

The Chameleon Habitus: Exploring Local Students' Negotiations of Multiple Fields

by **Jessica Abrahams and Nicola Ingram**
University of Bristol; University of Bath

Sociological Research Online, 18 (4) 21
<<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/18/4/21.html>>
10.5153/sro.3189

Received: 7 Apr 2013 Accepted: 13 Aug 2013 Published: 30 Nov 2013

Abstract

This study utilises an innovative creative method of plasticine modelling to explore the identities of local students (those who live in their family home) at the University of Bristol and the University of the West of England. Students created models representing their identity, which were used as a springboard for in-depth discussion. Through drawing upon Bourdieusian theory this article attempts to shed new sociological light on the subject of local student experiences. In much of the literature this is presented as problematic and it is often argued that local students either 'miss out' on the conventional university experience or that they are stuck between two worlds. This paper, however, presents a more complex picture of local students' experiences of inhabiting local and university spaces. The data is analysed through a Bourdieusian lens in which the university and local worlds are seen as fields of struggle, this allows for a nuanced understanding of how students conceptualise their positions and dispositions in relation to both fields. The findings indicate that living at home can be both problematic and of benefit to the working-class students in particular. Despite being immersed within two somewhat contradictory fields they can sometimes develop various strategies to enable them to overcome any internal conflict. In this article we draw uniquely upon Bhabha's concept of a third space to expand upon Bourdieusian theory, arguing that a 'cleft habitus' is not always negative and can be a resource for some in their attempts to negotiate new fields.

Keywords: *Local Students, Habitus, Field, Social-Class, Reflexivity, Bourdieu, Higher Education*

Introduction: The problematisation of living at home

1.1 Youth transitions have changed in recent years, becoming more unstable and less linear (Bradley & van Hoof 2005) with the transition from childhood to adulthood being more extended, expensive and high risk (Jones 2005). Leaving school at 16 to enter the labour market is no longer the norm; young people are expected to continue in education or training to be prepared for entering our 'knowledge economy' (Christie 2009). This lengthened transition coincides with an expansion of higher education (HE) (Boliver 2011) and an increase in the number of students choosing to live at home whilst at university (Holdsworth 2009a). For example, in 1998 43.4% of students in England and Wales were accepted into a higher education institution (HEI) in their locality. By 2006 this figure had increased to 51.1%. Whilst this is an overall increase across regions, individual localities varied. In the South West the figures were 42% in 1998 and 48% in 2006 (Holdsworth 2009b: 1852–1854). There is a connection between family background and choice to stay at home. Patiniotis and Holdsworth (2005) find that young people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, or whose parents have not been to university, are more likely to make this choice as it is a more financially viable option. Moreover they highlight that there are a greater number of local students attending post 1992 universities than traditional ones (2005). Not surprisingly, the increase in localised study also maps on to an increase in 'non-traditional' entrants (working-class, ethnic minorities and mature students).

1.2 Despite this broadening of the HE field and a diversification of the student population, ideas of what it means to be a 'student' are still very much governed by traditional middle-class discourses (Leathwood & O'Connell 2003). Government policy is geared around making non-traditional students 'fit' with the middle-class way of accessing university, whereby leaving home and submerging oneself in the university 'experience' and adopting a 'student identity' is perceived as the norm. Students who live at home tend to reject these normative ideals, instead forging new ways of being an HE student (Christie et al. 2005).

1.3 Holdsworth argues that living at home is presented as an inferior way to be an HE 'student' and that the term itself implies more than merely an occupational status but is about a lifestyle and an

'experience'. When people talk about 'students', they often mean white, middle-class and mobile young people (2006; 2009a). The transition to university is very much ritualised, and the assumption of geographical mobility in relation to university attendance as the norm is a middle-class one reflecting the elitist nature of the English HE system. She continues that this pattern is not universal, providing an example of France where moving away to university is the exception rather than the norm (Holdsworth 2006). Bourdieu and Passeron also find this in their study of the French HE system, noting that the majority (50–60%) of young people from the upper-class lived at home whilst at university compared to 10–20% whose parents were peasants and manual workers (1979: 13).

1.4 It is often argued that geographical mobility and independence go hand in hand, thus local students cannot be seen as 'independent' as they live at home. Holdsworth challenges this, finding that for many local students who had commitments at home independence was centred on obligation rather than distance and many appeared to be less financially dependent than those who moved away (2009b). She writes:

Mobility is not a necessary condition of negotiating transitions to adulthood, particularly for learning about responsibilities, though it is often assumed to be the case. Rather in celebrating students' mobility we are valorising a particular model of transition to adulthood which focuses on separation, self-resilience, and responsibility for the self, rather than one based on interdependencies, mutual support and responsibility for others (Holdsworth 2009b: 1861).

1.5 Similarly Jones argues that it is more logical to see transitions in strands: from school to work, from family home to own property, from single to married/in a relationship and from child to parent. This, she argues, allows for the complex picture to emerge as independence/adulthood is possible through making any of these transitions individually rather than needing to comply with them all (2005). Seen from this perspective and in line with Holdsworth's arguments living at home should not restrict ability to become independent as independence can be attained through other means. Thus once we recognise that moving away to attend university is not an inherently superior way of accessing HE and 'being a student', but rather a socially constructed, middle-class model which is 'privileged and privileging', we can attempt to theorise around alternative experiences being equally valid (Christie et al. 2005). Wider sociological literature on the experience of minority groups in higher education similarly challenges this socially constructed norm of the 'ideal' student experience and argues in favour of the value of enhancing localised forms of capital (Mellor 2010) and highlights the complex interplay between constraint and agency in terms of the classed experience of geographical (and social) mobility (Evans 2010). Indeed the diversification of the student population since the expansion of HE calls for different ways of conceptualising the 'authentic' student experience as diverse groups want different things from university (Brennan et al. 2010). This paper attempts to add to the literature exploring local student experiences in order to create greater awareness of this minority group and the issues they experience. There has to date been little research done on this group. The literature which does exist tends to view these students 'missing out' on the university experience. Holdsworth (2006) argues that even when controlling for class background, residential status plays a large part in determining students' experiences of social life at university. That is, those who move away benefit socially as establishing oneself in student accommodation generates particular forms of social experience and allows for mixing with fellow students. However, some local students do not need or want to mix and fit in with university social life as they have friends at home and as such have a more functional relationship to university. That is, Christie and colleagues (2005) found that the local students in their study did not see living at home as a second best or a constrained choice which caused them to miss out, but rather as a positive decision.

1.6 Little of this literature addresses the sociological issues around identities. The literature which has done tends to see living at home as problematic for the identity. Patiniotis and Holdsworth argue that local students may become viewed as 'outsiders' in their local community due to their new student status (2005). For example, Holdsworth found a tension between 'locals' and 'students' in Liverpool and argues that this is problematic for local students as they occupy a position 'between the two worlds' (2009a: 235). That is, she considers the problems of needing to fit in with family life and also university life. The constant moving between two worlds makes it hard for local students to feel that they truly belong to either (Holdsworth 2006, 2009a). However Christie et al. (2005) found that local students saw themselves as 'day students' who did not take on a 'student identity'. Their lives involved a split between their home and university worlds where university was seen as part of a working week, rather than an all-encompassing experience. Here it is possible to suggest that since their student identity did not affect their home identity they had a reduced likelihood of experiencing the problems Holdsworth identifies. Whilst these writers have provided useful insight into the experiences of local students; there is a need to build upon this work by considering the complexities of the local students' identities through a sociological lens. Bourdieusian theory provides a useful tool for this. Bourdieu's concept of habitus and the complexities of the relations between habitus and multiple fields is a useful way to conceptually frame the issues local students face with regards to their identities. In the following section we will discuss this framework and the notion of the divided habitus.

Identity and a habitus divided

2.1 Bourdieu's concept of habitus as a system of dispositions is commonly used within contemporary sociological analysis and we do not have the space to outline a definition in this article. For an overview and critique of the use of habitus see Reay (2004). We would like to highlight that our use of habitus draws specifically on an understanding of it as both an individual and collective concept (see Burke et al. 2013) with emphasis on the commonality of schemes of perception of those who occupy the same field position. This conceptualisation enables us to utilise the concept to understand multiple field identifications and resulting fluid positions. Bourdieu (1977: 86) writes of the way that subjective yet collective habitus are formed:

The habitus could be considered as a subjective but not individual system of internalised structures, schemes of perception, conception, and action common to all members of the same group or class and constituting the precondition for all objectification and

2.2 In using habitus we consider all new experiences to be mediated by perceptions laid down through past experience. Therefore, we can consider students' perceptions of new experiences in the education field only in relation to their previously internalised perceptions, as generated by their originary (local) field. Moreover, one's habitus is embodied; it is not just about attitudes and perceptions, but about ways 'of standing, speaking, walking and thereby feeling and thinking' (Bourdieu 1990: 70). So habitus enables us to conceive of the complex ways in which students not only possess different dispositions in relation to their pre-university experiences, but how they are differentiated through their embodiments of these dispositions. Habitus develops differently depending upon the field of origin and its position in social space. Those who occupy similar positions develop a similar habitus – one which is attuned to fields of which it is the product and un-attuned to others (Bourdieu 2002). In other words students will have developed a particular habitus from their field of origin (the local field) which will be more or less compatible with the university field. Whilst universities themselves are competing within a field for domination with some possessing more symbolic power than others, we argue that all universities are located relatively high in social space and as such students whose originary field is in a similar position are likely to feel more at ease within the university as their habitus was already attuned to a similar field through primary socialisation. However as Bourdieu discusses the habitus is not static rather it can be altered and adapted by new experiences. When the habitus encounters a new field there is a 'dialectical confrontation' (Bourdieu 2002: 31). At this point there can emerge a 'cleft habitus' (Bourdieu 1999, 2000):

A habitus divided against itself, in constant negotiation with itself and its ambivalences, and therefore doomed to a kind of duplication, to a double perception of the self, to successive allegiance and multiple identities (Bourdieu 1999: 511).

2.3 So we can see that through the encountering of a new field, local students (specifically the working-class ones) may experience a cleft habitus. Ingram, in her study of working-class educationally successful boys conceptualises of ways in which their habitus developed and whether and how it was conflicted by the two competing fields of their local community and the school (Ingram 2011a, 2011b). She conceptualises of a 'habitus tug' whereby tastes, practices and dispositions are competing for supremacy, resulting in the individual being pulled in multiple directions by different fields (Ingram 2011b: 292). Reay similarly discusses these issues in Shaun's story, the story of a working-class educationally successful boy. His attempts to maintain his position and identity within the two fields resulted in a great deal of emotion work (Reay 2002). Bourdieu (2000: 160) describes this process in the following way:

Thus it can be observed that to contradictory positions, which tend to exert structural 'double binds' on their occupants, there often correspond destabilised habitus, torn by contradiction and internal division, generating suffering.

2.4 Through drawing from Bourdieusian theory this paper will apply the concept of habitus to help explain the experiences of local working-class students in terms of possessing multiple and conflicting identities, due to their location within two misaligned fields. Whilst our sample included both working and middle class students, the discussion of conflicting identities that we present in this paper apply only to the working-class students. In our analysis we did not discern any habitus conflicts for our middle-class sample. Building upon Holdsworth's notion of 'two worlds' we are viewing the university and the local (home and community) spaces as competing fields. We will consider the complex ways in which local working-class students experience a position within and between the two competing fields of the local and the university and how their habitus adapts to suit this new field. Do they experience a 'cleft habitus' (Bourdieu 2000) or 'habitus tug' (Ingram 2011a, 2011b) and if so how do they overcome this? This paper presents three strategies that our local working-class students employ to overcome this cleft and tugged habitus: 'distancing from the university field', 'distancing from the local field', and 'adapting to both fields'. These three categories are not mutually exclusive and students may shift between the three. This aligns with our reading of Bourdieu's concept of habitus as a fluid, ever-revising means of perception generation. In the tug of habitus the students may shift between different alignments to different fields; and this shifting may create a means of reconciling both. Therefore, this paper will build on Bourdieu's concept of a 'cleft habitus' in that we suggest that it is not always negative (as his discussions imply). That is, we argue that at times local students benefit from a 'cleft habitus' as it enables them to become adaptable and provides them with a unique position between two fields in what Bhabha calls a 'third space' (Rutherford 1990), a privileged and reflexive position to occupy. Indeed, previous research on working-class students at an elite institution has suggested that the disruption in the field can induce reflexivity (Reay et al. 2009). We argue that in shifting back and forth between misaligned fields people can create their own differently structured space that is neither one place nor the other – nor is it a compromised space between the two worlds – rather they open up a space of new cultural possibilities. Bhabha argues that 'this third space displaces the histories that constitute it' (Rutherford 1990: 211) to which we would add that it is this displacement of histories that creates a cleavage in the habitus that can generate dynamic processes of habitus revision.

The study

3.1 This paper draws upon qualitative interview and focus group data gathered as part of a three year Leverhulme Trust funded project *Paired Peers*^[1] involving eighty middle-class and working-class students at Bristol's two universities (The University of Bristol (UoB) and The University of the West of England (UWE)). Participants were selected and put into social class categories based on a quantitative mini questionnaire distributed during lectures in the first week of university in which students were asked to specify if they wished to volunteer for the study^[2]. This paper draws from qualitative data on a subset of the overall paired peers sample (those who live or have lived at home whilst studying) along with additional students who were recruited to be part of a new study focussed solely on issues local students face.

3.2 The total sample size for this study of local students^[3] was 18, all of whom had a semi-structured

interview. A focus group was conducted with five of these students before their interview^[4]. During the focus group they were asked to construct plasticine models of their identities (one of who they are in university and one of who they are outside of university) This method encouraged students to reflect on the ways in which they operated in the two fields and allowed them to reflect on similarities and differences in the ways in which they presented themselves. Gauntlett (2007) argues that visual and creative methods which ask participants to make something and then allow them reflective time leads to rich data particularly on issues of identity. Whilst we do not wish to assert unquestionably the benefits of visual methods in researching with young people – and recognise Allan (2012)'s contribution highlighting the problems she encountered when using visual methods in such a way – we want to argue that plasticine modelling is a particularly non-intimidating creative method unlike, for example, drawing which may invoke feelings of inferiority regarding ability. As such we found it to be a useful and fun research tool. It enabled the students to solidify the abstract issue of identity, and thus talk openly and in-depth about such issues. (For further information on the benefits of plasticine modelling see Ingram 2011b.)

Table 1: Sample breakdown^[5]

| University | | | Class | | | Gender ^[6] | | |
|------------|-----|-------|-------|----|-------|-----------------------|----|-------|
| UoB | UWE | Total | WC | MC | Total | M | F | Total |
| 6 | 12 | 18 | 13 | 5 | 18 | 7 | 11 | 18 |

3.3 As mentioned above the social class of participants was assigned based on their responses in the questionnaire about their parents' occupations and educational backgrounds. This took into account a measure based partly on the occupational class of their parents as defined in the Goldthorpe scheme (Goldthorpe et al. 1980) and also whether their parents attended university or not, indicating the level of cultural capital they had access to (Bourdieu 1997). The researchers did not always draw upon the students self-defined social class in the coding process and an interesting finding of this relates to the difference between self-defined social classes and researcher-defined social classes (for discussion see Bathmaker et al. 2011).

There's no place like home

4.1 Holdsworth (2009a) argues that local students are disadvantaged by the fact that they are constantly moving between two worlds and therefore do not fit in to either, becoming rejected or isolated from both. Our findings suggest a messier picture with some students benefiting from remaining socially and culturally connected to the local field. Indeed, for some, remaining connected to their local field allows for strategies to be employed to overcome any potential conflict which may emerge when they are a fish out of water in university. Staying connected to their local field can allow for a successful means of dealing with/protecting against a cleft habitus. Bourdieu (2000: 160–161) writes 'habitus may, in many cases be confronted with conditions of actualisation different from those in which they were produced'. The majority of the sample are working-class. Their habitus has developed from within a 'dominated' field which is vastly different from the university field. Thus when they come into contact with this new field, they experience a confrontation in their habitus potentially resulting in a 'cleft habitus' (Bourdieu 2000) or a 'habitus tug' (Ingram 2011b). The students were very aware that they were different and did not quite fit in within the university field, for example Garry discusses this when explaining his plasticine models:



Figure 1. Garry's^[7] plasticine models

Garry: The one on the right being...having come from Bristol and living at home, or having lived at home, I sometimes felt like I could stick out – so that's the black on a white background, so a contrast. But, I still had a really good time in the first year and I still enjoyed it so it's a smiley face. And home me is.... I'm a mixture of different things and I blend in more and I feel more comfortable.

4.2 In order to overcome this conflicting situation in their habitus we argue that the local working-class students employ various strategies: 'distancing from the university field', 'distancing from the local field' and 'adapting to both fields'. These will be discussed individually below and it is argued that some of them are specifically available only to working-class students who live at home. That is, through remaining connected to their local field these students have various options to manage their habitus and the 'dialectical confrontation' which emerges through the encountering of a new field (Bourdieu 2002). The strategies represent multiple rather than discrete categories and as such are not mutually exclusive and indeed many of the students expressed signs of engaging in multiple strategies at once. For example many who 'distanced from the local field', in their attempts to not dislocate themselves completely, shifted into the third space developing a chameleon habitus adaptable to both fields.

(1) Distancing from the University Field: 'I kind of just focus on my studying and just go'

4.3 This strategy manifested itself in various forms, with each resulting in a distancing from the university field. Some students identified that they were faced with a choice as they could not successfully integrate into both fields. In the case of this strategy the students adhere to the local field thus distancing themselves from the university field:

Stacey: Say you moved to Bristol from somewhere else for uni, your community and your student lives are separate, whereas if you are living in Bristol and you are going to uni in Bristol they are quite close but they are really different at the same time so they kind of do [conflict].

Interviewer: So do you find that is the case for you?

Stacey: Yeah, yeah I do like I tend to have to pick one or the other and I have kind of picked like home life and spending all my time with people there in Bristol rather than student life.

Stacey continues by discussing how she does not present her true self to those at university, rather this is reserved for her home life. This is highlighted below in her explanation of her plasticine models:



Figure 2. Stacey's plasticine models

Stacey: That one on the right is a mouse and it's for university because I'm really quiet. I'm quiet as a mouse. Yeah, I just don't necessarily feel that comfortable around people at uni so I am a lot more quiet and conserved compared to when I'm at home. And then the other one is a music note cos my life does revolve around music pretty much. I can be myself at home and around my friends, whereas compared to uni I just don't feel like I can be. It's not like I'm intimidated or anything, I'm just not that comfortable with people at uni.

4.4 Stacey powerfully states that at university she just does not feel that she can be herself. She is an example of what many students discussed: a disassociation with one field (the university field in this case) out of necessity, to overcome the habitus tug of the competing fields (Ingram 2011b). This strategy is similar to what Ingram describes as a 're-confirmed habitus'; when the new field is rejected by the habitus and thus has limited impact on structuring it (Ingram 2011a: 53). That is the student does not change (or experience habitus revision) to fit with the new field – instead they distance themselves from it. For Stacey (a working-class student) the discomfort of the alien university field creates a sense of not being able to be herself, which ultimately results in an isolation from the field. Conceptually, it could be argued that an understanding of one's identity as fixed (predicated on the possibility that there is a true self) makes it more difficult for a person to internalise structures that misalign with the habitus developed through socialisation, as to do so would be to be 'untrue to one's sense of self'. In these situations the 'third space' is not created as the individual remains embedded in their originary field (in this instance the local space). This is not to suggest that remaining connected to the local field is negative. It is possible to see how living at home can be helpful in this situation, as moving away from home would take away this option. That is, Stacey's discomfort with the university field is not necessarily related to being involved in the local field at the same time, rather it is possible that it is related to social class. If she were to move away from home this discomfort might still be prevalent in this 'foreign' field. Disassociating from the university field whilst not being involved in the local field could be even more problematic for the habitus, and could lead to a student dropping out altogether. Indeed findings from the paired peers project indicate the problems many working-class students who moved away from home and their support network faced (see for example: Bradley & Ingram 2012).

4.5 Ruby provides another example of this strategy of distancing from the university field, this time in a very different and less problematic way to Stacey. That is, she feels that she can be herself at university and does not feel that she changes much between the two fields:



Figure 3. Ruby's plasticine models

Ruby: The reason they're the same cos they're the same size, the same colour everything is the actual person is the same, I don't feel like I change between, like I don't feel that I'm a different person, I think I've got the same personality. So I don't think I change as a person.

4.6 Interestingly, Ruby discusses how she is the same person in both fields, that she does not change her behaviour, she is not concerned with modifying herself to fit in with the university field. Ruby lived in student halls for her first year of university and hated it; she did not get on with the people there as they were more interested in the 'student experience' than studying. Instead of modifying her habitus to fit with them and into the new field, she removed herself and went back to live at home. What is problematic about Ruby's story is that she felt that she *had* to move away from home in her first year to be a 'proper' university student and this resulted in un-happiness. However on reflection Ruby has no regrets and is glad that she experienced this as it enabled her to be confident in her choice to live at home.

4.7 This strategy often went hand in hand with an isolation from the whole 'student experience'. For example many students discussed how they did not get involved with university life in the sense of 'extra-curricular activities':

Leroy: Nah I didn't really get involved with you know events or nothing like that nothing to do with the people at all... it just wasn't for me really like you know it just reminded me of kind of being like a prefect.

4.8 This was justified by most of the students through their comments about coming to university for a degree rather than a social life. As with Ruby, they viewed university as functional and primarily about the academic. This came out in some of the students' plasticine models where they constructed their university self as wearing a mortarboard, as can be seen in the following example from Sasha.

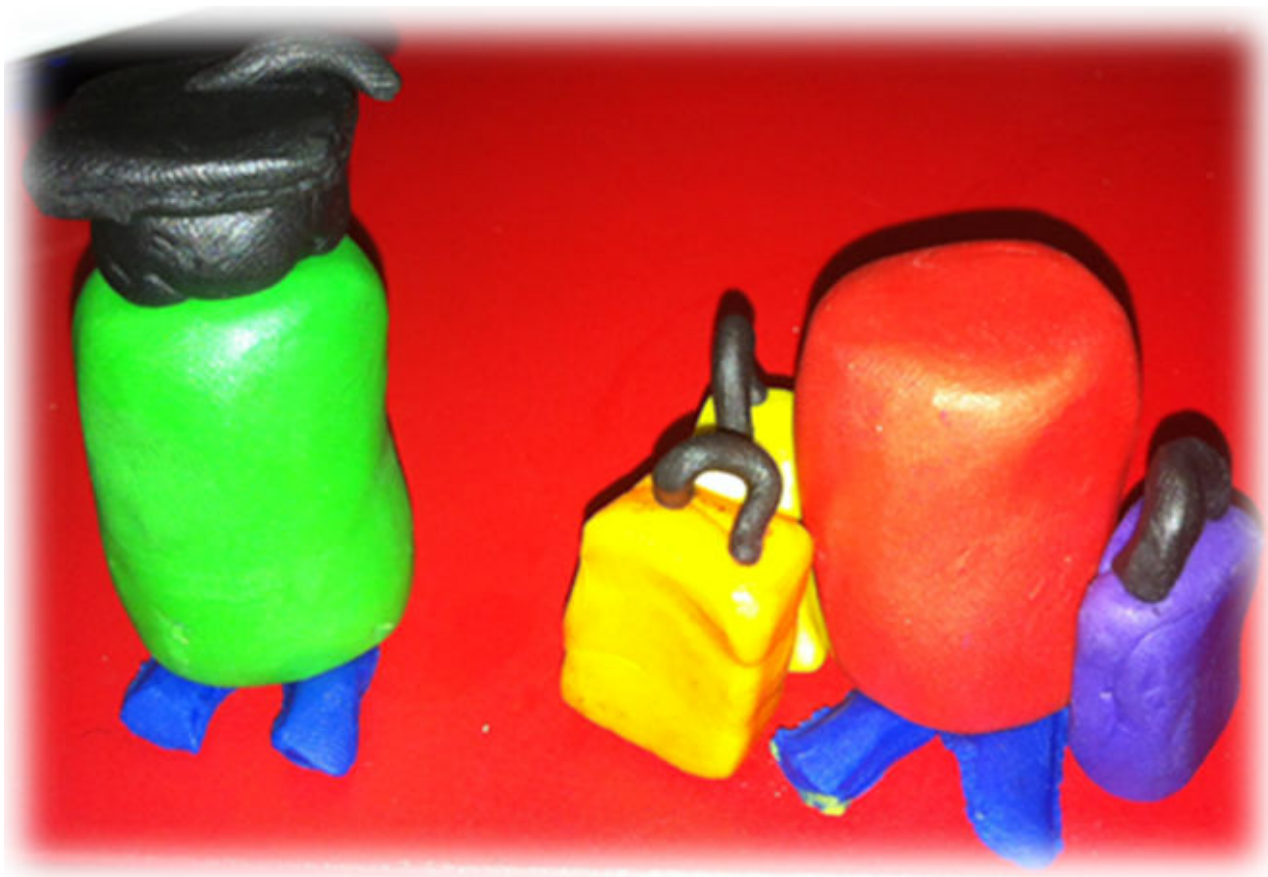


Figure 4. Sasha's plasticine models

Sasha: This one's obviously my one at uni and I've got the little mortarboard thing (...) Just to show how dedicated I am I suppose to getting a degree and that's what I focus on, like my end goal, graduating. And then the other ones me with lots of shopping bags, don't know if you can tell by this blob (...) not just shopping but that represents the other side of me, just more of a normal life I suppose, not academic at all, just into like fashion and clothes and girly stuff, and work.

4.9 Sasha's discussion indicates her commitments to the academic side of university. By distancing herself from the 'student experience' and lifestyle her habitus is protected and remains only partially confronted by this new field as she is not fully engaged within it. It is possible to see this distancing as problematic and argue that the students are 'missing out' on the 'experience' of university and on the opportunity to build social capital through their lack of participation in this field- indeed many students discussed feelings of missing out on socialising. However this was more of an issue for the middle-class local students who didn't experience a conflicted habitus. Their primary barrier to fitting in to the university field was their lack of physical immersion within it and the resulting lack of opportunities for making social connections. This was also more problematic for them as their local networks were fractured with many of their friends away at university. Meanwhile the working-class local students could fall back on a strong social network within their local community thus making it easier to distance from the university field. This is in line with Christie et al.'s (2005) findings, that the 'experience' of university and the stereotype of student life is a middle-class ideology. It is possible to see university primarily as a place to get a degree, and a valid student experience in and of itself. Moreover as Hollingworth and Mansaray highlight, an institution having a good 'social mix' does not necessarily lead to a great deal of social mixing (2012). Thus it is problematic to assume that moving away to university would necessarily lead to involvement in the student experience, and a mixing with those from different social class backgrounds. Indeed many working-class students who move away do not get involved in this (Ingram et al. 2012).

4.10 It is important to mention at this point that many of the local students chose to stay local due to having caring responsibilities at home. These responsibilities often infringed on their ability to engage with the whole experience and resulted in this strategy of distancing from the university field. Hayley spoke of the way in which if she had moved away she would not have to care for her mother as she would not have the option. Although she chose to stay at home so that she could do this, she recognises and is frustrated at the fact that this limits her ability to get involved at university and at times to study:

Hayley: It can be a bit frustrating at times like if I'm just trying to work and I need to look after mum cos she's just had an operation and that's something that other people don't have to do because they're not living at home. For instance my friend from Paris she can't just pop home to look after her mum if her mum's had an operation but because I'm here and because I want to I will do it, so I don't get angry with my mum cos obviously it's not her fault but I'm occasionally frustrated at the circumstances.

4.11 So in one sense living at home enabled them to maintain family relationships and be there to support their families. This may be positive as if they moved away they might constantly have to travel home or feel guilty for leaving. However, this is also problematic as it limits their ability to engage with the

university both socially and academically. This was not necessarily a classed issue. That is, some of the middle-class local students were in this position. Regardless of social class this is an important issue which often goes unnoticed. Student carers are likely to need extra support throughout their degrees and whilst they are often invisible and hidden within the student population they exist and must be recognised. What we are pointing out here is that they are likely to be found within the population of local students.

(2) Distancing from the local field: 'As time's gone on I've gravitated to people who have a high level of education'

4.12 Many students spoke about the way that they were changing (or had changed) throughout their degrees and how they had started to become closer to people at university and more distant from their local lives. For example many spoke about their home friends not understanding them anymore and of drifting away from them:

Zack: With going to university it sounds a bit snobby but it does change you a little bit and people who don't go to university don't necessarily understand the lifestyle and the different aspects of it. So you have less and less in common after a while (...). So with some of my friends that I don't really see now that kind of happened a bit I think.

Hayley: My friendship group has changed quite a lot. When I first started university I did see my old friends a lot more than I do now. I think just because there's a sense of them being left behind. They're quite happy to have a job that they don't really like and then have their money and just go to the pub. But I want more from a career and I enjoy learning so we've just grown apart a bit now I think. Umm I have a lot more of my boyfriend's friends now and a lot of them do have degrees and stuff so I think as time's gone on I've sort of gravitated more to people who have a high level of education I think.

4.13 These comments indicate that through the working-class students' participation in higher education they have acquired different cultural capital and their habitus is changing. Through their education the students have less in common with the people in their working-class community and feel more comfortable around others who are in similar positions in social space. Distancing oneself from the working-class home field is thus a strategy which seems to emerge out of a shift in the habitus itself. In this instance the habitus has changed to accommodate the newly acquired cultural capital. In other words, it is not about a confrontation in the habitus arising through being involved in two conflicting fields simultaneously; rather it is due to the individual moving within social space through acquiring more capital. This strategy is necessary as the habitus must adapt to suit the new capitals. The individuals themselves have moved within social space and change to suit their new position. However, this shift is not unproblematic as it can involve huge psychic costs. As noted by other studies (Reay 2002; Ingram 2011b) habitus revisions that involve a distancing from one's background can entail confronting huge emotional hurdles, guilt and dislocation.

4.14 Through their adapted habitus many of the students noticed and spoke about a change in their behaviour and speech, perhaps consciously or unconsciously to fit in better in this new field. For example:

Interviewer: Do you feel like you fit in at home?

Garry: Yeah. There's been a few occasions where, like the accent thing, that coming home, maybe the university has changed me. [For example] I was back to see my mum in Highfield, I went back to my old school. And (...) someone who I used to work with, was asking me how far away my new place was from work (...). In my mind, I don't know, it's not a big word at all, I just went 'oh well it's about equidistant'. He went 'oh, that's a big word'. (...)

I don't know, it just made me think 'would I have not said that before, I don't know' (...). It's just lots of little things like that that sort of make you think 'oh, maybe I don't fit in as much as I used to'.

4.15 This quote highlights the process of transformation Garry's habitus is undergoing, he discusses above a moment at which he is pulled up on this and becomes aware of the fact that he perhaps does not fit in as well anymore in his ordinary field. There is much talk around the way in which language and accent serve as forms of distinction and embodied cultural capital (Bourdieu 2010). For the working-classes, accent and language often mark them out as not quite fitting within the middle-class field (Lawler 1999; Addison & Mountford 2013). What is distinct about this moment is that for Garry, his language serves as a marker of the way in which he has changed and perhaps no longer fits as well with his local community. This is at times a source of discomfort for him (and others in this position) as they wish to maintain connections within their original field. This is highlighted through comments made about maintaining status of 'working-class' and still identifying with its culture. For example, Rochelle reflects on herself as becoming middle-class due to her new position within social space, yet she still feels she is working-class:

The way I look at it now was when I entered university I was working-class I come from a working-class family. Now I've got a degree under my belt and I've got the job I have on paper I might be seen as middle-class. So that's been a funny little journey really, that I've gone in as this working-class, but I've come out as this class. But like I say that's on paper if I'm being honest I'd still say I'm working-class anyway you know, just because I've got that job and that salary coming in (...). It was like you know in the factory on the conveyor belt and you come out as something different, bit weird.

4.16 This process of becoming socially mobile inevitably involves a distancing from the original field, it is

import to mention that this is not unproblematic and as has been discussed here many students wish to maintain their original habitus which is at times a source of internal conflict. Others have similarly interrogated the assumption that moving between social classes is a smooth and unproblematic experience characterised by unquestioned positivity (Sennett & Cobb 1977; Lawler 1999; Friedman 2013).

4.17 It is possible to argue here that living at home and being immersed in these two different fields at the same time made this process harder. That is, this adaptation and distancing from the local field may in fact be more accommodated and less uncomfortable if the student had moved away and were not reminded of their working-class roots. However many mentioned how it is important for them to stay grounded within their working-class community and how despite this distancing and changing they are still connected to the local field and still feel working-class (as Rochelle mentions). These connections would be harder to maintain from a distance, and as we will now discuss, the proximity allows for individuals to be immersed in both fields which can be beneficial.

(3) Adapting to both fields: the chameleon habitus

4.18 The local working-class students often spoke about having 'two lives' and the need to keep them separate as they were very different. The biggest issue involved in keeping their lives separate yet also being able to fit in and be immersed in both was modifying their behaviour and speech. This is similar to the strategy employed above. However, what distinguishes this is their ability to seamlessly switch between the fields, adapting their identities to match with whichever field they were in. For example:

Leroy: I mean in uni (...) what I did learn about myself was that I could kind of hang around with lots of different types of people... but yeah I think I'd be more myself with my friends at home

Interviewer: Ok that's interesting so you learnt that you could adapt yourself if you needed to, you could change to fit in with them

Leroy: Yeah like a chameleon kind of thing.

This adapting of the habitus is characterised by a change in their accent and also behaviour as the following example by Garry shows:

I do notice myself not speaking with quite so much, what's the word, I think it's rhoticity? When you put an 'r' sound on the end. And I do notice myself not speaking as broadly as what I would in other contexts and other...so yeah, that sense. So definitely speech, and then maybe in terms of behaviour, like difference sorts of humour, like in university, don't know, like more satirical, more political humour, whereas in Sainsbury's I guess, I think practical jokes are more for...you know, I don't know, jumping out of an aisle and scaring someone, you know. I can't really imagine doing that here, like in the library...you know it's not, you'd just get a weird...yeah, so differences in...certainly in speech and then certain behaviours I think.

These modifications are not conscious, as Garry discusses below, it is only afterwards that he is able to analyse the behaviour and realises he is speaking differently:

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'.

4.19 Garry provides an example of the internalisation of the structures of the new field, and a modification of his habitus in accordance. The habitus appears to have accepted the legitimacy of the new field and is thus structured by it (Ingram 2011a) allowing him to act in accordance with the rules of the new game. Rochelle provides another example, this time indicating a more active and conscious modification of her behaviour. Below she discusses how she tries to 'tone it down' when in university, aware in a sense that the university middle-class field requires a different type of disposition:

It was very difficult for me at the beginning just purely down to my accent. I was the only one with this big broad Bristolian accent, I wasn't the only Bristolian there but definitely with the accent. And I'm quite common sometimes in my mannerisms so my sense of humour and the sort of things I'd say. So I weren't tryna act posh or anything like that, but yeah I'd try to tone down the accent a bit, look a bit more upright, look a bit more intelligent and all of that. Whereas when I'm at home I really kind of you know chill out put the joggin bottoms on. My whole body language and the way I talk, everything would change you know. Especially at home I'm really loud and I'm really mouthy and id be givin' it all that 'ma, ma' so yeah I'm very different depending on where I am and who I'm with.

4.20 The above quote highlights a phenomenal awareness on Rochelle's behalf of the disjuncture between the working-class and the middle-class fields and the associated practices. She is aware that she must change herself; that her style and 'bodily hexis'^[8] are not symbolically recognised in the middle-class field. Skeggs (1997: 129) writes:

The inability to trade one's cultural capital because it has only limited value or is not recognised in the places where value can be accrued is a substantial disadvantage to and sign of being born working-class.

That is, these working-class students feel they must change to try to get rid of the 'signs of being born working-class' in order to be valued within the middle-class field. Working-class young people often attempt to use their bodies to gain capital within a system where they are devalued. For example stylistically in terms of elaborate hairstyles, makeup, lots of jewellery and a careful co-ordination of

clothes and accessories (Archer et al. 2007) or as displays of physical capital through toughness and fighting ability (Shilling 1992; Wacquant 1995). This often works to accrue them value within the local social space but this is not transferrable to the wider social space as their practices are not given symbolic recognition and at times can cause the young people to be labelled and stereotyped negatively (Archer et al. 2007). Many of the students were aware that their style and bodily hexis were not valued within this field, Rochelle's quote above illustrates this perfectly. She talks of attempting to look more 'upright' and associates this with looking more intelligent. Bourdieu (2000: 163) highlights the way in which those in more dominated positions in social space are forced to keep tabs on themselves:

It is likely that those who are 'in their right place' in the social world can abandon and entrust themselves more and more completely to their dispositions (that is the 'ease' of the well-born) than those who occupy awkward positions, such as the parvenus and the declasses; and the latter are more likely to bring to consciousness that which for others is taken for granted, because they are forced to keep watch on themselves and consciously correct the 'first movements' of a habitus that generates inappropriate or misplaced behaviours.

4.21 The modification of speech, behaviour and appearance (both conscious and unconscious) to fit into the new field whilst simultaneously remaining within their old field illustrates a degree of 'reflexivity' on the behalf of our students. Ingram discusses how reflexivity can occur through encountering a new field and adapting one's schemes of perceptions. When these new schemes of perceptions are brought back into the original field the individual is able to perceive of this field in a different way and thus they may act/think and behave differently (reflexively) (Ingram 2011a). This ability to fit into both fields is similar to Ingram's typology of a 'reconciled habitus'; where the competing fields are reconciled and the individual is able to internalise and adapt to the structures in both fields (Ingram 2011a). Although having the capacity to operate in both fields, the person's habitus is not necessarily wholly attuned to either but to a third space. The 'productive capacities' (Bhabha 1994: 38) of the third space are borne of the habitus rupture. As Bhabha argues:

[...] the transformational value of change lies in the rearticulation, or translation, of the elements that are *neither the One... nor the Other... but something else besides* which contests the terms and territories of both (Bhabha 1994: 28)

The students can therefore use their positioning in the third space to remain connected to both worlds simultaneously. It is possible to question whether this strategy is problematic in terms of constantly modifying oneself to fit in. However many students felt that they benefitted from this situation. This was usually in terms of remaining grounded by both fields or through developing adaptability skills. For example, Garry discusses this below:

Beneficial I think. You get to experience a greater variety of people (...). Hopefully it means I'm neither in danger of becoming a closeted, cut off, Bristol student, aloof from all social reality. Hopefully it also means I'm fairly travelled and I've got a broad view of the world and I'm quite ambitious and I'm not content with living in Highfield all my life and going to the Wetherspoons there on the Friday night and then going up Chase and glassing someone or something. So yeah I think it's a good balance.

Thus, we argue that the local working-class students, rather than being torn between two competing worlds/fields/cultures or selves, in-fact occupy a unique and privileged position within what Bhabha calls the 'third space' (Rutherford 1990: 211); a separate space that is something other than a place between the worlds, but from which to navigate and reconcile the apparent incommensurability of the two fields.

Conclusion

5.1 In conclusion, despite arguments by previous studies that local students do not fit in at university due to their residential status (Holdsworth 2006), we found that for many working-class local students, class identity rather than proximity was the main barrier to fitting in. This resonates with a study by Taylor and Scurry (2011) which highlights the complexity in the fitting in processes amongst working-class and international students in UK institutions and finds that the class barriers can leave working-class students feeling like foreigners while international students may utilise their middle-class capitals to find a means of fitting. In our study the middle-class local students, whose habitus were aligned to the field of education, found location (rather than identity) the main barrier to fitting in and it impinged greatly on their ability to mix socially. The working-class local students often resisted the middle-class ideology of university as an all-encompassing experience. They were less disappointed by not fitting in socially and any 'fitting in' issues related more to their classed habitus being misaligned to the field. We argue that moving away from home to attend university is unlikely to protect the habitus from such internal conflict. Furthermore, as we have highlighted throughout this article, by living at home the working-class students can develop various strategies to overcome a cleft habitus. At times they opted to be more fully immersed within one field and distanced from the other. However, the majority of them were also able to adapt to both fields; finding themselves belonging at home and university. Through modifying their speech, appearance and behaviour, they demonstrated an ability to seamlessly switch between the two fields drawing upon a 'chameleon habitus'. We argue that this is beneficial in terms of being in a 'third space' (Bhabha cited in Rutherford 1990). Their position provided a unique view of the two fields, allowing for reflexivity. Although the fields are somewhat incommensurable the habitus has found a way of internalising the structures of each to become attuned to both. In line with Bhabha's conceptualisation of the third space as a rearticulation that is neither the one nor the other we argue that the chameleon habitus is a rearticulation that contests the terms of both fields to create a new space. We do not wish to assert that this third space is purely positive. It must be recognised that this is also a profoundly painful place to be in both emotionally and psychologically (Reay 1997). It is a space that many encounter through their socially mobile journeys. The level of internal conflict experienced by being in this place is affected by the time and distance travelled in this journey (Friedman 2013). Thus whilst our students felt benefited by their position it is possible to argue that since they are early in their socially mobile journey the painful reality of their situation is yet to emerge. As we have highlighted throughout this article, living at home is not an

inferior way to be an HE student and needs to be recognised as a valid and often beneficial choice for many. Whilst there is a need for universities to consider techniques to better engage, integrate and support *all* local students – particularly with regards to finding non-residential spaces for mixing and socialising – it is also necessary for them to recognise that local working-class students face particular difficulties related to their classed backgrounds not residential status.

Notes

¹For more information on the paired peers project please visit the website:
<www.bristol.ac.uk/pairedpeers>.

²The questionnaire, as well as focusing on their personal details (such as age, nationality, ethnicity and self-defined social class), included questions on parental occupations and educational backgrounds and whether the student received maintenance grants. This information was then used to determine the social class of participants (for more details on the methodology see Bradley and Ingram (2012), Bathmaker et al. (2013) and Mellor et al. (2013)).

³Local students were defined as anyone living in their family home in a BS postcode area whilst at university.

⁴The reason for only conducting one focus group with five of the students was due to the fact that not all students volunteered. Moreover the students who were recruited in addition to the paired peers project sample were different ages, thus it was decided that the focus group would only involve students at the same stage in their degrees as the level of reflection on their identity and experiences might be different depending on their age.

⁵The sample split is in keeping with the pattern found across our 2,159 questionnaires.

⁶Due to small sample sizes we have not attempted to make gendered comparisons in this paper. This is not to suggest that there are no notable gender issues relating to local students simply that our analysis focusses on social class, particularly as this issue was jumping out of our data more starkly than any gender issues.

⁷All of the students and their residential areas have been given pseudonyms to protect their anonymity.

⁸Bodily hexis refers to the way in which one's social class position and habitus are embodied and played out through one's bodily practice (Bourdieu 2000: 141).

References

- ARCHER, L., Hollingworth, S. & Halsall, A. (2007) 'University's not for me – I'm a Nike person': urban, working-class young people's negotiations of "style", identity and educational engagement', *Sociology*, 41(2) p. 219–237.
- ADDISON, M. & Mountford, V. (2013) 'Talking the talk and fitting in: Troubling the practices of speaking "what you are worth" in higher education in the UK', paper presented at the *British Sociological Association (BSA) Conference*, London, UK. 3–5 April 2013.
- ALLAN, A. (2012) 'Power, participation and privilege – methodological lessons from using visual methods in research with young people', *Sociological Research Online*, 17(3) article 8.
<<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/17/3/8.html>>
- BATHMAKER, A-M., Ingram, N. & Waller, R. (2011) 'Constructions of class: defining students' social class in the Paired Peers project', *British Educational Research Association (BERA) Conference*, Institute of Education, London.
- BATHMAKER, A-M., Ingram, N. & Waller, R. (2013) 'Higher education, social class and the mobilisation of capitals: recognising and playing the game', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 34(5-06) p. 723–743.
- BOLIVER, V. (2011) 'Expansion, differentiation, and the persistence of social class inequalities in British higher education', *Higher Education*, 61(3) p. 229–242.
- BOURDIEU, P. (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: University Press.
- BOURDIEU, P. (1990) *The Logic of Practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- BOURDIEU, P. (1997) 'The forms of capital', in Halsey, A.H., et al. (Eds.), *Education: Culture, Economy, Society* (p. 46–58). Oxford: University Press.
- BOURDIEU, P. (1999) 'The contradictions of inheritance', in Bourdieu, P., et al. (Eds.), *Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society* (p. 517–551). Cambridge: Polity Press.
- BOURDIEU, P. (2000) *Pascalian Meditations*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- BOURDIEU, P. (2002) 'Habitus'. In: J. Hillier & E. Rooksby, *Habitus: A Sense of Place* (p. 27–34). Aldershot: Ashgate.

- BOURDIEU, P. (2010) [1984] *Distinction*. London: Routledge.
- BOURDIEU, P. & Passeron, J. C. (1979) *The Inheritors: French Students and their Relation to Culture*. London: The University of Chicago Press.
- BHABHA, H. (1994) *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge.
- BRADLEY, H. & Ingram N. (2012) 'Banking on the Future: choices, aspirations and economic hardship in working-class student experience', in Atkinson, W., Roberts, S. & Savage, M. (Eds.), *Class Inequalities in Austerity Britain*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- BRADLEY, H. & van Hoof, J. (2005) *Young People in Europe*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- BRENNAN, J., Edmunds, R., Houston, M., Jary, D., Lebeau, Y., Osborne, M. & Richardson, J.T.E. (2010) *Improving What is Learned at University*. London: Routledge.
- BURKE, C., T., Emmerich, N. & Ingram, N. (2013) 'Well-founded social fictions : a defence of the concepts of institutional and familial habitus', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 34 (2) p. 165–182.
- CHRISTIE, H. (2009) 'Emotional journeys: young people and transitions to university', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 30(2) p. 123–136.
- CHRISTIE, H., Munro, M. & Wagner, F. (2005) "Day students" in higher education: widening access students and successful transitions to university life', *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 15(1) p. 3–30.
- EVANS, S. (2010) 'Becoming "somebody": examining class and gender through higher education', in Taylor, Y. (Ed.), *Classed Intersections: Spaces, Selves, Knowledges* (p. 53–72). Farnham: Ashgate Publishing.
- FRIEDMAN, S. (2013) 'The price of The Ticket: Rethinking the experience of social mobility', *Sociology* [online], <<http://soc.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/07/18/0038038513490355.abstract>>. Last accessed 29/07/13.
- GAUNTLETT, D. (2007) *Creative Explorations: New Approaches to Identities and Audiences*. London: Routledge.
- GOLDTHORPE, J., Llewellyn, C. & Payne, C. (1980) *Social Mobility and Class Structure in Modern Britain*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- HOLDSWORTH, C. (2006) "'Don't you think you're missing out, living at home?" Student experiences and residential transitions', *The Sociological Review*, 54(3) p. 495–519.
- HOLDSWORTH, C. (2009a) 'Between two worlds: Local students in higher education and "Scouse" student identities', *Population, Space and Place*, 15 p. 225–237.
- HOLDSWORTH, C. (2009b) "'Going away to uni": Mobility, modernity, and independence of English higher education students', *Environment and Planning A*, 41 p. 1849–1864.
- HOLLINGWORTH, S. & Mansaray, A. (2012) 'Conviviality under the Cosmopolitan Canopy? Social mixing and friendships in an urban secondary school', *Sociological Research Online*, 17(3) article 2. <<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/17/3/2.html>>
- INGRAM, N. (2011a) *Reconciling working-class identity and educational success: A study of successful teenage boys, locality and schooling*, Ph.D., Queen's University Belfast.
- INGRAM, N. (2011b) 'Within school and beyond the gate: The complexities of being educationally successful and working class', *Sociology*, 45(2) p. 287–302.
- INGRAM, N., Abrahams, J. & Beedell, p. (2012) "'Students" engagement in extra-curricular activities: Constraints, freedoms and class background', unpublished paper presented at the: *British Sociological Association (BSA) Conference*, Leeds, UK, 11–13 April.
- JONES, G. (2005) 'Social protection policies for young people: a cross-national comparison', in Bradley, H. & van Hoof, J., *Young People in Europe: Labour Markets and Citizenship* (p. 41–62). Bristol: Policy Press.
- LAWLER, S. (1999) "'Getting out and getting away": women's narratives of class mobility', *Feminist Review*, 63 p. 3–24.
- LEATHWOOD, C. & O'Connell, P. (2003) "'It's a struggle": the construction of the "new student" in higher education', *Journal of Education Policy*, 18(6) p. 597–615.
- MELLOR, J. (2010) 'The significance of bonding capital: class, ethnicity, faith and British Muslim women's routes to university', in Taylor, Y. (Ed.), *Classed Intersections: Spaces, Selves, Knowledges* (p. 73–91). Farnham: Ashgate Publishing.
- MELLOR, J., Ingram, N., Abrahams, J. & Beedell, P. (2013) 'Class matters in the interview setting? Positionality, situatedness and class', *British Educational Research Journal*, early access online 21 February.
- PATINIOTIS, J. & Holdsworth, C. (2005) "'Seize that chance!" Leaving home and transitions to higher

education', *Journal of Youth Studies*, 8(1) p. 81–95.

REAY, D. (1997) 'The double bind of the "working-class" feminist academic: The success of failure or the failure of success?', in Mahony, P. & Zmroczek, C. (Eds.), *Class Matters: "Working Class" Women's Perspectives on Social Class*. London: Taylor & Francis.

REAY, D. (2002) 'Shaun's story: troubling discourses of white working class masculinities', *Gender and Education*, 14(3) p. 221–234.

REAY, D. (2004) 'It's all becoming a habitus: beyond the habitual use of habitus in educational research', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 25(4) p. 431–444.

REAY, D., Crozier, G. & Clayton, J. (2009) 'Strangers in paradise: working class students in elite universities', *Sociology* 43(6) p. 1103–1121.

RUTHERFORD, J. (1990) 'The third space: interview with Homi Bhabha', in Rutherford, J. (Ed.), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (p. 207–221). London: Lawrence and Wishart.

SHILLING, C. (1992) 'Schooling and the production of physical capital', *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 13(1) p. 1–19.

SKEGGS, B. (1997) 'Classifying practices: representations, capitals and recognitions', in Mahony, P. & Zmroczek, C. (Eds.), *Class Matters: 'Working-class' women's Perspectives on Social Class* (p. 123–139). London: Taylor and Francis.

SENNETT, R. & Cobb, R. (1977) *The Hidden Injuries of Class*. Cambridge: University Press.

TAYLOR, Y. & Scurry, T. (2011) 'International and widening participation students' experience of higher education, UK', *European Societies*, 13 p. 583–606.

WACQUANT, L.J.D. (1995) 'Pugs at work: bodily capital and bodily labour among professional boxers', *Body & Society*, 1 p. 65–92.