



University of
BRISTOL



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University of the
West of England

There's No Place Like Home:

Local University students' perceptions of the benefits of
living at home.

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Structure of Presentation

- o Overview of Literature
- o Description of the study
- o Findings:
 - o Choosing the Local
 - o Friends and socialising
 - o Independence
 - o Identity, Habitus and Reflexivity
- o Conclusion

Current Literature

- o Risk minimisation strategy (Patiniotis and Holdsworth, 2005; Christie et al., 2005).
- o “There is a sense that living at home represents an inferior model of participation in Higher Education” (Holdsworth, 2006:495).
- o Tension between ‘Local’ and ‘Student’ (Holdsworth, 2009)

The Study: 'Paired Peers'

- o 3 year Leverhulme funded project. Professor Harriet Bradley is the principal investigator
- o Qualitative (with initial quantitative questionnaire)
- o University of Bristol (UoB) and the University of the West of England (UWE)
- o 90 students: Paired by Social Class, Subject and University
- o This presentation is based on the experiences of 8 of those students, those whose family home is local.

Choosing to stay local: “I need my home comforts”

- o *“It’s a lot cheaper not to move away, I don’t have to worry about accommodation fees. [...] I can still keep in contact with [sixth form and work friends] and, [...] still keep my part time job on week-ends and see the same people.”*

(Garry: WC, UoB, History)

- o *“I think it’s a worry that I didn’t need was travelling and meeting new people[...] Didn’t really want to move away and make new friends, I wasn’t really worried about that because I’ve got a nice set of friends here”.*

(Isabel: WC, UWE, Law)

Friends and Socialising

- Local Students don't socialise at university as much. This is partly to do with not living in halls of residence:

"I guess not living in halls or nearby you don't really... like during the day you socialise fairly easily but it's difficult to commit to meeting up and, you know, they'll sort of all be doing their own thing, like their own social events at their halls of residence [...] so it's difficult to sort of fit into that I guess".

(Garry: WC, UoB, History)

- Restrictions of travelling into the city. Local students were often living out of Bristol or living in areas of Bristol far away from university, as Garry mentions in his quote it is not just about living out of halls but also out of the area.
- Contrast this to Sally a middle-class local student.....

Friends and Socialising

"Living in Redgrove, I'm right next to the halls of residence, so even though I'm not in halls it's quite easy just to kind of go up there and mingle a little bit, it's quite nice"

(Sally: MC, UoB, Law)

- **In Contrast to Garry, Sally is managing by the nature of her proximity to the students to mix better, the halls of residence are placed in a very wealthy area of Bristol so in this sense the local working-class students are more excluded from this socialising.**

“I came to university for a degree not a social life”

- o Most of the students do not feel that they are ‘missing out’ on this, stressing that they have friends at home or work friends who they socialise with. They didn’t come to socialise or have an ‘experience’ but came for a degree.
- o The idea of moving away to university and the whole ‘experience’ which comes with it is based on an ideological and stereotypical idea of what a student should be, which is bound with middle class norms of mobility and ‘becoming an adult’
- o Carefully planned route into university means they are determined to make the most of it, this means working hard not socialising.....

“I came to university for a degree not a social life”

- *“To me, it’s more about the subject matter and getting the qualification to me rather than the social life attached to it”*
(Aaron: WC, UWE, Geography)
- *“I just wanted to do my work really and get the qualifications, ‘cos that’s all that matters really”*
(Isabel: WC, UWE, Law)
- *“I think uni work before [...] going out, whereas they would tend to think “well it doesn’t really matter about that as long as I can go out and come back at like 3 in the morning and then do my uni work for an hour”, whereas I’m like “no” I would prioritise uni work over everything really.”*
(Ruby: WC, UWE, English)

“I came to university for a degree not a social life”

Some middle-class students also voiced these feelings.....

- o “I think some people just go to university for the experience and not the education, I think that’s a waste”

(Anthony: MC, UWE, Geography)

- o “[mother and eldest sister] were both like “if you don’t live on campus you won’t have a social life, you will not be a student”. And I was like “well I’m not interested in drinking and partying”, and they were like “you will be once you’re a student and you’re really going to miss out if you don’t live there”.”

(Joanna: MC, UWE, Psychology)

Missing out Un-Consciously?

- Could local students be missing out by not constructing a network of 'social capital' without realising?....
- Possibly!... But moving away does not mean that a network would be constructed automatically. (e.g many assimilate to 'similar' people).
- Many working-class students struggle to fit in at university. Living at home may be beneficial as less isolation if not fitting in.

- o For example here we see one working class student who moved away from home and then regretted this decision, she missed her mum and her network so much that she actually dropped out of university half way through the first year.....

“Because I wanted to get as far away as I could - and now I regret going so far. I thought it would be of benefit, I thought I'd really enjoy being away from home, being away from my old friends and not....I don't know. I think sometimes you take things for granted maybe....yeah....and I don't know, I've had to grow up a lot, quickly, and it's quite scary”.

(Holly: WC, UWE)

Independence

- Local Students refuted the idea of university as the place to learn independence, stressing their home environment as one where they were already afforded adequate freedoms and responsibilities.....

"I'm kind of more like a secondary mother figure in my family [...] I do the cooking and I do like the weekly shop [...] I take myself places rather than get lifts and things like that. So I think I get more of a feel of independence, and I have to pay rent to my parents and things like that. So even though I'm missing out on like the social side of living in halls, I'm kind of still feeling more independent than I did before uni".

(Sally: MC, UoB, Law)

"I'd say I'm fairly independent as the fact I cook my own meals and sort of work as I please and I've got my own car so I can come and go as I please".

(Anthony: MC, UWE, Geography)

Local (Student) Identity

- *"When people ask, "what do you do", and I say, "oh I'm at uni, I'm a student". They say, "oh right, where do you go?", and I say "Bristol", their next question will be "oh what, UWE?"*

Like they [...] exclusively almost in their minds associate local students with going to UWE and then people [...] who go to Bristol, from being outside the city. There's almost that very clear distinction already in their minds".

(Garry: WC, UoB, History)

- This assumption of local students attending UWE does match the pattern; that is most local students do attend UWE over Bristol.

Identity, Habitus and Reflexivity

- o Garry has begun to notice a difference between his working-class local community and the middle-class university community.
- o He has managed to successfully immerse himself in both groups and gets on well with both, however in order to successfully accomplish this he has become reflexive about his situation and is aware that he modifies his behaviour depending on which group he is with (speech and humour).....

Identity, Habitus and Reflexivity

"I'm definitely more conscious of my accent at university [...] [and] in terms of behaviour, like different sorts of humour, like in university [it's] more satirical, more political humour, whereas in Sainsbury's I guess, I think practical jokes are more for...you know[...] jumping out of an aisle and scaring someone[...] I can't really imagine doing that here, like in the library...you know [...], you'd just get a weird [look]...yeah, so differences in...certainly in speech and then certain behaviours I think"

(Garry: WC, UoB, History)

- Rather than caught between two worlds, Garry successfully negotiates both field, modifying himself to fit with each field. He overcomes any habitus conflict. It is what Ingram (2011) talks about as a 'reconciled habitus'
- Garry remarks also that he is not sure if he's "not being true to himself, or just showing a different side to himself". But overall he remarks it is positive as he has plurality in circles of friends and he is able to modify his behaviour and speech freely and naturally, it is almost like embodied, it is unconscious he has mastered this habitus switch.....

Identity, Habitus and Reflexivity

- o *“But overall, no I think it’s a positive thing. I don’t think, “oh I have to be a certain way, do a certain...” because it just sort of...like I say, it comes almost naturally, I...it’s almost a subconscious thing. It’s only afterwards like I think, “oh yeah, would I have done that in that situation or with that group of people”. So yeah I think overall it’s a good thing, but I guess other people would have different opinions about that.”*

(Garry: WC, UoB, History)

Identity, Habitus and Reflexivity

- o Isabel considers her feelings that people at university are 'different' to her and initially she struggles to explain how she feels they are different to her but reflects upon this as something perhaps to do with being a 'Bristolian' whereas they are outsiders.

"Some people are kind of different to what I'm used to. I don't know how to explain it [...] I don't know if it's because they're from out of Bristol [...] They're just sort of like, I don't know, just seem like really well spoken and I'm sort of Bristolian, so I feel a bit inferior to them sometimes because they're so well spoken"

(Isabel: WC, UWE, LAW)

- o This may initially seem to map on to what Holdswroth (2009) discusses as a tension between locals and students, however we argue it is about class. When the interview probes deeper this emerges.....

Identity, Habitus and Reflexivity

"I think that's the impression I get and that's why I feel that way. Just because of the way they speak and like some people have told me sort of the qualifications they've got and the work experience they've already had and it makes me feel a bit like, wow, like they've had really good preparation for this, whereas I haven't so much. I wonder if that's because maybe the area that I've grew up in or...because my family haven't...my parents didn't go to university and their's probably did, I wonder if that's why I haven't sort of been so prepared and knew what to expect and stuff like that. I'm not used to that sort of environment."

(Isabel: WC, UWE, LAW)

- o Thus if it is an issue of classed based distinction, this tension would not be solved by students moving away from home to study, in fact this may cause them further problems as they will likely not have the support network and 'insider' status they currently have by being immersed in their working class community still.

Conclusion: There's no place like home

- o Local students do not feel they are 'missing out' and emphasize the importance of the 'degree' over the 'experience'. Moreover they are already 'independent'
- o Only one student reflected on moving between two 'fields' and the effects this has on his 'habitus'. For most there was not conflict between 'local' and 'student'.
- o Overall living at home is experienced positively by all the students in the study.

References

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