

# Students' Engagement in Extra-Curricular Activities

Constraints, Freedoms and Social  
Backgrounds



Fish in water

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# **Concerted Cultivation and Middle-Class Freedoms**

Well the whole family is a member of a gym in Oxford, and this was when my brother was about 16 or 17, he used to play. And my dad used to play at uni a lot, and so they used to play as well together. And I went down a couple of times for my brother's training sessions, because he had coaching, and then I got coaching from the same guy and got on to a few teams and then played county. And then uni came and so I trialed for the team and got in (Francesca middle-class UWE).

(in the context of talking about parents appropriately spending money on their children)

I: And what do they spend their money on?

J: Oh just making sure we've got something that we can have for the future, like windsurfing, surfing, trumpet, climbing, I've done so many activities when I was little it's just stupid. And then so now my sister's now working all round the world doing windsurf teaching and stuff like this, and I've taught break dancing and stuff like that. So kind of setting us up for the future rather than just giving us PS3s.  
(Jack middle-class UWE)

# **The Value of Cultivation**

Parallel to the academic stuff I play trumpet, bass guitar, guitar, drums, all that kind of stuff, and I've done lots of stuff playing in orchestras, big bands, rock bands, in plays, musicals, all that kind of thing. Taiko is my big thing, I've played Taiko in Japan, Italy, France, America, played in the Royal Albert Hall...I've taught loads and loads of groups and workshops for kids all over the country and going into schools and that kind of thing, and yeah I've performed to five figure crowds and that kind of thing. And those experiences are just as valuable as any academic ones (Oscar middle-class UWE)

It's stressful as well because I've got a job and a boyfriend and that. I need to start volunteer work pretty soon or some sort of work experience, cos they've been drilling it into us from the start that like it's all well and good that you've got qualifications, but employers are looking for something else now because everyone's got the same qualifications, like there's going to be however many of us, hundreds of us graduating with this degree, we need something to make us stand out.  
(Isabel working-class UWE)

But it's just nice to just go in the kitchen, there's like four of us in my flat especially that get on really well, we just sit in the kitchen, make food together, have a chat. It's nice to like catch up after like a day, because we all go like our separate ways in the day and then come back. It's quite like a little family. (Jade working-class UoB)

I'll have the occasional Monday off because I have 9 O'Clock Tuesdays, and I have football til 10 O'Clock on Mondays and Thursdays. But that takes up a lot of time as well, I mean as far as going out, I mean I have training on Mondays from 8 'til 10 in the evening, and Thursdays from 8 'til 10 in the evening, and I have my matches on Wednesdays and we sometimes have weekend training sessions. If I have an away game on Wednesday that's the day gone and I have to be excused from lectures and try and rearrange tutorials and stuff. (Harvey working-class UoB)

# **Financial and Time Constraints**

I was going to do trampolining but I just haven't got the money at the minute, so I mean we're waiting for...being in sixth form you've got to apply for three like grants from the school board, so they don't come until December and they're like to put towards your books and that kind of stuff. And I was just like "well what use is that in December when I've bought the books in September?" So I'm just waiting for all the money to be sorted and then I'll think about it. (Abigail working-class UWE)

I think that the only problem is with quite a lot of them is that they're sort of quite expensive to go to into, and I can't afford really to go into them. Snow sports looks quite good but you have to pay to go to the dry slope every weekend. They have about five holidays or something and they're like £300 each, so it's a bit too much really. (Alfie working-class UWE)

It's like, they had try-outs and I scored and all in the match, and it was the only goal, the only try for the whole game, of this wee practice game. And they like just basically... it was ran by third year students, and this was like a trek for me to go to like... because I'm in the city centre I had to get a bus to here and the walk about 45 minutes that way. This is in the first couple of weeks of being at uni, didn't know anywhere in Bristol. And I finally got there, went to the try-outs, scored a try, and they didn't like... they said "right, keep going to training". I didn't get called up to their best team... And it's £120 to join and that covers your insurance and a kit. And I'm like "what £120!" But then I didn't pay that. ( Scott working-class UWE)

I: So are you involved in any hobbies or societies or sports or leisure or anything at uni?

Z: No. I'd love to but I physically don't have time. I'd love to do the acting and singing at uni, I'd love to do like the shows. There's so many societies... and paying for so many societies. I'm part of like the Law Club but I only go to their socials now and again, I don't really go to any of their...because law is very centred on like... every night there's like different meals, different like firms and like mooting, debating, and all that, and I'd love to get involved in it but I physically can't. Which is another frustrating thing then because I feel like I am not making the most out of my time here (Zoe working-class Bristol).

# Conclusions

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- We have considered
  - ECA as a form of concerted cultivation
  - The value of concerted cultivation and the way in which ‘cultivating’ activities can be processed into capitals
  - Other “unconcerted” forms of cultivation
  - Financial and time constraints for some students