

**Recruiting young volunteers in an area of selective education : a qualitative case study**

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# **Recruiting young volunteers in an area of selective education: A qualitative case study**

## **Abstract**

This article presents findings from a small qualitative case study of a youth volunteering brokerage organisation in England, operating in an area of selective state education. Data shows how brokerage workers felt grammar schools managed their students in a concerted way as to improve students' chances of attending university. Conversely, workers expressed difficulty in working with comprehensive schools, feeling they were less willing to utilise volunteering services. These impressions lead the volunteering organisation to focus intently on recruiting potential volunteers from local grammar schools. As a result there is a need to reframe current debates in the sociology of education around institutional habitus, with a focus on the *perceived* habitus/doxa of schools. It is ultimately this (mis)recognition of institutional practices which leads to unequal policy outcomes, in this case reinforcing the advantage of academically elite students attending grammar schools.

## **Keywords**

comprehensive schools; cultural capital; extra-curricular activities; grammar schools; institutional habitus; volunteering

## **Introduction**

*Kaia gave me a lift to meet some of her young volunteers. We drove through an area of town populated with grammar schools at half past three as the*

*school day was ending. Stopping at some traffic lights, Kaia pointed at girl after girl, saying 'She volunteers with me. She's volunteered with me. She brought two friends along. I haven't seen her in ages; I should give her an email.' It was extraordinary, but was it much of a coincidence? 'It always happens,' she replied smiling, 'there's always someone around you know'.*

(Extract from fieldnotes, May 2011)

In December 2013, the Chief Inspector of Schools in England, the head of Ofsted Sir Michael Wilshaw, gave an interview to the *Observer* newspaper which received significant press coverage for the harshness of his critique of England's grammar schools. Grammar schools are state-funded schools, selective at age 11, using an examination paper to ensure they take on the most academically talented students. With only 164 grammar schools remaining in England (4 percent of the 11-16 school population [Coe et al. 2008]), their importance in, and influence upon, the English education system could be overplayed, but in areas where they do exist the grammar school debate never goes away.

Wilshaw's critique focused on the classed dimensions of grammar schools' recruitment:

Grammar schools are stuffed full of middle-class kids. A tiny percentage are on free school meals: 3%. That is a nonsense. Anyone who thinks grammar schools will increase social mobility needs to look at those figures...Grammar schools might do well with 10 per cent of the school population, but everyone else does really badly...This is about improving the system we have. What we have to do is make sure all schools do well in the areas in which they are located. (Boffey, 2013)

Wilshaw's comments drew unsurprising fire from the National Grammar Schools Association, whose chairman, Robert McCartney, drew attention to the immense popularity of grammar schools wherever they exist, stating that:

We have 10 to 15 applications for every grammar school place and the reason so many aspirational parents are determined to get their children in is because they recognise they are good schools...It surprises me that someone in his position should mount an attack on that one section of the state education system that is providing top class results. He should be preserving the best and worrying about the rest. (Paton, 2013)

The extent to which social class envelops this debate is unsurprising sociologically. Over 60 years ago, Halsey and Gardner (1953) wrote about the middle-class 'salariat' prioritising a grammar school education in order to acquire educational capital, as a means of social ascent. More recent studies have shown the continued existence of grammar schools, predominantly in areas of relative social advantage (Atkinson, Gregg, and McConnell, 2006), favours children who are elite socially as well as academically (Gorard, Taylor, and Fitz, 2003), with the 'creaming off' of academically elite students negatively affecting local non-selective schools (Coe et al. 2008, 230-1).<sup>(1)</sup> Overall Coe et al. (2008, 229) conclude, 'in terms of school-level characteristics, grammar schools are very different from other schools'. What this article aims to do is highlight a way in which this difference is perceived by a third-party agency, leading to different strategic relationships, and different outcomes in terms of social education. It presents data from a small qualitative study examining the practices of a youth volunteering brokerage organisation in an area of selective education in England, focusing specifically on the different ways in which brokerage workers felt about and experienced working with grammar schools and comprehensive schools.

The majority of the interviewees worked for the same youth volunteering brokerage organisation. Brokerage organisations, such as the national network of Volunteer Centres, operate as the middle-man in volunteer recruitment, partnering with local volunteer-involving organisations such as charities, social enterprises, and certain public bodies, and recruiting from both the general population and specific populations to fill identified voluntary roles. In this case study, interviewees worked for an organisation which was funded by central government and tasked with recruiting young volunteers aged 16 to 25. Further to this, the organisation also organised one-off voluntary projects for young people to participate at. Part of a larger three-year doctoral study, focusing on how social class affects the design and delivery of youth volunteering policy (Dean, 2013), this article reports on qualitative data drawn from interviews with, and ethnographic work alongside, those working in youth volunteering in a Local Authority where grammar schools are still prevalent, anonymised as Croft.

### **Volunteering as a site of class inequality**

Volunteering has emerged as growing area of government policy (Alcock, 2010; Etherington, 1996; Kendall, 2005), with policies encouraging young people to volunteer often highlighting its potential role in transitions to work and adulthood (Hardill, Baines, and 6, 2007; Kamerade and Ellis Paine, 2014). Wilson (2000) provides an overview of the five benefits which are often attached to volunteering in academic literature: increased citizenship, reduced anti-social behaviour, improved health, better mental health and well-being, and improved socio-economic success. Through a sharing of information on volunteer projects, individuals can develop a better understanding of social issues (Camino and Zeldin, 2002), raise levels of critical engagement (Brooks, 2007), and develop a participatory identity (Yates and Youniss, 1998); the negative consequences of volunteering are rarely mentioned (Grotz, 2011; Booth, Park, and Glomb, 2009). Overall it is thought that volunteering can benefit an individuals'

physical capital (such as access to resources), economic capital (through expenses, stipends, or employment gained due to volunteering experiences), human capital (language skills, improved health and educational outcomes), and social capital (such as networking and interpersonal 'soft' skills) (VDS, 2008).

Employers prefer volunteers to non-volunteers (v, 2008), which has led many authors to acknowledge that instrumentality plays a greater role in young peoples' volunteering than for people of other ages, with young people more likely to assert that volunteering will assist them in gaining employment (Hustinx, 2001; Eley, 2001; Low et al. 2007; Dean, 2014). While young people report various motivations to volunteer, they are more likely than other age groups to report a desire to develop their employability as a result of their volunteering. Relatedly, Holdsworth and Brewis (2013) argue that within education, volunteering, an activity once thought of as 'extra-curricular', has become 'co-curricular', with Higher Education students increasingly volunteering substantially to combat the fear that a 'degree is no longer enough'. However, recent research by Ellis Paine, McKay, and Moro (2013) cautions that volunteering can have a weak effect on employability outcomes, with too much volunteering proving a particular barrier for young people's move into employment.

Such extra-curricular activities are ways for students to build and develop cultural capital (Stevenson and Clegg, 2011), and involving new agencies and experimentation in delivery can be seen as improving school quality over a more standard and regimented institutional environment (Vamstad, 2012). Yet sociologists, within education and other subareas, have shown that such participation is often dependent on social class. For example, the working-class children in Lareau's (2011, 9-10) study were rarely seen to mix with adults outside of their family, close neighbours, or teachers, whereas middle-class children did this regularly. Lareau (2011, 5) argues that middle-class parents are more likely to see the 'cultural logic' of child-rearing,<sup>(2)</sup> where:

Worried about how their children will get ahead, middle-class parents are increasingly determined to make sure that their children are not excluded from any opportunity that might eventually contribute to their advancement.

This leads to the 'transmission of differential advantage', as the benefits of being middle-class in the education system become reproduced and reinforced (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990).

Lareau applies Mills' (1959) understanding of the arrangement of institutions along social class lines, where to understand the social roles an individual plays we must first ascertain of which institutions they are a part. While we can immediately comprehend that children from elite backgrounds will participate in elite roles and institutions, and that children in poverty will participate in roles and institutions related to poverty, Lareau (2011, 15) writes of the 'great equalizers', those places, such as zoos, parades, certain shops, and in some cases public transport, that are open to all and draw all kinds of children and their families. Commonly thought of as a neutral activity and an uncontested field (Bunyan, 2013), volunteering and the voluntary sector have been shown to be deeply entrenched along class lines. Musick and Wilson (2008) identify several facets of this relationship, with middle-class individuals more likely to associate with individuals who formally volunteer and are consequently asked to volunteer more often. Poorer individuals are more likely to identify poor health as a reason they do not volunteer, and the decline in trade union or fraternal activities, and the increase in post-material politics, is often seen as a reason for declining working-class involvement (Phillips, 2005; Putnam, 2000). Recent work by Mohan (2011a, 2011b) has shown that volunteering in the United Kingdom (UK) is intensely concentrated in a 'civic core', a middle-class, middle-aged, well-educated and usually religious section of society, where 7.6% of the UK population contribute 49% of the total hours of formal volunteering. The below data highlights how the iniquitous delivery of volunteering policy can be seen to reinforce these (class) divisions.

## Methodology

*We went round the group: grammar school, grammar school, boy's grammar school, girl's grammar school. Unheard of elsewhere, but they were still regular 16 year olds: the jelly babies, apple pies, custard tarts, and chocolate éclairs we'd brought with us all got devoured – I seemed to be the only one eating the grapes – and our conversation was similar:*

*'Our librarian's well old!' 'Well ours is a slag! Ask anyone though, they'll tell ya!'*

*But we spoke of little else but university and all that's associated with it. They were making big choices, and they clearly found this group a good place to share these issues in their wider lives, not just discuss and plan volunteering projects. They were choosing a variety of different universities, but all were certain about it - non-attendance a non-issue.*

(Extract from fieldnotes, May 2011)

The data in this article is drawn from seven semi-structured, qualitative interviews, lasting between seventy and ninety minutes. These were recorded and transcribed by the researcher, and all the names of individuals, organisations, and locations have been anonymised. All seven interviewees worked for the largest youth volunteering brokerage organisation in Croft, including five workers (Kaia, Rita, Jill, Beatrice, and Erin) and two managers (Chrissie and Paul), both of whom still worked directly with young volunteers but also worked directly with schools at a more strategic level, working to secure funding and contracts.

Ethnographic data worked to supplement and triangulate the data from interviews. In this article three extracts are included from my ethnographic fieldnotes, detailing one specific research experience I had where Kaia took me to meet some young volunteers, all of whom attended local grammar schools. These volunteers operated as an advisory group to the

brokerage organisation, and in this meeting analysed the success of recent projects they had completed as a team, including a drive for clothing donations they had organised at a large shopping centre, and a community centre they had helped decorate. However, as the extracts included indicate, this meeting was also an opportunity for the young people to share their worries about university, and participate in the standard banter associated with being 16.

### ***Limitations***

It should be noted that the author recognises that it is to the detriment of this study that only one side of the story is told. As this case study formed part of a larger examination of volunteering cultures, and not the cultures of educational institutions, representatives of the grammar and comprehensive schools involved were not interviewed. In mitigation of this absence, it should be reiterated that the evidence presented below seeks to explain how brokerage workers *perceived* the approach of and their relationship with different schools to involving the volunteering organisation, and, as a result, how these perceptions affected the practice of brokerage workers. It must also be stated that clearly not all of the volunteering in Croft occurred through the work of this volunteer brokerage organisation. As Kaia, a youth volunteering worker put it:

Young people that want to volunteer will volunteer, it's not up to us to go and find them. I meet young people who say 'I'm already working in a charity shop', so there are obviously ways for young people if they want to volunteer will go and do it themselves.

However, as will be shown below, this lack of a desire for mass involvement meant volunteering through this organisation often became dominated by the grammar school attending civic core, of which Mohan (2011a, 2011b) writes.

### **A box-ticking exercise: The process of volunteer brokerage**

*One young man had come straight from school and was wearing the sharp blue blazer of Croft Boys Grammar School, bedecked with badges identifying him as a mentor, a prefect, and other roles of substance and authority. His university plan was to do Medicine at Imperial College London. Instigated by this, everyone brought out their favourite UCAS [Universities and Colleges Admissions Service] horror stories:*

*'I know a person who got four As and had an excellent personal statement and got rejected by everywhere!'*

*The young man wasn't fazed, and stated, although it felt like an admittance of guilt, that he undertook volunteering to bolster his personal statement, although had continued as he'd enjoyed it. He felt there was a contradiction in the attitude of the Boy's Grammar School. In one case I was told that they 'don't care about volunteering, only sport and business', but at the same time there would be space factored into the timetable for local charities to recruit for young volunteers at the school because 'that's the sort of thing the Head Boy will sort out in his duty of honour to the school'. Kaia said it was one of the best places to recruit from, and the school supported her in her endeavours, understanding the benefit she could provide to students.*

(Extract from fieldnotes, May 2011)

The institutional practices of the youth volunteering brokerage workers were most clearly realised in the organisation and response to assemblies at Croft schools. Brokerage workers would make appointments with appropriate teachers to go and address an audience of students, and use these assemblies to outline several volunteering opportunities students could get involved in over the coming weeks, and ask students what they were interested in participating in:

We'd do an assembly and have a good range of opportunities or go in and do a single event quickly if you had a big event coming up – depending on your relationship with the school. But usually, at the start of the academic year, you'd go in and do an assembly and tour the sixth forms with all your opportunities and go back in the New Year and remind them that you're there. (Beatrice, youth volunteering worker)

This meant that workers could build up a rapport with students and encourage them to try new things. Kaia (youth volunteering worker) gave me some estimates; when presenting to a comprehensive school she expected that out of an audience of 70 students, around 15 would express an interest in volunteering, either at a specific upcoming event or at some point in the future, whereas when she walked into a grammar school, Kaia felt confident that the 'vast majority', probably over 50 out of 70, would sign up. Workers found that 'in the grammars everyone will volunteer and they won't be needed to be told to' (Paul), with Jill (youth volunteering worker) adding:

More kids sign up at grammar schools. Because you have to pitch it, I say, 'So, you want to go to university and this will look great on your personal statement'. So loads of 'em will turn up at assembly.

The success of these assemblies was one reason for the imbalance in provision of volunteering services between comprehensive and grammar schools in Croft, as Paul explained:

We used to work with 95% selective schools. Now it's about 75-85%. But it has been very, very difficult [to achieve]. And the attrition rate for young people from non-selective schools is off the scale compared to grammar schools.

By attrition, Paul meant that workers found *retaining* young volunteers from comprehensive schools was much tougher than from grammar schools, with, in their experience, brokerage workers finding comprehensives school students were more likely to promise to attend an event and then not show up. While the veracity of this claim can neither be substantiated nor dismissed through the ethnographic work conducted as part of this study, I wish to argue that it is rather irrelevant whether the claim is true or not. Instead, it is the workers' *perception* of the different types of schools and their students which ultimately determined volunteering through this brokerage organisation.

### ***The perception of school attitudes***

It was felt by many of the interviewees that students at grammar schools did not need the personal development opportunities offered by volunteering; they just needed the appearance of activity, to fill their personal statements. 'So often they were told [by teachers] that "To do your personal statement, you're going to need some volunteering experience on there"' (Rita, youth volunteering worker), which Kaia (youth volunteering worker) reaffirmed, asserting that:

I think they've got different priorities [comprehensives and grammars]. The grammar schools very much assume that you're going to university and you have to tick these boxes – and I'm one of those boxes.

This presumption of university attendance was also made clear to me in the meeting recounted previously. While the brokerage workers were tasked to recruit from the 16 to 25 age bracket, they focused nearly exclusively on 16 to 18 year olds, because they usually found a willing and responsive audience at schools who were in organised audiences in assemblies who had to listen. In an area where academic achievement was prioritised, schools

were the gateway for the brokerage workers, and 'the gateway is more open the higher the quality of the school' (Paul, volunteering charity manager). Paul went on:

Schools are the gateway - and the gateway is more open the higher the quality of the school. That's no reflection on Headmasters, as each have their own problems. If a 'sink school' is failing then they become much more insular because you're concerned about your children's behaviour outside the gates. Whereas the private and selective schools have always welcomed volunteering with open arms and been much more freer with their time and resources.<sup>(3)</sup>

This is where the reported feelings of brokerage workers indicate some discord with Lareau's findings. In her study Lareau details how the overwhelming number of teachers supported practices of concerted cultivation, and believed in child development through participation in organised activities, with active involvement from both parents and third-party institutions (Lareau, 2011, 24). Yet interviewees reported comprehensive schools' attitudes as unwilling to let outside agencies in. Chrissie (youth volunteering manager) expanded on this, explaining that, in her view, comprehensive schools had to prioritise the vital above the important:

I think when a school is struggling, with much more difficult young people, it's harder to allow another agency in, when you can't depend on your kids to behave. Why get someone to come in and talk about volunteering? You're still trying to get them to come to school every day!

As Paul expressed, the volunteering organisation felt grammar schools did not possess this fear about outside interference, nor did they fear any potential detriment to their school's reputation. Rather, they saw and experienced the benefits of volunteering for their students. Workers felt grammar schools saw volunteering as an habitual part of 'what they do', which Kaia experienced on the ground:

Some schools are more receptive and eager for me to come in. There are a lot of grammar schools, and they very much demanded my presence whereas often the high schools just aren't interested.

This demand came to workers from teachers, heads of sixth-form, and headmasters, who saw the value in their students taking part in extra-curricular activities. Conversely, I asked Erin (youth volunteering worker) why she felt comprehensive schools were less keen to work with her organisation. She replied: 'The comprehensives' targets on A to C's are much harder because obviously the grammar schools have creamed off the top achievers', the young people who were destined to gain the requisite GCSE grades, largely unrelated to the effort they make at school. Volunteering was further seen as a method to separate these young people who get 10 GCSEs at grades A\* to C. As Beatrice (youth volunteering worker) said:

Even if you're at the grammar school and you get an excellent grade, so has the person next to you. So you need to stand out and show the different skills that volunteering can bring you.

***'The comprehensive kids? We didn't work for them'***

Youth volunteering workers in Croft found they needed to put more work into recruiting young people from comprehensive schools, for less reward, in terms of achieving the monthly targets for recruitment which they had to meet (see Dean, 2014:

Researcher: Is there a difference between comprehensive and grammar schools and their approaches to volunteering?

Erin: The comprehensive kids? We didn't work for them. If you do an assembly in a grammar school and you do an assembly in a comprehensive school that massive difference, apart from the fact that the grammar school kids are being pushed from every direction to get involved and the comprehensive kids generally don't have that encouragement or pressure

depending on what way you look at it, the main difference is the grammar school kids are generally given time by their teachers, given every encouragement possible to get involved in volunteering, whereas the comprehensive kids, I'm not saying the teachers don't care, they absolutely do, but those teachers don't have the same outlook on the kids and don't push in the same way. And actually when you get a comprehensive kid volunteering, nine times out of ten they're doing it because they really, really believe in what you've just told them about, whereas often with the grammar school kids they've had it drilled into them that they need a good CV, that they need a university place and that's absolutely fine because motivations to volunteer come in all different forms.

Erin answered my question with a strained and apologetic look on her face. She was clearly not trying to belittle the volunteering done by the grammar school students, nor the application of teachers in comprehensive schools. Her apologetic attitude came instead from immense disappointment and regret at the situation in which she found herself, trapped working in a system which limited the help which could be given to those who needed extra support, dependent on schools as 'gateways' in which those gates that needed to be open were the most likely to be closed. Where Erin says that grammar school students are 'being pushed from every direction' to volunteer and participate, Paul backed this up: 'in the grammar, everyone will volunteer and they won't be needed to be told to'.

This was demonstrated in how the brokerage recruiters felt they were treated by teachers when they visited grammar and comprehensive schools, and in the importance attributed to these events. Teachers at grammar schools would 'collect the forms [indicating student's interest in volunteering] and post them back' (Rita, youth volunteering worker), which volunteer recruiters saw as an obvious example of a good working relationship and the

high regard to which they were held. Local grammar schools were also more likely to provide students with an 'enrichment afternoon' every Wednesday in which they could take part in CV-building activities. This commitment was replicated in how workers felt grammar school students responded, 'bringing back forms, showing up on time, showing interest' (Rita). In turn, brokerage workers responded to this commitment, through trying to organise activities on Wednesday afternoons, as they knew many grammar school students would be available to take part.

## **Discussion**

I loved my job, but I felt I always got the volunteers who were going to volunteer anyway. (Beatrice, youth volunteering worker)

During interviews, it became clear that significant structural and operational factors within the locality determined how youth volunteering brokerage workers carried out their duties. This organisation, whose targets for recruitment were stringent and centrally-determined, and had only a small team of staff and limited financial resources, found local grammar schools much more active in pursuing their services. As shown, workers felt that this was in order that grammar school students could add wide-ranging and original experiences to their CVs, part of a wider social narrative of mass credentialism (Reay, 2006). Conversely, interviewees reported, local comprehensive schools were much less likely to push and encourage their students to see volunteer as a standard and required part of their educational biographies, and therefore saw little value in putting the extra effort into recruiting young volunteers from comprehensive schools, as their previous experiences suggest little professional reward to be had from such endeavours, even though they understand the potential negative social consequences of such an approach.

Social class does not determine the autonomous commitments of individuals, but it can help determine the controls and constraints that establish one's ability to commit (Dean, forthcoming). Lareau (2000) determines that if schools understood and acted upon the intimidation felt by working-class parents, schools would be more likely to capitalise on the home resources of even the poorest families. Brokerage workers felt students attending grammar schools were much more likely to get involved. This was because the grammar schools had more effective structures in place to incorporate volunteering programmes (Townsend, 1994), making students easier to reach and recruit. Workers felt grammar schools, and by extension parents and students at these schools, saw volunteering as an investment for later life, whereas their experience working with local comprehensive schools suggested to them that comprehensive schools did not see volunteering as a prerequisite for students' futures. Devine et al. (2005, 13) posit that Bourdieu sees cultural tastes, economic position, and social networks, as instrumental tools which can be used for self-advancement, but that it is the interplay between these resources, embodied practices (such as approaches to child-rearing), field (such as education) and institutional practices (such as those in comprehensive or grammar schools, or in the organisation of volunteer recruitment) which combine to generate far-reaching inequalities. If grammar schools dominate participation in this form of organised volunteering are, in Wilshaw's words, 'stuffed full' of middle-class students with working-class students more likely to attend Croft comprehensive schools, then middle-class advantage may be reinforced within this locality.

If we are to accept the position put forward by brokerage workers (and it must again be reiterated that it is the position of one element of a wider social relationship), why do comprehensive schools act like this? In Bourdieusian terms, non-elite students and comprehensive schools become social actors who 'will be far more likely to make a virtue out

of necessity' (Reay, 2004, 433) rather than attempt to achieve 'what is already denied' (Bourdieu, 1990, 54). As Bourdieu (1990, 73) wrote:

Our perception and our practice, especially our perception of the social world, are guided by practical taxonomies...and the classifications produced by these taxonomies owe their effectiveness to the fact that they are 'practical', that they allow one to introduce just enough logic for the needs of practical behaviour.

Where in Bourdieu's (2010) study of taste and social class these practical taxonomies operate through poorer individuals negating the need for 'frills' (Crossley, 2012), so do the comprehensive schools, and in a sense so do the brokerage workers.

Can we criticise the work of brokerage workers here? We can certainly question a policy which prioritises the quantity of voluntary participation as opposed to the quality of its outcomes, whether for charitable beneficiaries, or for the volunteers themselves (Dean, 2014). Volunteer brokerage workers needed a rationale to account for their behaviour. Over time, experience with young people from grammar schools and comprehensive schools hardened brokerage workers' attitudes to involving students from schools who they felt were difficult to engage, finding these students tougher to recruit and tougher to retain. This reinforces the advantages of Britain's involved civic core (Mohan, 2011a, 2011b), against those young people who perhaps should be targeted by policy programmes determined to increase social mobility. Youth volunteering workers, necessitated by the realities of volunteering policy, concentrate on recruiting the grammar school students who are more likely to already participate, and perceive the habitus of comprehensive school students to be recalcitrant to the call to volunteer, thereby reinforcing any inhabited resistance, and impeding access to the benefits of volunteering. Working with comprehensive schools was an unnecessary 'frill'; they were tasked with recruiting young people for local charities and volunteering events, not

specific young people, from specifically (disadvantaged) communities. These outcomes are based on the perception of habitus, both that of the comprehensive and grammar schools, and that of their respective students. That these practices are based on perceptions of habitus may add to our understanding of the concept of institutional habitus.

### ***Lessons for the study of (perceived) institutional habitus***

Recently the *BJSE* has witnessed a discussion over the concept of institutional habitus (Atkinson, 2011, 2013; Burke, Emmerich, and Ingram, 2013). Moving forwards, it may prove useful to consider those frames provided by 'institutional habitus' (Reay, 1998; Ingram, 2009; Burke, Emmerich, and Ingram, 2013) or 'doxa' (Atkinson, 2011, 2013; Davey, 2012), even though there has been some suggestion, notably from Atkinson, that these two conceptualisations of collective identity and practice are manifestations of terminological disagreement rather than differing analytical frameworks or empirical results. To avoid overreaching, it should be made plain that the data presented above is only representative of volunteering workers' views on comprehensive and grammar school identities, behaviours, processes, and practices. During the research process representatives of the schools themselves were not interviewed, therefore the veracity of such views cannot be determined to any great extent. Whether these perceptions arise out of character and ethos (doxa) or experiences of behaviour and dispositions (institutional habitus) is not answerable by this data. What does become clear though is that brokerage workers feel that the grammar schools and comprehensive schools they worked with have identities, ways of acting and relating to them as a third-party agency. The data presented focuses on volunteer brokerage workers' *interpretations* of schools' doxa and habitus, and therefore provokes significant questions to be explored in future empirical research, within schools and other social institutions.

Atkinson (2013) disavows the idea that an institution can have emotions, and Burke, Emmerich, and Ingram (2013, 173) assert that while ‘members of an institution have human emotions, both as members of the institution and as part of their institutional or collective habitus’ an institution ‘does not itself have an emotional life’. While the author agrees that an institution does not have emotions, it is important to recognise that they do *elicit* emotions, at times intense and powerful ones.<sup>(4)</sup> The way volunteer brokerage workers talked about certain schools were often in emotional terms: some schools were ‘welcoming’, other ‘scared’ of involving outside agencies; grammar schools were ‘determined’ to give volunteer brokerage workers all they needed, whereas comprehensive schools were more ‘insular’.

An individual’s habitus is at the same time separate from and dependent on others’ interpretations of that habitus. It is possible that brokerage workers may have ultimately been wrong about comprehensive schools’ desired relationship with volunteering agencies, having interpreted contact and behaviours incorrectly, yet this is immaterial. Their interpretation of events and behaviours was shown to be vitally important in the practice of delivering volunteering services. Whether an institution can develop a habitus, and whether we label that habitus or doxa, is ultimately an unimportant theoretical debate, which we should reframe as an empirical and social policy question. Of more importance is academic investigation into the often emotional (mis)recognition of institutional practices, and even an activist commitment to challenging and working through such (mis)interpretations, especially when these affect policy outcomes for often marginalised social groups, such as comprehensive school students, as they do in this study.

## **Conclusion**

Class habitus would suggest that the process of acquiring cultural capital and then utilising it is a subconscious behaviour, one aligned with middle-class habitus, and a practice that is not

explicitly learned or taught (Bourdieu, 2010; Kahn, 2011). Yet, as shown above, in the view of volunteer brokerage workers, the students they worked with at Croft grammar schools were formally and informally taught to make their cultural capital acquisition a conscious choice. In Bourdieu's terms, they were given a strategy to play the game:

[Strategy] is the product of a practical sense, of a particular social game.

This sense is acquired beginning in childhood, through participation in social activities...The good player, who is as it were the embodiment of the game, is continually doing what needs to be done, what the game demands and requires. This presupposes a constant invention, an improvisation that is absolutely necessary in order for one to adapt to situations that are infinitely varied. This cannot be achieved by mechanical obedience to explicit, codified rules (when they exist). (Bourdieu, in Lamaison, 1986: 112-3)

While Bourdieu is speaking figuratively, his words make literal sense; it may not be seen as 'right' to volunteer for instrumental reasons (Cnaan, Handy, and Wadsworth, 1996), but interviewees believed grammar school students had the structures in place to advance in the game in which they were engaged, with workers positioning grammar schools as enablers for their students to access the 'game' of volunteering. In extending Lareau's theory of concerted cultivation to schools, we can perhaps see how education institutions are not just an agency involved in bringing up and educating children, but an actor with a market incentive to develop young people who are engaged in the community, with well-rounded and impressive CVs and UCAS applications. Just as the parents in Lareau's studies utilise their extra cultural, social, and economic resources in order to protect their children against the external forces of the education and labour markets, grammar schools do the same in the view of volunteering brokerage workers. .

Holdsworth and Brewis (2013) argue that volunteering, an activity once thought of as ‘extra-curricular’ has in fact become ‘co-curricular’. While the authors demonstrate that Higher Education students increasingly take on substantial volunteering to combat the realisation that a ‘degree is no longer enough’, this article has shown that, in the views of a third-party agency, grammar schools in Croft were quicker than comprehensive schools in identifying that good A-levels are not enough. Further study of this kind, particularly in areas where grammar schools do not exist, would be highly beneficial in establishing how these structures operate outside of the market-distorting influence of selective institutions. Do schools with good reputations locally, either through academic league tables or anecdotally, receive preferential or different treatment from third-party agencies, and what logics of practice do such agencies use to account for such behaviours? Further, hypothetically we could perhaps see similar relationship patterns between third-party agencies and private schools (if an organisation's funding arrangements permitted a role in the delivery of extended education in fee-paying schools). Of further interest would be an examination of institutional habitus and the attitudes of brokerage workers in the majority of localities in England which are *not* selective. This would show whether it was the grammar schools of Croft which distorted the work of the volunteering organisation, or whether volunteering brokerage and third-party providers are liable to prioritise and focus attention on an elite band of schools in an area, whether these schools are selective or not.

Those structures and practices which enable and deliver youth volunteering under study in this article have, to some extent, ultimately and unwittingly helped to reinforce inhabited barriers to volunteering among potentially more socially disadvantaged students and those not at selective schools. With students as young as 10 'hot-housed' with extra after-school tuition in order to pass the 11-plus grammar school entrance examination, and where in some cases 40% of grammar school places go to children from private, fee-paying primary

schools (Murray, 2013), access to and participation in selective education is clearly a classed issue, based on differences in and access to economic and cultural resources. What the data in this article suggests is that grammar schools move beyond investing these resources in traditional education, and instead invest their economic and cultural resources in a concerted cultivation of their students' social and cultural educations through actively managing involvement in volunteering and charity work, fields many would think of as egalitarian and altruistic. Universal volunteering services, and the delivery structures of volunteering brokerage, reproduce this advantage, rather than acting as a 'great equalizer' (Lareau, 2011) and tool of social mobility for those who may not have access to such resources and opportunities. To re-quote Wilshaw, 'grammar schools might do well...but everyone else does really badly'.

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### **Notes**

1. For a thorough literature review of studies exploring the impacts of grammar schools, see Coe et al. (2008, 27-105).
2. We should of course be wary of overstating the homogeneity of class-based approaches to parenting, as it has been shown there can be significant diversity both across and within classes (Irwin and Elley, 2011), and of the extent to which parental approaches to child-rearing (Bodovski and Farkas, 2008) and the school itself (Coleman et al., 1966) determine a child's educational success.
3. One of the initial reviewers of this article rightly highlighted Paul's use of the phrase 'sink school', and enquired as to whether this indicated his prejudicial attitude towards local comprehensive schools. I did not specifically ask Paul this question. However, Paul's

background was that he was born into a working-class family in a small Northern town, with his career taking in the military, the Scout Association, and a catering business designed to provide apprenticeships for young men with histories of unemployment. Given these factors and other highly political subjects we discussed over ninety minutes, I am fully confident he did not use the phrase pejoratively, merely colloquially, for ease of recognition.

4. For example, the former Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott is often cited for having 'a chip on his shoulder' due to failing the 11-plus examination to get into a grammar school.

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