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'Sticky' Proximities: Sibling Relationships and Education
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Abstract
Drawing upon qualitative interviews and focus groups with young people, this article expounds the importance of sibling relationships in shaping their experiences of and orientations towards education. The article contributes to literature about the socially embedded nature of young people's educational journeys, arguing for the need to account for the significance of siblings. Following Smart's (2007) notion of 'sticky' relationships, the paper demonstrates how sibling relationships can be characterised by particular proximities; connections that make siblings important for young people's educational experiences regardless of whether the relationships are perceived as positive. The paper demonstrates three ways that sibling relationships are particularly proximate. Firstly normative scripts and obligations pertaining to gendered and birth order-specific sibling roles influence when and how siblings offer support to one another at school. Secondly, resemblances between siblings facilitate the 'rubbing off' of reputation between siblings at school. Finally, the ability to observe a sibling's progression through the education system means siblings can become foils against which young people measure and assess their own educational experiences. In highlighting these 'sticky proximities', the article builds and extends a sociology of siblingship, demonstrating how sibling relationships affect young people's education.

Key words
Siblings-embeddedness-education-family-relatedness-resemblances-proximity-relationships-school-youth

Introduction
Sibling relationships, including those with full, step or half siblings, are a central relationship in many young people's lives. Sibling relationships are embedded in young people's thoughts and practices, influencing their perceptions and experiences of education. Relationships with siblings can traverse home and school, with siblings often helping one another at school and young people being 'known' by those teachers and pupils who have encountered their brothers or sisters. Even when siblings do not attend the same school at the same time, their sibling relationships can carry over into school through their knowledge of a sibling's experience. Indeed, growing up in the same familial generation, often in the same household, can make siblings a foil – a comparison and accounting tool - for young people when considering their progress at school and watching an older sibling advance though the education system can provide a unique insight into a young person's own educational journey.

Despite this significance, siblings have been largely overlooked in sociological accounts of young people's experiences of school and their orientations towards educational transitions, which have focused upon the role of parents (Ball et al 2013; Devine 2004) or friends (Brooks 2005; Hey 1997) in these processes. Drawing upon interviews and focus groups with young people of UK secondary school age (11 to 15), this article argues that siblings profoundly influence young people's educational

journeys. Following Smart (2007), sibling relationships can be considered to be 'sticky' in their capacity to accompany young people between the contexts of home and school, so that siblings share a particular proximity to one another at school even when their relationships are not 'close' in the sense of being characterised by positive emotions, shared activities or intimacies.

The paper demonstrates how normative scripts about gender and birth-order related responsibilities create a sense of proximity between siblings at school. Next the article explores how resemblances between siblings, particularly physical resemblances, publicly represent relational and genetic proximities, shaping reputations with peers and teachers. Finally the data reveal ways in which the generational and domestic proximities of siblingship, particularly amongst siblings who have grown up in the same household, can enable younger siblings to learn from their older siblings' educational experiences over time. The paper concludes by arguing that these 'sticky' proximities highlight the importance of accounting for siblingship in our sociological understandings of education.

Theorising sibling proximities and education

Existing research on siblings and education
The majority of work on relational facets of education have focussed upon parents (Ball et al 2013; Devine 2004) and, to a lesser extent, friends (Brooks 2005) and there has been relatively little attention given to the role of siblings in shaping young people's experiences of and orientations towards education. Most existing work on siblings and education has concentrated on 'measuring' the influence of siblings as a potential source of social (dis)advantage with large-scale statistical studies analysing the effects of aspects of siblingship including size of sibship, birth order position, spacing and sex composition on educational achievement (Carr Steelman et al 2002; Hauser and Wong 1989; Kuo and Hauser 1997; Sandefur and Wells 1999). These works do not consider young people's own perspectives of their sibling relationships and, although findings differ, tend to follow Coleman's (198mare8) claim that having a sibling can be a disadvantage in education because siblings dilute parentally-provided social capital (see also Conley 2004).

Research undertaken by The Families and Social Capital ESRC Group formed at London South Bank University in 2002, and later continued under the ESRC Timescapes 'Siblings and Friends' project, has also theorised siblings as a source of social capital but has addressed tendencies towards adult-centred orientations, conceptualising children and young people as actors in the transmission of social capital and includes some of the few empirical projects which explore advantages derived from sibling relationships from the perspectives of young people. For example, Holland discusses how older siblings can provide 'insider information' as well as a 'bridge' to new friendships at school (2008:12). Hadfield et al (2006) demonstrate how older siblings can be a source of support for young people who are experiencing bullying at school, regardless of the quality of the relationship. Gillies and Lucey (2006) stress the importance of siblings for providing knowledge about school and teenage culture. More recently, Aaltonen (2016) has pointed to how older siblings provide knowledge

to young people preparing to leave compulsory education in Finland. It is notable that, whilst their focus remains on the advantages derived from sibling relationships, many of these works also indicate that sibling support may be situated in relationships that are not wholly positive or harmonious.

As with studies of education, sibling relationships have been overlooked in sociological accounts of family relationships more generally (Davies 2015; Edwards et al 2006; Mauthner 2005a; Edwards, Mauthner and Hadfield 2005). There have however been notable empirical studies, by Edwards et al (2006), Mauthner (2005a; 2005b) and Punch (2005), providing a constructionist conceptualisation of the meanings and realities of being/having a sibling as multiple, negotiated and continuously shifting whilst also influenced by underlying social structures. These authors acknowledge the ambivalence at the heart of many sibling relationships (see also Heath et al 2008), pointing to ways in which children's and young people's sibling relationships can be characterised by conflict as well as by shared activities and confidences. In a previous article Davies (2015) has also indicated the importance of sibling relationships for shaping young people's sense of self. By conceptualising education as an embedded experience, this paper builds upon these ways of understanding siblingship, focusing upon how the practices, norms and identity-shaping aspects of sibling relationships render them uniquely positioned to influence young people's educational experiences, choices and transitions.

Embedded relationalities: theorising 'sticky' sibling proximities
Whilst not concentrating specifically on siblings, there is a larger body of work which conceptualises young people's educational careers as relationally constituted. This work counters assumptions that young people's educational journeys are increasingly individualised experiences, contributing an understanding of educational experiences and decision-making as socially embedded and thus providing a theoretical framework able to incorporate numerous relational influences. For example, in their study of non-participation in Higher Education Heath et al (2008; 2010) took a networked approach to the analysis of educational decision-making, incorporating the influence of parents, friends, siblings and others in the choices young people make. Wyn et al (2011) also point to the significance of family for young Australians in their critique of the individualised concept of 'transition'. Snee and Devine (2014) - in exploring the reproduction of class and gender inequalities - argue that educational decisions are embedded within young people's networks, demonstrating the role of social ties in narratives of transition. Finn (2015) argues for a relational understanding of Higher Education, exploring the significance of family, friends and partners in young women's educational experiences (see also Brooks 2005).

Unpacking the concept of embeddedness, Smart argues that such 'interwoven' relationships are 'very sticky', because; 'it is hard to shake free from them at an emotional level and their existence can continue to influence our practices and not just our thoughts.' (2007:45) For Smart embeddedness cannot be seen as either a 'good' or 'bad' quality, rather its importance as a concept lies in its reflection of 'the tenacity of these bonds and links' (2007:45). This 'stickiness' is particularly pertinent when applied to sibling relationships, which can be simultaneously characterised by

feelings of ambivalence and conflict (Punch 2008; Heath et al 2008), and explains why siblings may influence one another's educational experiences and orientations even when not typically 'close'.

This paper takes forward conceptualisations of education as embedded and relational, pointing specifically to the role of siblings in shaping young people's orientations towards their educational careers. The article argues that the relational features of siblingship denote proximities which make siblingship a particularly significant relational form for young people at school. First the paper points to the 'sticky' connection between siblings at school who provide support regardless of the quality of the relationship. It is argued that this 'stickiness' is caused by norms and obligations surrounding sibling birth order roles. However, the 'sticky' proximities of siblingship are more than just normative and the paper goes on to demonstrate how relational and domestic proximities between siblings spill over into their school relationships, reputations, behaviours and plans.

The study
This article draws upon data from a qualitative study of 9 focus groups with 75 young people aged 11 to 15 (33 girls, 42 boys) and 26 interviews with 41 young people (17 boys, 24 girls) of the same age conducted individually, in pairs and groups of three. Interviews took place in schools, youth clubs and homes in the North of England between 2007 and 2008 and explored experiences of growing up, including sibling relationships. Focus groups took place in secondary schools in the same period[i] and covered young people's normative understandings of the role of family and friends in shaping their lives.

Participants were recruited from three schools in the North of England, selected to access young people from a mix of ethnic and economic backgrounds: 'Highfields' and 'Romsbridge' (both large comprehensives with economically mixed catchment areas) and 'St Stephens' (a small Roman Catholic secondary school in a deprived area). Young people were also recruited from three youth clubs: 'The Freedom Centre' (a specialist arts centre), 'Estate youth club' (situated on a deprived housing estate) and 'Rural youth club' (in an affluent rural village).

Though participants were often unable to provide sufficient details of their parents' occupations to facilitate categorisation by NS-SEC, the different fieldwork locations provide indications of the social locations of participants. Classed narratives of privilege, ambition and deprivation were particularly important in the context of the housing estate where young people commonly spoke about their perceived lack of job and educational opportunities and in the rural youth club and mixed catchment schools where participants often alluded to the desirability of apparently middle class trajectories involving university and a 'professional' career. There were 27 non-white focus group participants and 9 non-white interviewees who defined their ethnicity in a short questionnaire as 'mixed race', 'black British' or 'Asian British'. The arts-based youth club was particularly diverse and emphasised Caribbean-influenced art, music and dance. Despite the small numbers of young people in each group, there were interesting narratives about the role of ethnic, cultural and religious norms

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surrounding sibling relationships and although an exploration of the role of ethnicity in shaping sibling relations in schools is not possible here, this is an important area for further study.

The aims of the project as a whole were to explore how young people's relationships impacted upon their understandings of how they were 'turning out', not just at school but in terms of their sense of personhood more generally. An exploration of the role of sibling relationships in these processes was built into the design of the project from the beginning and the analysis presented in this paper is derived from the aspects of the interviews and focus groups that covered sibling relationships in relation to education experiences and aspirations. Data were analysed using thematic and narrative analytical techniques and coded according to key themes, many of which emerged during analysis such as resemblance, sibling roles and emotional aspects of similarities and differences between siblings. This thematic analysis was combined with in-depth analyses of individual cases to better understand the context and narrative formation of young people's stories. Pseudonyms were assigned to all participants though it was not always possible to ascertain who was speaking in focus group discussions.

Negotiated normative proximities: Obligation and sibling support in school
The data reveal a normative understanding of the gendered and birth-order specific support young people felt they ought to provide to their siblings at school. Support was overwhelmingly described as passing from older to younger siblings as a taken-for-granted by-product of birth order position and it was common for young people to view the position of an elder sibling as characterised by increased responsibility, with being the youngest sibling often viewed as the most advantageous birth order position as a consequence. This taken-for-granted way in which young participants spoke of the role of an older sibling is reminiscent of Ribbens McCarthy et al's (2003) argument that, despite familial relationships being multiple, fluid and negotiated, 'everyday 'family' discourse is concerned with constituting family *as if* it were indeed just a coherent and solid entity' (2003:29, original emphasis). The normative expectations surrounding sibling birth-order positions, reinforced in populist news media and fictional portrayals of sibling relationships, in familial practices and in educational policy and school practices, effectively 'fix' birth-order roles which, as Punch (2005) argues are in fact negotiated and contested in practice. The following quotation from Sofia is typical of the ways older siblings discussed using their greater experience and understanding of school culture to help equip their younger siblings with the tools necessary to negotiate school socialities. This help is given despite Sofia having described a decidedly tumultuous relationship with her younger sister:

> Sofia: The other day she was like, cos she don't wear makeup or anything, but she was like, 'Will you put this makeup on for me?' and I was like, 'Yeah' and then she was like asking me to borrow my clothes and stuff.
> Interviewer: …Are you quite happy to encourage that or..?
> Sofia: I don't want her to be like, weird.
> (year 9[ii], Highfields school)

This knowledge about how to perform femininity at school passed between many sisters in the sample and was often cited by girls as a reason for wanting an older sister. The way Sofia explains her willingness to help in terms of not wanting her sister to be 'weird' gives the impression that her motives are obvious to her; a 'natural' part of her role as a big sister.

Gendered narratives of brothering also centred around the idea of – particularly older-brothers as 'protectors' of sisters and were expressed by male and female participants. Despite such strongly gendered narratives of sibling roles, young people did not necessarily describe acting in accordance with these ideals and there was slippage between narratives of lived sibling relationships and normative ideals of how these relationships ought to be practiced, what Gillis (1996) terms the idealised *families we live by* versus the realities of the *families we live with*. The following example from a joint interview with friends Lindsay (who has 5 siblings, older and younger) and Gemma (who been an 'only child' most of her life) is typical with Gemma declaring that she would like an older sibling 'to look up to' despite having witnessed Lindsay's problematic sibling relationships first hand:

> Lindsay: like when we were younger and I still had like a little brother in my room and she used to come round to mine and like it got dead hectic and stuff, so I don't think she would want any other brothers or sisters.
> Gemma: Well I do! I want an older brother or sister but too late now.
> Interviewer: Why do you think you would want an older brother or sister?
> Gemma: Like to look up to and stuff.
> (year 9, Highfields school)

This slippage between Gemma's idealised views and Lindsay's lived experiences is also classed; Lindsay's experiences of siblingship are informed by the cramped conditions in the small house she shares with her brothers and sisters. Lindsay had even attempted to persuade her parents to allow her to move into the garden shed in order to enjoy the privacy Gemma took for granted in her more spacious home.

These descriptions of birth-order and gender specific responsibilities introduce a sense of obligation to the support provided by older siblings. In their study of family obligations, Finch and Mason (1993) found that generalised ideas about moral obligation towards kin did not map directly onto practices because people's normative sense of obligation was enacted in their lived relationships. Thus, family obligations – such as those attached to being an older sibling - are negotiated in relation to lived relationships rather than fully prescribed by wider normative scripts. In the following example from a year 10 focus group at St Stephens School it is clear how moral ideals and normative scripts about gender roles and birth order interact with young people's lived experiences of their sibling relationships:

> Boy: Like I want a son about three years older than the girl cos then the boy can stick up for the girl if anything happens.
> Interviewer: Okay… do you not think it can work the other way around then?
> Boy: Girls sticking up for lads?
> Girl: Not as much.

Boy: It'd be better to have a sister that's like one year younger than you so you can keep an eye on her in school and that.
…
Girl: Yeah. But then you'll have all your time on them won't you?
…
Boy: So? You stick up for your relatives.
Girl: But my brother never sticks up for me… He'd just love me to get battered, he hates me.
…
Boy: So if someone were gonna come round to your house he'd do nowt. Even if it were a boy?
Girl: No, he would batter a boy.
Boy: Right then.

This quote provides a typical example of the interplay between normative ideas about what siblings ought to do and lived experiences of sibling relationships in the ways young people spoke about the transference of support from older to younger siblings. The girl's attempts to insert her experiences of her own sibling relationship are ultimately thwarted by the further addition of a threat from a *boy,* indicating the strength of these gendered norms. This slippage does not mean that normative ideals and lived relationships comprise 'made up' versus 'real' accounts of sibling roles, rather they are mutually implicated and, along with the particulars of the research interaction itself, make up what Gubrium and Holstein (2009) term the 'narrative environment'. This can be seen in the ways opinions were voiced, challenged and modified as a result of the focus group discussion itself as well as in relation to the wider social context of a school in a deprived inner-city area where notions of 'protection' are likely to have particular resonance.

When older siblings did provide the support expected of them due to their birth order position, this was often described as reluctantly given. Many participants expressed annoyance and irritation at being 'bothered' by a younger sibling with older siblings describing feeling burdened by their younger siblings' need for support at school. The following example from friends Poppy and Abigail indicates how the support younger siblings talked about receiving from older siblings is often begrudgingly given:

Poppy: Last year all of her [sister's] friends used to come up and go, 'They've fallen out, can you make them be friends?' or 'Nadine's crying again.' It was dead annoying.
…
Abigail:…my other proper brother, yeah, he was really annoying, he kept coming up to me and saying, 'People are hurting me.' I felt sorry for him but it was really annoying. He did it all, nearly every day.
(year 7, rural youth club)

Most sibling relationships of support lay dormant at school to be activated only when needed, echoing Hadfield et al (2006)'s analysis of bullying support. Thus even where normative ideals of how an older sibling ought to behave towards his/her younger siblings at school were actualised, they were done so rarely and were not indicative of a generally supportive relationship. Take Chanelle's descriptions of how she relates to her older brother at school:

> Chanelle: Because we're both, in front of our friends, like say, if one of us said 'Hiya' or something, we'd just ignore each other…Or we'd…just say 'Shut up' or something…Whereas when we're at home we actually do speak.
> Interviewer: if you were having a problem at school, would you have gone to your brother even though you weren't that…?
> Chanelle: Yeah, I would have gone to my brother if I was having a problem in school and, like, I'd tell him about it…because he's older than me and he's probably been through it before, then he'd know some advice to give me.
> (year 8/9, Freedom Centre)

These descriptions of the ambivalence at the heart of the transference of support between siblings at school, expressed by same and mixed-sex siblings, echo the work of Holland (2008) and Gillies and Lucey (2006) where young people were found to derive social capital from their siblings even where relationships were difficult. I have extended this argument by demonstrating how support can be garnered from older siblings even in difficult relationships due to gendered normative obligations surrounding how siblings ought to behave towards one another. It is notable that this support is often performed differently at school and home and in front of different audiences with many participants offering support more reluctantly in the public, formal setting of school. Regardless, all young people noted the obligation to help if deemed necessary. The normative discourses surrounding sibling roles gives these relationships a particular 'stickiness' (Smart 2007) making it difficult for young people to free themselves of their responsibilities towards their siblings. Although young people can draw upon their friendships for support at school (Brooks 2005; Hey 1997), the moral obligation to help kin is different. Normative scripts about the rules and morals of doing friendship do exist, but tend to relate more to friendship as a reflection of the self (Smart et al 2012) and are less prescriptive, with different types of friendship comprising different friendship practices (Spencer and Pahl 2006). Young people are thus more obligated to offer support to their siblings, the norms and obligations surrounding siblingship making it a particularly 'sticky' relational form for young people which carries over between school and home.

Relational proximities: Resemblance and reputation
Participants spoke about how having a brother or sister who was known to teachers and peers meant that their reputation could 'rub off' on that of their siblings, affecting how they were perceived. These benefits and potential pitfalls of being 'known' due to a sibling's reputation indicate how reputations can 'rub off' on other members of the family, both in terms of being recognised as a particular person's sibling as well as being seen to somehow embody aspects of a sibling's reputation. This 'known-ness' is enhanced when siblings look alike, the physical resemblance encouraging others to make a connection between them and to assume other similarities. These resemblances are likely to be particularly potent during one's school days where siblings are especially comparable; negotiating school at a similar time, often encountering the same teachers and peers. Siblings' gender was not described by participants as affecting the impact of resemblances between them though a number of teachers who I spoke to in the course of the research described often confusing

same-sex siblings for one another. Mason identifies a public fascination with resemblances, which are 'in some ways deeply personal but are also publicly perceived, constructed, commented on and speculated about' (2008:30). As physical resemblances are '*highly charged with kinship*' (Mason 2008:31, original emphasis), their evidential nature means that, what Carsten (2004) would term the 'substance' of kinship (blood, genes, biogenetic substances) are implicated in young people's reputation and identity at school when they are seen to resemble their sibling(s). Marre and Bestard (2009) describe this as the recognition of the 'family body', tying together the social identities of family members. Thus, when siblings are seen by peers and teachers to look alike, they are often assumed to be alike in other ways.

In terms of being socially successful at school, having a sibling who is 'known' by others was found to have a direct impact upon one's own standing within hierarchies of popularity and it was possible for young people to garner more respect from their peers due to the reputation of their sibling. Take the following comment made by Tom about why he thinks people may feel positive about a physical resemblance with an older brother:

> Cos you get known for it…Like, if your brother's known…Because, like, if your big brother's, like, known, and then all like, everyone who hangs about with your brother like knows you because of your big brother.
> (year 8, Estate youth club)

Molly and Lois expressed similar views about the benefits to one's reputation of sharing a physical resemblance with a sibling, which they describe as 'nice', this time based on Lois's experiences with her elder brother who is well known at school and in the local neighbourhood:

> Interviewer: Why do you think it's nice to, kind of, look like people? Have you got any theory?
> Molly: Cos then people say, 'Oh I saw you before' and then they look at you, they can go, 'Oh you're so and so's little sister' so they know you then…
> Lois: That's what I mean, because, like, if they respect your brother they're going to respect you if you look a bit like him aren't you, as well?
> (year 10, Estate youth club)

It is significant that the idea of 'knownness' came across most strongly in the accounts of young people interviewed at Estate Youth Club where participants spoke of the 'rubbing off' of this stigmatised place on their reputations at school and where being known within the 'community' of the estate was important within this context of deprivation and stigmatization. The centrality of older brothers in these discussions of knownness is reminiscent of gendered norms around 'protection' and indicates the complexities of gender in the 'rubbing off' of reputation which occurred between mixed and same-sex siblings.

Teachers were also implicated in the 'rubbing off' of reputation between siblings. 16 young people talked in interviews of being likened to a brother or sister (including half and step siblings) by teachers at school, or having witnessed this happening to others, and it was discussed as a common practice in all focus groups. This likening was seen

as impacting upon how teachers viewed young people's behaviour, intelligence and attitude to school. Many participants attested to concerns that teachers may think less of them if their sibling's reputation at school is not positive and he/she is not seen as intelligent or well behaved. As Craig (year 10, Estate youth club) commented, he is pleased he does not attend the same school as his older brothers and sisters because, 'if I went their school, they'd all expect me to be like them. I'd have to, like, well, live *down* to their reputation 'cos mine's better than theirs.' Others who had siblings who did have 'good' reputations saw comparisons and assumptions of similarity as beneficial to their reputation with teachers. Sadia (year 10, Highfields School), for example describes how she likes it when teachers remember her older sisters because they are likely to say things like, 'that they were wonderful and you're really alike.' As Molly (year 10, Estate youth club) summarises, 'it depends if they've been naughty or good in school don't it really'.

This transference of reputation through the 'rubbing off' of an older sibling's reputation indicates a proximity between siblings that is different to the active help provided by older siblings described in the previous section as it is a wholly unintended consequence of the sibling relationship and one over which young people have little control. Again the data indicate it is birth-order specific and reputation tends to transfer from older to younger siblings, though this time the burden of this inequality in exchange is felt more often by younger siblings who may be advantaged or disadvantaged as a result. The evidential nature of relatedness between siblings, who may be obviously related due to looking alike or sharing a surname, means that siblings often experience a particularly 'sticky' sort of relational proximity that can carry over into the context of school and cannot be wilfully 'shaken off', bringing a young person's sibling into their everyday school experiences even if they are not physically together at the same school at the same time. This public 'rubbing off' of characteristics from one sibling to another is likely to impact upon their experiences of school in terms of their friendships and relationships with teachers and [iii] as well as implicating their perceptions of their own talents and capabilities more generally. Thus, the relational - and often genetic - proximities that have the effect of the 'rubbing off' of traits between siblings are imposed externally, in the reactions of others, and are more constraining and less agentic than the proximities implicated by normative scripts about obligations pertaining to sibling roles which are negotiated by young people within their relationships.

Temporal and domestic proximities: Siblings as a 'foil'
Watching an older sibling progress through the education system can have a significant impact upon the ways young people conceptualise themselves at school. Observing an older sibling face important moments, make choices and progress through education enabled many young people in the sample to better imagine what experiences, such as attending university, might be like for them. The sibling relationship (particularly when siblings have grown up in the same household) offers a proximity not usually present in other social relationships (such as with older peers) in that the longevity of the sibling relationship and the day-to-day nature of observations and conversations mean that knowledge of a sibling's experience can 'soak in' over time. Even participants who had not directly asked their older siblings

for advice (though many had) had a clear sense of what they thought things had been like for them. These impressions are constructed relationally within the context of the family and the dynamics of this have been discussed elsewhere (Davies 2015).

Older siblings did not have to be socially or academically 'successful' at school to be useful. Some young people explicitly reflected upon how observations of their older siblings' behaviour had motivated them to change their own attitude to their schooling so as to secure a different outcome. These young people were often able to piece together their knowledge of their sibling's school career at various points, identifying causal factors as to their sibling's perceived level of success or failure. Take the following comment by Aiden about his older sister and how his perceptions of her struggles with studying and the subsequent pay-off of her hard work have affected the way he approaches his own onerous school work:

> When she was trying to get into university, I know how hard it is cos she was getting annoyed and then the work paid off. So I'll be like, 'yeah, I'm doing a lot of work. I don't like it, but it might pay off for me'.
> (year 8, Romsbridge School)

Cameron Simmonds (year 10, Highfields School)[iv] also considered his own actions at school in light of his older brothers' trajectories, both of whom were said by teachers to have succumbed to what they termed 'The Simmonds' Downfall at Year Nine'. The teachers' assumption was that Cameron would follow the same trajectory and start to flounder when he reached year 9. Cameron interpreted the narrative of 'The Simmonds' Downfall' as an incentive to act differently and break the pattern stating, 'I just wanted to prove 'em wrong'. The way Cameron discussed his observations of the outcome of his brothers' school experiences, relating this to his own attempts to secure a different outcome for himself, indicates his longitudinal vantage point as a younger sibling and the relational way he makes sense of his own school self:

> My oldest brother was a lot like me; he did his work, he just proper got along with his work and then about year nine he started mixing with the wrong crowd, like I haven't done, and he started going off his work and just messing about… He missed, like the first two years of college because he was working and was a mess… He messed up pretty much but then now he's back on track, he's got a part-time job and he's at college… But my other brother, he's got an apprenticeship. He got, he did pretty much exactly the same as him… but he hasn't decided to go to college.

The chronology of the formation of this narrative is significant. Although Cameron tells the story in 'chronological order' starting with how his brothers behaved in their early secondary school years, explaining what happened at year nine and concluding with the 'outcome' of the story (what they are doing now), it is likely that he has pieced the narrative together in hindsight, with his memories of what his brothers were like at school formed through narratives created by his teachers and parents. This is alluded to below as Cameron uses his structural position as the youngest sibling, and particularly his distance from his brothers in age, to make sense of why he has been able to avoid succumbing to 'The Simmonds' Downfall at Year Nine':

> I think it's the middle one kinda copies the older one cos they're pretty close ages, they're kind of, they're practically the same year, they go through the same stuff. But me, cos I didn't really go to school with either of them... I didn't copy anything they did, I didn't know what they got up to at school. I knew to an extent what they got up to in school but other than that I didn't know so I was totally different because I never got to see what they were like. And I didn't wanna know what they were like.

Although here Cameron is explaining that he is different from his brothers because he did not know much about their school selves, it is clear from the earlier extract that in fact he is also different because he *does* know and his knowledge is of a narrative of how failure occurs which Cameron uses as a foil now.

Most younger siblings in the sample spoke of imagining their future in relation to an older sibling in terms of wishing to replicate success. Some however, like Cameron, talked more in terms of learning from mistakes. Thus, through their position as the youngest sibling, young people are sometimes able to use the hindsight acquired vicariously through piecing together the causes of older siblings' educational outcomes, in order to gain foresight (an ability to predict their own future trajectory and alter their behaviour accordingly).

This acquisition of both hindsight and foresight is brought about by the temporal and domestic proximities experienced by many siblings who grow up together in the same household and can help younger siblings to orientate themselves successfully towards their future educational transitions and perform well in the classroom. Older siblings can provide a 'route map' to adulthood, acting as a guide for younger siblings in identifying and negotiating phases of their educational careers and this 'route map' can be accessed by younger siblings vicariously, regardless of the 'quality' of the relationship or the intentions of their older sibling. Furthermore, the influence of Cameron's significantly older brothers demonstrates the lasting stickiness of siblingship in the context of education. Of course it is also possible for older siblings to gain foresight and hindsight from younger siblings who, for example, might inspire them to apply to, or critique the value of, university or to re-sit exams (Heath, Fuller and Johnston 2010). Crucially, this paper demonstrates that siblings are not just another form of influence to be considered alongside that of friends or family more generally but rather that they offer a particular temporal and domestic proximity which 'sticks' with young people, even if they do not physically attend the same school at the same time.

Conclusion

This article has addressed an omission in current understandings of young people's experiences of and orientations towards education by demonstrating the significance of sibling relationships in shaping their schooling. This is important because siblings influence young people's educational journeys in profound ways and I have argued that siblingship is characterised by proximities which make the influence of siblings distinct from that of other relationships. Following Smart (2007) it has been proposed that these proximities are 'sticky' in the sense that they 'follow' young people as they move between the contexts of home and school and through time as they progress through the education system. This 'stickiness' also means that the influence of

siblings cannot easily be 'shaken off', remaining important regardless of the nature of the sibling relationship. The paper has argued that sibling relationships are also characterised by proximities in the sense that they can be 'near' enough to be influential even if siblings are not physically at school together. It has been demonstrated that siblings can influence one another through social norms about what they *ought* to do for one another, resulting in older siblings often offering support to younger brothers or sisters at school. It has also been shown how other people can bring siblings into close proximity through the forming of assumptions about their relatedness. These assumptions are tied up with resemblances between siblings which often have an evidential nature and, in highlighting how these physical traits affect the ways siblings are perceived and treated, the paper brings an understanding of the corporeality of siblingship to relational conceptualisations of education. We have also seen how siblings are proximate in the literal sense of growing up physically close to one another, learning from one another's experiences.

The small number of studies that have looked at the role of siblings in young people's educational journeys have largely conceptualised these relationships as providers of social capital, focusing on the advantages that siblings can bring to one another. This paper has illustrated the complexities of the influence of siblings, indicating ways siblings can be advantageous in terms of helping young people to orientate themselves appropriately towards the temporality of the UK education system and in terms of the provision of day-to-day support as well as disadvantageous, in terms of the 'rubbing off' of negative reputations and the ambivalence experienced by older siblings responsible for the provision of help. Smart's notion of embeddedness as 'neither a good nor a bad quality' (2007:45) captures these complexities, accounting for how the proximities associated with being or having a brother or sister can have a range of positive and negative consequences at school. It is also important to consider contradictions in the ways sibling relationships are lived and perceived in different spaces with the more formal public space of school denoting a sense of obligation between siblings whilst also being a space where young people may seek to distance themselves from their brothers and sisters. This paper has highlighted how the informal aspects of sibling relationships in the home can spill over into the institutional and formal space of school.

A key feature of the 'sticky' proximities between siblings is that older siblings exert more influence on their younger siblings than vice versa be that through social support, the 'rubbing off' of reputation or a longitudinal vantage point for viewing one's educational journey. This does not mean that birth order positions should be understood as static or prescribed. Indeed, Punch (2005) emphasises fluidity in her study of siblingship where interviews with children in their homes highlighted the negotiated nature and changeable experiences of being the youngest, middle or oldest sibling. Rather, the organisation of school by age places older siblings in a unique position of influence and the focus upon education in this study captures a particular life course moment, likely encouraging participants to contemplate their sibling relationships in terms of age. The older siblings who participated, or who were mentioned by participants, had had more time in secondary education to accumulate knowledge and experience than their younger brothers and sisters and, although

younger siblings may not be able to reciprocate the transference of support and knowledge at this moment in time, they may be able to do so in the future. Furthermore, birth order is often far from straightforward and many young people who took part in the study had complex configurations of full, half and step siblings meaning their birth order position changed both throughout their life course as well as when traversing multiple parental homes. Of course, there are also cultural and ethnic differences in the ways sibling relationships are conceptualised and practiced (see for example Chamberlain (1999) on siblingship in the Caribbean and Song (1997) on British Chinese siblings) and these complexities implicate the gendered nature of sibling roles. Whilst there has not been space to fully explore the interactions between social class and sibling influences, the schools and youth clubs attended by participants hint at the social locations of young people in the sample and it has been demonstrated how the experience of siblingship and its reputational implications are mediated by young people's economic and class-based circumstances.

In emphasising sibling relationships it is important not to neglect the myriad of other relational influences that affect young people's educational experiences and trajectories. Indeed, siblings are often implicated in each other's friendship groups and sibling relationships and identities themselves are constructed within the politics of wider familial networks (Davies 2015). However, there is also something unique about sibling relationships, which have not received the same level of attention within the sociologies of education and of family as other key relationships such as with parents and friends. This paper has indicated how the relational and temporal 'sticky' proximities characterising many sibling relationships means they can affect young people's educational journeys in profound ways.

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[i] The data point to the theoretical significance of siblingship and are thus applicable beyond the temporal and regional context of the study.

[ii] UK Secondary Education covers years 7-11 (age 11-15).

[iii] Many teachers who I met during the course of the research spoke of making assumptions about resemblances between siblings.

[iv] Cameron is white British and from a lower middle class family.