on this decision but strong familial influence on decision method. Holistic approach to current choices. Considered. Juxtaposition of developing fledgling future identity and subjective value choices. Indications that she beginning to reject her cultural milieu and make different choices in the future.
Follow up interview July	completed

Participant 2: BEA	
Details	female, Feeder School 6, IBDP
Date and Time	19 Oct
Length of Interview	40 mins
Special Circumstances	I teach Bea
Major Issues Emerging	Confident in own ability to overcome challenges. Staying in same institution gave her a lot of confidence in selecting options, and she was able to easily seek advice from relevant teachers. Mum helpful with the mechanics of making a sensible decision. Neither parent able to be helpful with advice (Dad too self-centred, Mum 'non-academic'. Has had to develop a layer of not caring about others' opinions to be successful with her chosen subjects – Math / Phys – trad male dominated, and this does get commented on. Has plans for the future (part of which is to not do the same as her mum despite sharing a love of dance), but a lot of flexibility built in and has thought through alternatives. Felt very unprepared for this decision – it crept up – its importance could make you anxious. This choice not as a statement of who you are, but of who you want to be as you have to take on a

	persona and develop. Clearly considered subjective task values. Clearly influenced by some ex students (IB), but the way of learning had attracted her from the start. Found the DOSF off-putting.
Issues to be followed up	
Themes	Confident in her own abilities and future plans. Well prepared.
Follow up interview July	completed

Participant 3: CARL	
Details	male, Feeder School 6, IBDP
Date and Time	20th Oct,
Length of Interview	27 min
Special Circumstances	None
Major Issues Emerging	Single minded and determined. Aims to study Physiotherapy internationally, preferably Australia - due to family ties. Strongly motivated by a future relative cost – knows the IB will get him there so prepared to do the 'extra' subjects (which he does enjoy) and the course in order to access his chosen universities smoothly
Issues to be followed up	Still aiming for international HEIs?
Themes	Confidence, determination, single minded, well prepared
Follow up interview July	completed

Participant 4: DAN	
Details	male, Feeder School 3, A Level route
Date and Time	31st Oct
Length of Interview	36 min
Special Circumstances	None
Major Issues Emerging	Had a very fixed mindset about what he was going to do. Has a clear future aim, but this is slightly at odds with the fixed mindset regarding choices. His biggest influence is his friendship group, and he clearly made choices taking theirs into account, and is very dependent on them.
Issues to be followed up	How is he facing the prospect of university without friendship group? Is he finding his subjects will get him there?
Themes	Dependent on peer group, strong social identity, fixed mindset, unconfident
Follow up interview July	None possible. Did not get a response to emails, and when I went to find him to make an appointment both times he did not show up as he wasn't in school. Student's attendance is very poor. Unsure if he will return to y13.

Participant 5: EVE	
Details	female, Feeder School 1, A Level route
Date and Time	31st Oct
Length of Interview	42 min
Special Circumstances	None
Major Issues Emerging	Student had a very clear future aim, but as the interview progressed it became clear that she had been increasingly growing uncertain about her ability to get there, or whether she actually wanted to.
Issues to be followed up	Aim now?

Themes	Self aware, focused, lacks some confidence in her ability to succeed.
Follow up interview July	None possible. Did not get a response to emails, and when I went to find her to make an appointment both times she did not show up as she wasn't in school. Student has been having mental health difficulties and her attendance is very poor. Unsure if she will return to y13.

Participant 6: FERN	
Details	female, Feeder School 6, IBDP
Date and Time	1 Nov 2017
Length of Interview	39.17
Special Circumstances	Fern changed route after the sample was selected before the interviews, so should have been an A Level representative. Studied a very different set of subjects to originally chosen.
Major Issues Emerging	Student was originally influenced by peers, but on mature reflection about the future and her capabilities changed direction significantly.
Issues to be followed up	Does she still think the change was the right decision?
Themes	Mature thought process, aware of influences
Follow up interview July	completed

Participant 7: GIA	
Details	female, Feeder School 3, A Level route
Date and Time	1/11/17
Length of Interview	42 min
Special Circumstances	Very dyslexic. Has coloured glasses but still has a painfully slow reading speed. Didn't cover the last few vignettes due to time constraints.
Major Issues Emerging	- Dyslexia has coloured her perception of her abilities and influenced her approach to studying - Safe choices where she is able to succeed - Unclear about identity and its part in making a choice. Claims an artistic identity, but also claims this had no influence over her choice to study artistic subjects.
Issues to be followed up	How is RS now with the dyslexia? Still a good choice?
Themes	Foreclosure, identity, overcoming adversity
Follow up interview July	completed

Participant 8: HOPE	
Details	female, Feeder School 4, A Level route
Date and Time	1/11/17
Length of Interview	43 min
Special Circumstances	From Alderney. V small school in special measures.
Major Issues Emerging	Tendency to enter a moratorium and foreclose. Past experiences have led to her feeling very isolated as a student with no one to help her succeed. Late change of subjects to a very different set.
Issues to be followed up	Does she still have the same future goals?
Themes	Foreclosure, uncertainty
Follow up interview July	Completed

Participant 9: IAN	
Details	male, Feeder School 2, A Level route.
Date and Time	6/11/17
Length of Interview	47 min
Special Circumstances	none
Major Issues Emerging	Student suffered a large set back to his plans when he found that his Drama GCSE was several grades worse than he had been led to believe. He lost a lot of trust in his teachers' ability to guide his successfully, and this caused him to question his identity as a drama student. He chose not to continue to study this P16. Lost his friendship group due to the different choices, and appears lonely. Mathematics – struggling to pass GCSE despite numerous retakes – has knocked his confidence.
Issues to be followed up	Reinvented himself – way of working, approach, subject interests. Grown away from friends. How is this a year in? How does he feel about cutting Drama out of his life now? Has he managed to keep his work ethic?
themes	Loss of previous identity, isolation, no clear goal
Follow up interview July	completed

Participant 10: JAKE	
Details	male, Feeder School 6, A Level route
Date and Time	7th Nov
Length of Interview	47.30
Special Circumstances	none
Major Issues Emerging	Very clear focus for the future.
Issues to be followed up	Took Biology despite not being very good at it due to future goals. Was working hard and seeing success – has he managed to keep this going? Core Maths – is he still doing it? How did his parents react to him dropping it?
themes	Strong parental influence, mature thought processes
Follow up interview July	completed

Participant 11: KAT	
Details	female, Feeder School 2, A Level route
Date and Time	7th Nov
Length of Interview	29.39
Special Circumstances	none
Major Issues Emerging	Moratorium, illogical & arbitrary decision process, dependency on peer group, not considered. Motivation for studying unclear. Fixed future goal.
Issues to be followed up	Late decision to stay at SFC. Right decision?
themes	See major issues emerging
Follow up interview July	completed

Participant 12: LOU	
Details	female, Feeder School 5, IBDP

Date and Time	7th Nov
Length of Interview	47.30
Special Circumstances	
Major Issues Emerging	Change of identity – rugby injury – forced change of subjects. Parental influence vs brother & her wishes. Independent of peers.
Issues to be followed up	How does she feel now about her change in identity.
themes	Change of identity, future goals, parental influence, independence from peers.
Follow up interview July	Completed.

Appendix 5: Conceptual Maps

An example of the latent content analysis is given below for a section of Carl's transcript, in response to having read the 3rd Vignette:

> *Carl:* *Originally my – none of my friends were going to do IB, so it was just going to be me and I think one other person was going to do IB. But the reason I did it was because you can take it anywhere in the world easily.*
>
> *Researcher:* *Was it odd being different from your friends?*
>
> *Carl:* *Not really I don't think. It was – I was just thinking because I still see them in school obviously and I was thinking there's no point choosing the same things as my friends if I'm going to leave school and actually it's not the right thing to have and then it's going to be a waste of time really.*

> **Label in margin**: Demonstrates here that his peers, as key socialisers, have had a minimal effect on his decision.

These labels were then summarised to produce the conceptual map for each participant.

Diagram 6.5.1.a Ava, interview 1

Interview 1: AVA

Female, A Level, Feeder School 5.

Themes: Reliance on informal support network for information, strong familial influence that doesn't include parents. Indications that she is beginning to reject her cultural milieu and make different choices in the future.

Initially (Change over time)
- Spent several months trying to decide which route – A Levels or IB.
- Her cousins are a strong influence, and all studied A Levels. Implication that this was the obvious path for her to follow.
- Several friends were choosing IB, and this swayed her away from the more expected route.
- She appears to have had a moratorium regarding this decision, which was put off until just before it needed to be made.

How final decision came about (Change over time)
- Her immediate societal context pulled her to do A Levels.
- Experienced an extended moratorium, solved through influence from cousins who felt A Levels were the best path for her.
- Mother talked to her friends about their children's choices, and relayed conversations back to her.
- She then had to make a very hurried decision regarding subjects which she described as 'panicked'.

Now (Change over time)
- Whilst she has chosen A Levels, the subjects fit the IB grouping structure.
- Appears to think a holistic well rounded approach is best, but opted for less subjects
- Recognises that a lot of her concerns whilst making her choices were unfounded, and has been able to adapt to her new institution.
- Shows a lack of empathy for others who changed options once they had started the subjects. Clearly very settled and believes her method of obtaining information gave her everything she needed in advance.
- Thinks she will approach the decision regarding whether to study at university in the same way.

Task, Activities and Behavioural Choices (Column 5)
- Starting to consider who she wants to be in the future (relates this to decision of whether to go to University). Clear juxtaposition of emerging self-knowledge and cultural milieu.
- Starting to demonstrate discontent regarding the influences on her KS5 decisions.
- A feeling of loneliness in making this choice – a formation of a new identity which diverges from previous cultural expectations.

Expectation of Success and Subjective Task Values (Column 4)
- Parents help her to come to decisions by discussing subjective task values
- Did not consider how choices at sixth form would really affect her future options, but has started to recognise this now.
- Subjective task values (e.g. enjoyment, utility and relative cost) clearly form part of her personal reasoning surrounding subject choices.

Emerging Self Knowledge and Identity (Column 3)
- Fairly strongly held views on what she is or is not good at – a clear concept of her own ability.
- Does not appear to think that this would be able to change over time.
- Clearly finds it difficult to ignore her cultural influences, although she recognises that she may experience things difficult.
- Starting to recognise that her identity does not need to match her familial identity.
- Clearly able to resist her peer's opinions
- Currently as no clear future identity – apart from to work in finance (Guernsey's main industry).
- Sees these choices as a clear statement of who you are and what you enjoy, but not of who you want to be.

Individual's perceptions of Cultural and Social Influences, and the effect of previous experiences (Column 2)
- Decisions are taken using unofficial information then extrapolating her abilities onto this. E.g. 'people say... and I can't'. Tried to remember that her experience and opinion might be different.
- Lack of confidence in her ability to make her own decisions.
- Says she likes to collect lots of different opinions and consider them to make her choice.
- Past experiences and enjoyment are clearly important factors.
- Chose 1 subject completely based on having enjoyed it pre-GCSE, having not chosen it at GCSE. Clearly surprised her peers by doing this, and does not reference discussing this with her informal support network.

Cultural and Social Influences (Column 1)
- Student is strongly reliant on other's opinions. These are older young people who have experienced the Sixth Form (A Levels only) including her cousins). Informal social support network.
- At times this appears to be an over reliance.
- Family demographic is that her parents' generation have not studied past KS4, her generation have studied KS5, and none have gone to university. She is breaking the mould in her immediate family by continuing with her studies at Sixth Form.
- Clear implication that her parents are not a useful support mechanism, and feel out of their depth. They have a very hands-off approach which she justifies at various points.
- Parents push a subjective task value approach to making decisions.
- Her moratorium between A Levels and IB concerned her mum, who got further information by asking friends' about their children's experiences with either program. The implication is that A Levels were the norm within her social circle and this potential deviation was concerning.
- Her School's influence (11-16) appears to be very limited, as does the Sixth Form Centre's.
- She equates her school teachers' attitude with her parents, and appears to believe they wouldn't have studied KS5.

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Diagram 6.5.1.b Ava, interview 2

Student's current assessment of factors from columns 2-4 of the EV model.	**The effect of time when looking back at the decision**
• Doesn't recognise herself as being in a moratorium. She quite simply feels she'll figure it out eventually. It doesn't appear to be something she, or her parents, are concerned about. She has things coming up such as work experience that she thinks will help her to do this. • Clearly has made changes to her program of study over the last year, but is very vague. She is working her way through hoping her future will somehow become clear. Unclear if she is doing anything to help this happen.	• Her choice process was partially successful, but she is unclear how it wasn't. • Feels that she has been very 'lucky' for everything to have been so smooth this year – mainly because she knows she is so vague about the future.

Student's current perception of their decision process

• Identified strongly with the graphs on enjoyment and doing well.

• Very unclear when she made her decision about the future, so she tried to pick useful things.

Diagram 6.5.2.a: Bea's interview 1

Interview 2: BEA

F, IB DP, Feeder School 6.

Themes: Independent, considered researched approach. Choice for an aspirational identity and future goals. Subjective task values strongly considered.

Now (Change over time)
- Believes the IB subjects give a better reflection of what it is to be a philosopher, a psychologist, physicist etc, so do more to help develop your chosen identity.
- Discusses how her choices have made her develop her personal skills and new perspectives
- Pleased with her choices, and feels her thorough thought and research paid off.
- Has limited empathy for those changing their choices after the start of time, clearly blaming poor decisions on poor research.

Task, Activities and Behavioural Choices (Column 5)
- Sees difficulties with skills as opportunities to improve
- Perception of the transition as smooth, in a large part as she remained within the institution.
- Ella clearly heavily identifies with her mother in terms of likes and dislikes, but has seen her mother diminished by her life decisions and is making a firm commitment to make different choices.
- Maintains a clear awareness that individuals' different perceptions of a task are different.

Expectation of Success and Subjective Task Values (Column 4)
- Future goals and these choices are clearly based on subjective task values – she discusses love of a subject and interest.
- Subjective task values are tempered with thought – rejected following in her mother's footsteps despite loving dance.
- Very detailed level of forethought and planning went into her options. She has thought through the challenges in advance, and has a back up plan in case her hardest subject was too much. Hasn't shied away from challenge in case of failure.

How the final decision came about? (Change over time)
- Took a very considered approach, demonstrating understanding that the future may not be fixed and may need rethinking so carefully considered her options if her initial choices didn't work.
- Her mother helped her talk through her final decisions through facilitating the thought process as opposed to giving advice.
- Influences moved away from school / peer group / familial ones to looking at what was needed for future goals. Independence demonstrated.
- Circle of influence clearly suggests that her cultural / societal influences did not dominate here, and she heavily relied on her ability to research to find the facts.

Emerging Self Knowledge and Identity (Column 3)
- She has a strong personal identity that isn't effected by others' opinions
- Self knowledge of own strengths and weakness, and confidence in the information she has sought out.
- Motivated by dispelling societal myths (girls can't do physics) and prove others wrong
- Enjoyment of demonstrating her individuality through choices, clothes etc, but does demonstrate some insecurity at times about being the exception to the norm
- Clear future goals with some details to be decided which are clearly based on subjective task values such as love of a subject, enjoyment, attainment value, utility and interest. These are a decider for choice.
- Clear rejection of her mother's identity as a dance teacher
- Sees course choice as a reflection of the identity of who she would like to become rather than as a reflection of her current identity. i.e. aspirational identity. Talks about taking on the persona of your chosen subjects / course

Initially (Change over time)
- Describes a moratorium at the start of this process where she panicked and doubted her capabilities, partially due to the feeling that the choice was a huge commitment. Was very resistant to the idea of limiting herself as did not want to close off future options
- Has always recognised that this decision has a long lasting impact, and went for a considered, research based approach.
- Found the decision process (via careers lessons) at school unhelpful – the preparation was out of context, so the decision was still a shock and she felt unprepared.
- Clearly influenced by older peers, but the implication is that she sought out the opinions she was interested in.

Cultural and Social Influences (Column 1)
- Took advice from a few older ex students she respected / identified with from her extended social circle
- Sought advice from current teachers, but found the DOSF's enthusiasm off putting.
- Father's opinion was actively avoided
- Mother was helpful in facilitating the decision, but not in giving advice about the decision
- As she moved towards making the final decision she moved away from socialisers influencing her.

Individual's perceptions of Cultural and Social Influences, and the effect of previous experiences (Column 2)
- Her perception of other's opinions is counter intuitive. She disagrees with the conventional opinion of drop things / skills you aren't good at.
- To agree with a socialiser's input she had to identify with them
- Confident in current teachers' opinions as they taught in the Sixth Form and knew her and the course – trust
- Father's opinion was seen as biased and manipulative

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Diagram 6.5.2.b: Bea's interview 2

<u>Student's current assessment of factors from columns 2-4 of the EV model.</u>
- Acknowledges that while her long term plan has shifted, she has always felt on track and still does so.
- Has struggled slightly with motivation in areas that she is enjoying less, but overall has maintained this over the year.
- Currently in a bit of a moratorium about the future, as she cannot see the end career she is aiming for.
- Currently finding the uncertainty about the long term future overwhelming. She is in a cycle of worrying about that and neglecting work, and therefore not doing as well as she should.
- Acknowledges that her feeling of uncertainty and worry are decreasing, and her feelings are improving, but she is having to work hard at this.

<u>The effect of time when looking back at the decision</u>
- Clearly still feels that her decision process was valid and accurate.

<u>Student's current perception of their decision process</u>

- In agreement with the survey statements, apart from on enjoyment as she took that as something which needed to be there.
- Still struggles to talk her choices through with her family.

Diagram 6.5.3.a: Carl's interview 1

Now [Change over time]
- Found the transition very smooth, and attributes this to staying in the same school.
- Remains firmly set of his ideas of studying Physio at Queensland University.
- Appears very positive about his choices.

How the final decision came about? [Change over time]
- School / Guernsey peers have had very limited influence
- Future goals developed from past experiences, but these are sport related rather than academic. Ensured that he chose academic subjects he enjoyed, but that would fit him for his future HE aspirations.
- Listened to his teachers at year 11 talk about Sixth Form whilst teaching him, and absorbed a lot of extra information.

Task, Activities and Behavioural Choices (Column 5)
- Demonstrates a link between current enjoyment and future goals. Academic subjects are the vehicle to reach the future goals, and are not prompting these.
- Perception of choice as straightforward if you have clear ideas and have done your research
- Acknowledges that this is an important choice, and feels that IB helps here as it allows the potential to change your mind about the future due to the number of subjects.
- Could see the connection between careers lesson activities in year 11 and making this choice, and feels he was able to use these to focus. Ditto the guidance events.

Expectation of Success and Subjective Task Values (Column 4)
- Utility value – choices permitted university course – used this to guide choices
- Relative cost an important consideration – help him to get where he wants
- Future goal partly based on the idea that it has a reputation for happy professionals
- IB chosen over A Levels once he realised that this would be a simpler route in to international universities. Greater utility.
- Clear that enjoyment does feature heavily in his subject choice, but this isn't emphasised as his future goals are based in enjoyment so this is emphasised and the subject enjoyment follows naturally.

Interview 3: CARL

Male, IB DP, Feeder School 6

Themes: Confidence, determination, single minded, well prepared. Future relative cost a strong motivator.

Initially [Change over time]
- His plans have been considered and discussed with his wider family over time, and are partially based on a relative cost consideration with family Australian family with cousins at university. This, and cost, have inspired him to move to Australia for university.
- He has a strong interest in sport, and was inspired to work in the industry first by his part time employer (a personal trainer), then by his Physio. He then conducted research, and found this was realistic so has planned carefully how to get there.

Cultural and Social Influences (Column 1)
- Family influence is very strong, but cousins (his generation) rather than parents.
- Mother's influence is limited. She would prefer him to stay in Europe, but he is clear he doesn't want to.
- Father's influence is limited: appears to not be bothered about his son's choice even though his son is choosing to return to study in Australia.
- Peers' influence is limited; unconcerned that he would choose a different route both at Sixth Form and HE. However he has clearly discussed this decision with them.
- Key influencers appear to be people he wishes to emulate – e.g. his Physio, employer, cousins.

Emerging Self Knowledge and Identity (Column 3)
- Formulated a clear future goal
- Choices based around future goal – has looked at university's required choices and ensured he has chosen these.
- Shows a considerable depth of thought and research about the future, and has a back up plan in case he isn't able to do as he plans initially.
- The link between identity and these choices – they demonstrate who you want to develop into, rather than who you are now. His choices are taken to shape him into the type of student he wants to be to get into the course and university of his choice.
- He clearly feels that it should be normal to look at who you want to be and use your choices to shape that identity.

Individual's perceptions of Cultural and Social Influences, and the effect of previous experiences (Column 2)
- There is a clear link between future goals, past experiences and enjoyment. He is not driven by just by future goals and ignoring what he enjoys – the goals are developed by considering what he enjoys.
- Demonstrates a clear recognition that everyone is different, so what is right for him isn't necessarily right for his friends and vice versa.
- Has found talking to his friends beneficial, but can't remember why or how their ideas changed. Seems rather self-centred and un-empathetic at times.
- Has changed his mind about his future goals after discussion with his employer.
- Can look back now and see that much of the information that he took in about these choices was inferred in lessons rather than overtly stated.

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Diagram 6.5.3.b: Carl's interview 2

Student's current assessment of factors from columns 2-4 of the EV model.
- Discusses how the values PD helped shape and consolidate his ideas about the future, and make him think he is on the right track for him.
- Clear that his decision process was based around his ideas of what he would like to do in the future, and that enjoyment, doing well etc. were secondary.

The effect of time when looking back at the decision
- Reflects on the last year and acknowledges that he hasn't enjoyed all of it, but he didn't expect to enjoy everything in the IB and his motivation comes from where it will take him afterwards.
- Surprised at how few of the students in y13 said their method of choosing wasn't useful

Student's current perception of their decision process
- Whilst his decision was made early (y10), he doesn't appear to have foreclosed. He has discussed considering other options, and questioning whether its right for him, and coming to the conclusion it is. Appears to have a very considered thought process.
- He appears to feel that his method of making the choice was 'mostly' ok.

Diagram 6.5.4: Dan's interview 1

Center:

Interview 4: DAN

Male, A Level, Feeder School 3.

Themes: Reliance on friendship group, fixed mindset

Initially (Change over time)

- Checked his choices were appropriate for his career choice using UCAS, but says that this didn't effect what the chose – he was set on his ideas. Seems he made subject choices from own belief it would 'help' rather than external verification.
- Relied heavily on peers, and clearly wanted to avoid being different from them and the only one making his particular choices.
- Initially wanted to do 4 A Levels, but found his grades weren't good enough to allow this.

How the final decision came about? (Change over time)

- Checked in his peer group as to who had made choices like him. Partly to see if he was like them – appears to be a concern about how others could perceive him.
- Says that prior to making the choice he considered the other study options carefully including the IB after hearing about it at the information events. This implies that he didn't simply foreclose and make the expected choice, but contradicts this by saying he made his mind up on what he wanted to do rather early at the end of year 10, which is before the information events.
- His normal behaviour is to stick to a choice once made, so that has also influenced the way he has behaved as once he made his choices he didn't reconsider at all. His clear and fixed ideas made the final choice easy.

Now (Change over time)

- Found previous enjoyment to be a reliable basis for his decisions.
- Family unpreparedness for these decisions demonstrated here through the decision to ignore the future and just concentrate on getting through the course.
- Clearly was concerned at the start of year 12 to discover he didn't have friends who had ended up studying sociology with him. It is a 'downer' to think that he would have to study it for 2 years without friends. Clearly checked he had friends who had made the same choice, and now upset that he had been separated.
- Now able to justify why 3 A Levels were the best choice for him having observed others.
- Now acknowledges that if he changes his mind re studying Psychology at University he could face problems with what his current program of study allows, but doesn't seem concerned about this.

Cultural and Social Influences (Column 1)

- Friends influencing choice as he didn't want to be the only one making his choices. Justification of why he wanted to be in subjects with friends – they could help him with his studies. Later contradicts himself and claims that peers' choices weren't important to him.
- Implication that he was swayed by peers' opinions: 'I didn't really know what to believe'
- Family influence to do subject he was best at at GCSE
- Parental advice given, but with no pressure and unconditional approval of choice. Appears to be describing a very relaxed situation. Parents not seen as concerned or overly involved in the choice. Unclear whether this is because parents aren't particularly aware or not.
- Confirmation of lack of involvement from parents, although implication that they are invested now in supporting to succeed.
- Describes the perceived lack of support from his previous school in making this decision, and felt they were more concerned in making sure the students knew what immediate employment opportunities there were out there.

Individual's perceptions of Cultural and Social Influences, and the effect of previous experiences (Column 2)

- Choice based on gcse experience, and enjoyment at GCSE
- Student approval of parental hands off approach
- He continues to maintain his belief that English A Level will open lots of doors; this appears to come from the underlining of its importance at GCSE.
- The previous big study decision was choosing optional GCSEs, and he didn't take this seriously. He is clear that he didn't want to repeat this mistake.

Emerging Self Knowledge and Identity (Column 3)

- Coming across that this decision was a combination of achieving his personal identity, and far more a statement of fitting in with his perceived social identity within his peer group.
- Belief in his academic capabilities was eroded –although not to a large extent – when he discovered his GCSE grades weren't good enough to allow him to do 4 A Levels. He adjusted to this fairly easily.
- The extra opportunities at Sixth Form are helping him to form an emerging personal identity, but this is happening very slowly and he doesn't have much motivation to do this.
- This choice was a formation of personal identity – looking at who he wants to be in the future and making choices to get there. Sees a clear connection from the decision to the future.
- Sees choices as very influential in developing personal identity and a social collective identity – discusses having a group around him who made similar choices. Different choices would = different group.
- He has noticed how the subjects he studies has influenced his behaviour and how he interprets things. Links back to subjects influential on developing identity.

Task, Activities and Behavioural Choices (Column 5)

- Clearly learning is a very social as opposed to a personal experience for him. The lack of friends in the sociology class has changed his outlook. When in classes with friends, he gains confidence in his academic abilities.
- Enjoying many of the extra challenges of Sixth Form. Discusses the Law Moot competition he is taking part in and how that is making him consider it as a career.

Expectation of Success and Subjective Task Values (Column 4)

- Has a very fixed outlook
- When lacking the support from his peers he struggles to integrate with a new group.
- Has a low expectation of success; despite being predicted the entry grades he didn't think he would be offered a place.
- Has a clear future aim, and thinks choices will support this.

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Diagram 6.5.5: Eve's interview 1

Interview 5: EVE

Female, A Level, Feeder School 1

Themes: Self aware, focused, lacks some confidence in her ability to succeed.

Initially (Change over time)

- Strong parental involvement in helping and prompting her to make a decision
- Parental support for her long term aims – wants to be a journalist.

How the final decision came about? (Change over time)

- Even though she has discussed having a very clear future career, she didn't checked if her current subjects will take her there. She made her choices based on what she enjoyed and was good at when doing GCSEs.
- Despite discussing how her decisions were made independently of her peers, she was clearly influenced by older students – e.g. when told IB was difficult, she immediately decided against.
- Struggled to narrow her choices down to 3, but even so kept with A levels.

Now (Change over time)

- Has questioned whether she has made the right decisions for sixth form, but hasn't changed anything as can't see what she would like better.
- Sixth Form has been much more difficult than expected, and she has struggled to adjust. Lacks confidence in her ability to succeed, and struggles as she used to be top of her class at her previous school, and now compares herself less favourably to her new set of peers. Demonstrates that she deals with these feelings by trying to stay with what she has to do right now.
- She is reluctant to check if her A Level choices are right for her chosen career, and to do anything but stay with where she is. Concerns that her grades won't be good enough for university. This is an interesting shift from the clear career discussed earlier.
- Has developed clear concerns about how realistic her ambitions are, and how achievable they are.

Task, Activities and Behavioural Choices (Column 5)

- Found the trial sessions during the information events to be useful as enjoyed the experience of testing whether the subject was right for her. Found this a good indication of what the studies would actually be like.
- Demonstrating her attitude, that its better to try hard and not succeed, than simply miss the opportunity. Acknowledges that failure can be difficult and cause you to question yourself.
- Sees the decision for sixth form as one that has a huge effect on future jobs, and feels that it is a good time to take it as you have the support mechanisms around you from parents and school to help.
- Previous experience was that she was v good at a subject as school compared to her peers, and found that she came to sixth form and wasn't. This shaped how she found the subject.
- Has now started considering the next decision and is finding that a scary process. Again sounds like a moratorium in that she is saying even the idea of it is scary.

Expectation of Success and Subjective Task Values (Column 4)

- Has never been in the situation where if she worked hard and tried, she has been unsuccessful.
- Describes how WE has really made her question whether her chosen career is right for her, or if she will manage to get there. Describes it as 'playing on your mind'.
- With maturity she has come to see that she needs to have options, rather than simply thinking she will definitely get to the top of a competitive career.
- Discusses the pressure of feeling you have to get sixth form right – consequences for the future in you don't. Deals with these negative emotions by concentrating on taking one step at a time towards where she wants to be.
- Difficulty in adjusting from previous experience of where she ranked in her school to how she ranks in a much larger institution.

Cultural and Social Influences (Column 1)

- Recognises that peers have opinions and influence others.
- Older peers were an influence regarding subjects: enjoyment, difficulty, content etc. Found this to be a negative and not a useful source of information although she was clearly influenced by current students as she never looked past some negativity about the difficulty level of doing IB.
- Friendship group was a supportive mechanism to discuss choices.
- School provided an influence, through providing information, influence, and support.
- External mentor (scheme set up between a local company and the school) who she credited with inspiring and supporting her so she got to Sixth Form.
- Information events were a huge influence, as you need to consider whether trial sessions suit you
- Parents involved in the decision, and prompted her to make the decision a certain way. She was very unsure. Her perception is that her parents took every step of the decision with her, but that they all did it calmly and supportively with no arguments. Describing a moratorium, but was clearly supported well to get through.
- Demonstrates her independence from her peers as is not worried about being different.
- Support from school – personalised help.
- Support from external Mentor (from a local company)

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merging Self Knowledge and Identity (Column 3)

- She has a clear future aim
- The future is her main long term focus, and she is recognising that choosing to try and do everything with her friends won't get her there, so demonstrating her growing maturity and ability to develop her own identity and independence.
- Has already started to acknowledge that her chosen career is very competitive and she may not succeed.
- Sixth Form allows you to try out different future identities before deciding, whilst studying to get ready.
- Discusses the negative impact of comparing yourself with others rather than concentrating on your progress.
- Clearly not convinced that your choice of subjects / courses is a choice demonstrating your developing identity, however sees the choice as a public statement of the type of thing she might want to do next.
- Sees the transition as having a big impact on who you are, especially in terms of lessening naïveté.

Individual's perceptions of Cultural and Social Influences, and the effect of previous experiences (Column 2)

- Found older peers to be a negative source of information, and her friends to be a supportive mechanism to discuss choices.
- Sees the school and mentor as very positive.
- Her perception is that her intrinsic motivation has been her most important factor in success so far and making choices.
- Her parents are very supportive of her long term aims, but she and they are aware that these may change as she changes and develops.
- Not worried about making different choices from her friends as she can see the impact of the current choice on the future.
- Acknowledges that peers to influence you in ways that you shouldn't (e.g. being silly in class), and is clear that you should take responsibility for your own actions.
- Describes the change from GCSE options when she was more concerned about being with friends and fitting in with her peers, to taking responsibility for herself and planning for the future.

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Diagram 6.5.6.a: Fern's interview 1

Interview 6: FERN

F, IB DP, Feeder School 6

Themes: Mature thought process, aware of influences

Now (Change over time)
- Has a clear understanding that ideas and ability can change over time. These do not have to be fixed.
- Able to justify why she has made the right choice for her – clearly still defending her late change of mind to others.
- She feels that she is struggling to explain her feelings of why she rejected her previous studies so clearly

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Task, Activities and Behavioural Choices (Column 5)
- A mature discovery that friends remain even if you are doing something different from them.
- Changing to leave her open to make choices about her future later was a big relief
- Her final choice focuses on the ability to both have a clear aim and more options.
- Demonstrating the ability to think maturely and see the wider picture

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Expectation of Success and Subjective Task Values (Column 4)
- Has a future goal, but clearly aware that it might not be realistic
- The worry that in choosing a small number of A levels, and one turning out to be the wrong choice had a huge impact.
- Struggling with the misconceptions of her A level peers about her IB studies.
- Appears to be finding the sixth form joke comment of why do IB its so hard to be a bit annoying and unfair.

Emerging Self Knowledge and Identity (Column 3)
- A mature discovery that friends remain even if you are doing something different from them.
- First set of A level choices had no future goal in mind; they were simply based on enjoyment. Reflection over time led her to realise they wouldn't leave her with many options when finished and were narrow.
- Medicine related goal formed over time, and through wider family influences (family members who are doctors)
- Her choice as a reflection of an aspirational identity

How the final decision came about? (Change over time)
- Made an unusual late change – just before term started
- Came to a realisation that making choices to match her friends could have a negative impact
- Final choice made independently of peers / family. Clearly a lot of prior independent thought. Choice made after exam results – completely driven by the student.
- Needed a period of mature reflection with no other pressures to come to her final decision.

Initially (Change over time)
- Decided on A Levels – subjects she simply liked. No thought about future, but more matching with friends.

Cultural and Social Influences (Column 1)
- Parental influence vs friendship influence. Friends' opinions initially more important, but heard her mother's and went with that in the end.
- Father is struggling to comprehend that ability and preferences change over time.
- Late change obviously startled peers – faced questioning.
- Brother clearly a large influence, although not always a helpful and supportive one
- Influence of peers and wider circle – can be hard to resist.
- Older peers especially influential
- Appears to see her only influences and peers and family
- Repetitive nature of school career advice – boring
- discusses how teachers were an influence – she sought out their opinions of whether she would cope.
- despite talking about how little an influence the school has had she rates it above her friends. She also brings in grandparents who haven't previously been mentioned.

Individual's perceptions of Cultural and Social Influences, and the effect of previous experiences (Column 2)
- Feels that previous studies impact on choices as they provide the background that tells you everything you've learned before, what you like, don't like etc.
- Discussion of avoiding comparison with others, and making choices to avoid this.
- Also a result of past experiences – she really doesn't enjoy the experience of continuously being unfavourably compared to her older brother.
- Far easier to change your mind when parents don't remind you that they advised this in the first place.
- Previous option choices not taken seriously (KS4)

Diagram 6.5.6.b: Fern's interview 2

Student's current perception of their decision process	• Student's current assessment of factors from columns 2-4 of the EV model.	The effect of time when looking back at the decision
• Clearly identifying a gap in her previous reasoning. Hadn't considered her ability to do well in a subject, and just assumed that if she worked it would all be fine. Chemistry really hasn't been successful. • Has partially restarted, and based her decision more firmly on considering what she could do well in. • Acknowledges she is thinking about this differently that previously. • Very accepting of her ability to make poor decisions. 'Everyone says…' and 'I'm a mess'. • Reflects that the choice process is (and still is) confusing, • Expresses relief that the partial restart puts of the decision regarding what to do next for another year.	• Reflects that her initial assumptions about subject enjoyment haven't been correct • Future goals were never very clear, and have changed over the year. • Moved to a less certain place about her studies and the future over the year. • Clearly has a poor self image and compares herself to her older brother. This year hasn't helped those feelings of inadequacy. Very accepting that she isn't as good as him. • Clearly pleased she made an attempt to succeed when she struggled, although she regrets not making a conscious attempt to succeed sooner.	• Reflects that her decisions were not made well, and that being unable to succeed with one subject has had a big impact on all her studies. • Now feels that she doesn't approach important decisions as though they are, so therefore doesn't consider the surrounding factors. Describing a foreclosure.

Diagram 6.5.7.a: Gia's interview 1

Interview 7: GIA

Female, A Level, Feeder School 3

- Dyslexia has coloured her perception of her abilities and influenced her approach to studying
- Safe choices where she is able to succeed

<u>Initially (Change over time)</u>

- Struggled to make the P16 study decision, and feels that at that age you are too young to think about it properly. Needed more time to make it.
- Has a lot of confusion regarding decisions which is related to lack of clarity of what she wants to do
- Decision of where to study oscillated from one place to the other and back. Not a clear and easy decision.

<u>How the final decision came about? (Change over time)</u>

- Current choices have been guided to an extent by difficulties in reading
- Describes her decision as an indicator of what she likes to do and is interested in.
- Chose against a Btec as she didn't want to just be an artist, and felt she needed to expand her skills, both creative and writing.

<u>Now (Change over time)</u>

- Dislikes the transient feel of sixth form study.

<u>Task, Activities and Behavioural Choices (Column 5)</u>

- Maintained her friendship group despite having made different individual choices.
- Doesn't like wearing the coloured glasses despite the help they give as a side effect of the glasses is they change the way she sees colour.
- Clearly struggles with making and considering the important decisions in advance. E.g. at the moment would like to not do HE preparation work, and simply concentrate on studies. Almost sounds resentful.
- Most things about her decision return to her base feeling of herself as an artist. She seems unaware of this, but this seems to be a driving force in her decision.

<u>Expectation of Success and Subjective Task Values (Column 4)</u>

- Able to clearly justify why she has included an essay based subject, but doesn't sound very confident and certain given the challenges she faces to succeed. She is clearly very reluctant to close down her options too far and just study creative subjects, but it clear that Philosophy isn't her first choice of subject.
- Her 'normal' is to struggle with reading and take a very long time. She says this hasn't ever make her feel insecure about her ability, but the way she describes this contradicts that.
- The green dyslexia glasses give her the security that she can cope with reading or writing. They have had a very positive impact on the way she views learning, and her confidence regarding her ability.
- Becomes clear that HE isn't a decision she cannot make – parental financial situation is precluding it. Explains the resentment she displays (suspect she is unaware of it) regarding her friends who plan to go.
- Despite her creative identity, she dropped media for philosophy very early on due to the writing aspect of the media coursework.

<u>Cultural and Social Influences (Column 1)</u>

- Parents key to decision through discussion
- Dad clearly a strong influence – but not always a positive and encouraging one. Clearly unimpressed with her choice of a 'soft' subject. Father's perceptions of subjects do not match the normal. E.g. Art and DT as solid choices, but Philosophy as 'fluffy'.
- Father encouraged her to make choices that replicated his, despite her lack of interest.
- Mother seems more neutral. These discussions seem to have had less on an impact in terms of remembering them.
- Peers do not seem to be an influence. Discusses that individual choices to suit own needs are more important than trying to stay as a group.
- Little help from school in making the decision
- When asked to list her influences in order says they were parents, friends, wider family, teachers.

<u>Individual's perceptions of Cultural and Social Influences, and the effect of previous experiences (Column 2)</u>

- Subject choices based on previous life experience. She is very dyslexic so gravitated towards creative subjects that required minimal reading / writing.
- Now has prescribed green glasses for reading, but only got these on starting sixth form. This has influenced her attitude towards reading / writing throughout school as she clearly had substantial difficulties with reading when younger.
- Despite giving a strong impression that she was under parental pressure to not choose Philosophy, she says she wasn't pressurised to change her mind.
- When talking about her place in her friendship group, she describes herself as the most clingy, but the rest of her discussion does not give the impression of clinginess.
- Peer group contains some people who are considering HE, but clearly she doesn't quite believe it is their choice rather than their parents.

<u>Emerging Self Knowledge and Identity (Column 3)</u>

- Choice of subjects made while thinking of the skills she wanted to develop – e.g. improved literacy
- Acknowledges that her current strengths and focus have developed due to the challenges she has faced whilst studying.
- Made the safe choice for what to study, as has no clear future aim
- States that study decisions don't relate to personal identity
- Claims an 'artistic' identity, despite earlier statement that these decisions aren't to do with identity.
- Decision as an indicator of what she likes to do and is interested in. Unclear how this is different from her identity.

Diagram 6.5.7.b: Gia's interview 2

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Student's current assessment of factors from columns 2-4 of the EV model.
- Has had to be creative to find ways of learning.
- Has found Philosophy more difficult than she thought she would. Feels she is at a disadvantage compared to others, but it isn't a big issue.
- Her ideas about the future have changed over the past year, but not enormously. Feels very unsure.
- Has realised she should go to university, but is undecided on what to study.
- Her motivation over the year came from what she knew she would get out of it. Finds it fun in the lesson, but struggles with the writing and dreaded having to do it at times.

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The effect of time when looking back at the decision
- Underestimation of workload and difficulty meant that she struggled to do enough in time to get through to year 13.

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Student's current perception of their decision process
- Mostly made her choices as she knew she could succeed.
- Clearly currently feels she is in a bit of a crisis about the future – a moratorium.
- Decision is made worse as she is very concerned about the financial impact on her family of HE fees.

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Diagram 6.5.8.a: Hope's interview 1

Interview 8: HOPE

Female, A Level student, Feeder School 4.

Themes: foreclosing of decisions, poor decision process, past experiences leaves her with little confidence in school / teachers / her ability

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Now (Change over time)
- Clearly surprised by the more understanding / caring attitude at the SFC as opposed to earlier.
- Has found the transition strange – year group is around 25 times larger than in year 11.
- Now feels valued and cared for as a student – this is a clear shift from her previous experience where she had built a clear identity as someone who was able to be very independent.

Task, Activities and Behavioural Choices (Column 5)
- Information process very compressed due to school's isolated island location, with little time for consideration and thought.
- Describes a situation where choices were made in a hurry, and students were very unsure and unconfident of their options.
- Has been describing an ongoing moratorium, foreclosure, then reconsideration and better decision.
- Clearly her past experiences with school was stressful and led her to underperform, and it sounds like she lost her trust in her teachers' ability to give good advice. Also has had a significant impact on what choices she has been able to make.
- Regrets the choice to leave the selective school and move back to her home island – poor choice in the past.
- Clearly her past academic experiences were stressful for her immediate family also.
- Lack of guidance from previous school – possibly connected to how she approaches decisions now. Does come across as a freezing regarding a decision, then foreclosing quickly.

Expectation of Success and Subjective Task Values (Column 4)
- Initial choices based on enjoyment.
- Student chose Maths as she enjoyed the feeling of being able to succeed despite the school.
- Clearly sees the importance and significance of this decision, and clearly finds that intimidating.
- Feels she is now able to separate out that side of her that enjoys a subject, but doesn't want to study it / isn't good enough to. Couldn't make this distinction initially.
- Recognises that she received poor personalised advice from the SFC as she was predicted very low grades due to the problems within her school. She achieved far higher, which was a further reason for reinvestigating her choices.

How the final decision came about? (Change over time)
- Substantial change to choices was made on arriving at sixth form.
- Describes parental confusion when she made the substantial changes to her program, and her need to reassure.
- Final decision made independently of her parent.
- Clearly a student who carefully considers her decisions prior to making them – doesn't rush. The experience of starting her studies shook her preconceived ideas of what she was good at and wanted to study – e.g. dropped Art.
- She knew as soon as she started studying some subjects at the start of the year that they were the wrong fit for her, but she was very reluctant to change until she had tried the lessons properly. This led her to actually be a very late change. Poor decision making – a different type of moratorium?
- The time at the start of the academic year when she was reconsidering options was very confused – flipped between options, and took advice from quite a number of members of staff.
- Decision seems to have in part been decided as the member of staff she needed to speak to about one of the options was unavailable when she went to find her, so she decided in the other direction. Whilst she could clearly recognise earlier the poor decision in returning to her home island age 12, it seems that her decision process still isn't very logical.

Initially (Change over time)
- Found it hard to choose between the easy & safe, and the things she was good at.
- Peers very supportive of each other in her school, as all struggled to make their decisions against a backdrop of school problems.
- School experience locked out options; this made the decision easier as there were more things she was unable to consider. Suggest this lead to a foreclosure.

Cultural and Social Influences (Column 1)
- Mother as a major influence to guide choice.
- poor support from school in making the choice – felt very unsupported.
- School mistakes meant that students weren't able to access information events.
- Problems with the teaching within the school meant that sixth form choices were far less immediate an issue than simply passing GCSEs.
- Family experience guiding choices, regardless of whether these were the right choices for this student. Describes pressure to conform.
- Was able to succeed with Maths despite teaching problems at school, so parental pressure was to continue with that subject.
- Describes her mother's actions as nudging her towards a sensible decision as she had no idea. Has been describing an ongoing moratorium, foreclosure, then reconsideration and better decision.
- Wasn't concerned over whether she was or wasn't doing similar subjects to peers.
- Peers as a supportive presence whilst making a decision. The small school (12 in Y11) and shared difficult experience meant that they formed their own support group.
- Old friends from the selective school were also there to talk to, but clearly a less influential and helpful peer group.
- Very limited official help for this decision – clearly very isolated on her home island – describes only advice regarding options as coming in written form from the SFC.
- Influences go from 1 Mum, 2 Youtube, 3 Hostie and SFC teachers, 4 friends, 5 previous teachers.

Individual's perceptions of Cultural and Social Influences, and the effect of previous experiences (Column 2)
- Past experiences as the main motivation for choice initially.
- Past experiences were not supportive of her wish to study science. Known problems with the standard of teaching at her previous school meant that her GCSE grades only just allowed her to make the changes to her subjects.
- Clearly concerned that her past academic experiences and results are going to affect her future.
- Did consider other options to A Levels, but clearly influenced heavily by difficult experiences (described as horrendous) when studying certain subjects at her previous school. The stress of that time put her off taking classes in those areas again.

Emerging Self Knowledge and Identity (Column 3)
- When initially choosing, did not consider future goals.
- Developed a future goal after making her initial choice, but did not allow this to affect choices despite them not being the most suitable route prior to arriving.
- Appeared to be unsure on how her future goals were formed. Seems to have been a surprise to her.
- Sees these choices as a statement of the path you are taking to the person you will become. For her, this was based on her new goal of Astro-physics.
- Feels that if different choices were made, you would be forming a different future identity, although you would still be the same person underneath.
- Choices not connected to her social identity, which is based more about the person she was age 12 when she last attended the school.

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Diagram 6.5.8.b: Hope's interview 2

<u>Student's current perception of their decision process</u>
- Her wider experience of living away from home has coloured her studies, as she is able to recognise that when she has struggled with the situation this has affected her ability to affectively study.
- Recognises that she went through a moratorium in terms of decisions prior to sixth form, and is trying to make sure she doesn't enter the same state again with her next decision. This affects the way she approaches decisions she is much more careful.

<u>Student's current assessment of factors from columns 2-4 of the EV model.</u>
- Future goals guided her earlier choices, and in following study choices for these she is seeing further options opening up.
- Looking back at the year there have been times when she has struggled, but she hasn't lost her overall enjoyment of the subject, even though she hasn't enjoyed finding it difficult.

<u>The effect of time when looking back at the decision</u>
- Still recognising that her first set of subjects were chosen in an unconsidered matter, and the second set were chosen better.

Diagram 6.5.9.a: Ian's interview 1

Central node:

Interview 9: IAN

Male, A Level student, Feeder School 2.

Themes: Reinventing himself at Sixth Form (Identity as a learner, rejection of previous values, loss of previous social identity / friendship group

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Initially (Change over time)

- Feels that these choices are more important than trying to stay the same as friends as you will never make identical choices. Currently hoping he will make new friends in time who fit more closely with his new identity
- Sees A Level choices as a 'free for all', where you make your choice through interest and your inclinations.

Cultural and Social Influences (Column 1)

- Discussed choices with parents only. Parents concerned that he would balance the workload.
- Didn't discuss his decisions outside his immediate family as felt that it was his decision so should be made by him.
- Parents provided a firm influence, but at the same time gave him the space to make choices. Admits when younger he lacked motivation, but at GCSE was a lot better.
- Parents ensure that they are clear on what he needs to do.
- Friends were clearly choosing a different path so he didn't discuss his choices with them.
- Parents been very supportive and encouraging about maths.

How the final decision came about? (Change over time)

- Balanced making safe choices with new choices. Media was a safe choice, while others were new and a challenge.
- Drama GCSE was a shock, as his coursework was moderated down and he underperformed. This led him to reject taking Drama, previously his favourite and strongest subject, forward. Drama GCSE shook his confidence and faith in his abilities. Led him to feel very undecided.
- Chose A Levels rather than IB as he was worried about needing to retake maths. He was right, and he can do this alongside maths (a pass is an entry requirement for IB)
- Choice to do A Levels also came from feeling that studying a language would be his 'worst nightmare'.

Now (Change over time)

- Creative subjects now are very different (Media, Film) than previously. Can see the link to the workplace.
- Sociology has been a shock and different to expected as there is simply so much theory and possible questions.
- Now able to justify (use of the word 'always') why his other subjects were a better choice for him.
- Chosen subjects he feels are linked, and has had his view validated by his form tutor.
- Concerned that his chosen subjects are limiting, and wouldn't want to then resit / continue studying to make up any deficit.
- Trying to ensure he looks at the positive side and that regardless of subject what matters is he gets 3 good grades.
- Clearly feels that he has made the right choice and is understanding all his work. However there are times brief emotionally when he feels that this is the wrong place for him – perhaps connected to his previous friendship group.
- Now believes he has made the right choice. Clearly has justified to himself through claiming that no one likes A Level Drama. Although he ends acknowledging that he wishes he had had the chance to know whether or not he would enjoy studying drama. Clearly some regrets.
- Looking back, he finds the shift he has made regarding his choices (not studying Drama) to be dramatic.

Task, Activities and Behavioural Choices (Column 5)

- Chose Sociology despite not being keen on essay subjects, but it allowed him to argue and discuss using research.
- Maths is clearly a sore point. He describes having worked hard for his maths GCSE each time, but then not managing to pass. Clearly dispirited about this, and has found that successive maths teachers have struggled to help him. This influenced the way he made his choices.
- Now going well as he has learned a completely new way of approaching his work. Learned to separate academic work and socialising. Task based factor.
- Recognises that making choices so closely linked will limit his future options.
- Also thinks three A Levels, if done to a good grade, would act as entry to employment regardless of subject as they demonstrate his ability to work and commit.
- Choosing not to participate in extra curricular Drama. Explains this as wanting to stay on top of his work, but struggling to explain.
- Worried that if he does anything to disrupt his work pattern he will lose control and begin to struggle.
- Values the consistency within his current subjects, and is satisfied he has made the right choices.

Expectation of Success and Subjective Task Values (Column 4)

- Has a different approach to current studies after his GCSE experience – now consistently tries to work hard. Sees it paying off as has been getting Bs. Now its going well – he says he feels he is excelling which is clearly not something he is used to.
- Has found it hard to form a new friendship group – feels that most others are already set.
- Strongly feels he would have liked feedback on his Drama GCSE – it is an unanswered question for him and was deeply influential on his decision as he felt unable to succeed in studying it further.
- Resents being required to attend study support as feels that despite GCSE grades, if he was struggling now it would be apparent. Feels it is patronising.

Individual's perceptions of Cultural and Social Influences, and the effect of previous experiences (Column 2)

- In his previous studies enjoyed creative subjects, especially those that were more physical (e.g. DT, drama). Led him to choose creative subjects to study.
- Appears to think that the different potential paths meant that it wouldn't be useful to speak to friends.
- Didn't feel supported by previous teachers, who clearly doubted his abilities, and is able to describe his He is clear that his teachers weren't supportive as he wasn't a good student in KS3, and has not yet got Maths GCSE.
- Feels maths coloured his teachers' perceptions of his abilities, and is able to describe his teachers' shocked reactions when he passed his other courses.
- Clearly has trust in his current teachers to make good decisions regarding available options. This is based on his previous school having done so and it worked out well.
- Clearly receiving GCSE results that were lower than hoped for was a shock, and this has influenced the way he now studies.
- Influences as Parents, teachers, Friends at Sixth Form already, and friends. Clearly left a gap between parents and teachers, implying that teachers were far less influential than his parents.

Emerging Self Knowledge and Identity (Column 3)

- Subjects clearly chosen based on his strengths and enjoyment, with the cons taken were they were outweighed by the pros.
- Attitude towards studies has also changed as he sees that the next stage is HE or employment, so this is very important.
- Developed an independent identity from his friends – discusses the ability to maintain his social identity whilst developing his own.
- Discusses how changing his way of working is actually quite isolating – his path has taken him away from his friends. Clearly realised that his personal identity and choices have taken him away from his friendship group
- Clearly used to have a very strong social identity as part of a group prior to Sixth Form.
- Lower than expected results at GCSE shook his identity, and shook his trust in his teachers. He feels he must have done something wrong, and his approach to sixth form study reflects this.
- His experience for Drama GCSE (being told coursework was an A*, then being moderated to a B, C overall) made him change his decision to take Drama – he changed his identity as he decided he clearly wasn't good enough to be a drama student.
- Hasn't currently got a future career in mind.
- Identity: choice of subjects doesn't define you as a person, but more demonstrate what you enjoy. E.g. With Sociology he can see that this choice reflects his enjoyment of this area.
- Clearly rejects the idea of himself as a creative person, despite his other choices. Perhaps this is influenced by his experience with Drama. This is the basis for his feelings that the choice is not a reflection of identity – he isn't creative.
- Sees the choice more as a demonstration of who you are choosing to develop into, rather than a current identity.
- Can see that the subject areas encourage a certain type of group identity – Media and Film as bubbly, positive and outgoing. Wonders if people change to match this to ensure they are best suited for the area.
- Within the collective identity of Media and Film he identifies himself as an outsider. He wants to get on with his work and not participate in the wider culture of being this type of student. Recognises that he isn't alone in feeling this. There is someone else in his classes who displays a similar type of behaviour to him.

Diagram 6.5.9.b: Ian's interview 2

Student's current assessment of factors from columns 2-4 of the EV model.

- Continues not to consider usefulness past having 3 A levels
- Enjoyment is the factor he is least convincing about.
- Hasn't made any changes to his program of study since the start of the year, but has clearly found that his subjects were very different to expected.
- Very unclear about what he will do next; says there are a lot of options although not all are realistic. Does not want to commit to a future in case he makes a mistake.
- Positive attitude about his work and his level of interest.
- Clearly takes some pride in his achievements over the year, although is acknowledging he could do more.
- Has actively chosen not to commit to a future as he feels that if he worried about that he would have less mental space for studying and would be underachieving.

The effect of time when looking back at the decision

- Clearly regrets not considering other options such as the CFE.
- Found GCSEs very stressful as he was concerned about the future, and is making an active choice to not behave in the same way.

Student's current perception of their decision process

- Agreement with earlier thinking regarding what he could do well at.
- Has found his judgement on whether he could do well paid off, and his judgement about the amount of work he needed to do.

Diagram 6.5.10.a: Jake's interview 1

Interview 10: JAKE

Male, A Level, Feeder School 6

Themes: Parental approval, persuasion into certain subject areas, belief in a fixed type of personal skills, ability to make changes to succeed through hard work.

Initially (Change over time)

- Made a conscious choice to do A levels as he felt IB was more for people who didn't know what they wanted to do in the future, while he had a clear idea.
- Made a lot of enquiries to discover what his friends wanted to study – was very keen to be with his friends.

How the final decision came about? (Change over time)

- Felt that in order to find things were so different from expected that you wanted to change you would need to not listen or take the time to choose carefully.
- The decision also helped him make up his mind of who he would be in the future. He considered studying in the USA (IB be more beneficial to this), and then decided to study in the UK so A Levels would be fine.
- Strong parental involvement, their approval was clearly important. He was persuaded by them to include core maths AS to have a well-rounded program.

Now (Change over time)

- Before he started he felt it was important to have friends with him doing the same subjects. Now he feels it isn't, and it is better to sit with people who are less distracting.
- Currently feels in a very good place.
- Feels his decision is right for him as he has a lot of free time to work during the school day.

Task, Activities and Behavioural Choices (Column 5)

- Took Biology with the aim to work really hard, and so far sees that that is working.
- On making his choice he resolved to change the way he approached his work to ensure his choices were successful.
- He does have an old friend who is doing the same subjects as him – he feels he influenced his friend to do this. Having started, he feels it is better that they aren't actually in all the same classes. He feels it is risky having a good friend with him all the time as its distracting. Rather than working to understand it is too easy to just chat.
- Feels it is better to work with people who study the same subjects to clear up misunderstandings as you are less tempted to just talk.

Expectation of Success and Subjective Task Values (Column 4)

- Fixed notion of skills and knowledge. You are better at that skill, so you are should do this subject etc. Understanding your strengths leads to choices.
- Made a risky choice to take Biology, as he knew this wasn't something he was good at but needs for his future.
- Has concerns about whether he will be successful at sixth form – whether he can progress to his chosen HE course.
- Parental pressure to continue with Core Maths at Sixth Form was driven by his struggle to pass maths GCSE – they felt it would be important to improve his numeracy skills.
- Very clear that choices should be based on enjoyment, aptitude and future plans, not to be with friends or because they are easy options.
- Biology – clear he enjoyed it at GCSE and needs it, although he is concerned that he isn't good enough at it. He has found that subjects are different at this level – PE is far more theoretical and biology based. His experience of being pushed into a subject (Maths) that he doesn't enjoy is one of the driving factors for him saying decisions should be based in enjoyment.

Emerging Self Knowledge and Identity (Column 3)

- Choices driven by future goal
- Thinks that study choices are a choice about who you are and who you want to be in the future. You are choosing the kind of person you want to be when you are older.
- Observation that his peers are all starting to forge their own path and find out where they should be by themselves.
- Feels that the study choices means that it is hard to change path now, unless you are willing to put in time and start again.
- Reiterating that the choices made now set you firmly on a particular path, which is hard to change.
- Starting to plan for his future, and exploring university options (this is early to be doing this).

Cultural and Social Influences (Column 1)

- Had a clear reliance on older students' opinions, but recognises that if he had allowed older students' opinions to sway him he wouldn't have taken Biology. Contradicts earlier statement regarding usefulness of older students' opinions.
- Parents were clearly a big influence, and wanted to be actively involved.
- Parents were pro-active rather than reactive, and clearly asked him a lot of pertinent questions.
- Parental concern about incorporating an IB subject certificate alongside A Levels. This pushed them into persuading him to do Core Maths to give him a stronger program of study.
- Despite his enquiries about friends' choices, having friends with him isn't something his friendship group discussed as a group before. He was confident that they would remain friends.
- Influences were clearly himself, parents, teachers and older students, then friends.

Individual's perceptions of Cultural and Social Influences, and the effect of previous experiences (Column 2)

- However he states that hearing from older students that it was such a challenge was a significant factor is making his decision to change the way he approached his studies; he recognised that his GCSE approach wouldn't work.
- Student and parents didn't appreciate the change in structure of A Levels from previously.
- Parental impact on his decision was large, he does feel they persuaded him into subjects. He regrets doing Core Maths, but does however he believes they will accept if he decides to drop core maths.
- Describes himself as very interested to see if friends were doing the same courses, and actively asked, but hasn't allowed that to influence his choices.
- Felt well prepared in terms of receiving information from the Sixth Form prior to joining, but still found things weren't as expected.
- Recognises that his school put in work to help them make the decision, although he didn't find it useful. Found the advice given at school lacked credibility after the careers advice he received via an online test they were told to take was absurd.
- He sees a lot of his peers also starting to explore their study options, and trying to find out what each other are doing – sees this as a better way to make choices to be with friends than choosing the same course.

Diagram 6.5.10.b: Jake's interview 2

<table>
<tr><td valign="top">

Student's current assessment of factors from columns 2-4 of the EV model.

- Now starting to consider whether his planned future will be right for him as he knows he needs to be realistic about whether he will achieve the entry grades. This has been a shock.
- Has found there are times when it is hard to stay motivated and maintain levels of enjoyment. Recognises that motivation needs to be intrinsic.
- Extrinsic motivator of achieving predicted grades for future has also helped.
- Very little sympathy with those stuck in a moratorium; this is an alien idea to him.

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The effect of time when looking back at the decision

- Hasn't changed his ideas, but thinks this is because he had a future in mind. Recognises that those who are have completely changed type of subjects.
- He is surprised that so many students do have a clear future goal

Student's current perception of their decision process

- Clear that enjoyment is still an important factor.
- Considered whether he could do well, but this was outweighed by usefulness.
- Felt that the work load was exaggerated to students.

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Diagram 6.5.11.a: Kat's interview 1

Interview 11: KAT

Female, A Level, Feeder School 2

Themes: Extended Moratorium, illogical & arbitrary decision process, dependency on peer group, not considered or thought through

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Now (Change over time)

- Has discovered the reality of sixth form study is very different from her preconceptions and fears.

How the final decision came about? (Change over time)

- Still hadn't made up her mind at the start of the academic year, despite getting the GCSE grade to come to Sixth Form.
- Had another interview with the FE college after doing a week of Sixth Form, and realised that in not going to open days she hadn't got all the information and decided to go to the Sixth Form.
- Changed her course choices at Sixth Form 1 week in as she was partly thinking of going to the FE College as she didn't like one of the subjects she had chosen.
- Originally chose Photography as she had heard from older peers that it was good. Decided it wasn't for her as she discovered she was expected to study the technical side, and wasn't interested.
- Moved to Art as she had loved this at secondary school, and spent her free time doing Art.
- Despite knowing that she had an open choice of what to study, she found it very hard to make the decision, and it became a very extended process.
- Struggled when faced with the reality of needing to actually make the choice. Careers lessons had addressed it, but she hadn't taken it seriously, and therefore postponed and procrastinated.

Task, Activities and Behavioural Choices (Column 5)

- Describes herself as indecisive. She changed her mind backwards and forwards between the two institutions, and didn't come to the open days.
- Had decided college was more for her due to the increased amount of work experience / less of an academic focus. However when she actually went to find out she discovered that she had her facts wrong here too.
- When directly challenged regarding the arbitrary nature of her decision, she is clear that she disagreed and felt that her method was reasonable.
- Hadn't considered that if you went in to a course with a lesser grade, you weren't putting the same in and therefore, with her logic, might not get the same out. She had simply thought that the FE courses were a more specialised course but of an equal academic standard.

Expectation of Success and Subjective Task Values (Column 4)

- Whether to go to the FE college or Sixth Form at the FE college came when she heard from the DOSF in an assembly that A Levels are changing to linear and loosing coursework. She says she isn't good at revising and exam preparation, so began to think that Sixth Form wasn't the right place for her.
- While she has a future career in mind, there are no real prerequisites in terms of subjects. This meant her decision lacked importance.
- Sees her subject choices as an expression of her interests.
- Maintaining creativity in her life is clearly very important to her, and she sees this as part of who she is but hasn't made the connection to identity. However she hasn't considered how this can be maintained in the future.
- Whether to go to the FE college or Sixth Form Centre was based on her Business Studies GCSE grade – she couldn't make her mind up otherwise.
- Course and institution decision was put off to be based on her GCSE grades. Interesting type of moratorium – she talks almost as though she had no influence over the GCSE grades. Nice surprise to find her GCSE grades allowed her entry to Sixth Form.
- Initial wavering regarding whether to go to Sixth Form or the FE college came

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Emerging Self Knowledge and Identity (Column 3)

- Future career aim doesn't need specific subjects
- Enjoys having old friends in her classes, as she finds it hard to talk to new people. Worried that she doesn't know how to interact – confidence regarding her social identity.
- Despite having moved to a new institution, her friendship group remains strong and separate from others. Clearly has a strong social identity within this.
- Doesn't see the connection between her studies and her identity, although she does acknowledge that her studies are trying to shape her in a certain way.
- When asked how she reconciles her creative side with her desire to become an accountant, she reveals that her longer term aim is to start her own bakery, which reflects her creative side as well as her enjoyment of business. Her future identity is not as an accountant, where she is currently heading.

Initially (Change over time)

- Throughout secondary school had been sure she would go to Sixth Form, but became confused when she was asked to actually make a decision.
- She struggled to choose which course at Sixth Form, and decided on A Levels as she had to make less choices.
- Decided that her decision would be based solely on whether or not she achieved a C grade in Business GCSE, which she talks as though she has little control over. Made the decision in this way as she wanted a way to make the decision easier – almost taking away the need to think and consider away.
- The GCSE business grade would only have affected where she studied, not whether or not her studies included business. Perversely, a worse GCSE business grade would have led her to do a Business BTEC, so including more business in her studies than if she studied at Sixth Form. Other subjects at Sixth Form clearly seen as less relevant.

Cultural and Social Influences (Column 1)

- Mother a firm influence – discussed the choice with her extensively. Mother keen on Sixth Form
- Friends were a factor that swayed her to try Sixth Form as she didn't want to be somewhere she didn't know people.
- Friends going to the FE College had less influence as they wanted to do very different things.
- Influences: Mum & family, careers teacher and careers advisor, Sixth Form Guidance meeting and FE College advice

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Individual's perceptions of Cultural and Social Influences, and the effect of previous experiences (Column 2)

- Mother's persuasion was the only reason she tried Sixth Form at the start of the year, which in retrospect as she has decided to stay.
- She had heard a lot about Sixth Form from older peers (again a problem with not coming to the open days) and hadn't checked her facts, so was working with biased information.
- Discovered her newly discovered correct information with her mother at the start of the academic year and decided Sixth Form would suit her.
- Unclear how much credibility she feels her mother had – she doesn't know if she completed sixth form. Appears to simply have trust.
- Didn't want to talk to a lot of different people regarding her options – she found that confusing.
- Friends influence was more down to the fact that it would be fun for them to all be studying in the same place.
- Describes friends as influential, but not the main consideration.
- Felt that her mother didn't understand her concerns about terminal exams and no coursework – frustrating.
- She is aware that others saw her method for making this decision as 'crazy', but as it has worked well for her she is pleased.
- Even though she gained the grade required to study at Sixth Form, she was still worried about which place was right for her. Family influence that A Levels are 'better' than BTECs, even though its clear she isn't sure if this is the case.
- Mum's opinion about the superiority of A Levels as opposed to BTECs was important as she works in the industry the student wished to join.
- Student feels that the courses are equivalent, and it is more about how much she is able to put in to her studies and therefore get out.

Diagram 6.5.11.b: Kat's interview 2

<u>Student's current assessment of factors from columns 2-4 of the EV model.</u>
- Appears to have very little intrinsic motivation to succeed.
- Clearly is hoping that the immediacy of exams in Y13 and the appeal of good grades will act as an extrinsic motivator. Her future career doesn't seem to feature here.

<u>Student's current perception of their decision process</u>
- Reflecting on her subject choices, and her assessment of the subjective task values etc, she feels she was correct and her decision process worked.
- Future goals have remained completely consistent.

<u>The effect of time when looking back at the decision</u>
- She comes across as a student who has foreclosed on her decision regarding the future. She appears to have decided where her strengths are, and decided then that she wants a finance related office job locally. She does not appear to be willing to reopen and reconsider her decision at all.

Diagram 6.5.12.a: Lou's interview 1

Interview 12: LOU

Female, Feeder School 5, IBDP

Themes: Change of identity, re-evaluation of future and current choices, considered, mature,

Now (Change over time)

- Clearly enjoying and focused on her subjects. Discusses the difficulty in not switching from Spanish to Portuguese (also speaks at home), but clearly still enjoys this.
- Enjoys the structured approach to learning at Sixth Form.
- Despite the changes she had to make, she is now very happy with her program of study.
- Now, she is very clear that it is the right choice for her, and that others who think she must be too busy or ask how she manages to keep on top of everything simply aren't thinking things through.

How the final decision came about? (Change over time)

- Struggled to pick HL subjects, so did this by thinking of what she would like to do in the future.
- Had to substantially rethink her course choices within the IB after her injury, and in doing so had to think about her extracurricular interests in addition to grades.
- Clearly wavered over whether Sixth Form was the right choice.
- Decision also based on the inclusion of coursework within the IB – this plays to her strengths.

Initially (Change over time)

- Initial decision was to do A Levels, primarily due to the amount of free time that would provide. She then attended a preparation session for the IB, and decided that it would be better for her – she also discovered that IB would make it easier to study internationally. Also wanted to be a well-rounded student.

Cultural and Social Influences (Column 1)

- Family (parents and brother) are her first port of call when she needs to discuss her options. Difficult at times to discuss with parents as they don't understand the local education system, and she finds she has to explain that to them first.
- Parents really value education, and are very supportive to ensure she achieves the best she can.
- Student wanted to only discuss her choices with her family. She didn't talk to her friends as she felt it was important to make a choice for herself to help herself succeed.
- Influences are: Universities, mum / dad, brother, GCSE subjects, teachers and friends (quite a long way out)

Individual's perceptions of Cultural and Social Influences, and the effect of previous experiences (Column 2)

- Felt comfortable studying a wide range of subjects. Previous experience.
- Brother has experienced this education system, so is more understanding of the issues. Parents better at seeing where she wants to get to afterwards.
- Father has tried to persuade her not to do Art, both at GCSE and IB, and she has had to put a lot of time into explaining where it could take her for him to be okay with this.
- Parents clearly have fixed views on what it is necessary to study, so quite a lot of persuasion and explanation is needed to get them to onside.
- Student has had to overcome some significant barriers during secondary school, and her parents are doing their best to encourage her to not let these affect her future.
- Very angry about her past experience at school, and the way she felt excluded from classes because she couldn't manage the stairs etc.
- Watched her friends make choices together, and has seen that this has led to them changing once they start as they haven't done I for the right reasons.
- Refused to participate in the conversations with her friends regarding choice, so removing herself from the hype
- Mother supported her through the difficult realisation after her injury, and helped her discover her new options.
- Observed her peers also struggling at the beginning, and changing subjects with relatively little knowledge and research. She was keen not to replicate this.
- Her school careers teacher came to see her in hospital and at that point tried to discuss her need to change career. This appears not to have been a well-received conversation, primarily due to its poor timing.
- However when she returned to school her careers teacher set up meetings for her to explore alternative futures, and this was very helpful and helped her to see what else she could do.
- She says that initially you listen to others, and if they are momentarily stressed they try and put you off, and it they aren't they encourage you. Gives the impression she thinks it is very biased.

Emerging Self Knowledge and Identity (Column 3)

- Chose IB based on her self-knowledge as a well-rounded student who enjoyed the more holistic approach
- She perceives the behaviour of trying to do the same subjects as fear of making new friends. Holding on to current social identity.
- Has retained her friends from her previous school, but in making different choices she can observe the divide that has developed between them.
- Clearly feels that you can maintain your place in your social group without making similar choices to the others in that group.
- Her expected social identity would be to remain with the other girls from her school, and not mix. She wants to do both.
- Her school friends are concerned and not very happy that she is creating a social identity which isn't just with them – she is breaking the accepted norm.
- Has embraced her new identity as an artist.
- The sports injury had a huge impact on her personal identity, firstly as it was managed poorly at school so she felt excluded / disabled, then due to the need for operations and a lengthy healing time means that she hasn't been allowed to do sports for a long time and won't for another year.
- Choices were a reflection of who she was, and who she was trying to continue to be: balanced and holistic. Her choices express who she is and her traits, rather than a development of who she wants to be.
- Her injury meant that she has had to adapt and change her identity from a sports student to an art student. She describes the cross over skills (e.g. observation), and some of her difficulties in adjusting. Embracing her artistic side allowed her to realised that the time spent picturing herself as a sport student (which isn't possible now) wasn't worthless, and there are other options.

Task, Activities and Behavioural Choices (Column 5)

- Science became the difficult point for the student. She was a keen sportswoman, but injured herself badly so had to stop, which mean that Sports Science was a bad choice. Spanish was a safe choice as she speaks this at home.
- Feels very strongly that you need to have an open mind when you start a new course, as it will never be entirely as you expect. She strongly feels that you shouldn't simply change at the first opportunity, as you don't know what you are changing from and to. She has worked hard to be prepared, and this has benefited her studies. This discipline has meant that when she has been out of school she hasn't struggled to keep up.
- Learned the ability to be disciplined and focused through sport; if she didn't ensure she was physically in a good place to play she was unsuccessful. Applied that way of working to her study schedule and it has allowed her to remain in control.
- Had developed a very clear (she describes it as fixed) goal on what career / degree / university. Then she realised that there were other options and routes, and became more open minded. This allowed her to feel she could pick Art as a choice.
- The decision of what to study is harder when you don't have a clear future career in mind, and you are concerned about blocking options.
- Enjoyed making the decision, especially when she got there.

Expectation of Success and Subjective Task Values (Column 4)

- Has had to deal with the set back that a bad sporting injury meant that she didn't access all science lessons due to logistics and couldn't do PE, with the consequence that her GCSE grades didn't allow her to continue with science and PE. She had planned to do this, and now will not be able to follow her preferred career.
- Clearly really struggled and was distressed by the abrupt withdrawal of her sports identity.
- On starting she found the new experience very intimidating, and initially struggled to introduce herself to people. Her choices became real, and she was very worried about not doing well, despite having succeeding with her previous education.
- This stage of her education is clearly very important to her, and she is very aware of its importance to her ability to go to university.
- Observed others in a state of moratorium, where they procrastinated about their future until they had completely run out of time to consider whether their choices were right. In order to avoid a moratorium, she did a lot of research about future options after she had finished her GCSEs and before she started at Sixth Form. This allowed her to start feeling confident she had made the right decisions.
- Was surprised at the amount of responsibility she has to take for her own work and progress compared to her school career. Feels this means that success or failure is really down to you.
- Her injury forced her to re-evaluate, which has led her to be far more open minded.
- Steady transition from deciding to study one course to the other. Not described as an anxious or difficult time. Once her choice had transitioned she felt a lot of relief. She strongly felt it was the better route for her, and she was relieved not to cut out so many future options. *it made me think, oh yeah, okay the IB, I like it, let's do it and it linked very closely mentally, physically and emotionally to me because I really – I really had that strong bond with it that I didn't realise initially*
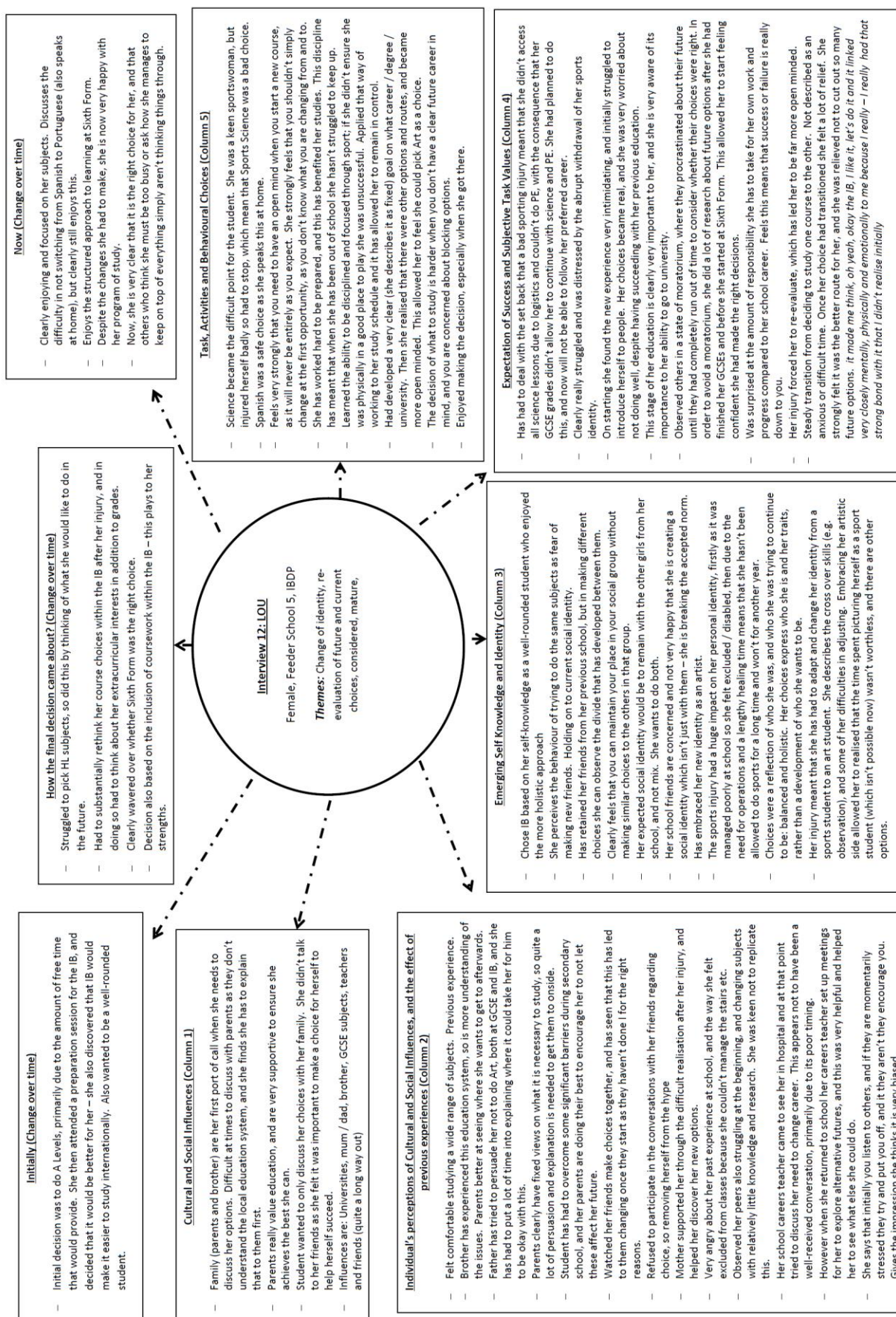
174

Diagram 6.5.12.b: Lou's interview 2

Student's current assessment of factors from columns 2-4 of the EV model.

- Continued to have the same long term motivation / career aim. Discusses how this has only got stronger over the year.
- Clear that the year hasn't been completely smooth, but she has found a way to overcome and move forward rather than stay stationary and struggle
- Clearly has made an effort over the year to stay positive and keep her eye on the future.
- Reveals that she made the conscious decision to not let her mental health struggles and time off due to an operation pull her down. Worked hard to get a good balance to ensure that her academics were maintained.
- Clear sense of pride that she has succeeded by the end of the year.
- Has maintained her future career goal throughout the year, but this is possibly as she had to balance and justify where she was going prior to Sixth Form for her parents. Maintenance of subjects she loves and is passionate about against a sensible future.
- Clear view that an existential crisis should be used to help a decision – for her this wouldn't be a stationary point but a point where you are continuing to work out what to do.

The effect of time when looking back at the decision

- This interview continues to be reflective and reflexive in a similar way to the first.

Student's current perception of their decision process

- Her current assessment of important factors is the same as the summary
- Looks back and thinks that she made the decision in a way that worked, and included a good amount of research.
- View is that the last year has gone as expected

Appendix 6: Embedded Unit of Analysis 13: Year 12 survey
Survey Instrument:

1. Are the subjects and courses you are now studying the same as you expected to be studying.... (tick all that apply) (*multiple choice*)
2. Please tell us why any changes to your subjects / courses took place. *(open question)*
3. What assumptions did you make about studying at sixth form a year ago? This could be about the different subjects, or the different courses, or in general. *(open question)*
4. Did you change your mind at all when you were making your decision on what to study? How many times? (*multiple choice*)
5. Who helped you make up your mind about what to study? *(open question)*
6. When you were deciding what to study in year 11, did you have a future job or degree in mind? (*multiple choice*)
7. How did having a future job or degree help you make up your mind? *(open question)*
8. Do you still want to aim for the same future job or degree as you did in year 11? (*multiple choice*)
9. Was this a consideration when you decided what to study: how much you thought you would enjoy it? *(Likert Scale)*
10. Was this a consideration when you decided what to study: you thought you would be able to do well? *(Likert Scale)*
11. Was this a consideration when you decided what to study: how useful it would be in the future? *(Likert Scale)*
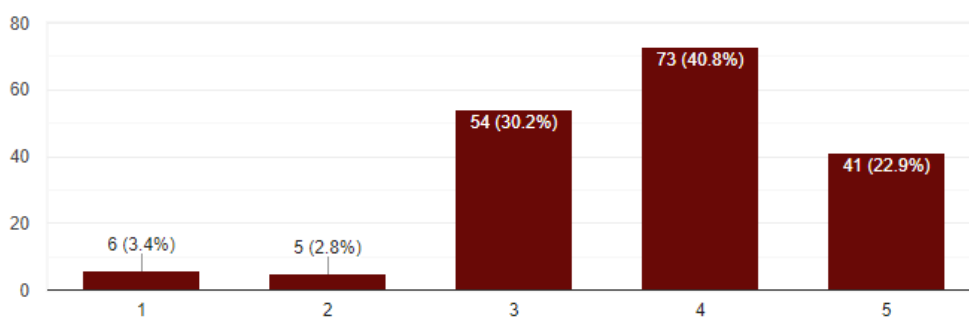12. Was this a consideration when you decided what to study: the amount of work you thought you would need to put in? *(Likert Scale)*
13. After being at Sixth Form for a term, do you think that your assessment of the last four questions was accurate when you were making your decisions? (*multiple choice*)
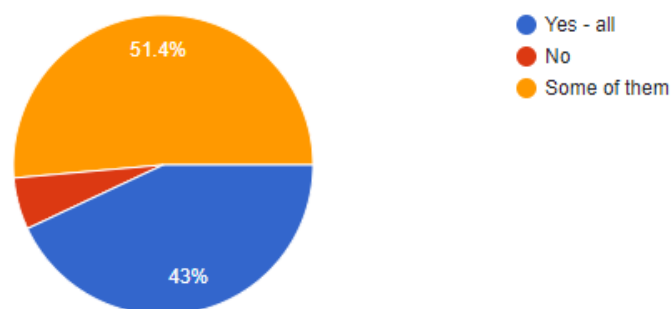14. Were your subject choices based on what you had enjoyed studying at school? (*multiple choice*)
15. Thinking about your current experience, was this a good basis for choosing what to study? (*multiple choice*)
16. Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: My choice of what to study reflects who I am or who I want to be *(Likert Scale)*
17. Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: I worried about what my peers would think when I made my choice of what to study *(Likert Scale)*
18. Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: I made the choices that other people expected me to *(Likert Scale)*
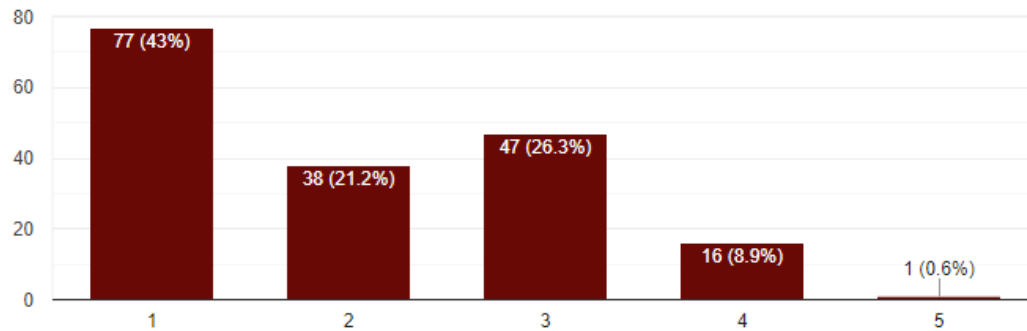19. Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: I made the choices I always thought I would make *(Likert Scale)*
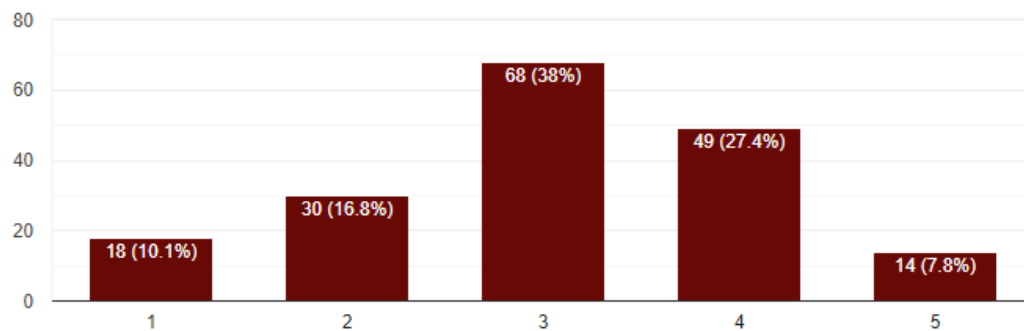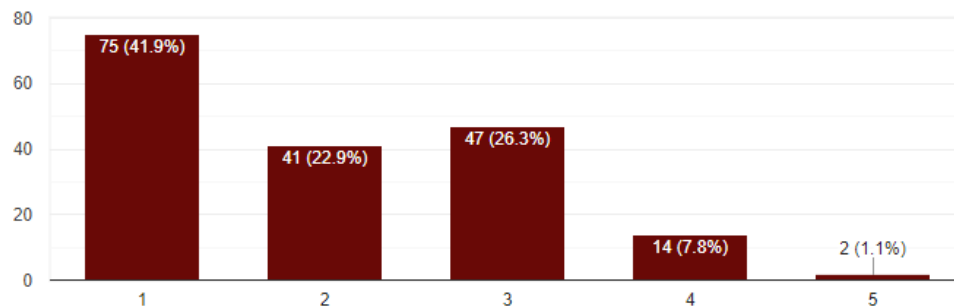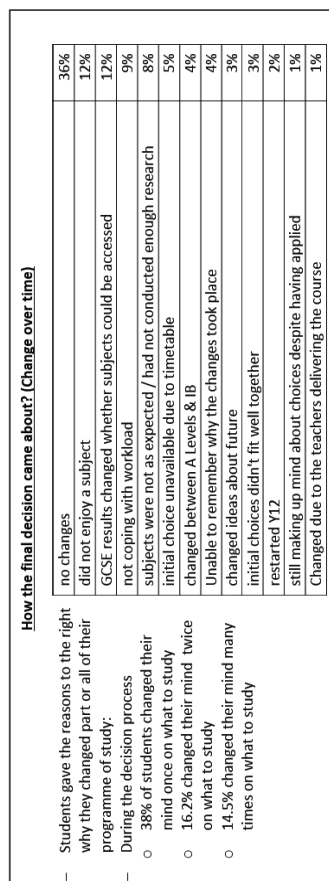20. Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: I made similar choices to my friends *(Likert Scale)*

All Likert Scale questions had the guidance 1 = not at all, 5 = very important.

The coding categories were derived from the response data for the following open questions.

Question 2: Please tell us why any changes to your subjects / courses took place.

- no changes
- did not enjoy a subject
- GCSE results changed whether subjects could be accessed
- not coping with workload
- subjects were not as expected / had not conducted enough research
- initial choice unavailable due to timetable
- changed between A Levels & IB
- Unable to remember why the changes took place
- changed ideas about future
- initial choices didn't fit well together
- restarted Y12
- still making up mind about choices despite having applied
- Changed due to the teachers delivering the course

Question 3: What assumptions did you make about studying at sixth form a year ago?   This could be about the different subjects, or the different courses, or in general.

- more work / concerned would not have time to do work
- none
- more / less free time
- difficult to make transition
- more independence
- more mature environment
- very different from school
- be the same as school / as easy as school
- would enjoy it more as had chosen subjects
- would be taking different study choices
- difficult to make friends
- smaller year group
- smaller / bigger classes
- be viewed negatively due to coming in from a different school
- less stressful than GCSE

Question 5: Who helped you make up your mind about what to study?

- parents
- teachers
- no one
- sixth form management
- friends
- careers teacher
- siblings
- older students
- GCSE grades
- Work Experience
- HE Requirements

Question 7: How did having a future job or degree help you make up your mind?

- prompted me to choose particular subjects / course
- no response or no future job or degree in mind
- provided the motivation
- future aspirations did not aid choice
- made the decision easier
- unknown future prompted choices through enjoyment or interest
- unknown future prompted choices that would keep options open
- prompted me to go to Sixth Form
- made the decision more rational / logic

Graphical responses from the Year 12 survey

Chart 6.6.1 Question 1

Are the subjects and courses you are now studying the same as you expected to be studying.... (tick all that apply)
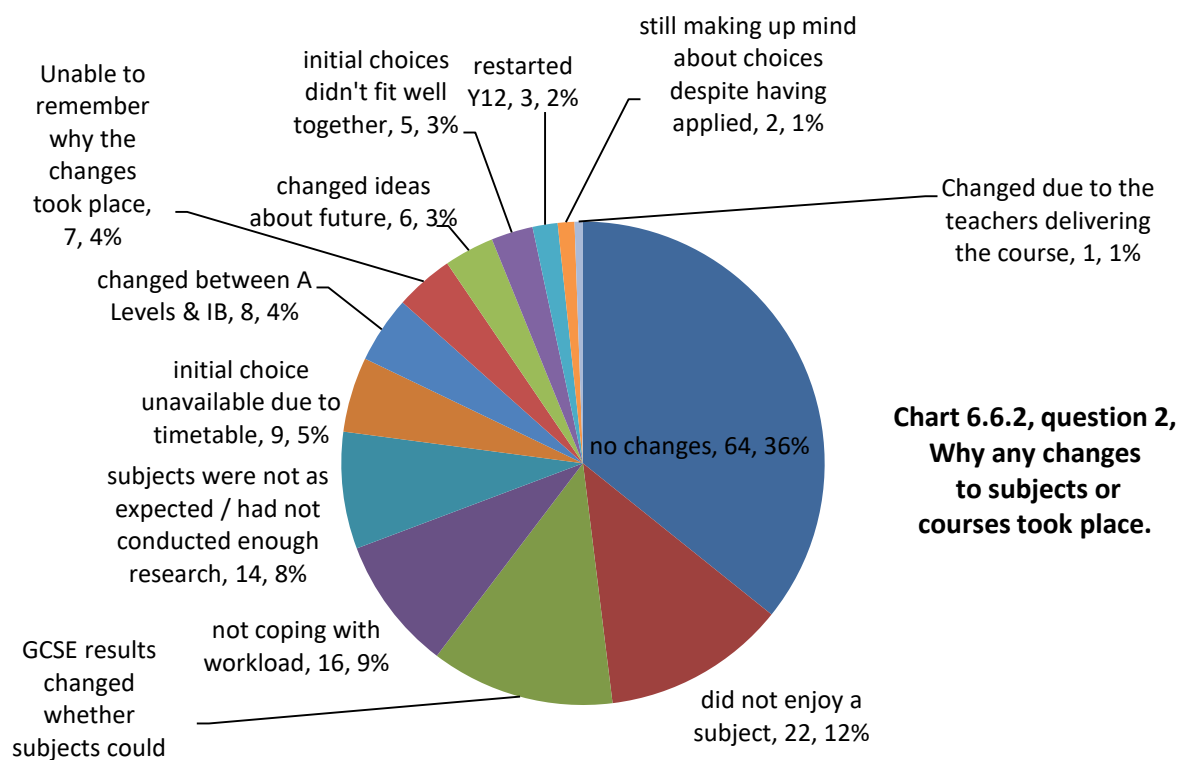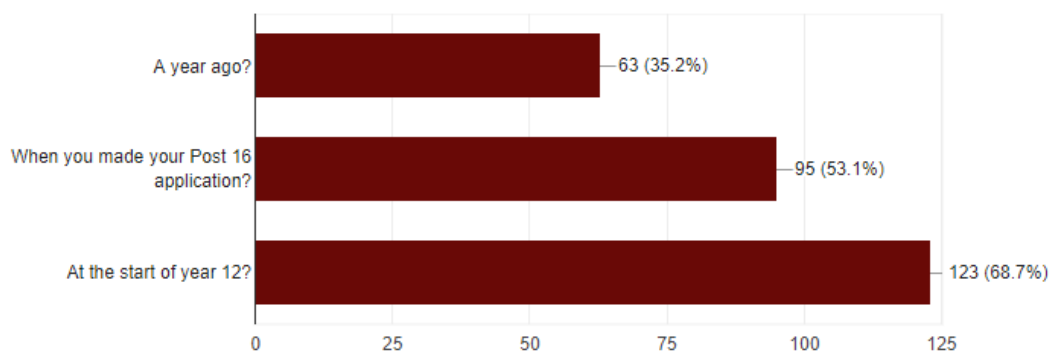
179 responses

Chart 6.6.2, question 2, Why any changes to subjects or courses took place.

Chart 6.6.3, Question 3: What assumptions did you make about studying at sixth form a year ago?

smaller / bigger classes, 2, 1%

be viewed negatively due to coming in from a different school, 2, 1%

would be taking different study choices, 7, 4%

smaller year group, 3, 2%

less stressful than GCSE, 2, 1%

would enjoy it more as had chosen subjects, 8, 4%

difficult to make friends, 5, 3%

be the same as school / as easy as school, 8, 4%

more work / concerned would not have time to do work, 77, 41%

very different from school, 8, 4%

more mature environment, 9, 5%

more independence, 12, 6%

difficult to make transition, 13, 7%

none, 16, 9%

more / less free time, 14, 8%

Chart 6.6.4, Question 4:

Did you change your mind at all when you were making your decision on what to study? How many times?

179 responses

- Didn't change my mind
- once
- twice
- many times
- Changed mind once then back to or…
- I had to change them due to the cla…
- Wasn't able to choose personally
- Only because of blocks and capability

16.2%

14.5%

38%

27.4%

▲ 1/2 ▼

older students, 6, 3%

GCSE grades, 5, 2%

Work Experience, 2, 1%

siblings, 6, 3%

HE Requirements, 2, 1%

careers teacher, 6, 3%

friends, 12, 5%

parents, 82, 36%

sixth form management, 23, 10%

no one, 37, 16%

teachers, 45, 20%

**Chart 6.6.5, Question 5:
Who helped you make up your mind about what to study?**

Chart 6.6.6, Question 6

When you were deciding what to study in year 11, did you have a future job or degree in mind?

179 responses

● yes (this could be more than 1 possible idea)
● no

34.6%

65.4%
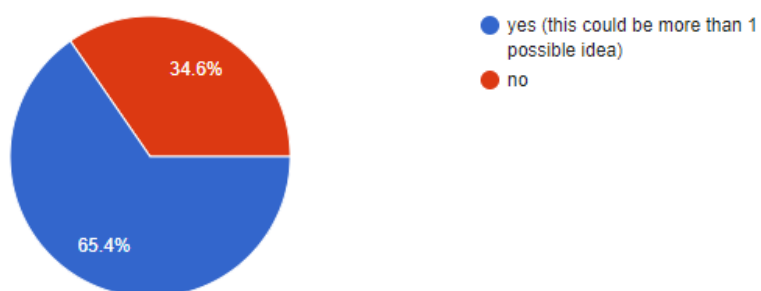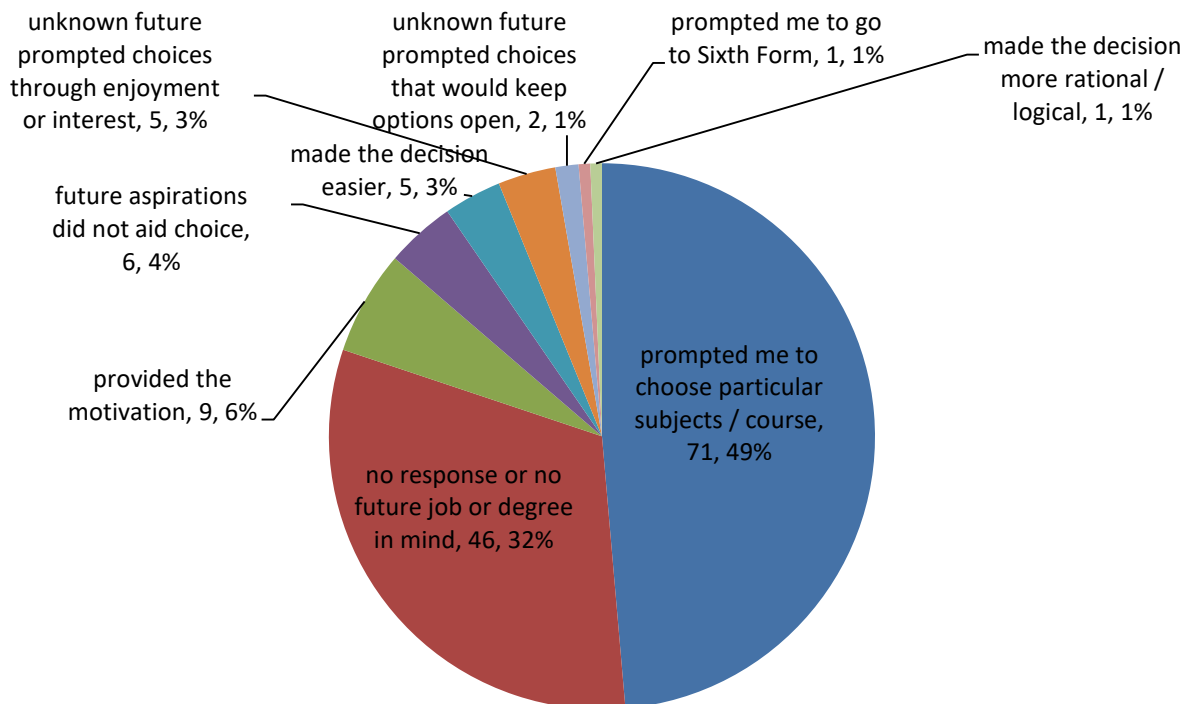
Chart 6.7, Question 7: How did having a future job or degree help you make up your mind?

Pie chart labels:
- unknown future prompted choices through enjoyment or interest, 5, 3%
- unknown future prompted choices that would keep options open, 2, 1%
- prompted me to go to Sixth Form, 1, 1%
- made the decision more rational / logical, 1, 1%
- made the decision easier, 5, 3%
- future aspirations did not aid choice, 6, 4%
- provided the motivation, 9, 6%
- prompted me to choose particular subjects / course, 71, 49%
- no response or no future job or degree in mind, 46, 32%

Chart 6.6.8, Question 8

Do you still want to aim for the same future job or degree as you did in year 11?

179 responses

- Yes — 50.3%
- No — 17.3%
- Didn't have any future job / degree in mind — 32.4%

181
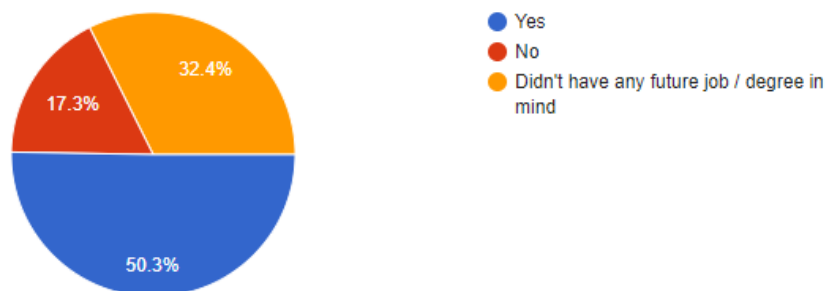
Chart 6.6.9, Question 9

Was this a consideration when you decided what to study: how much you thought you would enjoy it
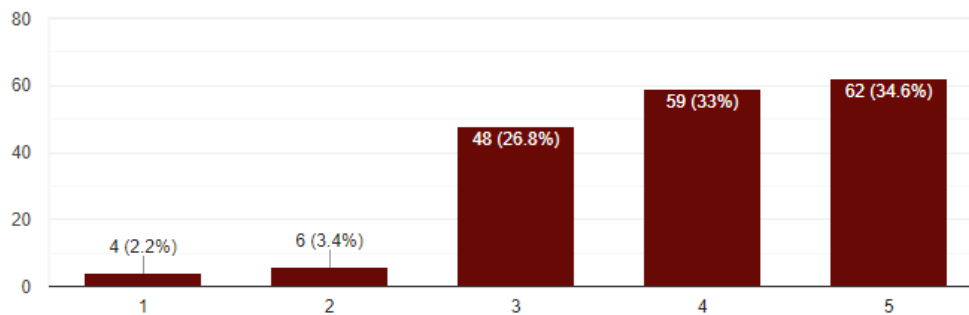
179 responses

Chart 6.6.10, Question 10

Was this a consideration when you decided what to study: you thought you would be able to do well.
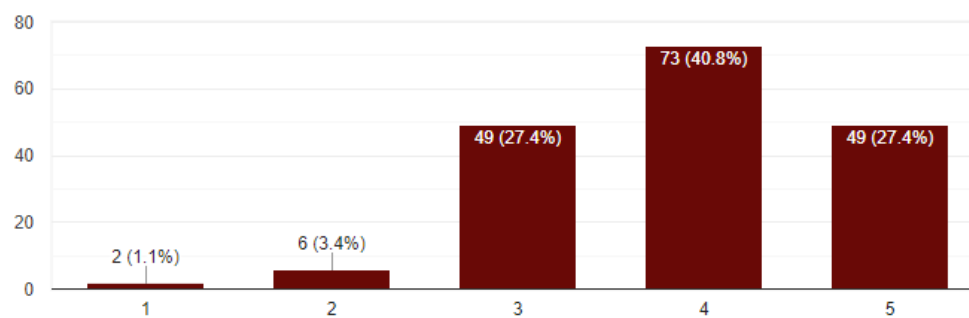
179 responses

Chart 6.6.11, Question 11

Was this a consideration when you decided what to study: how useful it would be in the future.

179 responses

Chart 6.6.12, Question 12

Was this a consideration when you decided what to study: the amount of work you thought you would need to put in.
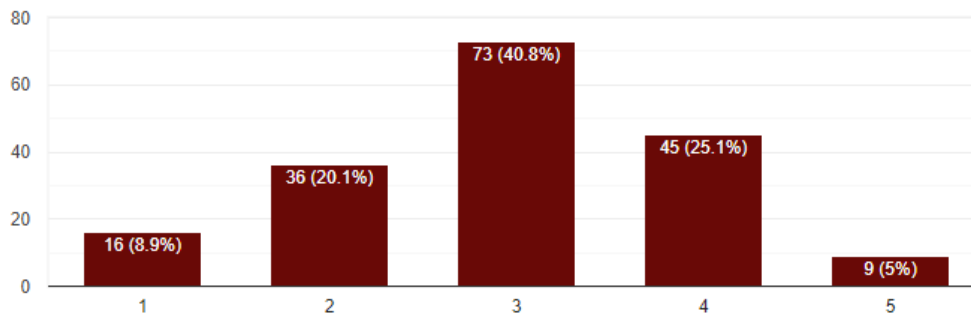
179 responses

6.6.13, Question 13

After being at Sixth Form for a term, do you think that your assessment of the last four questions was accurate when you were making your decisions?

179 responses

- Yes - all
- No
- Some of them

51.4%
43%

Chart 6.6.14, Question 14

Were your subject choices based on what you had enjoyed studying at school?

179 responses

- yes
- no
- for some subjects only

52.5%
10.6%
36.9%

183
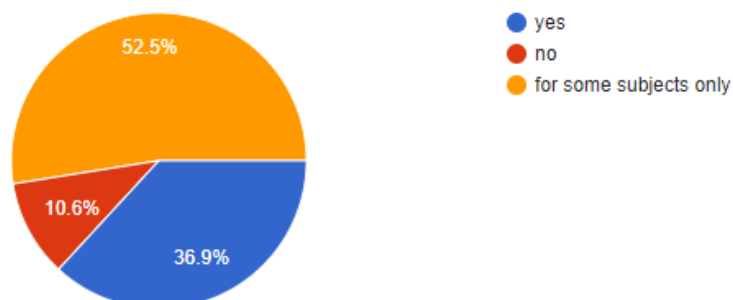
Chart 6.6.15, Question 15

Thinking about your current experience, was this a good basis for choosing what to study?

179 responses

- yes
- no
- for some
- I didn't take any of my subjects at GCSE
- Maybe

91.1%
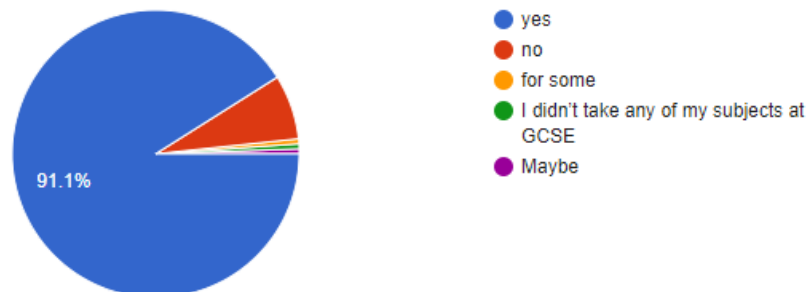
Chart 6.6.16, Question 16

Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: My choice of what to study reflects who I am or who I want to be

179 responses

7 (3.9%) — 1
13 (7.3%) — 2
67 (37.4%) — 3
67 (37.4%) — 4
25 (14%) — 5
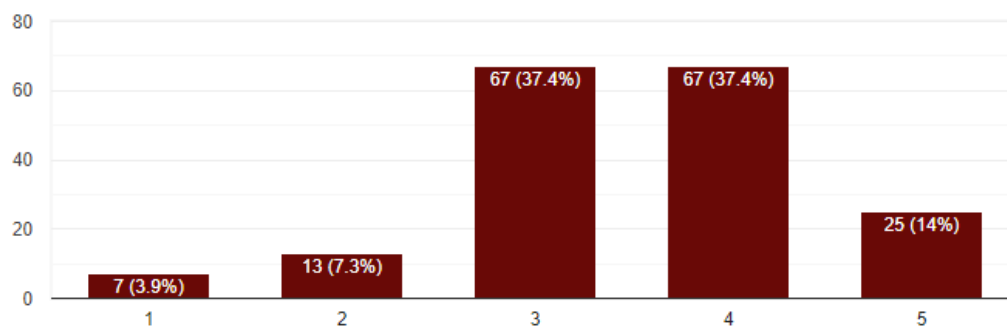
Chart 6.6.17, Question 17

Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: I worried about what my peers would think when I made my choice of what to study

179 responses

114 (63.7%) — 1
27 (15.1%) — 2
25 (14%) — 3
11 (6.1%) — 4
2 (1.1%) — 5
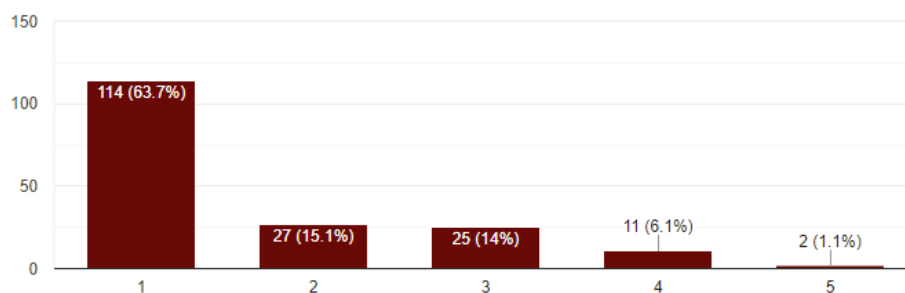
Chart 6.6.18, Question 18

Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: I made the choices that other people expected me to

179 responses

Chart 6.6.19 Question 19

Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: I made the choices I always thought I would make

179 responses

Chart 6.6.20 Question 20

Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: I made similar choices to my friends

179 responses

Chart 6.6.21: Summary diagram of survey responses

Central node

Embedded Unit of Analysis 13: Year 12 Survey

179 students responded, and 11 chose not to. 20 were absent and therefore did not get the opportunity to do this.

Themes: social identity did not shape choices, but neither did personal identity. Friends / peers were not an influence on this choice. Enjoyment was the most important subjective task value.

How the final decision came about? (Change over time)

no changes	36%
did not enjoy a subject	12%
GCSE results changed whether subjects could be accessed	12%
not coping with workload	9%
subjects were not as expected / had not conducted enough research	8%
initial choice unavailable due to timetable	5%
changed between A Levels & IB	4%
Unable to remember why the changes took place	4%
changed ideas about future	3%
initial choices didn't fit well together	3%
restarted Y12	2%
still making up mind about choices despite having applied	1%
Changed due to the teachers delivering the course	1%

– Students gave the reasons to the right why they changed part or all of their programme of study:
– During the decision process
  o 38% of students changed their mind once on what to study
  o 16.2% changed their mind twice on what to study
  o 14.5% changed their mind many times on what to study

Initially (Change over time)

– 27.4% students didn't change their mind on what to study throughout the whole process

Now (Change over time)

– In December of Year 12
  o 35.2% of students are studying the courses they expected to be studying a year ago
  o 53.1% are studying the courses they applied to study
  o 68.7% of students are studying the courses they started at the beginning of year 12
– On reflecting back over whether their assessment of the importance of enjoyment, expectation of success, utility value and relative cost / workload was correct when making their decisions, 43% thought they were, 5.6% thought they were not, and 51.4% thought some of them were correct.

Task, Activities and Behavioural Choices (Column 5)

– When asked how having a potential future job / career / degree in mind helped them to make their decision, students replied:

prompted me to choose particular subjects / course	49%
no response or no future job or degree in mind	32%
provided the motivation	6%
future aspirations did not aid choice	4%
made the decision easier	3%
unknown future prompted choices through enjoyment or interest	3%
unknown future prompted choices that would keep options open	1%
prompted me to go to Sixth Form	1%
made the decision more rational / logical	1%

Expectation of Success and Subjective Task Values (Column 4)

– Importance of enjoyment when making the choice:
  o 34.6% of students said rated this as 5 / very important   o 33% rated this as 4
  o 26.8% rated this as 3   o 3.4% rated this as 2
  o 2.2% rated this as 1 / not at all
– Importance of expectation of success when making the choice:
  o 27.4% of students said rated this as 5 / very important   o 40.8% rated this as 4
  o 27.4% rated this as 3   o 3.4% rated this as 2
  o 1.1% rated this as 1 / not at all
– Importance of utility value when making the choice:
  o 22.9% of students said rated this as 5 / very important   o 40.8% rated this as 4
  o 30.2% rated this as 3   o 2.8% rated this as 2
  o 3.4% rated this as 1 / not at all
– Importance of relative cost / potential workload when making the choice:
  o 5% of students said rated this as 5 / very important   o 25.1% rated this as 4
  o 40.8% rated this as 3   o 20.1% rated this as 2
  o 8.9% rated this as 1 / not at all

Emerging Self Knowledge and Identity (Column 3)

– 65.4% of students had a potential future job or degree in mind when making their decisions, 34.6% did not. 50.3% are still aiming for the same job in Dec Y12 as they had in mind initially.
– Personal identity: my choice of what to study reflects who I am or who I want to be
  o 14% rated this as 5 / completely   o 37.4% rated this as 4
  o 37.4% rated this as 3   o 7.3% rated this as 2
  o 3.9% rated this as 1 / not at all
– Collective identity: I worried about what my peers would think when I made my choice
  o 1.1% rated this as 5 / completely   o 6.1% rated this as 4
  o 14% rated this as 3   o 15.1% rated this as 2
  o 63.7% rated this as 1 / not at all
– Personal Identity: I made the choices other people expected me to
  o 0.6% rated this as 5 / completely   o 8.9% rated this as 4
  o 26.3% rated this as 3   o 21.2% rated this as 2
  o 43% rated this as 1 / not at all
– Personal Identity: I made the choices I always thought I would make
  o 7.8% rated this as 5 / completely   o 27.4% rated this as 4
  o 38% rated this as 3   o 16.8% rated this as 2
  o 10.5% rated this as 1 / not at all
– Collective identity: I made similar choices to my friends
  o 1.1% rated this as 5 / completely   o 7.8% rated this as 4
  o 26.3% rated this as 3   o 22.9% rated this as 2
  o 41.9% rated this as 1 / not at all

Cultural and Social Influences (Column 1)

Students identified the following as helping them to make up their mind with their study choices.

parents	36%
teachers	20%
no one	16%
sixth form management team	10%
friends	5%
careers teacher	3%
siblings	3%
older students	3%
GCSE grades	2%
Work Experience	1%
HE Requirements	1%

Individual's perceptions of Cultural and Social Influences, and the effect of previous experiences (Column 2)

• 36.9% of students based all their subject choices on what they had enjoyed studying at school. 10.6% did not base their subject choices on this, and 52.5% based some of their subject choices on this. 91.9% of students felt that this was a good basis for choosing what to study.

• Students made the following assumptions about Sixth Form study before starting:

more work / concerned would not have time to do work	41%
none	9%
more / less free time	8%
difficult to make transition	7%
more independence	6%
more mature environment	5%
very different from school	4%
be the same as school / as easy as school	4%
would enjoy it more as had chosen subjects	4%
would be taking different study choices	4%
difficult to make friends	3%
smaller year group	2%
smaller / bigger classes	1%
be viewed negatively due to coming in from a different school	1%
less stressful than GCSE	1%

Appendix 7: Embedded Unit of Analysis 14: Data from the Sixth Form Centre's annual Year 11 survey

Chart 6.7.1 Percentage of respondants who gave each post-16 programs serious consideration.

Categories: A Levels, IB DP, A Levels and IB Certs, BTEC, CACHE / NVQ, Employment, Apprenticeships

Chart 6.7.2 Percentage of respondants versus number of programs that were given serious consideration.

Categories: 1 program, 2 programs, 3 programs, 4 programs, 5 programs, 6 programs, 7 programs

Chart 6.7.3 The deciding factors in making your choice of post-16 programme
(also in text as Chart 4.6.1)

Chart 6.7.4 The deciding factors in making your choice of post-16 subjects
(also in text as Chart 4.6.2)
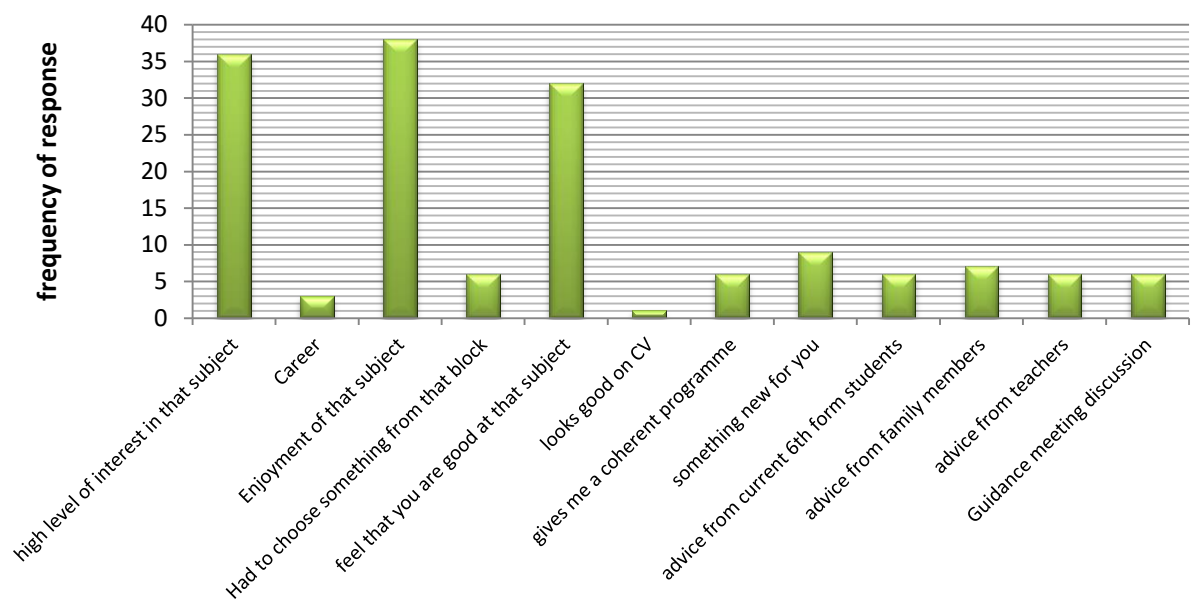
Chart 6.7.5 Why did you find the P16 events you attended useful?

Bar chart. Y-axis: number of responses (0 to 30).

Category	Number of responses
Able to talk to teachers / careers	30
Learned more about the available curriculum	25
experience of being a Sixth Form student	17
Information from new or different sources	10
Helped me make a programme / subject choice	19
Gave me an overview of all the options	14
My parents understood my options better	1
Gained an understanding of the way the Sixth Form Centre or CFE worked	24
Convenience - happened during the normal school day	11

Chart 6.7.6 Why did you find the P16 events you attended NOT to be useful?

Bar chart. Y-axis: number of responses (0 to 18).

Category	Number of responses
limited information available from it	8
Felt I had heard it before	11
didn't attend that event	17
felt I was being asked to consider different or further options	5
had already made up my mind	7
They were all useful	11
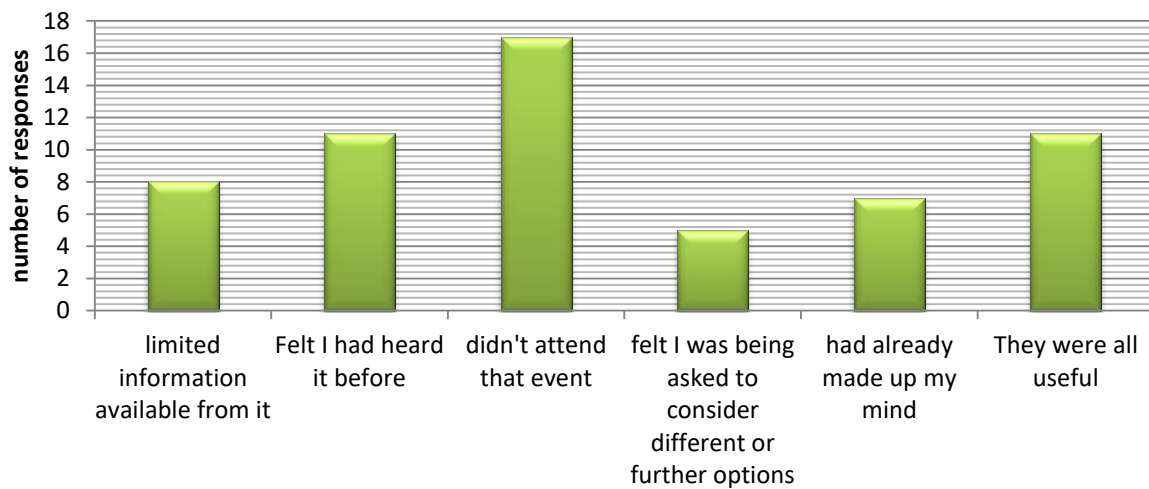
Chart 6.7.7 Did you consider choosing a mixed programme of A levels and IB Subject certificates?

No, 11

Yes, 32
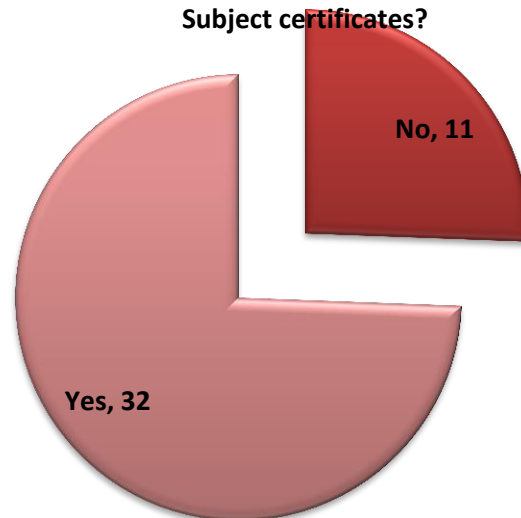
Chart 6.7.8 How did you feel about a mixed programme of A levels and IB Subject certificates when you FIRST heard about it?

number of responses

didn't know how universities would view it

didn't know how employers would view it

didn't know if A Levels and an IB HL were the same standard academically

didn't ever feel this programme was relevant to me so didn't think about this.

good to have a wider range of subjects to study

I knew all about them beforehand

was not concerned
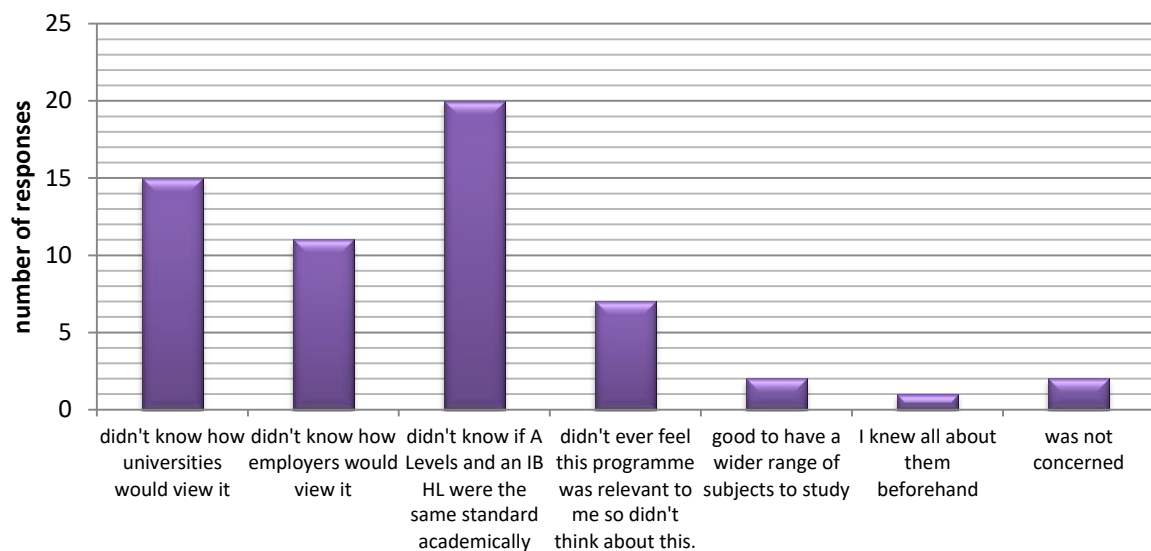
Chart 6.7.9 How did your PARENTS feel about a mixed programme of A levels and IB Subject certificates when they FIRST heard about it?

Number of responses (y-axis: 0 to 20)

- didn't know how universities would view it: 14
- didn't know how employers would view it: 13
- didn't know if A Levels and an IB HL were the same standard academically: 18
- didn't ever feel this programme was relevant to me so didn't think about this.: 8
- was not concerned: 5
- already aware of parity: 1
- didn't make them aware: 2
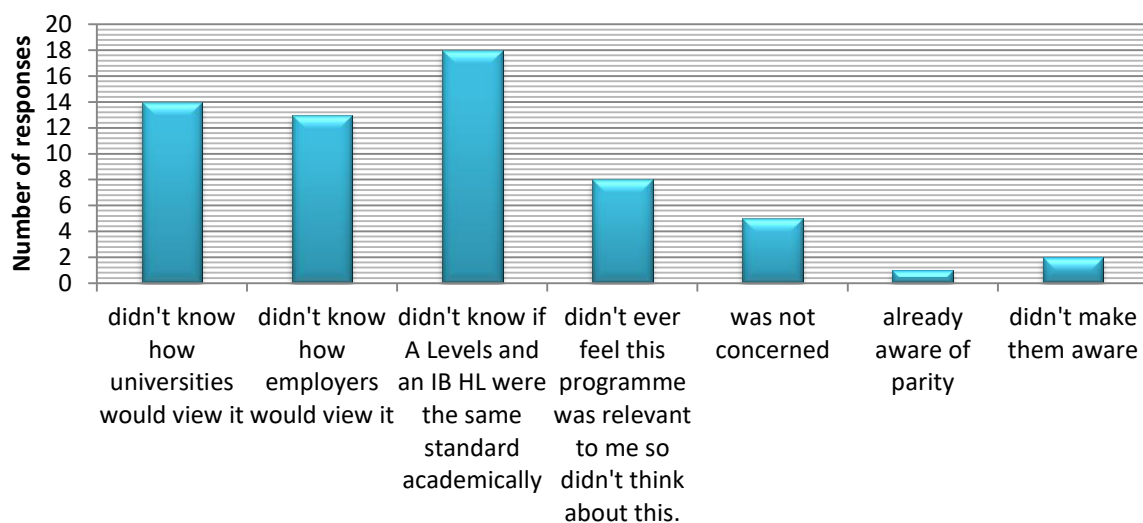
Chart 6.7.10 Did the information received from the Sixth Form reassure YOU about a mixed programme of A levels and IB Subject certificates?

number of responses (y-axis: 0 to 16)

- 1 / not at all: 1
- 2: 3
- 3 / neutral: 15
- 4: 15
- 5 / completely: 8
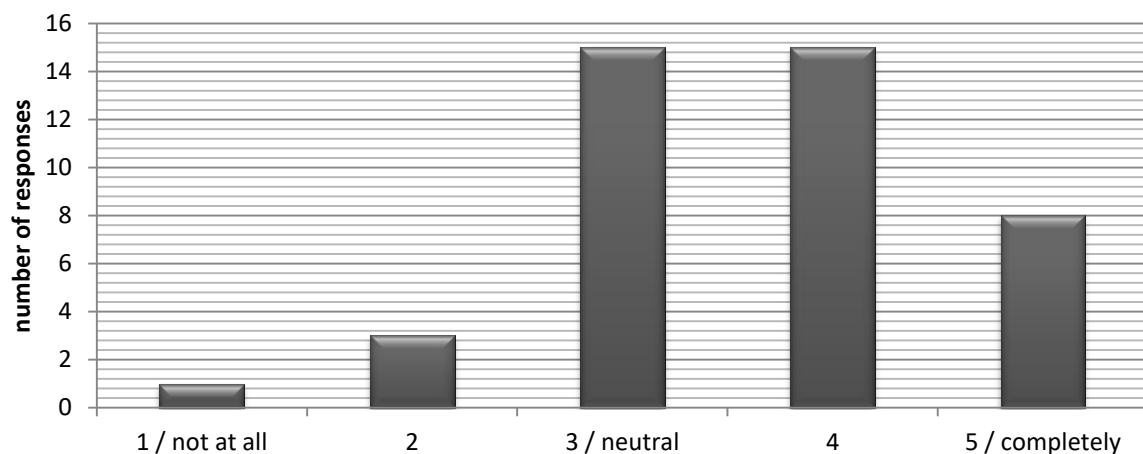
Chart 6.7.11 Did the information received from the Sixth Form reassure your PARENTS about a mixed programme of A levels and IB Subject certificates?
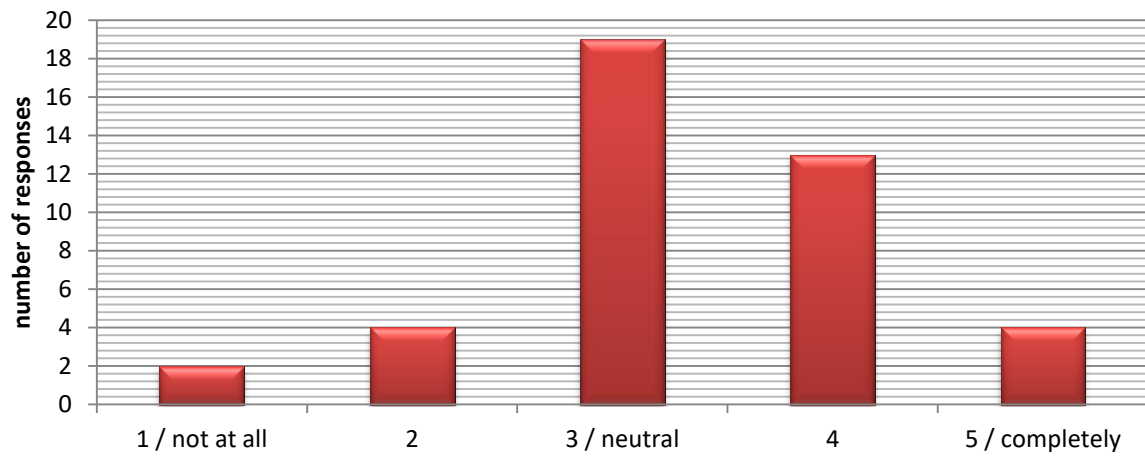
Chart 6.7.12 Did the range of subjects offered in a mixed programme affect the subjects you have chosen to study?
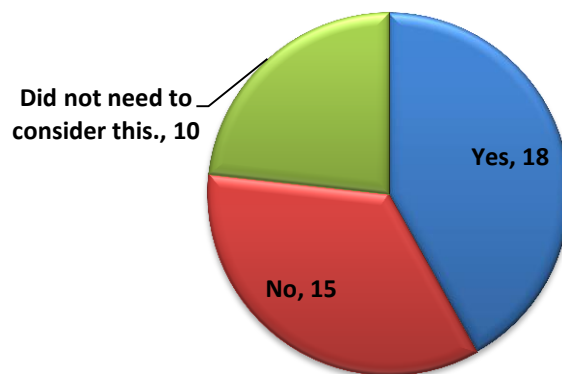
Chart 6.7.13 You had a Guidance Meeting with a member of the Sixth Form or CFE team before filling in your application. Did this help you to make your choices?

Maybe, 7
Yes, 20
No, 16
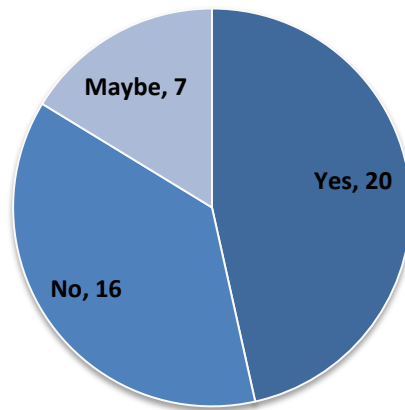
Chart 6.7.14 Further feedback about the helpfulness of the guidance meeting

number of responses

confirmed or helped make my decision | already decided | made a recommendation I didn't want to follow | gave me advice I needed | helpful at time but later information made me change my mind | felt challenged that my decision wasn't ok
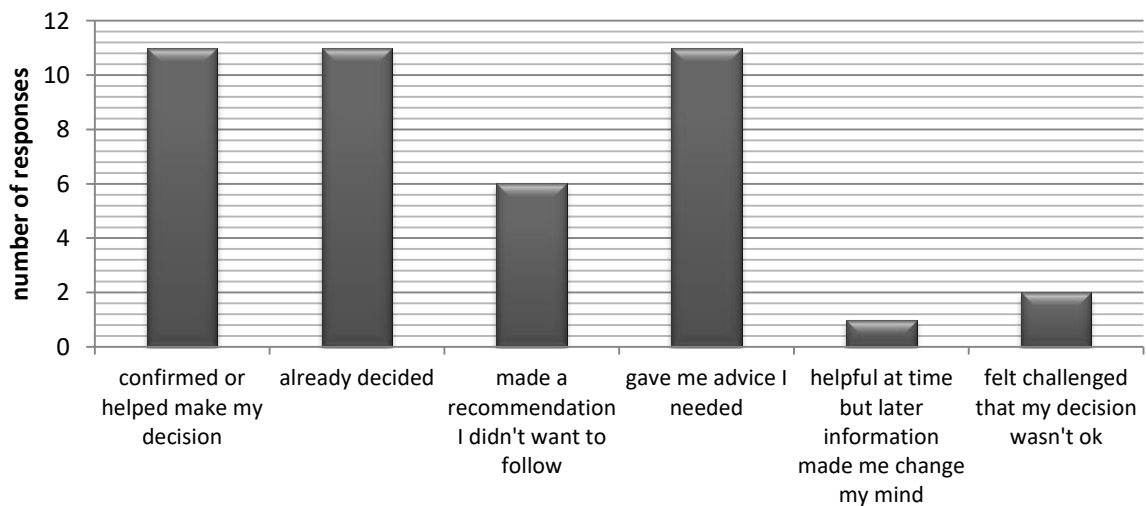
Chart 6.7.15 From what other sources did you receive guidance in making your post-16 choices?

number of responses

Personal tutor	11
Careers / PSHE	16
current teachers	27
friends in year 11	19
older students	15
family	26
Work experience	7
UCAS or University websites	13
CFE	3
Parents' friends	3
no other sources	3
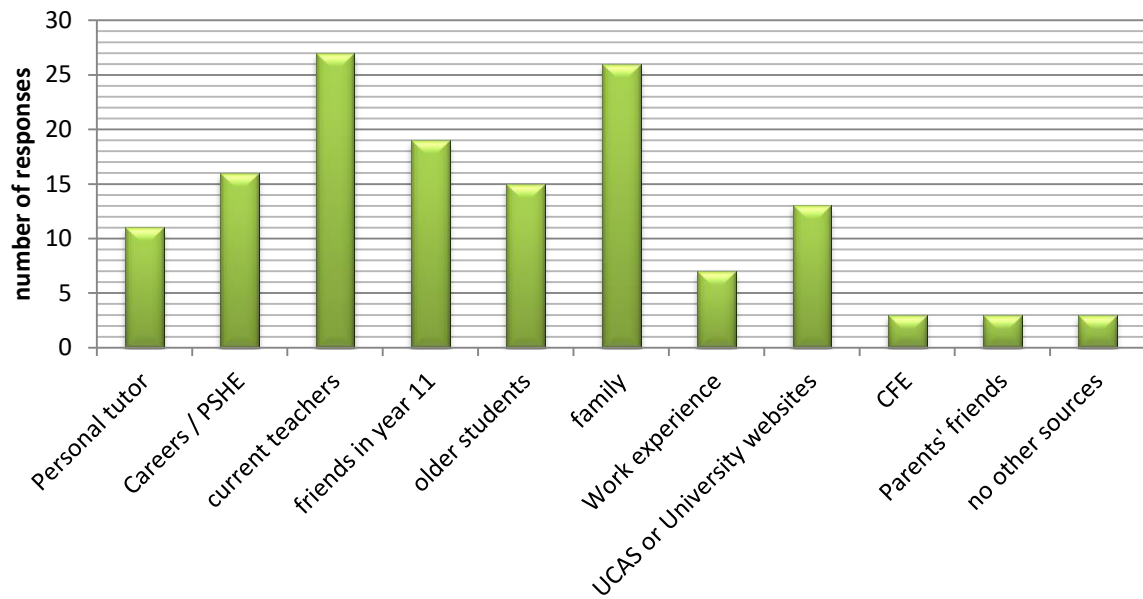
Chart 6.7.16 Which source (other than your guidance meeting) was the most useful for receiving guidance?

number of responses

Personal tutor	2
current teachers	8
UCAS or University websites	8
Work experience	2
Careers / PSHE	8
older students	6
friends in year 11	3
family	3
CFE	
Parents' friends	
no other sources	3

Chart 6.7.17 Which source (other than your guidance meeting) was the least useful for receiving guidance?

Source	Value
Personal tutor	6
current teachers	1
UCAS or University websites	3
Work experience	2
Careers / PSHE	2
older students	4
friends in year 11	5
family	3
CFE	3
Parents' friends	4
no other sources	10

Chart 6.7.18 When did you make up your mind?

number of responses

Category	Number of responses
March / Application Deadline	20
After guidance meeting (Feb)	4
After Sixth Form Information Day (Jan)	4
After Sixth Form Open Evening (Nov)	4
Don't know	3
Before Information events (Sept / Oct at latest)	5

Appendix 8: Ethical Approval

Institute of Education

⌂ UCL

Ethics Application Form: Student Research

Anyone conducting research under the auspices of the Institute (staff, students or visitors) where the research involves human participants or the use of data collected from human participants, is required to gain ethical approval before starting. This includes preliminary and pilot studies. Please answer all relevant questions in terms that can be understood by a lay person and note that your form may be returned if incomplete.

For further support and guidance please see accompanying guidelines and the Ethics Review Procedures for Student Research http://www.ucl.ac.uk/srs/research-ethics-committee/ioe or contact your supervisor or IOE.researchethics@ucl.ac.uk.

Before completing this form you will need to discuss your proposal fully with your supervisor(s). Please attach all supporting documents and letters.

For all Psychology students, this form should be completed with reference to the British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Human Research Ethics and Code of Ethics and Conduct.

Section 1 Project details

a.	Project title			How do Guernsey students experience and reflect on their choices in a changing landscape?		
b.	Student name			Nicola Papworth		
c.	Supervisor/Personal Tutor			Shirley Simon		
d.	Department			CPA		
e.	Course category (Tick one)	PhD/MPhil	☐	EdD	**y**	
		MRes	☐	DEdPsy	☐	
		MTeach	☐	MA/MSc	☐	
		ITE	☐			
		Diploma (state which)	☐			
		Other (state which)	☐			
f.	Course/module title			Thesis		
g.	If applicable, state who the funder is and if funding has been confirmed.			na		
h.	Intended research start date			1/9/2017		
i.	Intended research end date			1/8/2018		
j.	Country fieldwork will be conducted in *If research to be conducted abroad please ensure travel insurance is*			Guernsey		

	obtained through UCL http://www.ucl.ac.uk/finance/insurance/travel	
k.	Has this project been considered by another (external) Research Ethics Committee?	
	~~Yes~~ ☐	**External Committee Name:**
	No ⇨ *go to Section 2*	Date of Approval:

If yes:
- Submit a copy of the approval letter with this application.
- Proceed to Section 10 Attachments.

Note: Ensure that you check the guidelines carefully as research with some participants will require ethical approval from a different ethics committee such as the National Research Ethics Service (NRES) or Social Care Research Ethics Committee (SCREC). In addition, if your research is based in another institution then you may be required to apply to their research ethics committee.

Section 2 Project summary

Research methods (tick all that apply)

Please attach questionnaires, visual methods and schedules for interviews (even in draft form).

y **Interviews** ☐ **Focus groups** y **Questionnaires** ☐ **Action research** ☐ **Observation** ☐ **Literature review**	☐ Controlled trial/other intervention study Y Use of personal records ☐ Systematic review ⇨ *if only method used go to Section 5.* y Secondary data analysis ⇨ *if secondary analysis used go to Section 6.* ☐ Advisory/consultation/collaborative groups ☐ Other, give details:

Please provide an overview of your research. This should include some or all of the following: purpose of the research, aims, main research questions, research design, participants, sampling, your method of data collection (e.g., observations, interviews, questionnaires, etc.) and kind of questions that will be asked, reporting and dissemination (typically 300-500 words).

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to examine how Guernsey students make choices when faced with unexpected changes to their options. The choice for Sixth Form study has two main options: firstly the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IB DP), and secondly A Levels. This seemingly straightforward choice between two options changed significantly and unexpectedly for the students currently making their choices, as both the structure of A Levels on offer changed and some departments withdrew their A level offer. The consequence of this is that the choice became far more complex. This research will have clear implications for the way I and my colleagues work when guiding students through making their educational choices at Sixth Form, as it will provide a clearer understanding of how our students approach and process this choice.

Aims: I aim to examine how the students' ongoing narrative about their choice changes over the academic year after they have made their choice for Sixth Form Education and embarked on their course, and consequently how they shape their reality.

Research Question:
1. How are the students' experiences of the process of making their Post-16 study choice linked to the formation of their future identity and their preconceptions about this choice?
2. What is the relationship between students' subjective values, their expectancy values, and the choice they make for Post-16 study?
3. How do students continue to shape the reality of their choice as they move through the pathway they have

chosen?

Research Design: This research design is that of an embedded case study. It involves 13 units of analysis. Units 1-10 involve 10 individual semi-structured interviews where each question consists of a prompt statement or vignette to discuss. This allows the exploration of interesting areas and will last approximately 30 minutes. These interviews will be repeated twice, first in Autumn term 2017, and secondly in the summer term 2018. This type of interview was used successfully within my IFS, and the vignettes used here are drawn from the IFS interviews. These vignettes will be trialled with 2 additional students from this cohort prior to the interviews. Unit 11 is a survey of all the Year 12 students after making this choice, Unit 12 is a survey of all their parents, and Unit 13 is the secondary analysis of data from Grammar School year 11 students from the year that the participants in this research were in Year 11. These surveys will allow a broader overview of the situation. Unit 11 will be piloted prior to use using a small focus group of students who will be asked to complete the survey and then provide feedback, then their results will be analysed to confirm whether the information will be able to be used to answer the research question. Unit 12 will not be piloted due to the difficulties in administering this survey in a way that encourages responses.

Interview Participants: The interview participants, including those trialling the interview technique, will be 12 Sixth Form students aged 16-17 studying at the Sixth Form Centre in year 12 in the academic year 2017/18.

Interview Sampling: The 12 interview participants will be selected from the whole population of year 12 Sixth Form students using a pragmatic approach. This allows me, as the researcher, to ensure that key groups such as feeder school and gender are represented according to their proportion within the year group, and that the participants will represent a range of experiences and attitudes.

Data collection: The interviews (units of analysis 1-10) will be recorded, transcribed, and then qualitatively analysed using conceptual maps to explore the data. The surveys (units of analysis 11 and 12) will be administered using google forms. This means that the data will be automatically available within a spreadsheet, which then allows analysis using SPSS. The secondary data (units of analysis 13) will be available as a spreadsheet, which then allows analysis using SPSS.

Reporting and dissemination: The results of this research will be reported within the EdD Thesis. This Thesis is unlikely to be fully completed whilst these students are still attending the Sixth Form, but if it was it would not be disseminated in Guernsey until they had left the school. A summary report of the findings will be provided on completion of the Thesis for interested parties within my professional context.

Section 3 Participants

Please answer the following questions giving full details where necessary. Text boxes will expand for your responses.

a.	Will your research involve human participants?	Yes	~~No~~ ☐ ⇒ *go to Section 4*

b.	Who are the participants (i.e. what sorts of people will be involved)? Tick all that apply.

☐ Early years/pre-school	☐ Unknown – specify below
☐ Ages 5-11	☐ Adults *please specify below*
Y Ages 12-16	☐ Other – specify below
y Young people aged 17-18	

NB: Ensure that you check the guidelines (Section 1) carefully as research with some participants will require ethical approval from a different ethics committee such as the National Research Ethics Service (NRES).

c.	If participants are under the responsibility of others (such as parents, teachers or medical staff) how do you intend to obtain permission to approach the participants to take part in the study?

(Please attach approach letters or details of permission procedures – see Section 9 Attachments.)

Permission has been granted in principle for this research to take place within the school, and I will seek

	confirmation of approval to undertake this from the Headteacher and the Director of Sixth Form on receipt of ethical approval. As I am already employed within the institution, I have undergone the necessary criminal checks which need to be passed in order to work with young people.
d.	How will participants be recruited (identified and approached)?
	Once potential interview participants have been identified in the way described in section 2, I will approach them individually and discreetly and give them an oral overview of what I am doing and ask if they would be willing to take part. If they answer positively, I will give them an information sheet and consent form, and ask them to take it away and discuss it with their parents. If they are happy to participate after further consideration, they will be asked to return the consent form. Students who demonstrate a reluctance to participate at any stage in the recruitment will not be pursued any further.
	The whole population of year 12 students and parents will be given the option to complete the appropriate survey.
	The secondary analysis of data involves a re-analysis of data from an annual school survey for year 11 students. This takes place independently of this piece of research, hence no recruitment is necessary.
e.	Describe the process you will use to inform participants about what you are doing.
	After the verbal overview, potential interview participants will receive and information sheet and a consent form.
	Both surveys will start with a brief paragraph explaining the purpose of the research, and how the survey data will be used.
	The secondary analysis of data will be completed with the permission of the Director of Sixth Form Studies, who will need to be fully informed regarding the this piece of research prior to giving permission for it to take place within the school.
f.	How will you obtain the consent of participants? Will this be written? How will it be made clear to participants that they may withdraw consent to participate at any time?
	See the guidelines for information on opt-in and opt-out procedures. Please note that the method of consent should be appropriate to the research and fully explained.
	Potential interview participants will be asked to return a consent form in order to opt-in to this research. Participants who appear reluctant to do so at any stage will not be pursued further. The consent form and information letter will make it clear that students may withdraw their consent to participate at any point during the research phase of the study. It will be made clear that for practical reasons, students will be unable to withdraw from the study once the research phase is completed.
	The paragraph at the start of the surveys will also include a sentence that states that completion of the survey will imply consent for their response to be used in this research, and if they do not wish to opt-in they should not continue to complete the survey. After this paragraph there will be a compulsory question which asks participants if they consent; if they do not the survey will then close. The survey settings will be such that no personal data is collected (e.g. name or email address), so participants will not be able to request to withdraw their response once submitted as their response will not be able to be identified. As completion of this survey will not be an organised school activity, students and parents will not be coerced into completion, and will need to opt-in twice in order to participate; firstly through clicking on the link, and secondly after reading the initial paragraph.
	The secondary analysis of data includes a box at the start of the questionnaire which asks students whether they give permission for their data to be used in any external research. It is a compulsory question, and students have the option to select 'yes' or 'no'. Only data from surveys where students have selected 'yes' will be used for this research. As this survey is anonymous, students are unable to

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	withdraw their consent after completing the survey.
g.	**Studies involving questionnaires: Will participants be given the option of omitting questions they do not wish to answer?** **Yes**
	If NO please explain why below and ensure that you cover any ethical issues arising from this in section 8.
h.	**Studies involving observation: Confirm whether participants will be asked for their informed consent to be observed.** Yes ☐ No ☐ n.a.
	If NO read the guidelines (Ethical Issues section) and explain why below and ensure that you cover any ethical issues arising from this in section 8.
i.	**Might participants experience anxiety, discomfort or embarrassment as a result of your study?** **No**
	If yes what steps will you take to explain and minimise this? If not, explain how you can be sure that no discomfort or embarrassment will arise? When selecting interview participants, any students who are known to be struggling with anxiety will not be asked to take part. Students who demonstrate any reluctance to be involved will not be pursued, and I will be mindful in my interactions with students, both professionally and as a researcher, not to treat any who have participated or who have chosen not to participate any differently from normal. Their involvement will be confidential, and I will book a smaller meeting room away from my normal office for the interviews so that we are not unintentionally interrupted or observed. At the start of each interview, I will make sure that participants are aware that they can stop the interview at any time, and if I observe that the interview is making a participant uncomfortable in any way I will ask them if they wish to stop. The surveys will all be anonymous, and since they are completed electronically the link will be emailed to groups of potential participants. I will be able to ask group of potential participants to complete them, but will not know who exactly has or hasn't done this. Therefore anyone who chooses not to will only receive a generic request reminder, and will not be placed in a situation where they feel they have to explain their choice.
j.	**Will your project involve deliberately misleading participants (deception) in any way?** **No**
	If YES please provide further details below and ensure that you cover any ethical issues arising from this in section 8.
k.	**Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation (i.e. give them a brief explanation of the study)?** **No**
	If NO please explain why below and ensure that you cover any ethical issues arising from this in section 8. Participants will be given a brief explanation of the study both verbally and through the information sheet prior to agreeing to take part in the study.

	At the end of their participation, participants will be thanked, reminded of their ability to withdraw their consent within the timeframe above, and asked if they would like a copy of their transcript.
	Participants will not be debriefed once the research is completed and written up as they are likely to have completed their programme of study by this time and left the island to attend universities elsewhere.
I.	Will participants be given information about the findings of your study? (This could be a brief summary of your findings in general; it is not the same as an individual debriefing.) No
	If no, why not? By the time this Thesis is completed and I have a summary of the findings prepared, these students will be expected to have left the school and the island to attend university elsewhere.

Section 4 Security-sensitive material
Only complete if applicable

Security sensitive research includes: commissioned by the military; commissioned under an EU security call; involves the acquisition of security clearances; concerns terrorist or extreme groups.

a.	Will your project consider or encounter security-sensitive material?	~~Yes~~ *	No
b.	Will you be visiting websites associated with extreme or terrorist organisations?	~~Yes~~ *	No
c.	Will you be storing or transmitting any materials that could be interpreted as promoting or endorsing terrorist acts?	~~Yes~~ *	No

* *Give further details in Section 8 Ethical Issues*

Section 5 Systematic review of research
Only complete if applicable

a.	Will you be collecting any new data from participants?	Yes ☐ *	No ☐
b.	Will you be analysing any secondary data?	Yes ☐ *	No ☐

* *Give further details in Section 8 Ethical Issues*

If your methods do not involve engagement with participants (e.g. systematic review, literature review) and if you have answered No to both questions, please go to Section 10 Attachments.

Section 6 Secondary data analysis Complete for all secondary analysis

a.	Name of dataset/s	Guernsey Grammar School Year 11 Survey of the Sixth Form Information Process	
b.	Owner of dataset/s	Guernsey Grammar School and Sixth Form Centre	
c.	Are the data in the public domain?		No
			If no, do you have the owner's permission/license? Yes
d.	Are the data anonymised?	Yes	
		Do you plan to anonymise the data?	n.a.

Do you plan to use individual level data?	No	
Will you be linking data to individuals?	No	

e.	Are the data sensitive (DPA 1998 definition)?		No
f.	Will you be conducting analysis within the remit it was originally collected for?	Yes	
g.	If no, was consent gained from participants for subsequent/future analysis?	Yes	
h.	If no, was data collected prior to ethics approval process?	Yes	

* Give further details in Section 8 Ethical Issues

If secondary analysis is only method used and no answers with asterisks are ticked, go to Section 9 Attachments.

Section 7 Data Storage and Security
Please ensure that you include all hard and electronic data when completing this section.

a.	Confirm that all personal data will be stored and processed in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA 1998). *(See the Guidelines and the Institute's Data Protection & Records Management Policy for more detail.)*		Yes
b.	Will personal data be processed or be sent outside the European Economic Area?		No

* If yes, please confirm that there are adequate levels of protections in compliance with the DPA 1998 and state what these arrangements are below.

c.	Who will have access to the data and personal information, including advisory/consultation groups and during transcription? Myself, and my supervisor during supervision sessions if appropriate

During the research

d.	Where will the data be stored? On my personal computer, and backed up on my personal cloud storage

Will mobile devices such as USB storage and laptops be used?   Yes *

* If yes, state what mobile devices: My personal laptop

e.	** If yes, will they be encrypted?: My laptop is password protected, and confidential files will be password protected within my file storage system.*

After the research

f.	Where will the data be stored? On my personal laptop and backed up on my personal cloud storage
g.	How long will the data and records be kept for and in what format? These will be kept in electronic form for a year after~~until~~ the Thesis is submitted and accepted, to allow time for publication.
h.	Will data be archived for use by other researchers? No
	* If yes, please provide details.

Section 8 Ethical issues

Are there particular features of the proposed work which may raise ethical concerns or add to the complexity of ethical decision making? If so, please outline how you will deal with these.

It is important that you demonstrate your awareness of potential risks or harm that may arise as a result of your research. You should then demonstrate that you have considered ways to minimise the likelihood and impact of each potential harm that you have identified. Please be as specific as possible in describing the ethical issues you will have to address. Please consider / address ALL issues that may apply.
Ethical concerns may include, but not be limited to, the following areas:

− Methods	− International research
− Sampling	− Risks to participants and/or researchers
− Recruitment	− Confidentiality/Anonymity
− Gatekeepers	− Disclosures/limits to confidentiality
− Informed consent	− Data storage and security both during and after the research (including transfer, sharing, encryption, protection)
− Potentially vulnerable participants	
− Safeguarding/child protection	− Reporting
− Sensitive topics	− Dissemination and use of findings

Permission has already been sought for this research to take place from Guernsey Grammar School and Sixth Form Centre, and has been granted in principle. As I am already employed within the institution, I have undergone the necessary criminal checks which need to be passed in order to work with young people.

The Secondary Data analysis (embedded unit of analysis 13) is the analysis of data from Grammar School Year 11 student survey from 2017. This data set is anonymised, and owned by the Grammar School and Sixth Form Centre, who have given permission for its use. The stated purpose of the survey is to review students' experiences each year to enable the Sixth Form to identify areas of poorer practice. As this thesis examines how students make this choice, and will feed back into my professional role within the Sixth Form management team, the use of the data in this way could be broadly said to fit its original purpose. Individuals cannot be identified from the data.

The student and parent surveys (embedded units of analysis 11 and 12) will be disseminated through a method agreed with the school. This is likely to be via email or through the weekly bulletin for students and parents. The number of times this is disseminated (e.g. how many weeks running that the survey link will be put in the bulletin) will also need to be agreed with the school, but care must be taken to ensure that students and parents do not feel that they are being coerced into completing this. The surveys will be administered through google forms, and will include the facility for respondents to request a copy of their response, and return to the survey to edit it if they so wish. The surveys will be anonymous. Whilst the survey will need to be created on the school's electronic system, the data will be downloaded to my personal computer when the survey is closed, and then the survey will be deleted from the school's system.

Personal data will be used to select the interview participants for embedded units of analysis 1-10. This personal data would only be their feeder school, gender, entry grades and course choices for Sixth Form, which would allow the researcher to identify a balanced range of students to participate in this research. This data is owned by the Sixth Form Centre, and permission will be sought for its use in this way. This data is confidential, and the whole data set will not be saved from the school's electronic systems. This means that the data sorting will take place at school, and only the data of those students who are to be invited to

participate will be saved by the researcher.

Potential interview participants will be invited to take part during a private conversation with the researcher, so they do not feel pressurised by others to act in a particular way. However the students may struggle with my dual role as Assistant Director of Sixth Form and as a researcher, so could feel unable to refuse to participate. To reduce the possibility that they feel coerced into taking part, I will take the following measures. Firstly, I will not ask them for an instant decision on whether they would like to participate. Students will be provided with a handout giving a short description of the purpose and benefits of the research, the extent of their involvement, and an assurance that they can withdraw their consent at any point. They will be asked to take it away for at least 24 hours, discuss it with their parents, and bring back a signed consent form if they are happy to take part. They will be assured that if they do not agree there will be no negative consequences. If they bring back the form, the researcher will make an appointment with them for the interview, which, if possible, will take place in a neutral room rather than the researcher's office. Students who demonstrate signs of reluctance to be involved will not be pushed to participate.

Confidentiality, discretion and data protection are extremely important here. The students may express unpopular views during their interviews, and should not suffer any consequences as a result of being honest. This will involve treating the personal data, transcripts, recordings, and timetable of student interviews as secure documents which cannot be accessed by others and ensuring that the identity of the students (or staff discussed) cannot be discovered through the work. Electronic data will be stored in a password protected folder, which will be kept on my personal computer and cloud storage rather than on the school storage system to reduce the possibility that it could be accessed by others. Any paper copies of data will also be kept at home rather than at the school. As I will be undertaking the research on school premises, paper work and electronic data will temporarily be on the school grounds, and in the short term these will be locked in my desk.

Respondent validation will not take place as a matter of course, but students will be asked if they wish to read and validate their interview transcript before analysis takes place. If they indicate that they do, then they will be provided with a copy of the transcript and asked to sign and return it within an agreed timeframe, with any changes or comments indicated on it. If necessary, this process will be repeated until they are happy for the analysis to take place. My previous experience of research within the school when completing my IFS suggests that students are unlikely to want to do this, but they will be given the option to do so.

This research will benefit students applying to the Sixth Form Centre in future years as it will aid the Sixth Form Management Team's understanding of how students process and view this decision, so allowing the team to reflect on our approach. The whole report for this research will not be released to the school or Education Department while the students involved are in the Education system, so reducing the possibility of an undesirable outcome for the students from the release of this information. Interested parties will be provided with a summary report prior to this if appropriate.

Section 9 Further information

Outline any other information you feel relevant to this submission, using a separate sheet or attachments if necessary.

	Section 10 Attachments Please attach the following items to this form, or explain if not attached		
a.	Information sheets and other materials to be used to inform potential participants about the research, including approach letters	Yes	
b.	Consent form	Yes	
	If applicable:		
c.	The proposal for the project	Yes	
d.	Approval letter from external Research Ethics Committee	n.a.	
e.	Full risk assessment	n.a.	

Section 11 Declaration

I have read, understood and will abide by the following set of guidelines.			Yes
~~BPS~~	BERA	~~BSA~~ ~~Other (please state)~~	

I have discussed the ethical issues relating to my research with my supervisor. Yes

I have attended the appropriate ethics training provided by my course. Yes

I confirm that to the best of my knowledge:

The above information is correct and that this is a full description of the ethics issues that may arise in the course of this project.

Name	Nicola Papworth
Date	9/4/17

Please submit your completed ethics forms to your supervisor.

Notes and references

Professional code of ethics

You should read and understand relevant ethics guidelines, for example:

British Psychological Society (2009) *Code of Ethics and Conduct*, and (2014) *Code of Human Research Ethics*

or

British Educational Research Association (2011) *Ethical Guidelines*

or

British Sociological Association (2002) *Statement of Ethical Practice*

Disclosure and Barring Service checks

If you are planning to carry out research in regulated Education environments such as Schools, or if your research will bring you into contact with children and young people (under the age of 18), you will need to have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) CHECK, before you start. The DBS was previously known as the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB)). If you do not already hold a current DBS check, and have not registered with the DBS update service, you will need to obtain one through UCL.

Ensure that you apply for the DBS check in plenty of time as will take around 4 weeks, though can take longer depending on the circumstances.

Further references

The www.ethicsguidebook.ac.uk website is very useful for assisting you to think through the ethical issues arising from your project.

Robson, Colin (2011). *Real world research: a resource for social scientists and practitioner researchers* (3rd edition). Oxford: Blackwell.
This text has a helpful section on ethical considerations.

Alderson, P. and Morrow, V. (2011) *The Ethics of Research with Children and Young People: A Practical Handbook*. London: Sage.
This text has useful suggestions if you are conducting research with children and young people.

Wiles, R. (2013) What are Qualitative Research Ethics? Bloomsbury.
A useful and short text covering areas including informed consent, approaches to research ethics including examples of ethical dilemmas.

Departmental use

If a project raises particularly challenging ethics issues, or a more detailed review would be appropriate, you may refer the application to the Research Ethics and Governance Administrator (via IOE.researchethics@ucl.ac.uk) so that it can be submitted to the Research Ethics Committee for consideration. A Research Ethics Committee Chair, ethics representatives in your department and the research ethics coordinator can advise you, either to support your review process, or help decide whether an application should be referred to the Research Ethics Committee.

Reviewer 1		
Supervisor name	Shirley Simon	
Supervisor comments	A clear research plan that considers ethical issues	
Supervisor signature	Shirley Simon (electronic)	
Reviewer 2		
Advisory committee/course team member name	Michael J Reiss	
Advisory committee/course team member comments	A clear and appropriate application	
Advisory committee/course team member signature	Michael J Reiss (electronic)	
Decision		
Date decision was made	10 May 2017	
Decision	Approved	☒
	Referred back to applicant and supervisor	☐
	Referred to REC for review	☐
Recording	Recorded in the student information system	☐

Once completed and approved, please send this form and associated documents to the relevant programme administrator to record on the student information system and to securely store.

Further guidance on ethical issues can be found on the IOE website at http://www.ucl.ac.uk/srs/research-ethics-committee/ioe and www.ethicsguidebook.ac.uk