

Moving beyond immobility: Local students' narratives of undergraduate mobility

Holly Henderson
ESRC-funded doctoral researcher
School of Education, University of Birmingham
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Presentation Outline

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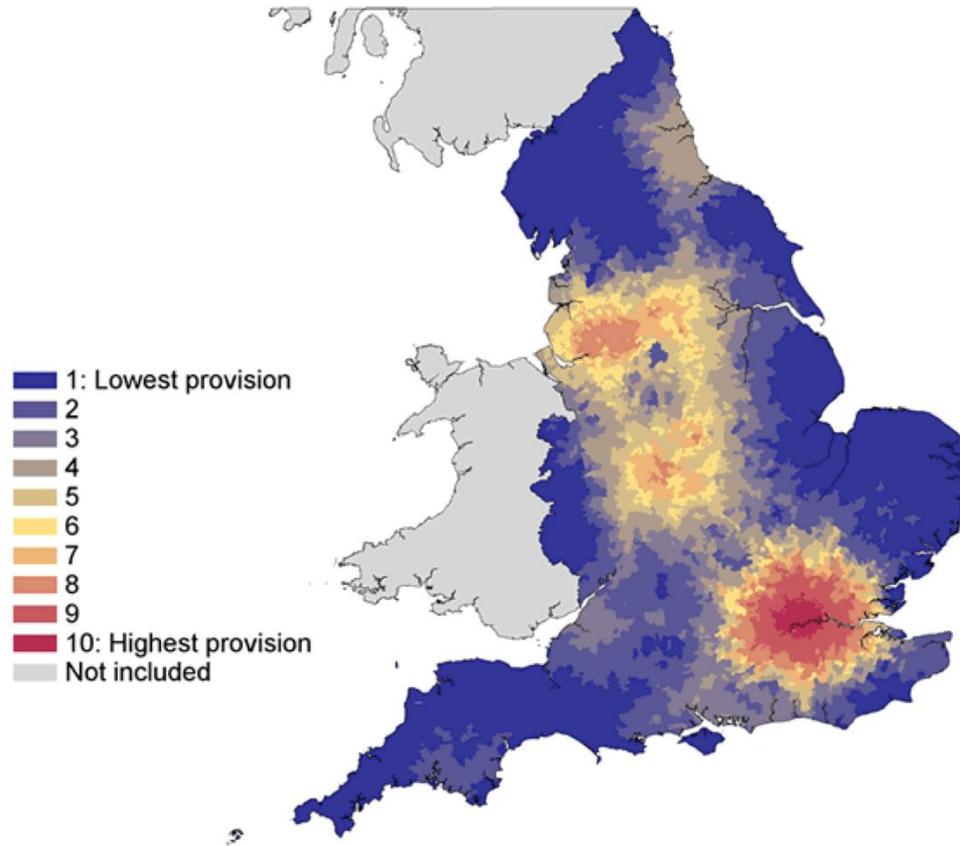
Mobility and English Higher Education

'You're down at the local but some students are in your usual seat. Do you:

- a) Sit somewhere else. You can catch them in the car park at closing
- b) Go over and kick off big-style. Who do they think they are?
- c) Sit silently at the table opposite, staring at them all night
- d) Delight them with the tale of, "My dad's second cousin was Paul McCartney's uncle's plumber's live in lover, y'know"

(BBC's 'How scouse are you?' game, n.d., cited in Holdsworth, 2009, p. 225)

Mobility and English Higher Education



Source: HESA and ILR data 2012/13

The study

- Two case study institutions
- Both large FE Colleges with varied HE provision, in 'cold spot' areas of England
- Interviews with HE directors in each college
- Interviews with tutors on two degree courses in each college
- Interviews with students on these degree courses at the beginning and end of their final year of study
- Concept-mapping (Umoquit *et al.*, 2013; Varga-Atkins, and O'Brien, 2009) of places mentioned in first student interviews, taken to discuss in second interview

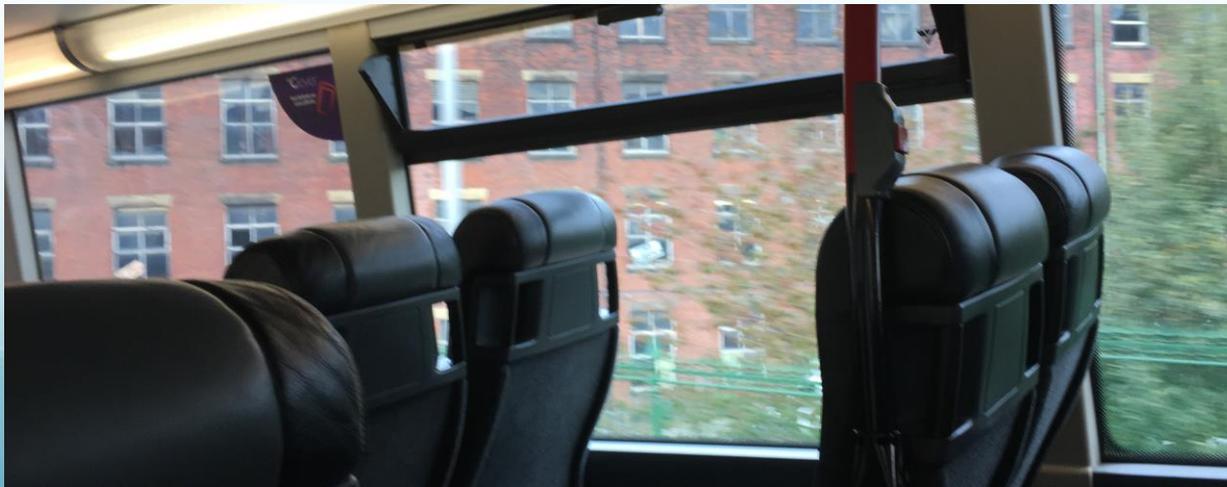
The study

- ‘This type of self-knowledge pertains to how individuals think about their potential and about their future. Possible selves are the ideal selves that we would very much like to become. They are also the selves we could become, and the selves we are afraid of becoming.’ (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p. 954)
- ‘The ability to think into future scenarios and to construct imaginary “project selves” (Giddens, 1991, pp. 32- 34) that involve “realistic” or what Bourdieu (1990) called “coherent and convenient” (p. 86) mobility trajectories is differentially distributed along social class lines.’ (Corbett 2007, p. 785)



Mobility Capital and the Im/Mobility Binary

‘For the most school- successful children in rural communities, leaving is a foregone conclusion. Mobile youth are prepared for leaving through family educational conversations, travel, or extended family linkages outside the immediate locale. These kinds of experiences represent “mobility capital” providing a crucial external perspective on the local.’ (Corbett, 2007, p. 782)



Challenge 1: The local student and mobility capital

‘I wanted to commute [from home town]. I didn’t want, well, mainly because I’m not ready to be an adult yet, but I wanted to stay. Everything that I do is in [home town]. I work at a theatre, and that’s in [home town]. I also used to volunteer at a library, and that’s in [home town], so if I were to move away I’d have stopped, and all my family’s in [home town]. Nobody’s ever moved out.’

(Ben, case college 1)

Challenge 2: The local student and multiple mobilities

'I felt a lot older [at the university] than everybody else, and I felt really, like, on my own, you know, because a lot of young ones, they move to university, and obviously I couldn't move there. I'd got two kids at home, my husband, and it just, it didn't work. And everyone was going out drinking in between lectures, because there was a couple of hours, and it wasn't worth me going home because I was going on the train, whereas everyone else was going back to their rooms or doing whatever they needed to do. So I really was like, I was just singled out from the word go.'

(Gemma, case college 1)

Home village
Posh
One of the most expensive places in the area
Very very wealthy people
Where people come to hide away

College Town
Flip side of home village
Working class town
Biggest town in the area
Come to College Town for everything you do – cinema, bowling

College
Applied because established with house/girlfriend
Didn't want to move away
People from all walks of life but still part of local community
Could be the future – smaller, town universities

City universities
Wouldn't have wanted the university experience
Can still access partner university's resources

Yurt in a field
Society messing people up
Go out hunting
Respect own human instincts

Challenge 3: The local student and imagined other lives

- If I were going to go to uni, if I were going to move somewhere to uni, I'd have gone. I'd have gone somewhere far away, just to, to make the most of it, like, to create a distance and not be somewhere that you can just get home in ten or fifteen minutes. I didn't want to be - if I would have moved away, I would have moved a distance that you can't just travel too closely. I would have wanted the space and stuff like that.

(Richard, case college 2)

Challenge 3: The local student and imagined other lives

- I wish I'd have stayed. I wish I'd have done it properly, gone to uni at the right time, because I wouldn't have come here. I'd have gone to a different uni probably. Not that this is a bad uni, but, you know what I mean. I'd have gone away and I'd have done it properly.

(Kate, case college 2)



Conclusions

- Common narratives of the 'local' student are that:
 - they are fixed in place by disadvantage
 - they are immobile
 - they do not have access to imagined futures of mobility
- I argue that
 - relationships to place are not simply relationships of deficit
 - 'local' students are mobile in multiple ways that are often excluded by accepted patterns of mobility in the university,
 - the powerful traditional narratives of student mobility in English HE are shared and reproduced by 'local' students

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