



BRIEFING SHEET

DISADVANTAGED WHITE MALE LEARNERS

Wright, Lucy. Ward, Abby

HELLO FUTURE

Definitions

Term	Description
Low HE Participation, Household Income and Socio-Economic Status. Also referred to as 'Target Learners'	<p>Young people from the least represented areas of the country are 31 percentage points less likely to go on to HE than those who grow up in other neighbourhoods.</p> <p>To understand and measure progress in this area, we look at participation rates of underrepresented groups based on the participation of local areas (POLAR) classification, which categorises areas across the UK based on the proportion of the 18-30 year-old population that participates in HE.</p> <p>An individual's or household's social and economic position can be represented through indicators such as income, education and occupation, and how this position compares to others.</p>

When developing interventions for this demographic group, selection to the intervention should only be based on disadvantage and not ethnicity because of our geography and ethics. We have very high rates of disadvantaged white male learners and a very small number of BAME disadvantaged male learners who are similarly underrepresented based on ethnicity at HE. Therefore we should seek to understand the potential differences of learner impact of the outreach intervention based on different demographic characteristics.

Insight from External Reports

Targeted Outreach for Disadvantaged White Male Learners

- White disadvantaged males have been identified as the large minority ethnicity group represented in HE study in the UK.
- Existing outreach for this group is already low. In a survey undertaken by NEON (2016) just over 20% of organisations were specifically targeting this group, however 60% said that they were developing ways to interact with this group in the future. Many organisations interact with this group through football, however this does not allow for all young white males to be targeted. This is not helped by there being a lack of research surrounding this group (Webster & Atherton, 2016)
- Recommendations provided by NEON include setting specific targets for recruitment of white working class so they do not slip through the cracks, re-define widening participation groups and have a national initiative to target white male students. (Atherton and Mazhari)
- 'White working class males' experiences differ all around the country so it is important to bear in mind that a flexible approach may be the best to take (Grogan, 2020)

HE Applications

- Less than 10% of young white males who received free school meals applied to UCAS in 2016. Only 32.3% of young white males who receive free school meals achieved 5 GCSEs at grade C. 64.5% of those who do not receive free school meals achieve 5 GCSEs at grade C or above (Webster & Atherton 2016)
- Although overall the student body is 50% white across universities, only 5% of these learners are from working class backgrounds. This is because many universities do not target disadvantaged white learners in their widening participation work. Fewer than 40% of universities were specifically targeting these students

(Atherton & Mazhari) White working class males are the most underrepresented group to attend university. (Baars et al n.d). It has also been found that the percentage of white working class males who drop out of university is also higher (8.8%) than those from more affluent families (6.3%) (Johnson, 2019)

- Although more disadvantaged males are more engaged with apprenticeships than university, not many go on to higher or degree apprenticeships (Baars et al n.d)
- Male attainment is influenced by two main factors: recent research has shown that males are more likely to be diagnosed with Special Education Needs (SEN) than girls, and parental expectations. When asked how likely parents thought it would be for their child to go to university, only 39% of male parents thought it would be very likely compared to 50% of female parents. 9.5% of male parents thought it would not be likely at all compared to only 3.2% of female parents (Curnock Cook, 2018). This suggest the gender of the parent affects their expectations for their children.

Background

- White working class males are the lowest-performing group at the end of compulsory education. In addition, the financial cost is often seen as not worthwhile and acts as a deterrent. White working class families are often less informed about the options for their children and prefer college or apprentice routes because there is less of a financial burden. White working class males are also less likely to have the cultural capital to include in their personal statements for HE course applications. It can also be difficult for practitioners to target this group because there is not a standard definition to decide who is and who is not working class (Baars et al n.d)
- An important influence on a young person's choice of whether or not to go to HE is parental influence. Working class parents and carers are less likely to be informed about or to have experienced HE, therefore by targeting these parents and carers to change their perspective on HE and see it as worthwhile we can hope to influence young people (Baars et al n.d). However, a report conducted by Southern University Network (SUN,) found that parental influence had little influence on their choices, but they did need to feel supported by their parents in terms of their choice.

Attitudes towards University

- Working class males tend to be more motivated by their interests and skills rather than financial gain when looking for a career. HE is viewed as a risky strategy but they do not feel that they have enough information about HE to make an informed choice. It has also been highlighted (SUN, 2017) that they wanted to hear more from employers and current student experiences about HE
- This group is aspirational, however they worry about whether they will fit in at university (SUN 2017). They can feel excluded or that they won't fit in because of their accents and clothes. However, they can become more confident when they speak to people 'like them' who have gone to HE and been successful (Johnson, 2019)

Insight from Internal Reports

Male Motivation

- When asked about aspirations, boys are significantly more likely to opt for an apprenticeship or job after finishing their GCSEs. A similar theme is seen with year 13 boys who are significantly more likely than girls to intend to begin an apprenticeship. However, it is worth noting that a smaller proportion of boys (16%) would intended to complete a higher apprenticeship compared to 19% going for a lower level apprenticeship. (Hello Future, 2019)
- When comparing motivation between boys and girls, it was found that boys were slightly less (-3%) motivated to do well in their studies. Girls were also statistically significantly more likely to believe that they could get the grades to get onto a good course if they wanted to (Hello Future, 2019)

- Boys were less likely than girls to study away from home, and were more attached to their home area. This could link to research by Jonson (2019) which showed that boys felt that they would not fit in at a university due to their background. When looking into attitudes towards HE, males were less likely than girls to believe that attending HE would improve their social life. This could be related to males being less likely to leave home because they do not want to leave their friends and family (Hello Future, 2019)

HE Knowledge

- Boys were also less likely to know what grades they would need to be accepted onto courses they were interested in. This could be related to a lack of confidence in academic ability but could also be linked to the belief that university is not a viable option for them, and so therefore there is no point in researching the entry requirements (Hello Future, 2019)
- Boys and girls had a similar level of understanding of HE. This could show the benefits which the UniConnect programmes are having on male learners (Hello Future, 2019)
- Boys were significantly less likely to have already applied to HE in year 13, and reported that they were less likely than girls to apply for HE now or in the future. Many males said that HE did not appeal to them; this could be due to a lack of confidence or because they have not had the opportunity to speak to HE students or graduates (Hello Future, 2019)

Mentoring

- Mentoring can have a mixed effect on male learners. Our research has found that mentoring can have a positive effect on encouraging males to begin to think about applying to university, however a slight negative impact could be seen on behaviour, including hopes about the future and having a growth mind-set (Hello Future, 2018). This could suggest that mentoring focusing on HE can make males doubt themselves more and feel stressed about the future. We know that Brightside had a negative impact of the likelihood of this demographic group to intend to study at HE.

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