Research article

Dis/locating Imagined Futures: The disabled habitus and young disabled people in alternative provision

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Abstract

This article considers the disabled habitus and a small group of young disabled people who are attending an Alternative Provision (AP), within one English Further Education College. The aim of this article is to understand the significance of the body in relation to these students' work to assemble and locate a vivid imagined future, and proposes that the college functions as a critical space where much of this body work gets played-out. The article draws on an ethnographic study of a group of school-aged, working-class disabled students; a group whose educational, employment and social outcomes are chronically stagnant in England. The article postulates that their inclusions in to a college have unintended effects and consequences, which illuminates some of the pernicious consequences of school exclusion. Despite several negative experiences, both inside and outside the AP, the article shows how young disabled people develop and appropriate capital to inform and disrupt the habitus. The article concludes with questions about APs as constituting the means to confer value upon young disabled students in search of identities that are apposite to paid employment within the contemporary (and future) labour market.

Keywords: alternative provision; capital; disability; habitus; young people.

Introduction

Despite commitments by consecutive governments in the United Kingdom (UK) to deliver more 'inclusive educational' systems (Slee, 2018), it is evident that young disabled people's social and economic statuses are located behind that of their non-disabled peers (ONS, 2019). This article therefore considers a developing English education policy enabling school-aged (14 to 16-year old) disabled students, permanently excluded from regular school, to attend full-time Alternative Provision (AP),[1] often in Further Education (FE) colleges. In England, the exclusion of working-class[2] and disabled[3] students is higher than other European countries (Cole et al., 2019), and risks becoming a normalised part of the educational experience for some students within state-funded English schools. This depicts a bleak picture of educational equity and social justice. Indeed, a growing

body of international research now indicates a 'layering of disadvantage' (McCluskey et al., 2015) from, for example, inadequate qualifications and sustained unemployment (Department for Education (DfE), 2018a) which awaits many young disabled students who emerge from AP.

Recent research and policy continue to suggest that managing students in AP, through an intense regulation of their bodies, space, and time, can re-route their future trajectories (Thomson et al., 2016). Much of this work ignores the multifaceted forces that act upon students' lives, such as the social field or 'multi-dimensional spaces' (Bourdieu, 1985) in which they exist. This article uses Bourdieu's theory of practice (1977); specifically *habitus* - or, the way a body has acquired and learns habitual ways to understand, interpret and act within a field - to paint a more complex picture of students' negotiations in the field of FE. Habitus is thus, broadly, *"society written into the body"* (Bourdieu, 1990: 63). A tension between young disabled bodies and conformity is seen to structure students' behaviours, experiences, and (future) expectations. An analysis of bodies also illuminates an understanding of the hidden inequalities that exist within disabled students' lives, such as a lack of relevant and valuable cultural capital (e.g. styles of interaction and modes of presentation) and social capital (e.g. networks and norms), being invested in to their identities. An access and ability to display a diversity of such capital is useful to enhance the prospect of future employment (Savage, 2015). In this article, an imagined future is therefore not viewed as a distant horizon separate from young disabled students' lived realities but exists in a present that is shaped by their past experiences, and the capital either made available or inaccessible to them.

The aim of this article is therefore to further understand how a small group of young disabled students experience AP and their responses to it. The decision to focus on disabled students; specifically, those excluded from several mainstream schools, was made on the basis that they represent a peripheral voice in current research and data can inform existing knowledge about the causes and consequences of school exclusions. This research draws on data gathered as part of an ethnographic study of the AP arrangements in one college in southern England. The article begins by briefly contextualising AP policy in England for young disabled students, and shows their existences are linked to differing valuations credited to their bodies, and to the values and practices that underpin FE. It concludes by suggesting that these young disabled students are differentially positioned in relation to the (future) labour market, and they experience forms of social closure and marginalisation which create new, and reinforces existing, forms of exclusion.

The search for inclusion through alternative provision

Educational policy in England developed rapidly during the 1990s, culminating in a move toward 'inclusive education' and the rights of disabled children to be educated in mainstream schools (UNESCO, 2018). This meant schools had to accommodate students variously regarded as 'disabled'. At the same time, the discursive regimes, logics and values of managerialism and economic individualism increased across much of Europe. This required *new* standards of socio-economic behaviour tied to multiple gazes, such as school effectiveness targets, tables and progress scores, and a preoccupation with ameliorating the risks related to an exclusion from the labour market (Ball, 2018a). This led some politicians to depict working-class habits, conditions and modes of distinction as embodiments of deficient cultural and social capital (Skeggs, 1997) and, thus, positioned some students in negative terms (Johnston and Bradford, 2019). This is most apparent in regards to assumed abilities required for the labour

market, and the limited capitals (knowledge and skills) vested in a disabled body, which situate young disabled students as a poor investment; slow to learn, troublesome, troubled, and economically un-productive in relation to the idealised embodiments and normative assumptions promoted through mainstream education.

This competitive individualism has - arguably - marginalised some disabled students and had the effect of pressuring some state-funded schools in to seeking alternative arrangements for their 'less-able' and more 'challenging' students (Cole et al., 2019). Growing numbers of school exclusions in England have led - not without some dispute - to a range of negative outcomes for those concerned. For example, 94 per cent of 16-year-old pupils educated in mainstream secondary schools go on to gain sustained employment, education or training (EET) destinations compared to 57 per cent from AP (DfE, 2017). This led the DfE (2016) to conclude that, *"by every objective measure, pupils who have spent time in AP do considerably worse than their peers"* (p.102). Relatedly, these students can face limited EET choices based on the qualifications they achieve. Indeed, only one per cent of AP students gain five General Certificates of Secondary Education (GCSE) with English and Maths (DfE, 2018b). Despite recognition of this evidence, the ways in which some young disabled students are continually being identified and categorised out of regular schools, and into full-time APs, is viewed by some policymakers, school-leaders and teachers - who may benefit from a student's exclusion from school or from the expansion of AP (Ball, 2018b) - as necessary and enlightened; an obligation placed on these powerful groups 'will to punish', (Parsons, 2005) and 'do good' for (Tomlinson, 2013), its weakest and most troublesome members.

Recent policy papers and reviews have tended to promote a picture of AP as vital to alleviate the ills that seemingly exists within the English educational system, such as a way to improve 'poor' behaviour or to reshape students' identities in ways that ensure they successfully enter the labour market. For example, 'Creating Opportunity for All' (DfE, 2018a) and the recent Timpson review (2019) extend APs attraction as a form of expertise concerned with preparing those students who are *"struggling to reach their potential"* (p.26). Such documents stress the value of 14 to 16-year old students 'imagining' a self-based on employment and individual lifestyle choices; without, it seems, considering the 'dense fabric of micro-practices' (Hatcher, 1998), and a re-drawing of the limits or boundaries, which frame lifestyle choices, motivation or capitals, in different ways, into young disabled students' lives. The creation of distinct places informed by deficits ascribed to the body of young disabled people, are key processes of social division, which being included in to AP seemingly invites. This is crucial, particularly if such deficits give status and distinction to normal, competent and healthy bodies as the 'natural' bearers of value. Such terms strengthen a notion that young disabled bodies are insufficient (Fine and Asch, 2000) by ignoring questions about the uncertainties surrounding bodies as neutral, deferential mechanisms that all students could rise above in order to belong or to 'fit in'. In other words, ignoring ability systems diminish bodies that do not conform to dominant norms. This may constrain the accumulation of resources, as bodies invested with dispositions (such as modes of speech, demeanour, dress and gestures) designate those who belong or those who recognise the FE field and its values. While current policy and AP literature views colleges as overt environments for all, this sidesteps the lived experiences of disabled students in spaces where their bodies may bear upon their present and future life chances. There is therefore a need to bring *"bodies back in"* (Zola, 1991: 1).

The Disabled Habitus: dis/locating imagined futures

Central to the work of Bourdieu is bodies as bearers of value within societies, or as *"a possessor of power, status and distinctive symbolic forms integral to the accumulation of... resources"* (Shilling, 1993: 124). For Bourdieu, bodies and their value in educational fields are interrelated and managing one's body (talking, moving, bodily deportment and demeanour), in the ways required to be an active member within colleges, is vital to accumulating (cultural and social) capital. As Bourdieu (1977) argued, a body is adopted within and through the habitus. Habitus, then, focuses on the corporeal, embodied and (unequal) experiences of FE life which become apparent through the interaction between body and field, as an ability to be accepted in a space without conscious effort – 'a fish in water' (Bourdieu, 1990: 163). Painter (2000: 242) indicates, the habitus can also be understood as the crucial *"link between objective social structures and individual action and refers to the embodiment in individual actors of systems of social norms, understanding and patterns of behaviour"*. Relatedly, such embodiments may dispose a student to act toward and perceive education in negative terms, especially where formal exclusions from school extend over time, which might significantly impact upon the development of the habitus.

This deterministic notion of the habitus is contested (Holt et al., 2013). I do not wish to survey such contestations here, but to acknowledge that while habitus favours stability (Bourdieu, 1990), its properties, particularly embodied forms, such as clothes and disposition to learning, are 'not eternal' (p.78), they can - incrementally - change and be learned (Reay, 2017). Insofar as properties can be learned and embodied, this raises the question about the effects of disability. Habitus transformation is dependent on the 'structured space of possibilities' (Postone, 1993), or shared conditions in a field. Such possibilities in regards to young disabled students are mediated by a body's congruence with 'the cognitive, moral or aesthetic' field of FE (Bauman, 1998, 17), which may present challenges for disabled people; not least, as it may be difficult to internalise new habits of conduct and to establish positive relations with others. As Garratt argues in relation to race, a body is valued through *"programmes of perception"* (2016: 81) which illuminates aspects of phenotypical bodies and denies others, and which can create illegitimate bodily differences. These are cogently shaped by the habitus of disability (Byrne, 2017: 11); or *disablist practices,* which are products of the internalisation of social structures in the social world (Bourdieu, 2000), and are maintained through misrecognition (Fraser, 2000). Misrecognition, such as stereotypes and prejudiced institutional practices, may obstruct familiarity and flow of capital (McCluskey et al., 2016). That is, the possibilities that may emerge though an inclusion in to FE (e.g. new ways of being), exists in the minds of disabled students, and those who belong or fit in to the majority. Misrecognitions may compel some students in to doxic submission, with little occasion for the expediency of capital in their lives to rework time and to the broader process of growing up. The ways in which students' social positions are preserved and legitimated are thus complicated and unpredictable. Of interest to this article, is how being included in to FE may reproduce, reinforce or reinvent the habitus of young disabled people at a crucial time in their educational careers.

Study background

The data presented was collected from research on working-class young disabled people who were attending one AP in a local FE college: Haven College. Haven is situated in an inner city, local authority area with a high level of deprivation, and also poverty, compared with the rest of England. It was approached because it represented itself publicly as a successful college. It is seen as a market leader of APs for students who presented as

challenging to regular educational provision. The research was part of a year-long ethnographic study that explored the capitals in young people's networks. This research documented their experiences in a college and explored various responses to their presence there. It was conducted following Research Ethics Committee approval. Preliminary in-depth discussions were held with students, with a trusted adult present, so they were informed (as were parents) about the reason and character of the research (Rogers and Ludhra, 2012). Entry to the AP, and Haven, was gained by senior management prior to commencement of the study.

Data was gathered at the beginning, middle and near the finish of Haven's academic calendar, in two-week blocks. The researcher spent time in the AP, partaking in, listening to, and observing students' lives and interactions. The time frame gave the students an opportunity to navigate a range of activities en-route to producing, accessing and embodying capital, whilst experiencing the last two statutory years of education in transition to (possible) EET destinations. Haven's AP is a full-time vocational provision undertaken by students who have either been excluded or removed from mainstream schools. Though data is specific to the AP, I do not assume that what Goffman refers to as *"the backstage of social phenomena"* cannot be generalised. This article is invaluable in that it illuminates the *"subjective, emic and ideographic"* (Sikes, 2000: 263), which is necessary in generalising this data in to other FE sites (Flyvbjerg, 2001: 74). However, any claims in this article are modest as the research methods were restricted to a small sample of young disabled students in one college, and I accept any limitations that this restriction imposes.

The researcher completed 19 semi-structured interviews with the 11 (14 to 16-year old) students featured in this article, and they participated in at least one focus group. The study included 30 students, 12 focus groups, and 69 interviews. The college and each student and staff member in this article were assigned a pseudonym to ensure their anonymity. The students brought complex backgrounds to the study, and were all labelled by Haven with some form of learning and/or physical disability. The term disabled is used to signify a student's position in relations of power and normative expectations that were often inaccessible to those concerned (Flyvberg, 1998). Disabled bodies therefore occupy particular material, cognitive and discursive spaces in AP, rendered significant and meaningful by the activities of policy-makers and professionals whose task it is to manage 'challenging' students through a composite range of individual learnings plans (ILPs), reduced curriculums, and therapeutic lexicons that constitute APs. In exploring young disabled students' experiences, I also considered the intersection of emerging and habitual social differences, such as social-class, age and gender that shaped their lives. These shared objective positions in local, disability, and classed terms meant that social categories were differentially experienced, often fluid and mutually constituted. An intersection of social differences offered up a complex set of experiences that served to ground and highlight the role and function of the habitus and capital.

This view of a student's habitus and capital is thus interpersonal, contextually specific and vibrant; laboured over within the classrooms and ordinary social spaces of Haven College. In essence, existing as a young disabled student involved being both finely and forcefully as well as factually placed as an outsider to regular FE life, and any capital that resided there. Data was transcribed and analysed thematically through repeated readings of these texts. Bourdieu's view that symbolic order is placed within *"durable dispositions such as mental structures"* (1993: 18) informed the ongoing analysis. Depictions of this structure ('the social') develop through the students voices and were captured in interviews, focus groups and observational data from which I draw. Data coding was gleaned from a theoretical interest in habitus and capital. Analysis at the differing stages of data collection remodelled the themes, which resulted in a change to

codes. As emerging codes were presented, capital(s) were mapped out. From coding and analysis, a number of strong themes emerged at separate times of the academic year. I consider three of these now.

Aspirational ambivalences and gendered differences

Most of the students entered the AP with dispositions to learning that were burdened by a lack of trust. For example, Tania said in her first interview that she expected staff to just, "chat shit". Therefore, she and others invested heavily in ways of being, such as "'avin a laff" or "banta'"(er) (wit or line of exchange), which set a distance between them and the social capital (care, support and advice) on offer within the AP. This capital demanded a value return, and was detached from some of the boys' imagined bodily capabilities, which brought corporeal differences to the fore:

> *"...My dad is workin' on the roads, (repairing local highways). He said, 'it's a good job, init'. I can just do 'dat! All you's need is to be strong an' 'dat, doin' diggin' and drillin."*

Like working-class *lads* before him, Gaz held non-negotiable familial and industrial aspirations, which placed his body at the centre of (future) action. This was far removed from the 'legitimate - deficient and dependent - body' (Shilling, 1993: 145) that was embedded in the career related outcomes of the ILP. Such outcomes focused upon crafting embodied *soft-skills* or acting and talking in scripted ways (Leander, 1993). These skills of personal recontextualisation are logical priorities. The staff recognised that affecting students' emotions and characters is not secondary to gaining paid-work in a service-based economy, but is vital to it. Kevin dismissed such *"bodily gymnastics...charged with social meaning"* (Bourdieu, 1990: 71), as it carried attributions of a body without any recognisable value. These tasks incited resistances rather than engagements:

> *"She (the tutor) hounds us...'stop laffin' or I put you's all on contracts' (systems where behaviour is examined). We's just avin' a bita' banter (with mates), it's a best bit 'bout comin' ere, cos' (classes) it's borin'. I think, she just waits for all us to mess up, init!"*

Being put on a behavioural contract resulted in punitive and therapeutic interventions growing around him, which compounded a lack of trust. In this regard, the last sentence in the interview is particularly revealing. Kevin sensed the tutor's lowered expectation of him and his friends. It seems a basic trust in the predictability of everyday interaction of school life was missing. This left these boys' believing, as Gaz said that, "*no-one cares 'bout us*" who, in turn, "*end up just gettin' rid* (of me)" - bringing about the insecurity he had previously experienced and expected. Their pasts were incorporated in to their bodies as ontological insecurities and overt 'embodied sensibilities' (Calhoun, 1998), or habits of yesterday's men, which meant that the ways in which they 'predicted' their future also made them less accessible to those whom they were not bonded.

The girls' aspirations were also heavily gendered, similarly guided by familial networks. Yet, they were ambivalent about staff-based capital. That is, they preferred to be on their phones, or laugh at other girls attending the AP - earning them the title "mean girls" from the other female AP students -, but they did not shut the staff out as a source of support. Their ambivalence was mixed with feelings of selfishness or, as Louise said, of *"not lettin' Miss down, cos' she's nice"*. This might show the way in which - incongruously - 'pseudo-therapeutic' (Parr, 2000) relationships are invested in to girls

(Osler and Vincent, 2003) relative to boys. Obligations to those staff who were "nice", or who Louise - and some of the other girls - had relied heavily upon in their previous schools to cope with the exigencies of school life, meant that internalising a fundamental belief in this new educational field remained open to interpretation: As Amy said:

> *"I's not goin' back (to school) doin' GCSEs, cos' it's stressy. I safe' 'ere (the AP) 'cos Miss says I do good wiff (hitting) my targets…I like 'Miss best cos' she 'elps me. If I passin', that'll mean I maybe's get good jobs an', she said, maybe's a degree!"*

A mixture of targets and emotional capital made acceptable to the girls, what Bourdieu and Wacquant referred to as *illusio* or being *"taken in and by the game"* (1992: 116). That is, the dominant GCSE discourse was set aside in support of a scripted notion of success - as individual progression - which, whilst making life bearable, weighed heavily on the girls' imagined futures:

> *"Amy: I passin'…Miss says if we work 'ard 'nuff, we can maybe do a betta' course (at the college). Maybe (pause) … I can't wait to just get a good job init, like my mum said.*
>
> *Researcher: So, you are unsure about doing a college course?*
>
> *Amy: I fink' it's long. I mean, my brain keeps shoutin 'do somefink' else', like my mates all do, just 'ave' a laff an' that, init. That's (my brain shouting) not weird, right Sir?"*

Advice such as "just get a good job" is familiar within working-class families (Skeggs, 1997). To aspire beyond this is subversive. While a 'brain shouting' may be an emotional response to class inequality it may also relate to 'positional suffering' (Bourdieu, 1998: 4) or low social standing. These girls knew that they were at the bottom of an ocean of qualifications. As Tash said, *"I do stupida' stuff* (work) *'ere* (than school)". Yet, this suffering was seen by staff through discourses of individualism, rather than being part of an unequal social picture, which suggested a problem with self. Ambivalence and apathy permeated the habitus, and offset new ways of being in the AP, which made their interactions with other students vital to understand. I move on to this now.

Body work: 'margins of freedom'

The staff and other students within and beyond the AP had a powerful hold over what is deemed a 'legitimate body' as 'body experts' (Shilling, 1993). They define what body practices require control and correction (Shilling, 2003). In FE, social legitimacy is founded upon desirable modes of interaction, such as forms of *"charisma"* (Flyvberg, 1998: 228), which demarcate social boundaries and are imbued with status differences. For example, Alice and Tania [with mild linguistic difficulties and uncontrolled ticks, respectively] were like many working-class students within the AP in not wanting (to be seen) to invest in Haven's aspirational discourse. That is, they wanted to *"ave a laff"* with other FE students in shared spaces, such as Hair and Beauty classes. This was of value to Alice and Tania who said, *"they* (AP classmates), *"don't get it"*. That is, they find what Tania calls *"banta"* hard to understand and this further restricted friendship in the AP. Sharing learning spaces with FE students can offer new friendships, and be productive in that it made new forms of social learning - talk, presentation of self and modes of interaction - possible. Yet, it also made the girls' bodily differences apparent. For example, socialising was *"'ard"* Tania stated, *"'cos they* (her classmates) *find ma' ticks*

'ard to deal wiff". This she said was offset by *"avin' a laff",* or by deploying banter in order for others to be at ease. Tania revealed such tactics in an interview:

> *"...people (her peers) stress about treatin' me like normal, ya know, 'cos I got ticks an' that. Now, I get all jokey wiff 'em so they chill out. I 'fink I gotta' be funny. I don't want 'em 'finking I'm weird or nufink."*

Alice was also aware of others' apprehension of her disability and tried to negate any perceived feelings of sadness and pity by being 'jokey':

> *"Sir [tutor] said to stand-up 'n read in class, I's nervous an' like "spaz'd out". I seen Sir, like, lookin' at me 'finkin', "Oh God, she can't read good, an' like, my mates all lookin' sad at me... I was 'finkin'...be jokey right. But, like, Sir went all mad!"*

While Alice's strategy improved peer apprehension about her being disabled, she is challenged by the tutor who viewed her identity work - an effort to be part of the group - a failure to co-operate. Whilst sharing spaces offered up a chance to fit in, this also undermined other chances. In a mid-term interview, Tania conveyed her frustrations that creating a non-disabled self was psychologically and socially tiring, and stifled moments to be recognised as "myself." That is, to fit in, but also receive the support that she thought she needed (and was entitled to) to "do betta'". This was also frustrating for some of the boys who had minor difficulties with social interaction. Luke, for example, lacked an awareness of what was required in shared social spaces, such as a mechanics class, to bestow a sense of value on to his body. This incident (a regular occurrence when observing shared classes) made him aware of how difficult it is to transcend his identity:

> *"I arrived at the classroom and wait on Luke to finish his work (a mechanics workshop he shares with older FE students) before our interview. [As is often the case] students are not engaged in work and, instead are talking or laughing to one another. The older boys [who are shoehorned round a desk] nod their heads in time to a rap song coming from a phone, which I can barely hear. Luke turns toward the boys and tries, but fails, to nod in time with them. [They all ignore him]. The tutor does not ignore Luke. Rather, he asks Luke to stop! He stops [momentarily] before producing a phone and playing the same rap song, but loud enough for most to hear. The tutor demands Luke's phone. He said no, and objects further by shouting, then Luke headed to the door. Another student shouts to the tutor "yeh lost him again." [Laughter] He gets a stern look from the tutor [who notices, but failed to challenge Luke's exit], before the class returned to normal." (Observation)*

This observation details a range of disobedient actions from older students speaking to peers, or moving to a popular song, which goes beyond set standards of acceptable classroom deportment but are legitimised by an implicit awareness of unseen behavioural requirements or how to 'play the game' (Bourdieu, 1998). Luke's efforts to fit-in lacked an awareness of how to perform 'bad', therefore rendering him different. He then broke more overt classroom rules by exiting the room, which reinforced the invisible divide over who belongs and who does not. In relation to a sense of belonging, I now look outside shared classrooms and in to Haven's communal social spaces.

Cultural Impoverishment: stuck in the field

Based on the students' comments, it was evident they all, as Courtney said, *"wanna' escape"* the intense regime of care in the AP to participate in ordinary spaces. Spaces

are backdrops to young people's lives; an influence that can mould their future pathways by allowing them to develop 'de-territorialised' lifestyles, which are so familiar to FE. Yet the opportunity to *"get burned",* Courtney said, was curtailed by the actions, attitudes and procedures that constituted 'risk' in the AP; with risks to students associated with moments to evade. This was evident in relation to the students' lack of participation in regular club activities, which were aimed at the standards of the majority and, thus, provided little occasion to be more sociable, trusting and positive towards others. The boys' perceived lack of respect toward others was punctured only by, as Jimmy said, *"bein' less hostile"* to staff who were *"safe"* or who Gaz said, *"we click wiff".* Such clicking suggests a counter habitus (ways of talking, acting and thinking), which opened up a space for the boys' to talk about personal issues, and for Jo to advocate for them to play football on breaks.

> *"Jimmy: Jo's safe! (a loud "yeah" is heard in one focus group).*
>
> *Craig: Ok, can you tell me what makes her safe, and not some other staff?*
>
> *Gaz: She's not uptight...She's chill 'bout work n' shite. Yeh know man, bita' laff, bita' work, bita' chat' (stories, talking about school) ... yeah, she knows the deal man, init!"*

In this conversation, respect for Jo - a personal tutor - is not gauged by holding authority over the boys, but by Jo valuing the otherness of students. This was made possible by an ability to have "bita' chat". The word "safe" distanced Jo from other staff who Tom said, were mostly *"borin'"* or *"uptight".* "Safe" enabled Jo to emerge as a cultural-go-between (Bourdieu, 1984), or a person who could be trusted without relying upon any authoritative powers. This trustworthiness freed up access to a valuable connection that had been previously closed off by past-experiences.

The girls' similarly saw risk as prized, but rather than seeking to access formal activities, they viewed their lives in FE as a space for heavily romanticised meetings. For the girls, meeting older boys was associated with a high social status and, thus, located Haven as a working-class female terrain (Hey, 1997), despite efforts by the tutors to curb such interactions. As Courtney explained in an interview, staff *"spyin",* or (always) instructing them to *"stay away from boys 'cos* (she claims one tutor had said) *"it's weird olda' boys wanna' go wiff'* (young, disabled) *girls' like us."* The girls' obscured such secret lives by *"makin' excuses for mates to skip classes".* The aim, Courtney said, was to evade *"nosey questions".* The girls had developed a covert system of social capitals, within which they tried to revise the incapacitating scripts of the staff who tried to hard implement them. Relations formed with older males altered their own social realities by, for example, improving their knowledge of the intensified feminine expectation in FE or by wearing tightly-fitted tops in ways that, Amy said, *"makes us olda".* In her first interview, Amy said *"boys all ignore us",* which she attributed to an association and her younger age. The girls had failed to offset what (Thomson, 2001: 7), describes in terms of 'aplasia' or a lack of fit with the perceived sexual prowess and capabilities of FE's adult-orientated space. The girls' negated these crises by altering their own sexual goals to try and become, as Bea said, a *"cool girl".* This change aimed to counter their older boyfriends' perceptions that their young age, association to the AP, and a disability, may cancel out more gender traditional femininities (Paechter, 2007).

> *"Amy: ...that's Paul [discussing a picture of her boyfriend on her phone] he's fit is it ... He dumped us 'cos I wasn't gonna' do it (have sex) wiff' 'im 'cos he says the olda' girls do it in 'ere' (in College). S'alright Sir, we's back now ...He's ma' boy (laughter).*

> *Courtney: (Pause) I 'fink ya gotta' do it, don't ya? Like, if the olda' girl's doin' it....*
>
> *Tash: ...yeah, yeh gotta', ya don't wanna' get dumped if yeh really like 'em*
>
> *Amy: ...he likes me, I 'fink, he's says he'd don't mind if I get all pregnant, we'd get married like my (her 17-year-old) cousin did, she got a baby!"*
>
> *(A loud round of "Aaah's' follows Amy's last statement.)*

The pursuit of enjoyment through their relations with older male students was an aspect of the girls' lives that frustrated staff and heralded the girls' departure from learning. The consequence of this was a strengthening of social capitals which prevented spaces to talk about sexuality in a way which conveyed positive expectation. An aversion to allow girls to become or act sexual, along with little space to confront lives drawn from limited repertoires, affirmed the probability of their own future roles as young mums, latterly epitomised in 'chav mums' (Tyler, 2008). The chances to construct a new sense of futurity through risk and interaction is crucial, as this allows for the formation of new limits around different modes of femininity and masculinity which is - arguably - a source of advantage to obtain interactive but low paid service work (Roberts, 2018).

Concluding Discussion

The aim of this article was to understand how a small group of students, defined by the college as disabled, experience AP at a critical time in the educational careers. It was hoped that being included in FE might be a source of affinity, familiarity, and acceptance between young disabled students and others - encouraging a platform to transform and transcend the habitus - that can emanate from an ongoing exposure to new environments, experiences and capital resources. In contrast to this, the existences of these students were dominated by social closure and restriction. The nature of these experiences also risked undermining the real possibilities that FE may hold to work against the notions, intricacies, and slippages that sustain the habitus within Haven and - arguably - beyond.

The extent to which young disabled students are managed or are marginalised in AP has a short path in youth and disability literature, and this article constitutes one of only a handful that comprise a discussion of the habitus of disability - characterised by psychic, social, material and physical costs that young disabled students are left to bear. This is problematic, as it leaves the most marginalised bearing the consequences of their own (future) marginalisation. For example, some of the students' previous experiences of mainstream education have led to a lack of basic trust in societal norms and labour market expectations. For them, change is not wanted if, indeed, possible. According to Mitzal, this *"tyranny of informality"* (2000: 239) can lead to, as witnessed in data, further withdrawals, avoidances and habitual distancing from the capital(s) required to negotiate increasingly insecure forms of employment. Challenging this in research must be seen as a trans-disciplinary task, something that moves beyond a habitus marked only by class (Reay, 2017), to overlap with inequalities linked also to disability, and the alterations that follow from this. To that end, I suggest revealing the voices of disabled students being educated in APs. This will shed new light on the evolving and emerging nature of these students' lives in FE and habitus, and its effects on assembling and locating a vivid sense of the future beyond localised networks.

The students and staff were not passive in developing this process; they had a will and energy, but not necessarily the means, to transform or to fashion desirable work

related identities. For example, Alice and Tania were able to deploy banter, a valued resource, to good effect. They had also developed ways to *"self-monitor"* (Cote 1996: 195) that yielded *"profits of distinction"* (Bourdieu, 1984: 245). Humour and investments in novel experiences were forms of agency that enabled new friends and facets of popular femininity. To echo Bourdieu (2000: 172), these moments must be repeated and better connected to self-understanding to allow reinvention as well as to accumulate more future orientated capitals, such as trust, charisma and reciprocity. Such agency was, however, "tiring" and regularly subjugated beneath a professionally expressed need for safety or recognised in disabled bodies as incarnations of undesirable capitals. It is also tempting to assume that the ambivalence in data is transitional; that is, the influence of AP staff can contest the constrained habitus suggested here. Certainly, there was an undercurrent in data, or sets of skills, which allowed Jo to *be* "safe". While exposure to this support combatted some of the pernicious effects of school exclusion, such as apathy, AP is condemned to innovate (Teese, 2006). That is, to offer the space to engage students on their own, rather than on policy led terms. Such efforts cannot be narrowly imagined; Jo's ability to reduce distance was crucial. Distance constructs these students as a matter of judgment not responsibility, and separates them from the 'profits of membership' (Bourdieu, 1985), such as reliable support from more people, which may locate a vivid 'imagined future'. To harness such existences, a disabled student's negotiations in FE must be seen as an ethical project for which everyone is responsible.

The voices raised in this article pose challenges; supporting educational journeys and realising progression into paid-work is unpredictable and the result of time. AP funding can depend upon providing behaviour change or short-term evaluations of value-added outcomes. Considering young disabled people and the disabled habitus, however, may assist in building more valuable and inclusive educational prospects. These may address questions about resource distribution and recognition, as APs within FE colleges have the potential to provide access to a diverse portfolio of capital by creating new pathways that acknowledge both class and disability. FE policymakers can take a step toward acknowledging this by considering how policy contributes to obtaining recognition and, thus, redistributing capital to a growing number of young disabled people. This approach does not claim - neither does the article - to address every concern. Rather, it aims to create a space to discuss some hidden inequalities and to stimulate debates about APs as having the means to confer future value upon young disabled people. Recent studies hold limited relevance to the realities of a growing number of students in FE but the habitus offers a level of congruence with the school exclusion debate in England and beyond, by creating a deeper understanding of the relationship between social structure and the agency of young disabled people. Bourdieu (2000: 241) might argue this is needed as *"there is no worse dispossession than that of the losers in the symbolic struggle for recognition".* My analysis suggested that the students struggled to gain, invest in and display new ways of being, which might contest the disabled habitus. Yet, there was evidence of their agency in forming (but not sustaining) a restricted portfolio of capital. How applicable this may be in enabling future achievements, beyond FE, is a point of discussion in need of research.

Notes

[1] AP is "education arranged by Local Authorities or schools for pupils who, due to exclusion, or other reasons, would not ... receive suitable education" (DfE, 2013: 3).

[2] The term, 'working class' refers to those pupils entitled to free school meals. All 11 students whose data are presented here were eligible for free school meals before

entering FE. Free school meals data was readily available and has been frequently used as proxy indicator of class by many researchers.

[3] The pupils were all labelled with a disability; including, nine disability classifications, and many have secondary labels, such as bipolar disorder or extreme mood disorder.

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