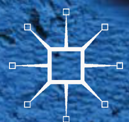
EDUCATION AND WORKING-CLASS YOUTH

Reshaping the Politics of Inclusion

Edited by Robin Simmons *and* John Smyth



Education and Working-Class Youth

"Reshaping the educational furnace is a timely and significant edited collection. It addresses one of the most persistent and protracted problems facing education today, that is, the cultural processes of advantaging and disadvantaging of different classes of students. From a range of perspectives, the contributing authors confront the ways in which schools have failed some of the most vulnerable and marginalised young people in society through a range of unfriendly and demeaning experiences. However, at the same time the book captures a sense of hope and optimism of what schooling might be. This involves a rejection of deficit thinking about young people and their backgrounds, a sophisticated analysis of class and a rethinking of the 'culture,' 'pedagogy' and 'structure' of schooling. This book is essential reading for policymakers, educators and community activists concerned with democracy and social justice."

—Barry Down, *City of Rockingham Chair in Education, Murdoch University, Australia*

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—Tracy Shildrick, *Head of Sociology, Newcastle University, UK*

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Editors

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This book is dedicated to Brenda Simmons, 1935–2018.

Preface

Class is of those words that it is considered impolite to talk about publicly—nowadays we all like to see ourselves as being fair-minded, enlightened, egalitarian and inclusive. Few of us openly admit to relishing the idea of social cleavages. This book profoundly argues otherwise—namely, that class is very much alive and is deeply sutured into the structure of our societies. When class is coupled with education, then its distorting effects become glaringly apparent. The framing argument of this book is that social class has a deforming effect when it is worked through educationally, and it is working-class youth who feel the effects the most.

Through our choice of the cover image for this book, we try to give a visual inspiration of where we see this book as heading. Along with our authors, we unapologetically portray education as a kind of social and emotional cauldron, or furnace, in which young people and their lives are continually being shaped and remade—sometimes for the better, but sadly many young people have diminished futures because of the way they are treated educationally.

Using a broadly 'relational' approach to class, the various contributors to this book argue that education is a social institution that is

heavily slanted in favour of the already advantaged to the detriment of young people from working-class backgrounds. However, because of the uniquely relational nature of education, the book argues that the social structures of education can be changed for those young people currently being excluded from the benefits of education, by adopting forms of education that positively affirm the cultures and backgrounds that all young people bring with them to schools, universities and other educational institutions—including those from the working classes.

The underpinning theme of this book is unquestionably one of critical hope and the positive assertion that education and society can be reformed and reshaped in ways that address the interests of working-class youth—by regarding education as a site for *reshaping the politics of inclusion*.

Huddersfield, UK Robin Simmons
2018 John Smyth

Contents

Where Is Class in the Analysis of Working-Class Education? 1
John Smyth and Robin Simmons

Revisiting the 'Zombie Stalking English Schools': The Continuing Failure to Embrace Social Class in Working-Class Education 29
Diane Reay

Counternarratives to Neoliberal Aspirations: White Working-Class Boys' Practices of Value-Constitution in Formal Education 55
Garth Stahl

Performance, Choice and Social Class: Theorising Inequalities in Educational Opportunity 79
Ron Thompson

"A Chance to Talk Like This": Gender, Education, and Social Haunting in a UK Coalfield 105
N. Geoffrey Bright

The Re-composition of Class Relations: Neoliberalism, Precariousness, Youth and Education 131
James Avis

An Intersectional Approach to Classed Injustices in Education: Gender, Ethnicity, 'Heavy' Funds of Knowledge and Working-Class Students' Struggles for Intelligibility in the Classroom 155
Louise Archer

Education, Social Class and Marxist Theory 181
Dave Hill

Beyond the Vocational/Academic Divide: Inclusion Through Craftwork and Embodied Learning 209
Terry Hyland

Education and Social Class: How Did We Get to This and What Needs to Change? 233
Robin Simmons and John Smyth

Index 261

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Where Is Class in the Analysis of Working-Class Education?

John Smyth and Robin Simmons

Background

Social class is back on the political agenda and with a vengeance we could hardly have imagined. With Brexit in the UK, a resurgent Donald Trump elected as US president, and the rise of populist radical right-wing parties in Australia, France, Netherlands, and Austria, what we are witnessing is a politics of disruption. The victims of neoliberalism and the losers of globalisation—white poorly educated, rural and urban working classes who feel they have lost their national identities and been relegated to the economic margins—are speaking back to the political elites who they regard as having betrayed them. These 'deplorables' as Hillary Clinton labelled them—or fragments of the working classes—variously labelled as dole

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bludgers, welfare cheats, lazy, indolent and feckless—are loudly proclaiming that the trickle-down economics of neoliberalism has left them stranded and abandoned.

This has huge implications for the way we need to rethink education for working-class children, especially the white working classes. We can no longer ignore the reality that schools work for middle-class children, but largely ignore working-class children, or at best assume that they will somehow morph into compliant facsimiles of their middle-class counterparts.

At the outset, we should be clear about what we are trying to do in providing an opening move for this book. We are trying not to engage in what Cowie and Heathcott (2003) refer to as 'smokestack nostalgia' (p. 15), but rather as Strangleman (2008) put it, to instead 'recognise value within working-class culture without falling into an uncritical nostalgia nor at the same time engaging in a critique which denies any value in such communities' (p. 18). This will mean going beyond portraying the working class 'as being an entirely passive victim of deindustrialization and globalization' (p. 17) and looking instead at what Zandy (2001) calls 'what we hold in common' so as to develop the 'intellectual elasticity' with which to envisage what it would look like to place 'the history and culture of working-class people…at the center of educational practices' (p. xiii).

Here we endorse Walkerdine's (2011) view of class as constituting experience that is 'deeply embedded, affectively lived and performed within specific practices' (p. 258). In other words, class is not fixed or defined by category, but rather something that is experienced through relationships. What is refreshing about this approach is the way Walkerdine (2011) invokes Guattari's (2000) use of the notion of 'existential territories' to refer to the process we use to 'mark out ourselves, our space…[and] the boundaries of our affective bodies' (p. 260). The merit of focussing on 'affect', or how 'we experience our existence' (p. 261) through time and space, is that it enables us to 'move…forward and into the new rather than getting stuck in the old' (p. 261)—something that is crucial when talking about the fluid nature of the working class, and what this means for the education of working-class children. The optimistic aspect here

resides in 'splitting off' the 'painful realities' (p. 263)—of what neoliberalism has done to traditional working-class jobs—and imagining alternative futures. This kind splitting off, enables the creation of some distance and safety 'from the pain and terror of separation', which is to say, 'the painful world of reality' (p. 262).

The key to educational change, especially in the turbulent times of upheaval we are now experiencing lies, Walkerdine (2013) argues, in working out 'how to support change in the face of anxiety'—that is to say, 'how do we allow [young working-class people] to feel safe enough to harness their imagination to move into something new?' (p. 761). The message in respect of working-class youth whose families have suffered dramatically as a result of global restructuring, is that new educational scenarios will only be able to be imagined into existence, if the conditions are created in which these young people feel they can safely move forward.

Working-Class Education…More than a Middle Class 'Makeover'

Guardian UK journalist Suzanne Moore (2014) made a relevant point to our argument by contending that 'working–class kids shouldn't have to be more middle class to "fit in"'. She put it in these terms:

> Wanna get on in life? Then welcome to Class Makeover, where we take an able but sadly working-class person and teach them how to feel comfortable in middle-class environments. You need to "fit in" because, ultimately, success is about appearing middle class. Or you will frighten the ponies.

Moore's (2014) point is that to succeed in the dominant middle-class institutional culture requires a process of adaptation involving the working class making itself into something other than what they are. That is to say, it requires taking on the assumption that 'working-class culture [really] doesn't exist' (Moore 2014), and that in life generally working-class 'kids need to learn their place and simply "fit in"':

> Children from poorer homes need to change how they eat and dress and conduct themselves so they can feel comfortable in middle-class settings such as restaurants and theatres.

The expectation then is that for working-class children to succeed, they have to commit class suicide and accept that 'middle class culture is just better than working class culture' (Moore 2014). But, this is not unproblematic:

> Life as a class imposter is tricky. Change your accent, tone down your clothes and lie; exude self-belief even as you are no longer who you were.

To take Moore's notion of class as it might be applied to schooling, involves seeing success at school as involving a process of 'fitting in'—or being 'fitted out'—so as to accommodate to the invisible cultural norms that constitute schooling. When we say that schooling is a middle-class notion we take this to mean that constructing a successful learning identity involves accepting class as being 'a complex structure of feeling with networks of interactions as well as structural dimensions' (Back 2015, p. 833), which is to say, according to a particular set of norms involving:

- an emphasis on competitive individualism rather than collaboration or solidarity;
- a capacity and preparedness to place matters of abstraction above practicality;
- an acceptance of delayed or deferred gratification that effort invested now, will bring future rewards;
- rule-following and compliance involving a deference to authority;
- a deferral of immediacy in favour of an orientation to the future.

In other words, schooling is something that 'is lived' according to a set of largely 'unspoken realities' (Back 2015, p. 833) deeply embedded in the way social class is experienced differentially.

In a departure from the usual way of envisaging and talking about working-class youth and schooling that invariably labels, categorizes and stigmatizes them in individual, pathological, and deficit terms—from

backgrounds that don't value education; contexts that do not provide positive role models; an absence of aspiration; and generally lacking the skills and intellect to learn and that catapults them into being labelled as 'troublesome'—we want to begin from a different place. We want to start by placing the focus *on the school* rather than defects in the students, their backgrounds or cultures. This reflects our view that it is the school that should be fitting (and accommodating) the working-class students, rather than vice versa. We want to follow what Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) in *The good high school: portraits of character and culture* called 'institutional goodness—a broader, more generous perspective than the one commonly used in the literature on "effective" schools' (p. 23).

Lawrence-Lightfoot argued that:

> "Goodness" is a much more complicated notion that refers to what some social scientists describe as the school's "ethos", not discrete elements. It refers to the mixture of parts that produce a whole. The whole includes people, structures, relationships, ideology, goals, intellectual substance, motivation and will. (p. 23)

It is worth dwelling for a while on why Lawrence-Lightfoot believes in focusing on 'goodness' rather than 'pathology' or 'failure' (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis 1997, p. 8), and how this might be a more fruitful way for us to re-think the relationship between working-class children and schooling.

The primary reason social scientists tend to think in terms of 'disease' rather than 'health' (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis 1997, p. 8), is that identifying 'things that do not work, or work poorly' is considered to be an important and laudable 'prelude' (p. 8) to finding ways of fixing what is broken. The problem with this approach, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) argue, is that this 'relentless scrutiny on failure has many unfortunate and distorting results' (p. 9). This distortion has four aspects. First, a magnification of what is wrong deflects attention away from 'evidence of promise and potential' (p. 9). Second, continuing to focus only on failure can result in 'cynicism and inaction. If things are this bad…then why try to do anything about it?' (p. 9). Third, exclusive attention to only the negative 'bleeds into blaming the victim' or as Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) say:

> Rather than a complicated analysis of the coexistence of strengths and vulnerabilities…the locus of blame tends to rest on the shoulders of those most victimised and the least powerful in defining their identity or shaping their fate. (p. 9)

Fourth, 'the focus on pathology seems to encourage facile inquiry' (p. 9). In other words, it encourages shallow analysis and quick-fix solutions, when what is really required is a much more 'complicated approach' that leads to 'path-breaking paradigms' (p. 9) with which to arrive at better understandings.

Without romanticizing or reifying it, we need to try and ascertain the qualities of 'goodness' that inhere in the working-class psyche, so we can see how schools might better connect to the lives of working-class children. In Charlesworth's (2000) terms, we need to get inside 'working-class experience' to understand it. Another way to put this is in terms of the question: what are the 'psychic' (Reay 2005) qualities or dispositions of working-classness that need to be understood to bring 'goodness' to schooling for working-class children? What we are really arguing here, consistent with Raymond Williams' (1989) *Resources of hope*, is that we are not interested in understanding working-class reality as an end in itself, but rather as a process of transforming the reality of schools and the experience of education for working-class children. Stepping around the difficulties of what constitutes working-class culture, as indicated by Williams (1957), we see some merit in the cultural practices that constitute the 'psychic dispositions' that Allen (2013) argues 'are increasingly central to shaping an individual's position in social space' (p. 4). As Reay (2005) points out in her analysis of the 'psychic landscape of class', the notion of the 'psychic' can be used as a way of bringing to life aspects that are deeply rooted in 'fear and shame' (p. 914). As Hoffman (1957) notes, the origin of the term 'psychic economy' (p. 605) is a Freudian idea, deriving from his 1919 essay 'the uncanny', that advances the psychoanalytic notion that nothing is ever totally lost or forgotten—in contexts of dread or fear, there is a reversion to the familiar.

While building on these ideas, our argument is somewhat different: if we can begin to identify the ensemble of psychic and cultural dispositions that are culturally embedded in working-class life, even though

these may not be consciously aware to those to whom they apply, then we may have begun to make some progress towards unpicking the 'sociological entanglements' (Allen 2013, p. 4) that are crucial to improving the educational experiences of working-class children.

Towards an Ensemble of Affective Working-Class Dispositions

Another helpful way of framing what we are doing here is trying to map or scope out what Taylor (2012) calls the 'affective geographies' (pp. 47–71) of the working class—tracing the invisible forces that constitute the 'sense of belonging or rupturing' that acts as 'a binding straightjacket' or a 'restriction on getting ahead', or conversely acting 'to shore up a sense of comfortable ease or belonging' (Taylor 2012, p. 1) that operates 'to make people and places "fit" in changing versions of then and now, present and future' (p. 1).

Honesty

This means being true to the authentic self; not afflicted or posing as something they are not, or cannot aspire to be. To take an example, referring of the way multiculturalism is often witnessed in these communities, at least in working-class contexts in Australia, Peel (2003) says that while we 'must heed their complexities' in these very complicated settings, 'expressions of intolerance neither define these communities nor provide the main threads in the local story. The best way to describe this is to say that these suburbs manifest a practical tolerance that the people who built it find unremarkable' (p. 152).

Directness

Being direct is a working-class norm that Lubrano (2004) says is sometimes seen as 'straight talking' (p. 10). It takes the form of 'resolving conflicts head-on and speaking your mind' (p. 10). But as he says, the

working class soon learn that 'straight talk' does not cut the mustard in schools, 'where people rarely say what they mean' (p. 10). Lubrano (2004), a 'class migrant' (Williams 2010, p. 16) as a bricklayer's son, says that 'from an early age middle-class people, learn how to get along, using diplomacy, nuance, and politics to grab what they need. It is as though they are following a set of rules laid out in a manual that blue-collar families never had the chance to read' (p. 9).

Authenticity

As McKenzie (2015) puts it, authenticity amounts to 'being valued'; 'Being authentic to the neighbourhood, being known and fitting in'… being known as 'a person of value' in the place that you lived, and 'to whom and how you were connected' (p. 205). A 'true self', Griffiths (1995) argues, involves a form of 'authenticity' in which transformation of the self 'is possible, but which acknowledges that such transformation starts with what is already there' (p. 185).

Dignity

This is a quality of working-classness that is rooted in work 'based in an ethical life beyond consumption' (Charlesworth 2000, p. 158).

Having a 'Practical Philosophy'

This amounts to the idea that life is to be 'gotten on with and not dwelt upon' (Charlesworth 2000, p. 152).

A Tendency to Self-blame

This can be seen as a working-class attribute, for example, when things are not working out they 'see it as their fault, as a personal failing… rather than as part of a general social condition' (Charlesworth 2000, p. 151). That is they 'present themselves in terms of the limitations they have learnt are their own' (p. 151).

Placeness or Attachment to Immediate Locality

Studdert (2006) refers this as 'micro-sociality', or the 'combination of small everyday actions' that amount to 'communal being-ness' and that can both enable or constrain 'community enhancement' (Walkerdine and Studdert 2014, p. 1). Behind this is a 'strong sense of historical memory' (p. 4) that often characterises working-class communities. This can work positively in the case of 'supporting the enhancement of what exists' (p. 8) rather than regarding it as pathological and needing to be 'remade' (p. 8). In this sense, 'micro-sociality' can amount to feelings of 'powerlessness' as to where to go to get action, in which case it is acting as a 'silent barrier' (p. 4) producing paralysis. Placeness can manifest itself, for example, in working-class communities defending their history and wearing long-term derogatory labels assigned to them, such as 'westies' (see Smyth and McInerney 2014, pp. 79–80), as a badge of honour. In a working-class community I researched, established in the 1950s, government tried to rename the community to gloss over what it saw as it's unsavoury history, and it was vigorously rejected by the community, explained by one informant because of 'the social fabric that has built up [here] over the years' (Smyth et al. 2008, p. 44). These may be communities that are 'gone' in the sense of having been undone by globalization, but they are not 'forgotten' (see also Peel 1995); they can be feisty communities.

Immediacy

Charlesworth (2000) described the working class as prioritising 'problems of the immediately pressing future' (p. 153). In reviewing books by Charlesworth (2000), Munt (2000), and Milner (1999) on the working class which he entitles 'a welcome back to the working class', Edensor (2000) phrases this disposition of 'making do' in terms of the way working-class lives are organised around ways of making do and 'getting by' (p. 808). Edensor notes that this pragmatic reality is becoming 'increasingly irrelevant in a world shaped by insecurity, a low-wage economy, and new regimes of

accountability' (p. 809). The collapse of institutional spaces in which such identities can be valued, he says, has meant, borrowing from the title of Stewart's (1996) book, that working-class people are left stuck in a "space by the side of the road" (p. 809).

Solidarity or Community

This disposition amounts to 'a profound sense of the common experience of their living conditions' (Charlesworth 2000, p. 154). Williams (1957) gives as an example the middle-class practice of 'substitution of service for the practice of [bourgeois] competition' (p. 31). He points to the English middle-class habit of sending their children to boarding school. 'The immediate family is to some degree broken up… to prepare certain of its members for service to something which is thought of as larger and more important' (p. 31). By contrast, the English working class has a 'deep distrust of such procedures' (p. 31). Invoking the work of Hoggart, he says that, for them 'working-class life is the product of the primary affections and allegiances, in family and neighbourhood, which make up the immediate substance of life' (p. 31). The 'political effect' is that for the working-class 'family, neighbourhood and society must be satisfactory, be continuous and co-extensive; none can be good if it involves a sacrifice or weakening of the others' (p. 31). However, as Walkerdine (2011) argues, the demand that working-class children re-fashion themselves in the image of their middle-class peers, misunderstands the way aspiration is interpreted in working-class communities. The idea of 'aspiration, understood as the desire to better oneself', could be interpreted in working-class communities as 'antithetical to mutuality and collaboration, which stressed mutual strength and support through sameness', indeed it could even be seen as form of 'disloyalty' (p. 256). The problem with the extant view of aspiration is that it is 'a concept which is assumed, rather than discovered' (Walkerdine 2011, p. 257). For Walkerdine (2011) the problem with aspirational pathways for working-class children that deploy a resilience model about how to 'escape' to a middle-class life, is that such views are heavily predicated on the individual success stories of how some young people

are able to overcome blockages. What remain untouched with this approach are the structures that continue to keep countless number of working-class young people trapped.

As Walkerdine (2014) put it elsewhere about the de-industrialised south Wales Steeltown she studied in which 'nothing in the working environment could be understood as stable', what held the community together was 'a closely knit fabric of community in which people looked after each other, cared for each other in the absence of resources' (p. 4).

A Sense of the 'Public Sphere'

Historically, working-class communities have tended to be places that have 'built a well-developed non-state public sphere with working-men's clubs, institutes, libraries and many other support organizations' (Walkerdine and Jimenez 2012, p. 190). The question here for schools in working-class communities is, given the history of the things that have been lost, destroyed or re-configured: 'How can community link back with its own creative history and with it reach forward into a new future?' (p. 190). In other words, the challenge is how to work educationally with working-class children to understand what has been lost, in order to help construct a positive and safe alternative future for them?

Innovativeness

This translates as being 'doing' people that get things done and often with limited resources, and in gaining satisfaction in getting a job done. Walkerdine's (Walkerdine and Jimenez 2012, p. 191) study of Steeltown in south Wales lead her to conclude that one of the most significant qualities working class people possess is 'creativity', pointing to the way the people of Steeltown had created a 'rock' music school. Central to this was the way this community had begun 'to harness the creativity that they undoubtedly have to create the support for each other that they need' (p. 191). She says what this illustrates is that 'The inhabitants have found a way to work together to create something that has the potential to bring them together and that binds them in new ways' (p. 191).

While this may not bring new employment the benefit, she argues, resides in 'the spirit and creativity of the people that seems to me to offer most hope in times in which it is all too easy to sink into despair' (p. 191).

In his interviews of 300 working-class people in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, Mark Peel (2003) refers to this as 'a hidden history of creativity and imagination, or activism initiated by the residents of these suburbs and nourished by compassionate careful outsiders who listened to them, and as far as possible, asked them to lead the way' (p. 142). This amounted to an acknowledgement of the 'recognised capacity and the imaginativeness of people who were otherwise so easily discarded' (p. 142).

An Affective Geography of Working-Class Schooling

Speaking of the way space and place are neither neutral nor innocent, Marxist geographer Doreen Massey (2004) argues that 'place' is an idea that is 'grounded' in the way 'everyday' lives are lived (p. 8). What this means, Massey says, it that identities are 'relational' in the sense of 'not [being] rooted or static, but mutable and ongoing' (p. 5). Despite the fact that we live in a rapidly globalizing world, 'global phenomena' are still profoundly 'grounded' in the 'local'. This has important implications for what Massey calls 'Russian doll care and responsibility' (p. 9)—a kind of 'nested' set of relationships, in which:

> First there is 'home', then perhaps place or locality, then nation, and so on. There is a kind of accepted understanding that we care first for, and have our responsibilities towards those nearest to us…[I]t is utterly territorial, and it proceeds outwards from the small and near at hand. (p. 9)

Envisaged in this way, schools are 'evocative' (Massey 2004, p. 8) and 'emotional' places (Kenway and Youdell 2011) in which young people do emotional work in constructing identities for themselves. There is thus an 'evocative vocabulary' (Massey 2004, p. 8) around who feels a

sense of belonging and connectedness, who feels they are 'insiders' and have 'rights', and who feels unwelcome, out of place, and alien. These are political and territorial questions, and in this respect, schools can be welcoming as well as hostile places.

If we want to re-think what the politics of educational inclusion might look like for working class youth, then we need to go beyond what Peck (2012) called the *Constructions of neoliberal reason* which is the dominant view of schooling, and look to what Clough (2007) refers to as *The affective turn*. The notion of 'affect' is notoriously difficult to define. Even though it can involve an exploration of feelings and 'basic emotions' like 'sadness, anger, fear, surprise, disgust and happiness', even notions like 'victimhood' (Wetherell 2012, p. 3), generally these are considered 'too narrow and restrictive' (p. 3) to cast any new light, and the deeper level required involves an attempt to 'understand how people are moved, and what attracts them..[to]repetitions, pains and pleasures, feelings and memories' (p. 2). Coming to grips with the notion of affect can involve an 'epistemological upheaval, marking a moment of paradigm change' (p 3). Envisaged in this way, Wetherell (2012) says, 'Attention is thrown onto becoming [and] potential…in preference to the already formed…' (p. 3), that is the usual approach of the social sciences.

The 'way in' and 'way forward' for Wetherell (2012, pp. 3–4), is a pragmatic approach she calls 'affective practice' (p. 4)—a term borrowed from Walkerdine (2010) even though 'she doesn't elaborate a practice account' (p. 23)—but that focuses on 'the emotional as it appears in social life [and as this applies]…to what participants do' (p. 4). For Wetherell, affective practice involves 'embodied meaning making' (p. 4). Building on Bourdieu, she argues that 'dispositions, preferences, tastes, natural attitudes, skills and standpoints', become a 'guide for future conduct' in the way in which 'the past becomes carried forward, flexibly but inexorably, into the future' (p. 105).

Where affect becomes relevant to class and schooling is in the way feelings are 'lived at the level of the gut' (Wetherell 2012, p. 111), or as Reay (2005) terms it 'the psychic economy', and the way affect 'follows, regulates and composes social relations and social values', as well as the construction of 'hinterlands of exclusion' (Wetherell 2012, p. 111). The centrepiece here for our construction of an affective geography of

working-class schooling lies in what Skeggs (2004) argues is the middle class notion of 'self-interested…possessive individualism' (p. 186) that underpins schooling. The way Wetherell (2012) summarizes it, the middle class marks itself out 'by a deep-seated commitment to self-improvement, deferred gratification and accruing more and more "property in the self"' (p. 111). Skeggs (2004) calls this 'self-authorizing' a form of 'appropriation', and when applied to schooling, in its crudest form, it amounts to the exercise of a form of 'entitlement' (p. 153). If we envisage schools as a form of culture, then the working class considers schools differently—they do not present as having the same sense of 'entitled selves' and its 'subsequent entitlements, projections and legitimations' as do the middle class (p. 153). For example:

> These ambitions are particularly evident in middle class-parents' practices in relation to their children who are encouraged to acquire a wide range of qualifications, forms of knowledge and experiences found in music lessons, gap years, private school education and multiple 'A Level' qualifications which can then be 'banked', setting them up for life. This acquisitive attitude is taken to be normal and moral, used as the standard for judging other social groups. (Wetherell 2012, p. 111)

Elsewhere, such practices have been labelled 'concerted cultivation' (Lareau 2003, p. 2; Vincent and Maxwell 2016), which as Reay et al. (2011) point out, amounts to a form of 'playing the educational market and capitalising on educational investments' to ensure that in the 'competition' middle class parents are able 'to generate a greater profit than other parents' (p. 163) so as to advance the life chances of their progeny.

The corollary to this is the construction of children of the middle class as therefore having a… 'brightness' about them, as a marker of their success, to be used as a kind of 'affective defence' with which to explain their success as being due to their 'specialness' (Wetherell 2012, p. 112).

Our question, therefore, is; given the ensemble of dispositions we alluded to earlier, that seem to constitute a reasonably robust and dynamic portrayal of the realities of working-class life, what does this

mean for the way schools need to re-invent themselves around affect and emotions, so as to fit the lives of working class students? We can make a number of observations in this respect.

The first and paramount point here is that the school needs to reposition itself so as to 'fit' the student, rather than trying to make what are often perceived to be recalcitrant working-class students more middle class and malleable. As Reay (2001) reminds us, 'working-class relationships to education cannot be understood in isolation from middle-class subjectivities' (p. 333). Over 40 years ago, Bernstein (1973) alerted us to the importance of this when he said that:

> We must ensure that the material conditions of the schools we offer, their values, social organisation, forms of control and pedagogy, the skills and sensitivities of the teachers are refracted through an understanding of the culture the children bring to the school. After all, we do no less for the middle-class child. (p. 175)

Thinking of this kind involves acknowledging how the invisible middle-class norms of schooling are constructed and enacted, involving; attendance, adherence to order, compliance to authority, abstraction, conformity, deferred gratification, and investment of effort on the promise of a future return. These values are deeply embedded in the psyche of middle-class students, and are reinforced by family histories, mentalities and sensibilities, and they resonate with middle-class students. For middle-class students who have unwittingly or unknowingly absorbed these mores, they are like fish in water. For working-class students, however, these invisible cues put out by schools are either alien or ones they actively refuse. When this dissonance occurs, we have what Freebody et al. (1995) call 'interactive trouble'—that is to say, the values put out by the school are acquiesced to by middle-class students, but they are encountered as 'barriers to full participation by [other] students' (p. 297). Working-class students mis-read the school because of the confusing messages it puts out, and for its part, the school mis-reads working-class students, labelling them as uneducable, troublesome or simply unprepared to make the effort required. Whatever the proximal

cause, the effect is that working-class students experience the feeling of not belonging, of schools being unwelcoming, or as inhospitable places in which to do identity work.

Interactive trouble can take various forms, according to Freebody et al. (1995). It can be *epistemological trouble* (p. 298)—where working-class students simply do not understand the language registers used by the teacher, with students actually missing factual knowledge presumed by the teacher. It can be *organisational trouble* (p. 300) in that classrooms operate according to codes of conduct such as 'turn taking', which is regarded as form of polite middle-class discourse, but may not be something working-class students are accustomed to. Equally, it can take the form of *reasoning trouble* (p. 302), in the case of the teacher who may ask students where they might find the meaning of a word, expecting a textual response, but who instead is given a response by working-class students reflecting a history of 'buddy-work'. It is not hard to see how a teacher might label this as a faulty form of logic, when in reality it is a response rooted in 'a different set of social circumstances' (p. 302). There is scope too for *pedagogical trouble* (p. 306) where the teacher is operating out of a particular theoretical framework, searching for a sequence of steps as an indication of linguistic competence, but the student who is missing certain information, is providing something quite different. *Relational trouble* (p. 308) occurs when there is moment-by-moment confusion over the instructions to be followed and the criteria by which they will be assessed. Finally, there is a form of interactive trouble that is *stylistic* (p. 309). This emerges from different styles of childrearing—the middle class tend to engage in forms of divergent reading to children along with encouraging them to read alone, followed by questions, that emphasise high-order thinking skills, whereas working-class children are taught to listen, not interrupt, and are asked for more factual recall of information (Rothstein 2004, p. 19). Such forms of interactive trouble are indicative of complex messages and expectations conveyed to students about what is to occur, how students are to respond, and what kind of feedback students will receive—all of which influence who is labelled successful or otherwise.

Lareau (2003) refers to another form of relational trouble in the way the working class is 'distrustful of the school' which takes the form of them feeling 'completely powerless and frustrated' (p. 227) in their interactions with the school. The genesis of this resentment, according to Lareau (2003) resides in the 'continuity or distance between the culture of child rearing at home and the standards encoded in the school' (p. 227). Where middle-class parents express no fear about 'what the school could do to them' (p. 231), this is very different for working-class parents who have had unhappy experiences with a variety of agencies that bear down on them in terms of their deviant childrearing. It seemed for Lareau (2003) that professionals like 'social workers, psychologists, medical doctors…have issued standards of proper child rearing…[and] teachers and administrators in schools have adopted these standards' (p. 232), a process exacerbated for the working class by the fact that schooling is compulsory.

Some of the signifiers of this affective turn, or an affective approach to schooling for working-class youth, would include a number of foci that acknowledge the realities of working-class life, and bringing these into prominence in the way schools are organised and enacted. As Smyth and McInerney (2007) argue, this involves working across the three registers of the school and its community, including 'culture', 'pedagogy' and 'structure' to produce a 'pedagogically engaged school' for working-class young people (p. 200). We will limit ourselves to three examples, by way of illustration, but they are crucial.

- *Focus on place*—as we have seen, the working class has a strong emotional attachment to place, and especially immediate proximity. It makes little sense for schools in working-class communities to ignore the strong attachments working-class youth have to their neighbourhoods, communities and histories by ignoring socio-spatial factors (see Smyth and McInerney 2013). Rather than being erased or ignored, place needs to be accorded prominence in the curriculum, pedagogy and organisation of the school—indeed, we would argue, that it needs to be the most prominent element. There is an extensive

literature on place-based learning (McInerney et al. 2011; Gruenwald and Smith 2007; Smith and Sobel 2010; Somerville et al. 2009; Sobel 2005; Gruenwald 2003, 2005).

Constructing a curriculum that starts with the lives of working-class youth in schools, has numerous merits:

1. It provides a basis upon which to build motivation for learning, because it starts with something young people can relate to, and that has practical immediacy for them.
2. It provides a basis for affirming the worth and value of the lives and communities of working-class youth, in contrast to approaches they might previously have experienced that disparage, belittle, demean, pathologise or ignore their histories.
3. Focussing on the immediacy of the communities and neighbourhoods in which young people live, provides a basis upon which the school can develop deep, meaningful and respectful relationships with communities, something that helps the school to keep these young people connected to learning.
4. Not only does involving the community help to reinforce the message to working-class youth from the school and the community that education is important, it also enables the community to re-invent the relationship they have with an institution that was often less than a happy one in their own education.
5. There can be a richness to the lives of working-class young people that is significantly undervalued, but when used as a basis for more systematic analysis and investigation, enables important connections to be made to 'bigger issues' in the wider world in which they live.
6. Pedagogically, this approach works from the known and familiar to the strange and unknown, and involves important forms of theorising that might otherwise be ignored.

This fits with what Moll et al. (1992) and Gonzales et al. (2004) call the 'funds of knowledge' embodied in households and communities that support the educational goals of the school that help to improve learning. They use the term funds of knowledge to refer to 'those

historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and wellbeing' (Moll et al. 1992, p. 134). As Smyth and McInerney (2007) found in their study of a working-class Australian primary school they called Plainsville, 'there was a view that pedagogical knowledge did not reside exclusively with teachers, and we were constantly reminded about the importance of "bringing the community into the school"' (p. 86). This occurred in several ways—first, by having the students engaged in a range of community projects; and second, by having parents and community members providing sporting, cultural and experiential craft activities in the school (pp. 86–87).

- *Success-oriented learning*—starting by acknowledging the assets that reside in individuals as well as communities, puts out a very different message to that which underscores deficits and continually disparages. These serve only to undermine and discourage. This is not to fail to acknowledge the significant challenges confronting working-class students and communities. However, affirming success and celebrating achievement, provides a more hopeful basis upon which to build further educational experiences. For Smyth and McInerney (2007), this means providing students with 'authentic and informative feedback' on their success in a way that serves to honestly show what has been learned as well as to 'highlight areas for growth and improvement' (p. 203). This is usually coupled with opportunities for students to 'negotiate assessment tasks and to present the products of their learning to their peers, caregivers and members of the community' (p. 203).
- *Aspiring to create a 'relational' school*—one of the pervasive and recurrent themes implicit in the ensemble of working-class dispositions we alluded to earlier, was the primacy of personal relationships. It took many forms, but what has become self-evident is that working-class people place a premium on personal rather than institutional relationships. That is to say, they encounter difficulties with the way institutional relationships and officialdom stigmatize, categorise, and stereotype them in authoritarian ways, because of alleged deficits and the concomitant need to control them (see Smyth et al. 2008, pp. 33, 40, 42).

> Little wonder that working-class communities have difficulties relating to schools and what they represent. Institutionalised relationships, therefore, have to be reworked and supplanted with approaches that have a more human face (see Smyth et al. 2010, 2014, for further discussion on building a 'relational school'). The 'relational school' does this at a number of levels that can be summarised as follows from Smyth and McInerney (2007), using the three reform registers mentioned above:

School culture has an overwhelming focus on 'students having high levels of ownership of their learning', in which 'student voice is actively promoted as part of learning', and there is continuing 'active dialog with the community about the school and its agenda'. While barriers and impediments are recognised, they are not allowed to become reasons for paralysis or apportioning blame. In fact the reverse is the case, with the school and community actively 'engaged in countering deficit view of its students and their families…in developing an inclusive curriculum…' (p. 201).

Pedagogy, teaching and learning in the relational school has teachers deploying 'connectionist pedagogies' (pp. 201–202) making connections to students' lives, backgrounds and aspirations, while presenting them with a meaningful, relevant and rigorous curriculum. A 'socially just curriculum' is pursued in which the animating question foregrounded is 'how are the interests of the least advantaged being advanced in this school?' (p. 202). Learning is 'culturally relevant' in the sense that if the students are not engaging then it is because the school is failing to negotiate a non-hegemonic set of curriculum experiences. The way the relational school views what it is doing is that it is involved in 'capacity building and social capital' (p. 202) so as to invest their students with the capacities to navigate a life beyond school.

School structure, as we might expect in the relational school, endorses the construction of 'teachers as critical and reflective practitioners' involved in debate and contestation about what they are doing based on locally collected evidence. Forms of assessment and reporting are multiple, authentic and informative and focus on areas of 'success', achievement and strengths, and areas for growth and improvement (p. 203). Leadership is 'distributive' in the sense of being based on the

possession of expertise rather than being based on office or hierarchical rank, and can therefore come from anywhere in the school or its community depending on the circumstances. The basis of decision making is 'dialogic' and is informed by 'debate research and informed discussion within the school community' (p. 203).

This discussion sets the book up to address Reay's two questions: 'What would a socially just education system look like?' (2012), and 'How possible is socially just education under neo-liberal capitalism?' (2016). Let us hear what our contributors have to say in the chapters that follow as they engage these questions through a working-class lens!

Structure and Organisation of the Book

In Chapter "Revisiting the 'Zombie Stalking English Schools': The Continuing Failure to Embrace Social Class in Working-Class Education", Diane Reay attempts to untangle various discursive and policy strands which complicate contemporary understandings of social mobility in a post-Brexit Britain riven with feelings of discontent and distrust of 'others'; a UK that is far from united. Through case studies of educationally successful working-class students—including reflections on her own time at university—the chapter examines what education means for the working classes individually and collectively. It tries to develop more nuanced conceptualisations of the relationship between the working classes and the educational system that recognise historical specificities, and the wider social and economic climate. Reay argues that that the actions of the neoliberal state—both in terms of its increasing intervention in educational policy and practice, and its restructuring of social and economic relations more broadly—is deeply damaging both for working-class youth and society in general.

Chapter "Counternarratives to Neoliberal Aspirations: White Working-Class Boys' Practices of Value-Constitution in Formal Education", by Garth Stahl, argues that recent scholarship on social reproduction in UK schooling has focused on the 'raising aspiration rhetoric' which privileges a neoliberal, socially mobile, entrepreneurial self. Such a narrow view of aspiration is, Stahl argues, largely incompatible with traditional

working-class values. While aspirations are influenced by dominant neo-liberal ideologies, working-class students often enact their learner identities through historically-constituted dispositions aligned with solidarist and communal values. As the social mobility rhetoric permeates the social imaginary of the UK, the focus is on how working-class boys *negotiate* the aspiration rhetoric and *construct counter-narratives* in order to constitute themselves as subjects of value in schools where increasingly they feel they have no value.

In Chapter "Performance, Choice and Social Class: Theorising Inequalities in Educational Opportunity", Ron Thompson uses rational action theories to deal with questions of educational inequality, drawing particularly on the work of the sometimes overlooked French sociologist, Raymond Boudon. Thompson outlines our current knowledge about patterns of inequality and then introduces Boudon's distinction between the primary and secondary effects of social stratification—or, in other words, the impact of social class on performance and choice. He then discusses the relative magnitude of these effects, before considering theoretical explanations for their origin. Central to the chapter is an analysis of rational action theories, and the secondary effects which arise largely from the economic and social costs of education, the greater 'distance of travel' required for working-class upward mobility, and the desire of all classes to at least maintain their class position. Thompson concludes with a discussion of the specific role of class in rational action theories, highlighting key elements of the conceptions of class required to fulfil this role.

Chapter ""A Chance to Talk Like This": Gender, Education, and Social Haunting in a UK Coalfield", by Geoff Bright, draws on Avery Gordon's concept of 'social haunting' to examine the dynamics of social class in the former mining village of 'Blackwaters' in north Derbyshire. It draws on ethnographic research to focus on affective aspects at the intersection of class and gender, and attitudes towards, education and community life more generally in the former coal mining communities that were at the front-line of the Great Strike of 1984–1985. The experiences of two groups—young people deemed 'at risk of exclusion', and a group of adult youth and community workers who work with

them—are considered through data gathered during a turbulent period of decline and the final demise of deep coal mining in 2016. The argument is developed that while the 'geography of gender relations' and 'ideology of virility' noted by Massey (1994) as particularly relevant to former coal mining settings has been challenged by social and economic change, both continue to play out in an unfinished, revenant performance of gender that serves to limit the range of individual and community futures imaginable for young people. As an antidote, a critical community practice of 'working with social haunting' is canvassed.

The starting point for Chapter "The Re-composition of Class Relations: Neoliberalism, Precariousness, Youth and Education" by James Avis is a critique of meritocracy. Whilst many leftist analyses seek to move beyond meritocracy by implicating social structures in the reproduction of inequality, Avis argues this can lead to a re-shuffling of social positions rather than a fundamental transformation of social relations. The chapter locates such arguments within a context of financialisation of capital, under the sway of neo-liberalism. It addresses the re-composition of class through a consideration of youth, labour and precariousness, whereby class relations are being restructured—the result of which, it is argued, is that formerly more privileged sections of the young people are now also encountering increased insecurity and precariousness.

Chapter "An Intersectional Approach to Classed Injustices in Education: Gender, Ethnicity, 'Heavy' Funds of Knowledge and Working-Class Students' Struggles for Intelligibility in the Classroom" by Louise Archer examines how identities and inequalities are constructed in education, with a particular focus on working-class children. Using research on science education as the basis for her argument, Archer examines the proposition often uttered by working-class students that 'science is not for us, it is not something that people like us do'. The chapter uses a 'funds of knowledge' approach to examine dispositions working-class students bring with them to school which often act to shape and constrain their educational identities. Archer argues that the idea that 'science capital' is a collective classed-based construction that often acts to pathologise and demonise working-class students.

In Chapter "Education, Social Class and Marxist Theory", Dave Hill draws on a range of Marxist and neo-Marxist perspectives to critique the global neoliberal project, through which it is argued the capitalist state in Britain and elsewhere is able to reproduce and exacerbate social and economic inequality, and justify the subservient role of working-class people. It draws on a range of empirical and conceptual research to argue for a reconceptualisation of education which, Hill contends, needs to be reshaped as part of a broader social and economic project which challenges the domination of global neoliberalism.

Chapter "Beyond the Vocational/Academic Divide: Inclusion Through Craftwork and Embodied Learning" by Terry Hyland focuses on the vocational/academic divide and the subordinate status of vocational pursuits which he argues is especially disadvantageous to students from working-class backgrounds that predominate on vocational courses. Hyland explains how previous reconciliation strategies have included assessment reform, changes in the nature and organisation of apprenticeships and attempts to promote alternative philosophical perspectives on work, education and training. He goes on to suggest that recent writings on craftwork—and in particular the links between intellectual, ethical and manual activity—offer valuable insights which can inform the perennial debate on such matters. Drawing on consciousness studies and work on the importance of the physical in generating key human characteristics, the idea that all learning is essentially embodied is employed to argue for a more inclusive conception of education. This, Hyland suggests, may help to reconcile the harmful and misguided divisions between theory and practice, intellectual and manual, body and mind which bedevil education systems across the world.

In the final chapter, Simmons and Smyth, ask 'How did we get to this, and what needs to change?' drawing together and highlighting key lessons to be learned from the book. It focuses not only on the conceptual and theoretical contribution made by the different authors but discusses how questions of social class are played out in the classroom, and at the institutional and the systemic level. Historical and contemporary debates about the nature and purpose of education are used to challenge the current status quo, and to present an agenda for the future. The chapter finishes by arguing that re-engaging with social

class as the key organising concept not only of education but social life more generally is necessary if we are to understand the nature of contemporary schooling in neoliberal societies such as the UK—and, also to re-imagine young people's relationship with education. This, it is argued, is necessary to re-engage working-class youth with a schooling that is both meaningful to them as individuals, and socially and economically just.

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Revisiting the 'Zombie Stalking English Schools': The Continuing Failure to Embrace Social Class in Working-Class Education

Diane Reay

Introduction: Austerity England

While the upper classes and most of the middle classes have been insulated from austerity that has blighted England in the 2010s, and its consequences, most of the working classes are struggling. Austerity is mainly for those who are already poor. In particular, the rediscovery of the working classes is in many ways a revival of old stigmatising debates about what the working classes lack rather than a recognition of their economic, social and political rights and entitlements. We are told the white, working classes, in particular, are clinging to the now elusory certainties of the past. But there are continuing certainties—those of working-class exploitation, undervaluing, and marginalization that may have changed in texture and shape but are just as exploitative, undervaluing

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and marginalizing of the working classes as attitudes and practices in the nineteenth century. So, for example, the imagery used to describe employer practices in Sports Direct in the twenty-first century was evocative of the workhouse. In 2016, The Parliamentary Committee for Business, Innovation and Skills concluded in their report on employment practices at Sports Direct that:

> Workers at Sports Direct were not being paid the national minimum wage, and were being penalised for matters such as taking a short break to drink water and for taking time off work when ill. Some say they were promised permanent contracts in exchange for sexual favours. Serious health and safety breaches also seem to have occurred. (House of Commons Business, Innovation and Skills Committee (2016) p. 3)

Workers were found to have 15 minutes pay deducted if they clocked in just one minute late on arrival or on return from a break. The Sports Direct warehouse also operated a "six strikes and you are out" policy. Under the rules, a strike could be given to a worker if they spent too long in the toilet or chatting, or if they took time off when they are ill or when their children were unwell. As Steven Turner, Assistant General Secretary of the Unite Union said in his oral evidence to the Committee:

> This is a business model that we will find exported across not just retail and hospitality, the traditional areas where you find predominantly precarious work. This is now finding its way into transportation and logistics, supply chains and manufacturing industries. Wherever you find agency employment alongside zero-hours direct employment, you find the same sort of practices. One in five retail workers are employed on zero-hours contracts…This is a business model that has exploitation at the very heart of it.

It is hard being working class in twenty-first century England. The wages of the working classes have declined in real terms as a result of austerity measures, and their working conditions have become increasingly precarious as a result of casualization and zero hour contracts. Half a million more children now live in absolute poverty than did in

2010, while child poverty more generally is predicted to rise sharply over the next few years (Ryan 2016). In 2014–2015, according to Department for Work and Pensions statistics, 28% of UK children were living in poverty, but the percentage could well rise to a third by 2020 if current austerity measures persist (Walker 2016). According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2016) 13 and a half million people in the UK live in poverty, slightly over 20% of the total population. Particularly worrying is the fact that the majority of people experiencing poverty are in working households, a proportion that has increased in recent decades (JRF 2016, p. 142). This is perhaps unsurprising as the unemployment rate hit a new low in 2017 of 4.8% (Trading Economics 2017). We are being sold the myth of a country of strivers and skivers but the strivers outnumber the so-called 'skivers' by more than 20 to 1, and it is they who are living in poverty in increasing numbers. We are seeing the running down of the welfare state, the erosion of universal benefits, a growing gap between the rich and poor, the demonization and undermining of trade unionism, the impoverishment of working class workers, the reduction of affordable housing, in particular, the selling off of council housing. The list goes on and on. Then in 2016 the country voted for Brexit delivering the working classes 'a double blow'. They were both blamed for causing a vote to leave, and at the same time became the social group to be most adversely affected. The large number of the working classes who voted against the European Union as a proxy for globalisation and its destruction of working-class security have rapidly discovered the Conservative government's alternative of taking back control is far worse for them (Helm 2017). Brexit has revealed the staggering hypocrisy of the English political elite. First, they removed the employment rights of the working classes, then in the Brexit campaign justified racist immigration policies on the basis that they were protecting the rights of British-born workers. This demonstrates the extent of class contempt, disregard and exploitation that characterises contemporary England.

The working classes have always been judged by their 'social superiors' and found wanting, but in late 2010s the judgments feel harsher, crueller, especially post-Brexit. There was a time when being working

class used to be honoured but no longer. We only have to look at the labour market conditions and dwindling employment rights of the working classes to recognise their low standing economically (Elliott 2016). Also the endemic self-blame that has plagued the working classes throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is harsher now than in the past. And worryingly, in a post-Brexit scarred by austerity, the dominant over-simplistic discourses centring divisions between the North and South, the old and the young, the 'strivers' and the 'skivers', Black and White have gained even greater force. Against the grain of the accepted status quo that social class is an outdated concept, I want to argue that we need class to provide both the complexity and inject some sense of informed morality (Sayer 2005) into the contemporary debate. There was never a more appropriate time to flesh class out and bring it back to life because it is otherwise impossible to capture the full, appalling complexities embedded in contemporary economic, cultural and social inequalities.

As the rhetoric of equality and freedom has intensified across both the US and the UK, both sociologists and economists have documented ever-deepening economic inequality and political domination (Buroway 2005). Increasing economic insecurity has been accompanied by growing political exclusion. Research demonstrates that changes in the political system over the last fifty years have increasingly marginalised the working classes (Heath 2016). The working classes are blamed for their own marginalization. Heath asserts that despite a widespread belief that class has become less important in British politics, this belief is false. While it is certainly true that class divisions are not as evident as they once were, this is because working class representation has been pushed outside the political system. In 1964 over 37% of Labour MPs came from manual occupational backgrounds. By 2010 this had fallen to under 10% (Heath 2016, p. 11). Rather than the working class being incorporated within the political system, since the 1960s, they have become increasingly excluded from it.

In this first section of this chapter, I have written about the defeats and losses of the working classes in the economy and wider political system. In the two next sections I move on to focus on the defeats and

losses of the working classes in education before drawing on the what might initially be seen as the counter-intuitive example of social mobility as a continuing source of working-class educational failure.

Austerity Education

Austerity is out there in the wider economy but it is also inside schools. The children of the working classes are increasingly experiencing 'austerity education'. As Saltman (2014), writing about American education in the twenty-first century, argues:

> Austerity education is not only about a turn to repressive control of disciplined workforce as the conditions of work and life are worsened for the majority of citizens. It is also about the rightist project of capturing public space such as schools to actively produce politically illiterate, socially uncritical, and un-self critical subject positions for youth to occupy. (p. 55)

Such right-wing projects are powerfully resonant of the nineteenth century upper and middle class mission to control and pacify the working classes rather than to educate them (Lowe 1867). Our new austerity world of Brexit and Donald Trump may feel unsettling and unfamiliar but austerity education is a return to the past. Just as was the case in the nineteenth century we are educating the working classes to be subservient and compliant, cramming them with facts, and then continually testing their recall. Such teaching to the test means political awareness, critical thinking, and problem solving have all been neglected. One of the major forms of the miseducation of the working classes is that we are still educating them for the nineteenth century in the twenty-first. As Saltman argues:

> …in the age of austerity subjects are formed through repressive pedagogies. Punitive disciplinary practices and policies including hierarchical surveillance, security apparatus, militarization, and punishment target working class and poor students…such expanded repressive control is

> part of the broader economic and cultural market fundamentalism that rolls back social investment, support, and care and rolls out new investment in punishment, containment, and coercion, making youth into commodities. (p. 43)

Working-class schools have become punishment factories that increasingly subject their students to pedagogies of control, discipline and surveillance. Pedagogy has been emptied of critical content and now imposes on students mind-numbing teaching practices organized around teaching to the test. As Giroux (2016) points out, the latter constitutes both a war on the imagination and a disciplinary practice meant to criminalize the behaviour of children who do not accept a pedagogy of conformity and overbearing control.

It is against such educational and wider economic conditions being experienced by the working classes that Theresa May told her new cabinet at their first post-Brexit meeting in July 2016 that it was their "duty" to improve education and skills and ensure that social mobility is "at the heart of Government". Aspirations were to be raised yet again, despite a plethora of studies that show the working classes across ethnicities are highly aspirational (Ipsos MORI survey 2010; DCSF 2009). Yet, aspirations tell only a fraction of the murky and challenging tale of social mobility. Far more influential are the reproductive strategies of the already privileged, the constraints facing working class young people, and the changing economic and educational landscapes that make social mobility increasingly difficult. In a context where there is incessant babble about social mobility, but very little in practice, the working classes have a great deal to feel resentful about. But so do those few from the working classes who succeed in achieving 'middle-class' jobs. Recent research is now showing that being socially mobile brings its own array of problems. The much heralded graduate premium is largely cancelled out by growing student debt, there is an impenetrable class ceiling facing the working classes who do attain management and professional jobs, and those who reach a class position that is higher than the class position of their parents are less satisfied with their lives than people who remained in the same position (Hadjar and Samuel 2015; Laurison and Friedman 2016; Reay 2017).

Social Mobility: An Example of Class as a 'Zombie' Category?

Social class haunts the educational system just as much today as it did ten years ago when I wrote "The Zombie stalking English education" (2006). Since then social class divisions have been further inflamed by the wilful misunderstanding of our elites as to what class constitutes, how it works, and the ruthless pursuit of self-interest. In particular, working classness is primarily understood by the English elite in terms of its bare bones, dull, inanimate, and amenable to control. It is almost as if they believe class thinking, feeling, and action are the prerogative of the upper and middle classes alone. And the educational policy that plays most directly to their self-interest is the relentless focus on social mobility as the solution to working class educational failure. The current rhetoric on social mobility is full of duplicitous reassurances that everyone can be winners, provided the right policies are in place. The vested self-interest of our elites is barely concealed. There is no need in this bright new social mobility future to dismantle the entrenched positions of the privileged in society. Any attempt to combat growing economic inequalities has been elided. Redistribution is no longer on the schedule unless it is the covert (and recently not so covert) redistribution from the poor to the rich. Both equal chances and equal opportunities are negligible considerations, while equality of outcome vanishes from the agenda. Furthermore, social mobility is the cheap policy option in comparison to funding the English educational system so that it can support and nurture working class educational success. It also places the onus for change on the working class individual not a steeply hierarchical and unfair educational system. Under social mobility policy initiatives, they are expected to succeed against slightly reduced odds, and transform into acceptably middle class versions of themselves. The more the focus is on social mobility, the less the educational system and wider society have to change.

As C. Wright Mills (1943) argued, working-class social mobility needs to be seen as a public issue that transcends the individual and resides in institutional crises that are deeply sedimented in the

organizational 'milieux' of social structures and the way society is historically organized 'as a whole' Social mobility, particularly in deeply unequal societies, is as much about failure as it is about success. You become more equal in relation to privileged others but at the cost of those you love and care for becoming less equal in relation to you. Bourdieu's (2014) statement that 'the individual ambition of climbing the social ladder and participating in the protection of the collective interests of one's class are far from easy to reconcile' (p. 265), vastly underestimates the scale of conflict involved, not least because, as he goes on to argue, 'the two impulses get their inspiration from two visions of the world that are totally alien to each other' (p. 266).

But still, social mobility retains its iconic role in English political discourse. It appears as if the less mobility there is the more it becomes a preoccupation of politicians and policy makers. And it is nearly always seen in straightforwardly positive ways, particularly within political, policy and media discourses. In earlier work I argue that social mobility is a form of cruel optimism (Berlant 2011; Reay 2017)—it is powerfully desired but, in reality, is often a barrier to thriving. So many of us from working-class backgrounds invest heavily in the fantasy that our relentless efforts will bring us love, care, intimacy, success, security and wellbeing even when they are highly unlikely to do so because in doing so we are forming optimistic attachments to the very power structures that have oppressed us, and our working class families before us. Social mobility is one such optimistic fantasy that ensnares and works on both the individual psyche and collective consciousness. As a convenient justification for educational inequalities, it has become the preferred cure for social ills and educational inequalities, promoted by politicians on both the right and left. But in deeply unequal societies like England, it operates as much as a social ill as a social gain, one that depletes the communities the socially mobile grew up in but can also harm the socially mobile individual.

When I wrote about social class as 'the zombie stalking English education' in 2006, I argued that social class was an absent presence in English education, the problem that never spoke its name. Ten years on the language of class has been hijacked by right-wing, austerity-driven politicians in both the UK and the US. Now, post-Brexit and post-Trump, class is recognised, heralded, even paraded as an issue to

address. But this is not class in any real sense of the word. Rather, this is class as a smoke screen but also as an ideological weapon to be used against political opponents. Theresa May, the Prime Minister, in a talk delivered on 9th September 2016, mentioned working-class families 9 times in a 30 minute speech. But, for those of us who have long argued for class to be accepted as the major fault-line in English education, this new recognition of social class in education raises many concerns. The confusions, instrumentalizing, dissembling and over-simplifications are ever present. How else could May, with her many 'experts' to advise her, promote selective schools as the answer to working-class underachievement in the face of overwhelming research going back over a period of 70 years that shows decisively that such schools reinforce working-class educational failure (Douglas et al. 1971; Halsey et al. 1980; Burgess et al. 2017). This is the antithesis of educational fairness, the importing of yet more educational elitism and hierarchy, thinly disguised behind the rhetoric of raising working-class achievement and realising working-class aspirations. But it is also the use of class as a rhetorical device behind which there is no substance, just ephemeral promises that rapidly evaporate under the remorseless austerity cuts (Rayner 2016).

In 'The Zombie stalking English education' I argued that the key question that we need to ask is, 'what progress has been made towards social justice and equality in education for the working classes over the last hundred years?' My answer was remarkably little. Over ten years on, the response is still the same, and the latest educational policy solution, the reintroduction of grammar schools will exacerbate rather than alleviate existing inequalities (Burgess et al. 2017). But such a patently unjust educational policy can attract wide-ranging political support, even from large sections of the working classes, because of the myths of social mobility. The discursive power of working-class social mobility as the justification for grammar schools continues to have a pernicious impact, despite the lack of evidence. As Gamsu (2015) argues:

> For the grammar schools involved, and post-war society more widely, working class 11-plus successes provided a sort of 'social alibi' which allowed the justification of a system of education that still overwhelmingly benefitted the middle and upper classes, at secondary and university level.

He concludes that 'the class elitism inherent in the logic of "raising up" a gifted few through the 11-plus was never seriously challenged and has returned with a vengeance in the widening participation discourse at elite universities. Now we have moved to a mass system of higher education, the logic of 'the educational ladder', and the insidious ideological alibi that it provides, has simply moved upwards. Instead of the 11-plus operating as the main mechanism of social selection it is our elite universities who have taken over this role. Elitist processes masquerading as meritocracy are just as evident in the English educational system as they were 60 years ago, but the primary engines of this pseudo meritocracy are no longer the grammar schools but the elite universities. In twenty-first century England the huge expansion of higher education is often presented as evidence of the success of social mobility and meritocracy in English society. But, like grammar schools, widening access and participation is far from the unalloyed success narrative it is presented as.

The concept of social mobility has injustice at its heart. It is all about social and educational responsibility being piled on the working classes. It is now the obligation of the working class individual to ensure their own educational success. In twenty-first century England there have been myriad educational policies that focus on raising aspiration but none that adequately resource working class academic achievement, and a growing number such as setting and streaming, and the intense focus on competition, that work against working class educational success. While we socially mobile individuals have to develop the resilience, determination and single mindedness to transform ourselves without either adequate educational support or the material and cultural resources to make that transformation bearable, the upper and middle classes are exempt. The burden of change in social mobility narratives is placed on the working classes—the upper and middle classes only need to remain in the same place to warrant respect, status and value. But when the vast majority of the working classes act like the upper and middle classes and choose, or more likely are forced, to remain in place, the consequences they face are disapprobation, social censure, and for the poorest of the working classes, vilification. The distortions embedded in the dominant social mobility logic are matched only by its cruelty.

Social Mobility—A Process Involving More than the Working Classes

What is also rarely recognized in both commonsense and academic understandings of social mobility is that social mobility experiences are powerfully influenced by the reception the successful working classes face when they move into new more privileged fields. It is routinely assumed that going to university is somehow a straightforward process of becoming middle class. Getting to university is often portrayed simplistically as the end of the social mobility journey when it is yet another stage in a long struggle. The focus on the individual journey too often omits the complex array of positive, but also often negative, social interactions that work continually to include and exclude. In this section I draw on my own experiences, as well as current research (Coulson et al. 2017), to illustrate how upper and middle class ‘class feeling’ and ‘class action’ work at university level to reinforce the position of working-class students as ‘outsiders on the inside’. The comparison between the 1960s and the 2010s demonstrates how the more things change the more they remain the same. The class prejudices and slights faced by the socially mobile are just as evident today are they were 50 years ago.

In their research examining the experiences of working-class students at a Russell Group university, Coulson and her colleagues (2017) found the students were largely isolated. All, apart from one, had not joined any groups or societies. They talked of how disheartening and dispiriting they had found Freshers’ Week, sometimes finding themselves friendless or in awkward social situations. My own experience in the late 1960s at the same university had similarly been disheartening, but also, at times, terrifying. I had applied to a number of Halls of Residence but was rejected by them all. One rejection letter blatantly stated that I would not fit in because I was from a different social background from the other students. I ended up being the only first-year female student to be placed in private lodgings; that my digs were three miles from the university further reinforced my isolation. I loved dancing so was determined to go to the Freshers’ Ball. A female medical student whose father had bought a flat for her in the same street as my student

lodgings said she would give me a lift, although, like the working-class girl in Coulson et al.'s study, I was abandoned within five minutes of arriving as she spotted a group of medics she knew, and darted off. Left to my own devices I decided the best approach was to just dance and try and enjoy myself. However, within a few minutes a group of young men, who I later learnt had been to a leading public school, approached me and asked if they had seen me earlier in the local branch of Woolworths. The aspersion being cast was that I was an interloper, a local shop girl with no right to be there.

That negative encounter was the start of three troubled years. Coulson et al. (2017) write that negative experiences during Freshers' Week signaled a failure to make friends that affected the rest of the working-class students' academic lives:

> They found many students were not necessarily interested in making friends with them and rejected their approaches. This could take the form of polite, but vague, interest followed by excuses; or in some cases, more privileged students' outright refusal to associate with those unlike themselves. (p. 17)

I was never to become socially acceptable to the female middle-class students at my university, and failed to find another working-class female student. Instead my female friends during my three years at university were a hairdresser and a secretary, both 'town' rather than 'gown'.

Coulson and her colleagues also write of the academic as well as the social difficulties faced by the working-class students in their study. One of the students spoke of hating to go to a lecture or seminar if they didn't have someone to walk in with. What I remember is the class prejudice and bigotry that permeated the curriculum. In one of the first lectures I attended the subject was working-class culture. The professor giving the lecture told the approximately 200 students present that coal miners kept their coal in the bath. While they wrote his words down I stood up, shouted rubbish, and stormed out. In a later lecture the same professor told us all that he would much prefer the joys of being a farm labourer as they are in constant communication with nature and

experience the pleasures of being in the open air. I had to leave for a second time. Soon afterwards attending seminars became increasingly difficult. My tutor suggested that I could talk in the sessions about the experience of being working class. He said it would be helpful for the other students who lacked experience of working-class lives. In his words 'I could bring working classness to life'. Instead my first encounters with the middle and upper classes drained the life out of me, as I tried and failed to hold on to a bearable, authentic sense of self. What I want to convey here is that far from university being the beginning of 'a new better middle-class life' for the working classes, as is often implied in the social mobility rhetoric, it is much more often another stage in a difficult and painful struggle to be accepted and included in middle-class contexts. Working-class adjustment to becoming middle class is as much about how working-class individuals are treated by the more powerful middle and upper classes as it is about individual volition. Social mobility is characterised through metaphors of reaching for the sky, but it is also about tumbling down, rejections and refusals, periods spent wrestling with snakes rather than shooting up ladders.

There is another sense in which class fades away in the myths surrounding social mobility. In presenting the working-class young person as born again as a middle-class adult rising from the ashes of their old, now discredited, working-class past, dominant discourses deny the importance, necessity even, of retaining aspects of the working-class self. But the dead live on. As Jackson and Marsden (1966) made clear in their book on 'Education and the Working Classes', class background cannot be disposed of by an act of will, 'it is something in the blood, in the very fibre of a man or woman: a way of growing, feeling, judging, taken out of the resources of generations gone before' (p. 192). They record 'a crumbling away' felt through much of their socially-mobile young people (Jackson and Marsden 1966, p. 168), and write about an endemic 'lost feeling for source, means, purpose; a loss heightened by an absence of the sustaining powers of social and family relationships'. In the quote below there is a powerful sense of these socially mobile young people being hollowed out, losing, along with their authenticity, any sense of substance or core meaning:

> There is something infinitely pathetic in these former working-class children who lost their roots young, and now with their rigid middle-class accent preserve 'the stability of all our institutions temporal and spiritual' by avariciously reading the lives of 'Top People', or covet the private schools, and glancing back at the society from which they came see no more there than the 'dim' or the 'specimens'. (p. 241)

As I hope is becoming evident, those who are socially mobile have to cope with the pernicious as well as the positive effects of social mobility, just as Jackson and Marsden's sample did over 60 years ago. In Stillwagon's (2017) essay on melancholia and working-class resistance to educational transformation, he writes of how working class success not only separates the working classes from the identities they have come to love without having chosen them, but that the pain of this separation—the value of the lives they lose as a result of becoming educated—often remains unspeakable in mainstream educational language, in which educational transformation presents itself as a positive growth without negative repercussions (p. 52). But there is increasing evidence of the repercussions. Now we have medical research demonstrating that poverty in early childhood, and dealing with often hostile and unfamiliar environments such as the middle-class school and university, literally gets under the skin and damages socially-mobile individuals physically as well as psychologically. The social challenges that are part and parcel of social mobility become biologically embedded resulting in stress, inflammation and premature aging (Miller et al. 2015; Castagné et al. 2016; Solis et al. 2016).

Widening Access and Participation: The Largely Unfulfilled Promise of Working-Class Social Mobility

In the face of research that paints a picture of stagnant or barely rising social mobility, growing widening participation in England is presented as a cause for celebration and a positive example of increasing social mobility for the working classes. Yet, as Boliver (2017) points out, despite absolute increases in higher education enrolment rates for

all social groups in England, class differences in relative rates of progression to higher education have so far shown no sign of equalising. Furthermore, the most elite institutions continue to be dominated by students from the most privileged family backgrounds (Marginson 2016). In this section of the chapter, I draw on my own research with Crozier and Clayton (Reay et al. 2009, 2010) to show working-class educational gains within HE come at a cost that is rarely recognised in policy discourses, and that the returns to HE are nearly always less than those achieved by the upper and middle classes.

As I argued earlier, the working-class relationship to schooling has typically been one of failure (Reay 2006) and this is still true in terms of how a majority of working-class students at a new university perceived their university experience (Reay et al. 2010). As Arthur, a white working-class history student at Northern, said:

> My thoughts have always been, at my lowest point, it's always that I'm not capable of doing it.

And as Barbara, a white working-class History student at Northern, suggested:

> Academically-wise I keep thinking I shouldn't be here, that you know I'm not up to the level that I should be.

Both Arthur and Barbara are mature students with, as Arthur points out, a considerable gap between school and university. But, even young students lacked confidence in their academic ability:

> Unfortunately, my experiences of school always taught me that, I mean I was always a late learner, I never caught on particularly quickly but when I did it was always slightly later. So I was always brought up with the attitude that 'oh Fiona will never amount to anything'. (Fiona, white working-class Chemistry student, Northern)

This sense of being a second-rate learner, despite going to university, is reinforced by the status and academic standing of most of the universities the majority of working-class students attend. Working-class

students predominantly end up in universities seen to be 'second class' both by themselves and others. As Bourdieu (1999) asserts, 'after an extended school career, which often entails considerable sacrifice, the most culturally disadvantaged run the risk of ending up with a devalued degree' (p. 423). Even with increasing numbers of working-class students having access to higher education, class inequalities reappear in the unequal access to forms of valued cultural and social capital, as the middle classes continue to monopolise both those universities seen to be the 'best' and high status, esteemed activities, and social networks within the less prestigious universities (Bathmaker et al. 2013). The success of the few working-class students who do gain entry to UK elite universities has a negligible impact on this broader picture of continuing classed and racialised inequalities. In the past, the major problem was a paucity of working-class students in HE, but with the expansion of higher education, and the widening of access to the working classes, the commonsense view, among both the general population and politicians, is that the problem has been largely dealt with, that our national policy of widening access and participation has been a triumph of social mobility. However, the problem of social class in higher education has not gone away, rather it has transmuted from one of restricted access to one of 'who goes where'. The problem for the working classes is no longer simply one of admission to the university sector per se, but the additional difficulty of exclusion from high status, elite universities. So, for example, recent research (Sutton Trust, 2010) found that less than 1% of state school students on free school meals gain a place at Oxbridge. As a result, students from private schools are fifty-five times more likely to get a place at Oxbridge than state educated free school meal pupils (Vasager 2010). Instead there is a clustering of working-class students in those universities at the bottom of the university league tables (see Fig. 1).

In our study (Reay et al. 2010) a major factor impacting on working-class university experience, and the students' chances of integrating fully into the field of higher education, was the university they attended. We also found that the rewards and recognition of going to university were nearly always lower for working-class students than their middle and upper-class peers. Of course, we want more ethnic minority

Institution	Number from manual occupational backgrounds	% from manual occupational backgrounds
University College Plymouth St Mark and St John	160	50.6
The University of Bolton	185	52.3
The University of Bradford	525	52.4
The University of Wolverhampton	750	53.1
Glyndŵr University	80	54.5
The University of Greenwich	855	55.5
London Metropolitan University	705	57.2

Fig. 1 Universities with over 50% working-class students. Adapted from 2008/2009 HESA data

and working-class students to go to university but when they primarily go to poor, working class, universities in a segregated system, we are talking about a very unlevel playing field. The issue is much more than widening access. The troubling paradox of widening access is that despite its democratic intentions, this has brought an intensification of class and racial inequalities between different levels of higher education. Growing diversity within the field of HE, rather than producing a more inclusive higher education, has resulted in a segregated and increasingly polarised system. Upper and upper middle class pursuit of the educational exclusivity they experienced in private and selective state schooling, has relegated the working classes and the lower middle classes to universities that the more privileged do not want to attend. Again, as with social mobility more generally, the onus is on the working-class

individual to change, not the unequal system within which they are struggling to succeed. The assumption is always that it is the working class individual who must adapt and change, in order to fit into, and participate in, the (unchanged) higher education institutional culture.

Working-class students at new universities are often precariously positioned in the new, unfamiliar field of HE, jostling work and family commitments while doing a degree. Often the first two overwhelm and take precedence over studying, as individuals' biographies and reserves of capital remain in tension rather than alignment with the new field. For the majority of our participants' social identities and relationships with peers, family and work colleagues inevitably had to be prioritised over relationships to knowledge and the development of student learner identities. As Debbie admitted:

> When I had my two jobs I felt like I was paying too much attention to one job or too much attention to the other job and I just didn't feel like I was focusing on the university at all. I felt like I was just squeezing it in when I could. (White, working-class engineering student, Northern)

University experience for working-class students is often, therefore, a pale shadow of that experienced by their middle and upper-class peers (Boliver 2017). But, as mentioned earlier, going to university does not always translate into social mobility for working-class students. Research shows that working-class students will on average graduate with £12,500 more debt than their wealthier peers (Britton et al. 2015). They are also to be found disproportionately in unsalaried or low-paid posts six months after leaving university (HESA 2010). Overall, 58.8% of graduates are in jobs deemed to be non-graduate roles, with working-class graduates in the new universities ending up getting working-class jobs, or no jobs at all. Working-class students at elite universities are also seriously disadvantaged compared to their middle-class peers. Even when working-class students graduate from elite universities, they are much less likely to gain graduate-level occupation, compared with their middle and upper-class peers (Britton et al. 2016). Coulson et al. (2017) found that, of the working-class students on a

special entry scheme to an elite Russell Group university, 57% gained graduate jobs compared to 74% of university-wide graduates. This was despite a higher percentage of these working-class students gaining a First or Upper Second than the general student population.

When working-class students do attain graduate jobs, they are disadvantaged compared to their middle-class peers. Britton et al. (2016) research found that students from higher income families have median earnings around 25% higher than those from lower income families. As Crawford et al. (2016) found, class differences in graduate earnings persisted even when educational attainment, university attended, and subjects studied, were taken into account. Research by Laurison and Friedman (2016) found that people from working-class backgrounds who get a professional job are paid an average of £6800 (17%) less each year than their middle and upper class colleagues. They identify the 'stickiness' of class origin in which a poverty of resources in early life often continued to shape individual life courses well beyond occupational entry. If you are working class even a high-class degree from a top university does not provide equality of access to top professions and higher earnings. The sad irony is that as more and more working-class students have achieved a degree its status has been eroded and the value attached, symbolically and financially, has dropped. Britton et al. (2016) found that as student numbers have increased graduate earning power has decreased in relation to non-graduate earnings. As their IFS report concludes, 'increasing numbers of future graduates would result in further declines in the educational wage differential'.

Sending more and more working-class young people to university seems a commonsense thing to do. Yet, producing more and more working-class graduates in a restricted graduate labour market is a perverse form of social mobility. As I argued earlier, it is as much about sliding down snakes as climbing up ladders. The consequences can be seen, for example, in the working-class female Ph.D. graduate who has been serving in my local restaurant for three years, and the male Masters graduate who has been working at the checkout in the local supermarket for nearly 5 years. Can either Rosie or Assiz be called socially mobile when both are in casualized and poorly-paid work? The case of Lisa is illustrative:

> I feel an idiot. I guess I just didn't get the right advice so I started my law degree thinking that was all I needed to be a human rights lawyer and of course it's nowhere near enough. So now I am doing a Masters and my debt level is over £50,000…and I'm suddenly thinking how on earth am I going to get a job as a lawyer? I'll probably still be working in Next in 5 years' time and the only difference between me and the other shop assistants is that I've got shed-loads of debt.

Lisa, a working class full-time Masters student at a red-brick University, and whose mother is herself a shop assistant, is working 15 hours a week in Next as well as doing 12 hours of bar work, just to keep her head above the water financially. In her interview she talked of feeling trapped in education—it felt far too risky to leave with just an undergraduate degree, but terrifying to go on acquiring debts she could not fore-see ever paying off. Lisa, Rosie and Assiz are among the growing number of educationally successful working-class students, 'outsiders on the inside', caught up in an educational conveyor belt that all too often leads to disappointment and debts rather than the realisation of their dreams.

Although highly credentialed, all three are desperate and despairing about their lack of economic progression. Yet, they are the educational successful working classes who no longer see themselves as working class but are striving to become middle class. However, they have a fragile relationship to both the working-class communities they have come from and the middle-class society they are struggling to belong to. Their middle classness is just a flimsy veneer, yet to be animated and given any substance, while their working classness lurks beneath the surface threatening to drag them back to physical places and psychological spaces they have tried to move away from. As Lisa commented wryly:

> If anyone was to ask me I'd say I was middle class but I don't feel middle class inside, in all sorts of ways. I still have to struggle all the time. I still feel I'm just surviving. Maybe if I do get a good job with a decent salary I'll feel more middle class but that still feels like a dream, and even then I'm not sure.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to demonstrate the many ways in which social mobility in a deeply unequal society like England is not the panacea it is made out to be. And the focus on meritocracy is a smoke screen diverting attention from the ways in which the educational system positions the vast majority of the working classes as devalued 'outsiders within' English education. As Littler (2017) points out, currently in both the UK and the US, the focus on meritocracy is being used to justify policies that will increase rather than decrease inequality. The key issue we need to tackle in education is not social mobility but class inequality. Far from being a solution social mobility creates social and educational problems even as it provides a degree of success for a small number of working-class individuals. Social class is still the zombie haunting the English educational system. It is there lurking as an absent presence in dominant political and educational policy discourses. The social class conjured up by politicians is a phantom, a pale shadow of the realities of social class in the lived experiences of working-class young people and their families. Our elites, even as they lay waste to the welfare support, and plunder public sector provision, the working classes have come to rely on, have tried to bury the realities of working-class lives. But the repression always returns, as Brexit has shown. In relation to social mobility social class is a spectre rather than a real force animating the debate and influencing policy. The problematic working-class past of the socially mobile is air brushed away as if it never existed. But, as I have tried to show through the examples of Rosie, Assiz, Lisa, and Jackson and Marsden's 'pathetic' socially-mobile adults, we socially mobile wrestle to varying degrees with the working class undead inside us. Some, like Jackson and Marsden's sample, want to bury their working classness for ever, some like me are desperately trying to animate a sense of working class self that often refuses to come to life. Rosie, Assiz, and Lisa are trying to reconcile two competing aspects of the self, both of which, at different times, feel fragile and in danger of slipping away. But all of us, in our different ways, struggle with the

zombie that is social class in England. Habermas (1991) argued thirty years ago that modernity may be dead but it was still dominant. Social class may be having a resurgence currently in political rhetoric, but it expired long ago in policy terms. No policy has seriously addressed its economic and social consequences for decades. Yet, it continues to dominate the lives of the English, from the working classes, the socially mobile, to the elites.

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Counternarratives to Neoliberal Aspirations: White Working-Class Boys' Practices of Value-Constitution in Formal Education

Garth Stahl

Introduction

Since the 2000s, successive governments in the United Kingdom have promoted the idea of 'raising aspirations' of working-class young people as a solution to persistent educational and socio-economic inequalities which contribute in various ways to mobility stagnation. Statistical research indicates that in Britain, 'it is possible to combine socio-economic classification of the household with the children's overall developmental score at age of 22 months to accurately predict educational qualifications at the age of 26 years' (Evans 2006, p. 3). Alarmingly, the idea that low levels of social mobility could be attributed to a 'poverty of aspiration' among young people from working-class backgrounds has gained significant purchase during the 1997–2010 Labour administration and continues to inform the political and wider public imaginary (Reay 2013; Spohrer et al. 2017). To this end during 2010 and 2014

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when Michael Gove was Secretary of State for Education, schools, and specifically schools in disadvantaged areas, were expected to function as '*engines of social mobility* providing every child with the knowledge, skills and aspirations they need to fulfil their potential' (Cabinet Office 2011, p. 36, emphasis added). This simplistic, digestible and pervasive meritocratic policy rhetoric works to individualize structural disadvantage, instilling a deficit view of working-class youth.

Problematically, in policy discourses regarding the so-called 'aspiration problem', aspiration has been construed as a personal character trait, with high aspiration associated in policy documents with personal qualities such as inspiration, self-esteem and self-efficacy (see Spohrer 2011, p. 58). In contemporary schooling today, we are witness to low academic attainment 'transposed or re-coded into a matter of personal sin (a private psychological propensity or "attitude" particular to the individual), and [which] therefore attributes social disadvantage to a lack of principled self-help and self-responsibility' (Wilkins 2011, p. 768). As a result of this neoliberal framing of ability and aptitude in formal education institutions, there exists a narrow conception of the ideal 'client' (Gillborn 1990; Youdell 2010). As a result, I contend that working-class students function within spaces where they are increasingly expected to both validate and legitimate themselves as neoliberal 'subjects of value' and they actively find ways to counteract such expectations.

In their formal education, working-class students are increasingly judged as having 'bought in' or 'bought out,' depending on whether or not they accept the 'socially mobile' rhetoric prevailing within our current educational system (Stahl 2015). Reay (2001) has shown that in attempting to 'upskill' by entering higher education (and entering into rigorous competition in order to do so), working-class students face a struggle to preserve their identity and make sense of feelings of inferiority as they are judged according to middle-class conceptions of 'success' and 'failure'. In the constant focus on 'upward mobility' in educational policy, the very real identity-based challenges for disadvantaged groups tend to be left out. Researchers must maintain a consistent spotlight on the 'identity work' for working-class students in relation to the injuries of class (Reay 2002; Hattam and Smyth 2003; Stahl 2015).

Furthermore, it must be noted that alongside neoliberal policies influencing normative educational practices (Stahl 2015; Wilkins 2016) there exists a long history in the United Kingdom 'in which the working-class have been (through representation) continually demonized, pathologized, and held responsible for social problems' (Skeggs 2002, p. 76) and where 'most representations of working-class people contribute to devaluing and delegitimating their already meagre capitals, putting further blocks on tradability, denying any conversion into symbolic capital' (Skeggs 2002, p. 11).

Throughout the United Kingdom, many elements of working-class culture, such as 'respectability' and 'the creative hedonism; the anti-pretentious humour, the dignity, the high ethical standards of honour, loyalty and caring' (Skeggs 2004, p. 88) have been socially constructed as lacking. This pathologisation—embedded in wider society and in schools—significantly influences the practices of value constitution for working-class students. How young people's engagement with schooling 'depends in part on the sense they make of themselves, their community, and their future and in part on "the adaptive strategies" they use to accept, modify, or resist the institutional identities made available' (Smyth 2006, p. 290). Therefore, we must think critically regarding how working-class identity is positioned in reference to the doxic and how 'the self' is in a constant form of negotiation as it becomes articulated, debated, and problematised in the everyday. As Bourdieu argues:

> The vision of the dominated is doubly distorted in this respect: first because the categories of perception that they use are imposed upon them by the objective structures of the world, and hence tend to foster a form of doxic acceptance of its given order; second because the dominant strive to impose their own vision and to develop representations which offer a "theodicy of their privilege". (1987, p. 16)

Therefore, in considering how working-class students evoke counter-narratives that question the 'given order' and recast their 'categories of perception' we need to be critical of how they construct themselves as

subjects of value. Before we consider counternarratives, we must first understand how these young men are constituted through schooling practices and how their participation in these institutions both *regulates* and *reproduces* certain discourses around their attainment and aspiration.

Constituting value is never a 'zero sum' game and it is imperative that we theorise the aspirations of working-class students as a daily negotiation relative to opportunity structures and the pressures placed on formal schooling through a neoliberal policy agenda. In her analysis of institutions and institutional practices, Smith (2005, p. 27) notes that how 'people become caught up in, and how our lives become organized by, the institutional foci of the ruling relations is mediated by institutionally designed realities that organize relations …' which, in turn, objectify and assign subject positions. To understand the experiences of white working-class boys in these three South London school sites we have to first understand how ability was constructed through the schools' ideological structures, or more specifically, how conceptions of ability becomes a fixed part of student identity through discourses. According to Gillborn and Youdell (2000), 'The view of "ability" that currently dominates policy and practice is especially dangerous. The assumption that "ability" is a fixed, generalized and measurable potential paves the way for the operationalization of deeply racist and class-biased stereotypes' (p. 15). Within this study I was witness to educators engaging in such class-based stereotypes concerning both behaviour and ability of the white working-class boys (Stahl 2017b).

This chapter aims to theorise how white working-class boys constitute themselves as valuable within school contexts shaped by discourses of 'devaluement' (Stahl 2015, 2017b) and how personhood comes into effect as agents move through overlapping and conflicting 'regimes of value' within 'local circuits of power' (Skeggs 2011, pp. 497–507). In the production of personhood, a 'subject of value' emerges and is validated through process of symbolic legitimation (Skeggs 2004, 2011). 'Value' and class, for working-class students, always remain interlinked and closely interwoven with the nuances of lived experience. To address how these young men construct themselves as subjects of value, the first

part of this chapter presents background on post-industrial masculinities before exploring how the working-class educational experience in the United Kingdom has historically been shaped by inequality, segmentation and pathologisation. This Dickensian history has contributed heavily to the current structuring of schooling which privileges a strong tendency toward framing white working-class students, specifically white working-class males, through discourses of deficit and a bigotry of low expectations. The second half of the chapter briefly recounts the study (cf. Stahl 2012, 2015), before reflecting on how the young men I researched negotiate their learner identities. I focus on how they capitalise on historically-validated conceptions of working-class masculinity to construct counternarratives of value, in direct opposition to the aspiration discourses—grounded in a neoliberal conception of personhood—which pervade their formal schooling.

Post-industrial Masculinities

Forty years of scholarship has documented how working-class masculinity has been dramatically impacted by post-industrialization (Willis 1977; Dolby and Dimitriadis 2004; Ward 2015), leading to what has been called a 'crisis of masculinity' (Weaver-Hightower 2003). In the United Kingdom, 'the importance of work, of a job, and a wage are well-known features of working-class masculinity' (Arnot 1985, p. 44), and it is widely acknowledged that the foundation of steady employment is endangered in current neoliberal times which has a significant influence on masculinity and identity practices (Roberts 2012). It has been argued that generations of white working-class boys suffer in coping with the reality of the knowledge economy with its new, shifting geographies of power, wherein they are arguably becoming an anachronism (Nayak 2003). So-called 'macho lads', whose 'reproduction of working-class masculinity has been ruptured' due to economic restructuring (Kenway and Kraack 2004, p. 107) may find it more difficult to adapt to their present circumstances. Undeniably, the historic infrastructures of respectable employment that have been the traditional bases of white male power 'have eroded rapidly' (Weis 1990, p. 6).

As these traditional social and economic structures are reconfigured, young men, particularly those from working-class backgrounds, have to negotiate their identity work around rapidly changing discourses of aspiration, power and risk.

As working-class males experience this social change, they have to contend with a rise in credentialisation alongside a hazy economic future where stable employment is increasingly uncommon (Brown 2013) and where the steady rise of service-level positions require working-class men to 'learn to serve' (McDowell 2003). If white working-class boys continue to draw upon employment as a main part of their identity construction and aspiration formation, they are now more likely to draw upon the 'McJob' (Bottero 2009, p. 9) or the retail sector (Roberts 2012). Considering the relationship between aspiration and masculinity, both are culturally constructed and deeply contextual where 'class remains an ever present arbiter – if unacknowledged signifier – structuring young lives' (Nayak 2006, p. 825).

Furthermore, within the onset of post-industrialisation, working-class males draw on certain historically-validated dispositions and working-class cultural practices, such as social cohesion and social solidarity (established through a legacy of union action and community involvement) to confirm and validate their gendered, classed, and ethnic subjectivities both inside and outside of schooling (Stenning 2005; Mac an Ghaill 1994; Pye et al. 1996; Stahl 2015; Ward 2015).

History of Working-Class Schooling in the United Kingdom

Before I hone in on the current issues which frame the experience of white working-class boys in their formal schooling today, I first call brief attention to the history of working-class education which has always been shaped by inequality and control. Skeggs (1992, p. 185) writes that it is essential we consider the role of institutions, specifically schools, as 'working-class culture cannot be understood without reference to the history of the state and to the history of those institutions which function to maintain and reproduce the social relations

of capital'. Originally set up by the dominant classes to police and control the working-classes rather than educate them (Reay 2006, p. 293), mass education was not a result of 'liberal' and 'collective ideals' but borne out of a need for social and 'class control' which furthered capitalism (Humphries 1981, p. 2). Compulsory education, under the *Elementary Education Act of 1870*, required all working-class children to attend compulsory schooling, bringing to the forefront how much of a role social class should play in (a) how pupils were educated (elementary only or elementary and secondary, the appropriateness of the curriculum, etc.) and (b) where they were educated (to avoid 'social mixing') (McCulloch 1998). According to historian McCulloch, social class and education have been interconnected from the inception of mass education. Supporting this assertion, there is very little doubt that the mass education system was unequal and under-funded, with the working-class receiving a lower standard contributing further to their segregation (The Newcastle Commission of 1956).

A massive lack of social justice persisted through the 1920s and 1930s with the Hadow Reports (1923, 1926, 1931) and John Lewis Patton's appeal to sort 'mentals' from 'manuals' at the age of eleven, despite politicians like R. H. Tawney arguing for a more egalitarian system in which all British citizens had access to gaining a 'synoptic mind' and full societal participation (McCulloch 1998). Shockingly, when the tripartite education system was modified in 1944, it identified three 'types of intellect and character, ranging from those capable of "abstract thought" to those who could not progress beyond "concrete thought"' (Humphries 1981, p. 48). As a consequence of this historical systemic disparity, the working-class educational experience has always been an experience of social differentiation—shaped by doubts as to working-class capabilities and the appropriateness of formal education (Brown 1987). Clearly, if working-class disaffection has been a persistent issue in British education since first noted in 1889 (Humphries 1981; McCulloch 1998), the problem is partially the school system's ideologies and practices which do not recognise or value working-class culture(s). This raises questions as to the educational, social and cultural significance regarding not only the past, but also the present and future development of schools.

The White Working-Class, Neoliberal Schooling and Deficit Discourses

In contemporary times, statistically, non-migrant, white working-class boys continue to be one of the lowest attaining groups in the United Kingdom's educational system (Strand 2008) with their "educational attainment failing to improve at the rates of most other ethnic groups" (Communities and Local Government/Department for Children 2008, p. 8). Within the state education system 'the great majority of low achievers – more than three-quarters – are white and British, and boys outnumber girls' (Cassen and Kingdon 2007, p. x). Furthermore, in wider society, this ethnic group remains less socially mobile than ethnic minorities of similar class backgrounds (Platt 2007). Whites who live in poverty in the United Kingdom remain the lowest educational under-achievers. According to a 2014 report in *The Economist*, '31per cent of white British children entitled to free school meals got five good GCSEs in 2012, fewer than poor children from any other ethnic group' ('Island Mentality' 2014, para. 6). GSCE attainment amongst white British is highly polarised with the divergence largely dependent on socio-economic status (Cassen and Kingdon 2007; Strand 2008). As evidenced by the Parliamentary hearing on the *Underperformance of White Working Class Children* in February 2014 (Select Committee on Education 2014), this phenomenon continues to be a subject of concern and controversy. White working-class underachievement was noted widely in the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills annual report for the 2012–2013 academic year (Ofsted 2014) in which a poverty of low expectations was linked to 'stubbornly low outcomes that show little sign of improvement' (p. 1). Unsurprisingly, it has been well-documented in educational research that white working-class boys typically experience high levels of disengagement toward their education (Gillborn and Kirton 2000; Evans 2006; Demie and Lewis 2010). For any marginalised group, a medley of factors—including persistent disengagement, lack of basic skills and insufficient education—means they are more susceptible to poor health, depression, extended unemployment, etc.

The phenomenon of white working-class disengagement from formal education has many explanations: cultural features of working-class life, desire to stay close to family (and thus within class), peer pressure, and so forth. Demie and Lewis' (2010) research in South London shows that the white working class, as an ethnic group, have specific barriers to educational attainment such as lack of community and school engagement, weaknesses in literacy, low levels of parental engagement, and lack of school-based targeted support. As previously mentioned, white working-class families, who often experience high levels of cultural and material deprivation (Charlesworth 2000), are often blamed for their 'failure' to act responsibly in regards to their own education (Reay 2009; Gewirtz 2001), and such discussions conceal massive structural inequalities and barriers. Equally disadvantaged and in need of special support as groups from other ethnic backgrounds, the white working class are consistently excluded from special programs aimed at raising student achievement (Gillborn and Kirton 2000) and arguably can be constructed as 'new race victims' (Keddie 2013, p. 3). Gillborn and Kirton (2000, p. 281) show quite poignantly how the white working-class boys they researched were conscious of their class and ethnic disadvantages; these students were ineligible for the same level of help as the EAL (English as an Additional Language) students, despite having similar literacy deficiencies which have been shown to contribute heavily to prolonged disengagement from formal schooling.

My research has explored how white working-class boys experience formal schooling and where they feel valued and de-valued (Stahl 2015). I argue that the experience of the white working class is framed by deficit discourses which work to pathologise them and their capabilities (Stahl 2017b). According to Comber and Kamler (2007, p. 293) deficit discourses are dangerous and harmful belief systems that 'blame certain groups in society as lacking and responsible for their lack … the poor, the wilful, the disabled, the non-English speaking, the slow, the bottom 10per cent.' In terms of how students are positioned through these deficit discourses, it is important to consider how neoliberal policy governance focused on attainment and credentialism has shaped

teaching and learning. Through a neoliberal lens, '"underachieving" boys appear to be unable - or worse, unwilling- to fit themselves into the meritocratic educational system which produces the achievement vital for the economic success of the individual concerned and of the nation' (Francis 2006, p. 193). By de-socialising and de-contextualising educational achievement, a focus on individual attainment is privileged, thus perpetuating the invisibility of structural inequality.

As pedagogic processes become influenced by neoliberal logic, there are overt and subtle consequences for gender identities, specifically for working-class males. Class and gender identity enactments shape educational processes in a myriad of ways, often fixing boys into certain positions within the classroom (Francis 2006; Mac an Ghaill 1996; Stahl 2015). The presence of a competitive 'performance-oriented culture generates anxiety, especially among boys whose gender identity needs to be based on achieving power, status, and superiority' (Arnot 2004, p. 35). Schools are—intentionally or unintentionally—active players in the construction of masculinity and strong claims exist that boys' academic performance and behaviours are influenced by the way they construct and express their masculine identities in relation to the school structure (Connell 1989; Mac an Ghaill 1994, 2000).

The Study

This chapter serves as a reflection of my study, conducted in the UK between 2009 and 2011, of twenty-three white working-class boys, aged 14–16 years, enrolled at three schools in South London (two state schools and one Pupil Referral Unit) and who were preparing for General Certificates of Secondary Education (GCSEs) during their last two years of compulsory schooling (Stahl 2015). The research looked across a nexus of gender, aspiration, identity and engagement, primarily extending scholarship in educational research grappling with the boys' identities in schools and, secondly, actively addressing the complexities of social researchers working with the conceptual lenses

associated with the study of aspiration. Furthermore, the research considered how white working-class boys across the three school sites are exposed to various degrees of pathologisation which influences their learner identities and aspirations. Where 'ability' is conceptualised as measurable (Gillborn and Youdell 2000) and teachers are pressured to produce high grades, working-class students often have negative educational experiences. In my research, I observed teachers and school leaders casually labeling my participants as 'thick', 'feral', 'chav,' 'a toe-rag,' and 'fucked up' (cf. Stahl 2017b). In light of this, this chapter seeks to explore how 'young people negotiate their own meanings, lives and futures, in the context of specific sociocultural, political and economic circumstances' (Hattam and Smyth 2003, p. 381). The data gathered highlights how aspirations were conceptualised among participants and how they constituted themselves as subjects of value in reference to the deficit discourses. The institutional rhetoric that positions educational qualifications as the antidote to poverty ignores how the pursuit of higher education and increased social mobility may result in these young men either 'finding' or 'losing' certain aspects of their historically constituted working-class (Reay 2001), gender (McDowell 2003; Nayak 2006; Roberts 2012) and ethnic identities (Gillborn 2009).

In researching aspiration and how these young men construct a personhood of respectability we must remain critical of schools which, constrained by a variety of pressures, often engage in problematic approaches. Under-resourced schools and pathologising discourses are not inseparable entities but often mutually constituting. The discourses I observed in the three school sites reinforced a continual pathologisation of working-class boys as problematic and 'unteachable' thus contributing negatively to their educational achievement (Stahl 2017b). In the second half of this chapter I address the various ways in which white working-class boys, drawing on traditional values associated with working-class masculinity, evoke counternarratives to the aspiration discourses—grounded in a neoliberal conception of personhood—that permeate their normative schooling.

Reflecting on Counternarratives to Neoliberal Personhood

According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1977, p. 111), 'the level of aspiration of individuals is essentially determined by the probability (judged intuitively by means of previous successes or failures) of achieving the desired goal.' Therefore, according to this logic, working-class students do not aspire highly because, according to Bourdieu, they have internalised and reconciled themselves to the 'limited opportunities that exist for those without much cultural capital' (1977, p. 197). Therefore, youth from working-class backgrounds often come to see the aspiration toward academic success as a symbolically legitimated form of success beyond what they are constituted to desire. This is an interesting provocation and, in general terms, does not leave much space for considering how these young men construct counternarratives. While I have theorised aspirations as constrained by social class and an ongoing negotiation set against opportunity structures, my focus has been on how white working-class boys employ counternarratives to critique and subvert neoliberal conceptions of personhood in formal schooling. Counternarratives, in this sense, are primarily value-constituting practices and deeply intertwined with a history of working-class masculinity. These boys construct these counternarratives within institutions under tremendous neoliberal policy pressures which promote practices of setting, streaming, coding and assessing (Gillborn and Youdell 2000). Furthermore, intertwined with these normative practices shaping experience, schools are increasingly expected to create a neoliberal subject—the 'entrepreneur of self' which espouses values of 'self-reliance, autonomy and independence' in order to gain 'self-respect, self-esteem, self-worth and self-advancement' (Davies and Bansel 2007, p. 252).

While whiteness in relation to power and entitlement is well documented, in the South London schools in this study whiteness is often socially constructed as undesirable and equated with poor behaviour, rudeness, stagnation and a lack of ambition (Stahl 2015, 2017b). The current hegemonic neoliberal discourse permeating schools, which prioritises a view of aspirations that is competitive, economic and status

based certainly influences the subjectivities of these young males (Stahl 2015). For working-class students—in this case specifically white working-class boys, their aspirations, existing in tandem with their academic attainment—become coded in schools in a variety of unsettling ways (Stahl 2015). These deficit discourses regarding students' capabilities were embedded in the school cultures I researched. The deficit thinking permeating the institutional cultures structures the subjectivities of staff and students around a certain conception of expectation, achievement and aspiration. Through the use of labels, the working-class boys I researched became further imprisoned in a vicious cycle of deprivation, educational underachievement, and failure. Furthermore, these labels propel them to dis-identify from education and the aspirational rhetoric promoted in schools as they search for other ways to constitute themselves as subjects of value.

Counternarratives of Egalitarianism, Ordinariness and 'Middling'

Of significance to arguments concerning how class works in working-class education is how the boys I spoke with were largely able to negotiate the dominant symbolic discourse of neoliberalism and construct salient counternarratives which drew on historic egalitarian working-class values. As they are pathologised in their schooling, they draw on historical assemblages of working-class dispositions (e.g. collectivism, anti-pretentiousness, egalitarianism) to mediate neo-liberal rhetoric which privileges a very narrow form of success. These historic dispositions have been recast in the post-industrial, post-austerity landscape where traditional practices to construct a working-class masculinity are severely endangered. The boys in the study center their identity work concerning counternarratives on what I call egalitarianism (Stahl 2015). I define egalitarianism as in line with a working-class disposition toward 'fitting in' and being 'loyal to oneself' (Stahl 2014), where everyone has an 'equal say in the world' and where 'no one is better than anyone else' or 'above their station' (Archer and Leathwood 2003; Lawler 1999; MacDonald et al. 2013). Within their formal schooling

contexts which were focused on academic performativity and eligibility for university, the boys valued being considered 'ordinary' (Stahl 2013). I argue that egalitarianism in reference to aspiration is founded upon dispositions that value serendipity; 'what will be, will be', 'making do', or 'waiting and seeing.' While the neoliberal conception of personhood is one of individualism and the 'aspirational self', the counternarrative of egalitarianism has strong inflections of 'sameness' (Stahl 2014), and a commitment to collective well-being over personal gain which has been documented in other studies focusing on working-class identities (Reay 2003; Skeggs 2002). Historically validated dispositions toward solidarist, working-class communal values significantly contribute to the formation of egalitarianism. For the boys in this study, egalitarianism serves as a strategy to address the tension between the competing fields of the aspirational culture of the school and the working-class communal values of the home. It is how the boys create a sense of value and how they gain a sense of where to invest their energies to be seen as 'subjects of value.'

The majority of the boys voiced that they did not want to be seen as snobbish or thought of as better than others. In terms of their learner identities, egalitarianism was articulated in terms of being 'in the middle', where 'middling' was a mediation between 'fear of success' and 'fear of failure' (cf. Stahl 2014). In egalitarianism we see a dimension of positional suffering where the affective dimensions of class (envy/deference, contempt/pity, shame/pride) come to the fore but are mediated. As a main aspect of the counternarrative, 'middling' is a process of amelioration as the boys negotiate the rhetoric of 'learning equals earning' (Brown 2013, p. 685). As part of an internal process of 'sense-making', the participants center their identity work around egalitarianism, rejecting neoliberal binaries of 'best' and 'worst' but instead aspiring for a 'standard' level of educational achievement (Stahl 2013). This supports Phoenix's (2004) research on neoliberalism and masculinity. She found boys pursuing a 'middle position for themselves in which they could manage what they saw as the demands of masculinities, while still getting some schoolwork done' (p. 234). Linking back to deficit discourses and how whiteness in these schools is equated with poor behaviour and a lack of ambition (Stahl 2017a, b), the boys' strong desire to be

perceived as indistinctive and ordinary is coded by their educators as a lack of investment, as anti-aspirational. While many of the boys expressed they would 'make do' with whatever GCSE results they obtained, they existed in institutions focused on attainment and credentialism where the discourse of 'learning equals earning' was pervasive (Brown 2013, p. 685).

Discussion

Egalitarian counternarratives add a new dimension to understandings of the identity work of white working-class boys in schooling (Stahl 2015). Within the documented high levels of disaffection toward education exhibited by white working-class boys (cf. Gillborn 2009; Demie and Lewis 2010), my analysis draws attention to the complexity involved in mediating the call to become socially mobile (Stahl 2014). For these boys, learner identities are heavily influenced by historic working-class cultural dispositions and are in continual struggles to negotiate a self from 'different repertoires of social and cultural resources' (Wexler 1992, p. 7). Within formal schooling in the United Kingdom, neoliberal policy rhetoric has arguably narrowed the 'spaces of value.' Furthermore, continuous exposure to pathologisation (in both schooling and wider society) clearly limits the spaces where white working-class boys can access and validate identities and working-class masculinities which are respectable in a context where conceptions of respectability in a post-industrial community are in flux (Nayak 2006; Ward 2015). In critically considering the aspiration of working-class students we must consider how they find spaces to contest, critique and subvert neoliberal regimes in order to constitute themselves as persons of value.

The majority of the participants saw their aspirations as adequately fulfilled by a drive towards 'middling', and this aligns with the work of Savage et al. (2001) where 'what seemed to matter more for our respondents was being ordinary' (p. 887). Focusing on social class identification rather than learner identities Savage et al. (2001) suggest that 'middling' could be 'a strategy to resist the dominance of cultural capital' whereby individuals distance themselves from what they do

not possess. Savage et al. (2001) argue that, in their study of class in Manchester, people actively disassociated from the labels involved with social distinction where 'By being ordinary, people try to claim to be just themselves, and not socially-fixed people who are not "real" individuals but rather social ciphers' (p. 889). Furthermore, Savage (2000) suggests that such responses are an indirect way of 'refusing' class identity, a process of repudiating the discourse of inequality altogether (p. 35).

I am interested in the extent to which an egalitarian counternarrative is a result of the disjuncture between forms of schooling under neoliberal pressures and the historic working-class community values. The egalitarian counternarratives, as an agentic response to sometimes painful lived experience in schools, raises interesting questions regarding whether they exist *despite of* or *because of* the circumstances of the white working class.

It is important to be critical in considering how egalitarianism manifests and works. Though clearly it lends itself to a certain amount of subversion we should remain critical as to the extent to which counternarratives are actually a form of resistance. Bourdieu writes:

> For example, to oppose the school system … is to exclude oneself from the school, and increasingly, to lock oneself into one's condition of dominated. On the contrary, to accept assimilation by adopting school culture amounts to being coopted by the institution. The dominated are very often condemned to such dilemmas, to choices between two solutions which, each from a certain standpoint, are equally bad ones … . (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 82)

While the young men may present egalitarian subjectivities as a way to rebuff the neoliberal discourse of schooling, they were, of course, at least partially neoliberal subjects formed through long-standing neoliberal schooling practices. These young men move through discourses where certain capitals are privileged and legitimised, and they feel certain pressures to present a self that is amenable to capital accumulations, the finding and increasing of value (Skeggs 2011, p. 508). In his research on working-class masculinities in post-industrial environments, Ward (2016) describes a chameleonisation of masculinities where there is code

shifting and multiple performances of the masculine self; where working-class masculinity was 're-embodied and re-traditionalised in different ways across other local sites and spaces' (p. 222). In my research, the participants were beholden to an egalitarian ideal influencing how their aspirations were mediated and which limited their fluidity and desire to adopt multiple selves (Stahl 2017a) although this may have been more apparent outside of their formal schooling which was not observed in this study.

The participants were caught up in contemporary processes of individualised aspiration concerning grades and qualifications, however, 'such processes are both ameliorated and framed by an overreaching sense of, and commitment to, collectivity and "the common good"' (Reay 2003, p. 305). It has been documented that working-class students engage in 'emotional work' surrounding feeling of guilt when it comes to the pressure to move beyond one's place (Reay 2001). Arguably, the boys buy into the egalitarian counternarrative to guard against a 'fear of failure' as well as a 'fear of success' as if they were to invest heavily in their academics they would potentially be the first in their families to attend university and, in conventional terms, move away from their point of origin. However, it must be noted that at the time of data collection, university fees had trebled in the United Kingdom, making university study very risky for all the participants in terms of finance.

Conclusion

The arguments in this article are positioned against the educational policy rhetoric of 'raising aspirations' (Spohrer 2011). The reality is that the United Kingdom remains economically relatively stagnant which restricts social mobility (Blanchflower 2012; Cabinet Office 2011). As I researched in these school sites, I was struck by how it has become increasingly difficult for these young males to establish a so-called 'good life' (Stahl 2012) away from the neoliberal conception of personhood that is self-serving, highly strident and focused on capital accrual. Class is in no way straightforward; it is, according to Reay (2004) 'a complicated

mixture of the material, the discursive, psychological predispositions, and sociological dispositions' (p. 151). Class identities are not fixed but rather social identities are re/produced through relational structures and processes which are, in turn, contested. Where middle-class youth have continued to find new ways to symbolically legitimate their power, working-class youth contend with a robust pathologisation embedded within UK society (Skeggs 2004) which compels them to become agentic in the search of increasingly narrow spaces where they can feel valuable. In conclusion, I draw on Tawney's (1964, p. 108) wise words on social mobility:

> individual happiness does not only require that men [sic] should be free to rise to new positions of comfort and distinction; it also requires that they should be able to lead a life of dignity and culture, whether they rise or not.

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Performance, Choice and Social Class: Theorising Inequalities in Educational Opportunity

Ron Thompson

Introduction

Persistent inequality in educational opportunity is well documented in the sociological literature. For many years, *access* to education was the overriding issue. However, during the twentieth century lower secondary education became almost universal in Western industrial nations, and mass participation in upper secondary and higher education has become firmly established in recent decades. The focus has therefore shifted, from gross inequalities in access to patterns of inequality in terms of attainment, highest level of education reached and type of institution attended. These inequalities remain significant, and the chances of young people reaching the higher levels of education are strongly associated with their social origin. Taking just one example, in 2016 only 39% of pupils eligible for free school meals in England achieved a critical requirement for progression to upper secondary

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education, a GCSE grade A*-C in mathematics and English, compared with 67% of other pupils (DfE 2017). This chapter explores how such inequalities can be understood in terms of *class*, taking the position of families within the social structure as fundamental to understanding their relationship to education. It explores two important questions. Firstly, how does class contribute to the generation of inequalities in educational opportunity? Secondly, why should class remain significant in spite of social and technological progress, and the increasing meritocracy claimed by many politicians? To answer these questions, the chapter discusses rational action theories of educational decision making, an approach developed specifically to explain observed patterns of stability and change in class-based inequalities in educational attainment. These theories have been largely neglected within the sociology of education, where the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Basil Bernstein in particular has dominated. However, they have received increased attention in recent years due to a number of factors. These include more reliable international data on patterns of educational inequality; more extensive evidence on the underlying assumptions of rational action theory; and improved estimates on the relative magnitude of performance and choice effects at educational transitions.

Although greatly developed by later authors, the rational action approach derives from the work of Raymond Boudon and the methodological individualism utilised in his *Education, Opportunity and Social Inequality* (1974). In retrospect, Boudon describes the centrality of individual behaviour to his approach:

> [I]n order to analyse the system of macroscopic data which social mobility represents, it was vital to take it for what it in fact *is* – the statistical imprint of the juxtaposition of a host of individual acts … [by] individuals who are socially *situated*, in other words people who are part of a family and other social groups, and who have resources which are cultural as well as economic. (Boudon 1989, p. 6)

This does not imply that Boudon denied the existence of macrosocial structures. Rather, the location of individuals within these structures—including class structures—leads to behaviour which produces,

reproduces and adapts to their situation within the structure (Boudon 1991, p. 30). Boudon argued that the educational decisions made by children and their families could be understood in these terms. Moreover, the cumulative impact of these decisions—whether to proceed from one level to the next, or whether to follow academic or vocational routes—meant that even relatively small class-based differences in decision making could accrue significantly over an educational career, outweighing the effects of other differences in performance.

Following Breen et al. (2014), we can distinguish between two types of process which might generate educational inequalities according to social origin. *Socioeconomic mediation* refers to systematic differences in the orientations of families towards education, orientations which are relatively permanent and are formed through socialization within a system of class relations that disadvantages those in working-class positions in a number of ways, both material and symbolic. The interaction of field and habitus which lies at the centre of Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction produces this kind of mediation. Where *socioeconomic heterogeneity* applies, any differences in orientation towards education are primarily the consequence of the ways in which families are affected by their class position, irrespective of any intrinsic dispositions. Such effects might arise from differential access to material, social and cultural resources, from differences in status and treatment within the schooling system, or from other less visible processes. Whilst accepting that cultural inequalities could explain many of the observed differences in educational attainment between social classes, and especially those relating to performance at a particular level of education, Boudon adopts a model of educational decision making which gives a crucial status to socioeconomic heterogeneity. That is, he assumes that class-based patterns in educational decisions can be comprehended as rational responses to the situations associated with different class positions:

> Educational sociologists (who owe their social position to their educational qualifications) often imagine that children from the underprivileged classes have limited educational aspirations as a result of an ('irrational') fidelity to a subculture or a class ethos. But such behaviour

> is irrational only in terms of the *observer's* situation, when it is obvious that 'rationality' or 'irrationality' can only be determined in relation to the *actor's* behaviour. (Boudon 1991, p. 50)

The chapter begins by reviewing the empirical literature on inequality of educational opportunity and establishing terminology. It then introduces the distinction between the primary and secondary effects of social stratification on educational attainment (Boudon 1974), leading to one of the most important motivations for developing a rational action approach—the recognition that, in addition to their academic performance, the choices made by individuals are central to the production of educational inequalities. The main features of rational action theory are then outlined, drawing on the work of Goldthorpe (1996), Erikson and Jonsson (1996b), and Breen and Goldthorpe (1997), as well as later developments (Jaeger 2007; Breen et al. 2014). The chapter then discusses attempts to test rational action theory empirically, particularly in its Breen–Goldthorpe formulation, and highlights some of the aspects confirmed—or otherwise—by these analyses. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the role of class in rational action theories of educational decisions.

Inequality of Educational Opportunity: Persistence and Change

Educational attainment differs between groups of people defined in various ways; for example, according to 'race', gender, or disability. In this chapter, the focus is on inequality of educational opportunity (IEO), a term which describes 'differences in level of educational attainment according to social background' (Boudon 1974, p. xi). Social background will be understood primarily in terms of class, enabling a conceptualisation based on categories with specific social meanings. A number of caveats to this statement are necessary before examining the data on educational inequality. For authors such as Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992), whose work has been particularly influential in framing quantitative studies of IEO, these categories are defined in terms of

employment relations, and for employed workers are based on features of the labour process—whether workers are closely monitored and paid according to specified quantities of labour, or have a more open-ended and autonomous 'service contract' relationship typical of professional middle-class employment. In studies based on this conceptualisation of class, large employers tend to be rendered invisible due to their relatively small numbers, so that what we learn from such research is essentially about fractions of the middle and working classes rather than what Marxists might consider more fundamental relationships between an exploiting capitalist class and other sections of society. Moreover, whilst the relationship between different forms of employment relation and material conditions is reasonably clear—for example through income levels, career progression and job security—the relationship with the cultural resources necessary for educational success is less obvious.

An alternative conceptualisation of class, and one familiar from many qualitative studies of class in education, is associated with the work of Pierre Bourdieu. In this approach, families are located within a multi-dimensional social space and share class positions with others having similar distributions of capital, in terms of its quantity, composition (economic, cultural and social), and trajectory in time (Bourdieu 1987). This makes visible inequalities in *wealth* as well as income, and also in cultural and material resources. However, it is rare for large-scale studies of IEO to be conducted from this perspective (see Van de Werfhorst and Hofstede 2007 for one example). Even when social class is understood in terms of occupational categories, it is often either not known or not the only social background variable of interest. Parental education, occupational status or family income may therefore be used in place of or in addition to class. In the UK, eligibility for free school meals is an often-used proxy for disadvantage, but its correspondence with social class is relatively weak (Ilie et al. 2017). Erik Olin Wright (2005, pp. 25–26) notes that frameworks for understanding class which are based on modes and processes of production 'differ sharply from simple gradational accounts of class in which class is itself directly identified within inequalities in income'. For this reason, different approaches to conceptualising class can lead to difficulties when comparing empirical studies.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, there has been a dramatic expansion of educational opportunity in most developed nations. For the more privileged classes in these countries, participation rates for upper secondary education in excess of 85% were already widespread by the mid-1970s (Haim and Shavit 2013), whilst increasing numbers of children from poorer backgrounds were able to access at least lower secondary education. These trends have continued into the present century, and in 2012 the OECD average for the proportion of adults aged 25–34 who had achieved at least upper secondary education was 82%, compared with 64% of 55–64-year-olds (OECD 2014, p. 43). Similarly, participation in higher education has grown significantly almost everywhere, and the OECD average rate of completed tertiary education is now 42% for 25–34-year-olds compared with 26% for those aged 55–64 (OECD 2016, p. 42). However, from the early stages of this process, there have been high levels of inequality in participation and attainment according to social origin. In the UK, although improvements occurred between the mid-1970s and mid-2000s, the performance gap at ages 16 and 18 between the richest and poorest remains significant (Blanden and Macmillan 2014), and a similar situation is observed elsewhere.

In the early 1990s, international comparative studies suggested that, except in a very few countries, inequality in educational opportunity had persisted with little change throughout the twentieth century (Shavit and Blossfeld 1993). This conclusion was later modified, and a complex picture has emerged in which some equalisation has occurred in a number of countries (Erikson and Jonsson 1996a; Breen and Jonsson 2005; Breen et al. 2009; Haim and Shavit 2013). Nevertheless, significant levels of inequality according to social origin remain, in contrast to inequalities in educational attainment relating to gender, which decreased substantially from the 1930s onwards (Breen et al. 2010). Equalisation has tended mainly to affect earlier transitions, with near-universality of lower secondary education and a reduction in class origin effects at the transition to upper secondary education. Evidence on inequalities in the transition to tertiary education is more mixed, with some countries showing an increase in inequality whilst others show little change (Schindler and Lörz 2012; Haim and Shavit 2013).

In UK higher education, periods of expansion in the 1960s and 1990s had minimal impact on differentials between working- and middle-class students (Boliver 2011), although there was some reduction by 2000 (Ianelli 2007). For more recent cohorts entering higher education in the UK, comprising young people who turned 18 between 2004 and 2009, Blanden and Macmillan (2014) report some decrease in differentials using a compound measure of socio-economic status but little change when eligibility for free school meals alone is used.

The persistence of IEO through periods of educational expansion can be understood—in part at least—by noting that expansion can occur in a number of ways, not all leading to increased equity in access. In particular, changes in the class structure such as those which occurred in Britain in the 1950s and 1960s can generate increased demand for education from a burgeoning middle class, a demand which created irresistible political pressure for expanded provision. According to Goldthorpe and Heath (2016), the British class structure changed between 1951 and 2011 from a pyramidal to a near-rectangular configuration as the middle class grew from around 11% of the working-age population to 40%, whilst over the same period the working class declined from 55% to 30% of this population. Even allowing for changes in the social meaning and material conditions of white-collar work, this suggests a mechanism for expansion in which the class distribution of educational resources would not change greatly. Moreover, changes within the middle class itself have arguably shifted the balance from families in which class position is reproduced by the transmission of wealth towards those where the intergenerational transmission of education has greater importance (Power and Whitty 2002). These considerations suggest that great care must be exercised in interpreting changes in participation rates during periods of educational expansion, and it has often been observed that the middle classes have been the chief beneficiaries of expansion. For example, Halsey, Heath and Ridge (1980) found that, whilst working-class higher education participation in England and Wales more than tripled across four cohorts born between 1913 and 1952, the actual growth—from 0.9 to 3.1%—was dwarfed by the increase in participation of young people from the highest social classes—from 7.2 to 26.4%. By 2009, higher education

participation amongst the most deprived quintile had increased to 17.8%, but amongst the most advantaged quintile participation was 55.0% (Blanden and Macmillan 2014).

Patterns of access in which higher social classes retain their advantage during periods of educational expansion are often described as illustrating *maximally maintained inequality* (Raftery and Hout 1993). This term refers to a situation in which, initially at least, the additional places made available by expansion are taken up disproportionately by students from advantaged backgrounds. Relative transition rates or odds ratios[1] therefore remain constant, even though provision expands, until demand for education amongst higher social classes is saturated. More precisely, maximally maintained inequality describes an educational system in which one of the following applies: (a) expanded educational participation reflects increased demand due to population growth generally or an increase in the size of the middle class—in this case there is no trend towards full participation and transition rates are largely unchanged; (b) expansion exceeds this basic level of demand—transition rates increase across the population, but inequality expressed by odds ratios is preserved or even increased because participation grows more rapidly in higher classes; (c) demand from higher social classes is saturated—in this case transition rates for lower social classes increase more rapidly than those for higher classes, and inequality decreases. The findings on UK higher education discussed above can be understood in this way, and Boliver (2011) concludes that social class inequalities in higher education have been maximally maintained, persisting until participation by the most advantaged classes reached saturation point and declining slowly thereafter.

Differences between educational systems produce different levels of inequality, and in particular the relationship between stratified systems of education and IEO is well documented. 'Dead-end' pathways, differentiated curricula and low permeability between vocational and general education are likely to be associated with greater inequality, especially when allocation to different educational tracks occurs at a relatively early age (Pfeffer 2008; Van de Werfhorst and Mijs 2010; Burger 2016). Greater opportunity to exercise educational choice also tends to increase IEO, for example by enabling children from working-class families to be

diverted into less-prestigious vocational pathways (Becker and Hecken 2009). In higher education, stratification also tends to maintain or increase IEO, as applicants from working-class backgrounds may avoid prestigious institutions and courses, opting for notionally equivalent courses elsewhere (Reay et al. 2005; Boliver 2011; Blossfeld et al. 2015). Indeed, when educational opportunities are extended to the majority of people, they no longer offer positional advantage and the social meaning of these opportunities changes. However, the quest for advantage may not move to higher levels of education. In his thesis of *effectively maintained inequality*, Lucas (2001) proposes that "socioeconomically advantaged actors secure for themselves and their children some degree of advantage wherever advantages are commonly possible" (p. 1652). As saturation approaches, qualitative differences within a particular educational level can be exploited, thereby maintaining the advantage of those with the cultural and economic resources needed to profit from them. Although in the UK demand for higher education may still not be saturated, effectively maintained inequality (EMI) has obvious implications for understanding differentiation between, for example, Russell Group universities, former polytechnics and colleges of further education. A number of studies in different countries provide evidence in support of EMI (Boliver 2011; Thomsen 2015), although it is not clear whether the exploitation of qualitative differences has increased, as might be expected if EMI is indeed operating (Ianelli et al. 2016).

Primary and Secondary Effects of Social Stratification

The distinction between primary and secondary effects arose from studies of class differences in the transition to secondary education (Boalt and Jansen 1953; Girard and Bastide 1963). However—although the terminology does not appear in the original French edition of his book—Boudon (1974) was the first to utilise primary and secondary effects as the basis for a systematic sociological explanation of inequalities in educational opportunity.

> IEO is generated by a two-component process. One component is related mainly to the cultural effects of the stratification system. The other introduces the assumption that even with other factors being equal, people will make different choices according to their position in the stratification system. In other words, it is assumed (1) that people behave rationally in the economic sense … but that (2) they also behave within decision fields whose parameters are a function of their position in the stratification system. (Boudon 1974, p. 36)

In Boudon's account, social stratification is assumed to generate a number of differences between families, so that the lower the social position, the poorer the cultural background. These differences—the cultural inequalities—lead to lower average school achievement by children from working-class families. The outcomes of this process, in which cultural inequalities mediate the association between social status and educational achievement, are the *primary effects* of social stratification. Secondly, Boudon (1974, p. 28) notes that, when social background differences in performance have been allowed for, educational and social aspirations remain strongly influenced by social background. The *secondary effects* of social stratification, defined as the impact of social class on educational attainment after taking into account differences in performance,[2] are assumed to operate by shaping the educational decisions made by students with similar academic performance but different class backgrounds. This does not imply that working-class students have intrinsically lower aspirations. Drawing on the work of Keller and Zavalloni (1964), Boudon comments that 'the tendency of lower-class youngsters to expect lower status does not imply that their level of aspiration is lower. It simply means that the distance they have to travel … will be different from the distance covered by middle-class youngsters' (1974, p. 23). The distinction between primary and secondary effects was of great importance to Boudon, who argued that, whilst cultural inequalities are an important factor in producing IEO, they are not necessarily the most significant: although primary effects tend to diminish for those who reach higher levels of education,[3] secondary effects 'assert themselves repeatedly throughout the life of a cohort' (1974, p. 86). Over an educational career, therefore, secondary effects should be the

dominant process in producing IEO. Moreover, they provide a possible explanation for why differentiated and stratified educational systems tend to be associated with higher levels of IEO, as observed earlier.

From the outset, the distinction between primary and secondary effects proved controversial, not least because the relative size of these effects is difficult to measure. Halsey, Heath and Ridge (1980, p. 134) noted its potential for understanding IEO, but concluded that a model with only primary effects appeared more plausible than one with only secondary effects. However, it was not until attention to Boudon's approach was revived by the rational-choice models developed by Erikson and Jonsson (1996b, c) and Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) that estimates of the relative magnitude of primary and secondary effects in a range of countries became available. These contributions include Erikson et al. (2005), Jackson et al. (2007) and Jackson (2013), all of whom find that secondary effects are a significant factor in producing IEO. Applying a different estimation method to tertiary education transitions in Germany, Schindler and Lörz (2012) find that secondary effects play a larger role than primary effects and have increased in importance over time. Nash (2006), however, offers a radically different analysis which concludes that primary effects are by far the dominant element in IEO. However, Nash's approach—which is based on comparing the eventual attainment of different social classes according to a measure of cognitive ability at age 10, rather than on actual academic performance at the relevant transitions—appears tangential to the definition of secondary effects given above (see Jackson et al. 2007, p. 226).

A technical difficulty with estimating secondary effects is that the presence of unobserved variables may lead to inaccurate estimates. Underestimates may be produced by anticipatory decisions (Erikson et al. 2005), which lead students to relax their efforts prior to a transition point because they have already decided not to remain in education. This is because the consequent reduction in performance would be attributed to a primary effect, even though it was the result of an educational decision. However, Morgan (2012) argues that a more complex causal model is required to understand how incorrect estimates of secondary effects may emerge. He suggests that the assumptions underlying the analysis of primary and secondary effects could be compromised by the existence

of an exogenous variable—ethnicity would be an example—which may influence social background as well as educational performance and choice (Morgan 2012, p. 33). The possibility of erroneous estimates, particularly when ethnicity is a significant factor, should therefore be acknowledged.

Rational Action Theories and Educational Decision Making

In general, theories taking a rational action approach assume that social phenomena are the macro-level result of individual decisions and actions which can be understood as rational from the point of view of the actor. In coming to their decisions, these actors evaluate (not necessarily consciously or explicitly) the costs and benefits of possible courses of action, selecting the one which provides the most favourable balance in relation to their goals and preferences (Boudon 2003, pp. 3–4). Although for its advocates, rational choice sociology provides a rigorous theoretical approach leading to testable hypotheses, it has also been the object of some controversy, and has been accused of reducing complex issues involving structure and agency to an unrealistic quantitative-economic approach to human behaviour. However, for some rational action theorists—including Boudon himself—rational decision-making should be interpreted more broadly: 'to get a satisfactory theory of rationality, one has to accept the idea that rationality is not exclusively instrumental' (Boudon 2003, p. 17). Aims and preferences can derive from 'soft' motivations including identity and social values as well as material advantage (Kroneberg and Kalter 2012). Nor does rationality imply that actors are perfectly knowledgeable about their situation:

> I would recognize that departures from the standard of 'perfect' rationality are very frequent. I make no assumption that actors are always entirely clear about their goals, are always aware of the optimal means of pursuing them, or in the end do always follow the course of action that they know to be rational. (Goldthorpe 1996, p. 485)

For Boudon (1974, p. xiii), one of the central questions motivating his theorisation of IEO was why educational inequality had fallen since the Second World War, whilst social mobility showed little change. Following the work of Shavit and Blossfeld (1993), the problem taken up by Goldthorpe (1996) and Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) in their development of Boudon's approach was the *stability* of class differentials in education. More recently, evidence has again accumulated of a decline in IEO (Breen et al. 2009). However, as noted earlier equalisation has taken place mainly at lower educational levels, and secondary effects appear to play an important role in upper secondary and tertiary education. The motivation for considering theories of IEO in which educational decisions play a central role is therefore largely unchanged.

It must be emphasised that the models proposed by Boudon (1974) and by Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) are models of IEO within educational systems as a whole, not theories of individual behaviour. Rational action theories have been criticised for failing to acknowledge the diversity of individual behaviour, and Hatcher (1998, p. 20) argues that 'real-life choices … cannot be reduced to utilitarian calculations of costs, benefits and probabilities'. However, this perhaps misrepresents rational action, which deals with average effects rather than complex patterns of variation: 'We … assume that, *in their central tendencies*, these patterns of educational choice reflect action on the part of children and their parents that can be understood as rational' (Breen and Goldthorpe 1997, p. 277, original emphasis). This standpoint is integrated with a positional explanation of educational decisions, in which location within the class structure, rather than inherent class characteristics, is the chief source of class differences in average behaviour. Social classes are assumed to differ in only two substantive ways: through the primary effects of social stratification, which affect average academic ability and therefore the chances of educational success; and through the resources they can draw on to offset the costs and risks of remaining in education. This may include cultural resources, for example a family's strategic knowledge about the educational system and their ability to offer help with schooling (Erikson and Jonsson 1996b, p. 26). Secondary effects are assumed to arise because, although members of different social

classes think in essentially similar ways about educational decisions, the substantive differences in their situation lead to different subjective evaluations of the costs and benefits attaching to these decisions.

Progression through an educational system is represented by a sequence of branching points where students choose between alternatives with differing risks, costs and benefits, which may vary according to social origin (Boudon 1974; Breen and Goldthorpe 1997; Breen et al. 2014). Typically, branching points entail options such as leaving education altogether, or remaining in education and following a higher- or lower-status curriculum track. The significant factors in making a decision are taken to be the cost of remaining in education, including opportunity costs such as lost earnings; the benefits associated with the possible outcomes of the decision, as evaluated by the individual and their family; and the (subjective) chances of successfully completing the next educational level. Although Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) include only economic costs in their model, Boudon (1974, p. 30) argues that social costs must be included, arising from the effect on family solidarity or peer group relationships of the educational decision. An increasingly meritocratic society is assumed, so that educational qualifications become more important over time and therefore—provided resources outweigh costs—participation rates will tend to increase for all social classes. This assumption is not particularly realistic, and there is evidence of a continuing direct effect of social origin on class destination (Gugushvili et al. 2017). However, this may not be a significant weakness: if education is thereby seen to be less efficacious, all social classes would potentially be affected, leaving differentials largely unchanged.

The factors outlined above suggest three possible mechanisms which may generate essentially rational social class differences in educational decisions (Breen and Goldthorpe 1997, p. 282). Firstly, differences in economic resources are likely to mean that the costs of education—even when limited to foregone earnings—will place a relatively heavier burden on working-class families. The social costs proposed by Boudon would reinforce this tendency in systems where significant disparities already exist in participation according to social class. Secondly, class differences in the subjective probability of success at higher levels of education will exist because they correspond to objective differences arising from

primary effects. The possibility also exists that a *higher* subjective probability of success may be required for working-class children to continue in education, which would introduce extra-rational processes to decision making (Gambetta 1987). Thirdly, and most crucially, families from higher social classes desire more education because in a meritocratic society this is a pre-requisite of maintaining their higher social position. As Boudon (1974, p. 29) points out, a middle-class child choosing a non-academic education would be likely to experience social demotion, whilst the same choice for a working-class child would not carry the same risk. This explanation is further developed by Breen and Goldthorpe (1997, p. 283), who use the term *relative risk aversion* (also referred to as *class maintenance*) to describe a class-independent desire to avoid downward mobility. Given the increasing importance of service sector and so-called 'knowledge-based' employment, class maintenance motivations would of course prompt children from working-class backgrounds to obtain more education than previous generations, but not necessarily to the same extent as those aiming to enter the higher professions. For these children, mid-range mobility may be seen as less risky and leading to significant, if more modest, rewards. Educational expansion thereby becomes self-sustaining, but preserves class differentials and drives further development of positional strategies as middle-class families strive to overcome social congestion (Brown 2013).

Constructing a formal mathematical model from the assumptions outlined above, Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) show how it can produce the patterns observed in conditions of maximally maintained inequality. They assume that the balance between costs, risks and benefits at a certain level of education shifts because lower levels become saturated, more places become available or costs decrease. For example, fees may be removed or lost income may decrease due to high levels of youth unemployment. Initially, participation will expand as continuing in education becomes more attractive. However, largely driven by class maintenance, there will be greater uptake amongst higher social classes and IEO as measured by odds ratios remains approximately constant (Breen and Goldthorpe 1997, p. 294). Once costs and/or risks are sufficiently low to enable all children from higher social classes to continue in education if they so wish—the saturation condition—further

reductions will have little impact on this class, and odds ratios will decrease as participation rates for lower social classes continue to increase. It is also possible to explain effectively maintained inequality from this perspective, provided that qualitative differences within an educational level entail different cost burdens, subjective probabilities of success, or probabilities of access to higher social class positions.

Given the importance of relative risk aversion in both the Boudon and Breen–Goldthorpe models, it is unsurprising that this hypothesis has been the subject of extensive empirical investigation across different countries and contexts. Some negative results have been reported, and for example Gabay-Egozi et al. (2010) found that in Israel class maintenance motivations did not affect educational decisions. Most studies agree on the importance of families' desire to avoid downward mobility, but differ on whether this motivation is independent of social background. Although Van de Werfhorst and Hofstede (2007) found class maintenance in the Netherlands to be nearly constant across social classes, German data analysed by Stocké (2007) indicated that parents from routine non-manual classes attached greater importance to their children avoiding downward mobility than did parents in professional employment. Breen et al. (2014) have shown that relative risk aversion is related to socioeconomic heterogeneity, and operates when class maintenance motivations override individual risk aversion. Researching educational transitions in Denmark, they found that the distribution of individual risk aversion was the same across social classes. However, higher individual risk aversion did not reduce the probability of choosing the academic route for the most privileged students, whereas such a reduction did occur for students from disadvantaged and middle socioeconomic backgrounds. A similar effect is also reported by Obermeier and Schneider (2015). Other features of the Breen–Goldthorpe model have also been tested, with broadly favourable although not conclusive results (Stocké 2007). However, it has proved difficult to surmount the theoretical ambiguity affecting rational action theories more generally: that is, although there is substantial evidence that the Breen–Goldthorpe model is consistent with observed patterns of IEO, other theoretical explanations—for example human capital theory—can also account for these patterns (see Thompson 2016).

Conclusion: Class in Rational Action Theories

Rational action theory provides an elegant and persuasive account of the generation of IEO in educational systems. In contrast to pervasive classifications of young people and their families in terms of aspiration (middle class) and dependence (working class), it conceptualises differences in behaviour as rational ways of dealing with differences in condition. Although it cannot be used to understand the complexities and variations of individual behaviour, it can explain observed trends in IEO such as the relatively persistent inequality seen across national contexts, the narrowing of class differentials as participation by higher social classes approaches saturation, and reductions in IEO associated with lower levels of economic inequality or lower costs of education. For policy in England, it also raises the question of how robust participation in higher education may be if the current regime of tuition fees and student loans continues. The policy implications of rational action theory do not stop here, and in particular Boudon's emphasis on the cumulative impact of secondary effects suggests a significant negative impact from early curriculum differentiation and low permeability between academic and vocational tracks. In general, whenever 'choice' is associated with increased academic, social or economic risk, we should expect a tendency towards greater inequality. In terms of positive interventions, Neugebauer and Schindler (2012) find that neutralising secondary effects at the transition to upper secondary school would be the single most effective means to increase participation rates in tertiary education among working-class students. However, whilst the importance of distinguishing between primary and secondary effects can be considered well established, verification of other key elements of the theory such as relative risk aversion is hindered by theoretical ambiguity: it is often difficult to differentiate rational action explanations from other theories. Although substantial evidence has accumulated which is consistent with the Breen–Goldthorpe model, further empirical research which differentiates it from other approaches is needed. In view of these issues, it is necessary to look more closely at the theory itself, and ask to what extent it is a theory of *class* in education rather than merely an account of the consequences of stratification according to continuous variables such as income.

The starting point for such a discussion must, of course, be the conceptualisation of class itself. For Boudon, there is considerable latitude in the way that class is used, and terms such as 'class' and 'status' occur largely without clarification. Boudon (1974, p. 163) claimed that there was 'no satisfactory theory of stratification in industrial society' and intended his model of IEO to be as independent as possible from any specific theory of class, assuming only that classes exist and form an ordered, roughly pyramidal structure. Similarly, although Goldthorpe's (1996) conceptualisation of class is articulated more explicitly in terms of the Erikson–Goldthorpe schema, its role is confined to generating inequalities in economic resources and in early academic ability. In one sense, this is the great achievement of these models—to demonstrate that an elaborated theory of class is not necessary to explain the broad outlines of persistence and change in IEO. However, it is still legitimate to ask what theoretical work is done by class in these models, and what is omitted by them from a more detailed understanding. Clearly, the first requirement of class is that it should produce the primary effects of social stratification. For Boudon, this occurs through cultural inequalities, based on the assumption that school achievement is a function of cultural background, which is 'poorer'—or at least less consonant with the middle-class values embodied in the school—for lower social classes (Boudon 1974, p. 23). This naturally invites comparison with cultural reproduction theories, and indeed Boudon cites here both the original French edition of Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) and Bernstein's early work on linguistic forms.[4] By implication, then, the differences in cultural opportunities which Boudon relies on to produce primary effects are not solely the result of inequalities in economic resources; they must also reflect qualitative aspects of class relations such as the production of class-differentiated subjectivities.

To produce secondary effects, class acts structurally, as a matrix of positions associated with different resources and opportunities. In view of the importance of cost–benefit evaluations to the rational action approach, it might be thought that little more would be required of this matrix than to provide a hierarchy of more or less desirable locations. The relative risk aversion hypothesis assumes that all classes fear downward mobility, and that for middle-class students class maintenance motivations are strong enough to override individual risk aversion. This certainly suggests significant class gradients in material conditions.

However, class maintenance motivations could also arise from non-economic factors, such as the social costs proposed by Boudon, and indeed there is evidence that students attempt to maximise *both* social and economic returns to education (Jaeger 2007). These social costs extend into education itself, and there is substantial evidence that class is 'lived' in classrooms in different ways according to social background (Reay 2006). This suggests that a deeper approach is needed than merely positing a hierarchy of classes. Beverley Skeggs (2015, p. 206) argues that 'to understand class we need to understand the processes of classification: exploitation, domination, dispossession and devaluation, and their legitimation'. In this type of conceptualisation, class relations involve struggles over the rights, powers and relationships individuals have in processes of material and cultural production and consumption. The economic inequalities shaping class-based differences in decision making then *derive from* such class relations. Moreover, rational evaluations should not be assumed to take place against a static or class-neutral background. Educational systems reflect class interests as well as more general national values, and the neoliberal education reforms that have occurred in many countries are part of a dynamic ideological project which exacerbates rather than reduces inequality.

These observations suggest that, as a theory of how class operates to produce IEO, the rational action approach contains weaknesses as well as strengths. These derive largely from difficulties associated with the idea of class acting in two different ways, corresponding to the two components proposed by Boudon in the generation of IEO. As we have seen, a rounded conception of class requires that, ultimately, both cultural and material inequalities arise from a single unitary process. Although the distinction between primary and secondary effects is, as Nash (2006) says, of great methodological value, failing to recognise their common roots in class relations may be unhelpful in framing a politics of inclusion. Boudon (1974, p. 115) suggests that the best strategy for reducing IEO might be to focus on economic rather than cultural inequalities, as these would change the parameters of the educational decision-making process and thereby reduce the accumulation of secondary effects over an educational career. However, if secondary as well as primary effects are embedded in class society at a deeper level, the impact of such an intervention would be limited.

The attractiveness of a more unified model of IEO raises the possibility of integrating a rational-action model within a Bourdieusian framework. This might appear an impossible task: on the one hand, Goldthorpe (1996, p. 491) rejects cultural reproduction explanations of secondary effects, claiming that they are incompatible with the realities of educational expansion; and Bourdieu himself explains that 'the main purpose of this notion [habitus] is to break with the … philosophy of action … which rational choice theory has recently brought back in fashion' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 120). Nevertheless, there have been several attempts to achieve some form of accommodation between rational action and cultural reproduction. Van de Werfhorst and Hofstede (2007) propose that primary effects are best understood from a Bourdieusian perspective, using cultural capital in particular, whilst Glaesser and Cooper (2014) argue that habitus can deepen our understanding of relative risk aversion by providing boundaries for a subjective rationality. Although such a project would have been unwelcome to Boudon, who described cultural reproduction as based on 'a tautological postulate, of questionable value' (1974, p. 112), it may provide the large-scale explanatory power of the Breen-Goldthorpe model alongside a compelling account of class in education.

Notes

1. Odds and odds ratios between social categories for an educational transition are calculated from the proportions in each class making the transition. If p_1 is the probability of making the transition for children in class S_1, and p_2 the corresponding probability for class S_2, the odds for class S_1 are $p_1/(1-p_1)$. The odds ratio between the two classes, taking S_1 as the reference class, is the ratio between the odds for S_1 and the odds for S_2, that is $\left[p_1(1-p_2)/p_2(1-p_1)\right]$.
2. Some authors consider also the tertiary effects of social stratification; that is, the effect of social background on the evaluations of students' performance by teachers and educational institutions. See Blossfeld et al. (2015).
3. A similar observation is made by Bourdieu and Passeron (1990, p. 72), who use the term 'unequal selectedness' to describe the tendency of

lower-achieving students from higher social classes to remain in the educational system, whilst students from lower social classes with similar levels of achievement drop out.

4. Somewhat dismissively, in the case of Bourdieu and Passeron (1990). See also Boudon (1974, p. 112), where he attempts to distinguish the cultural inequalities he regards as responsible for primary effects from the 'critical sociology' represented by Bourdieu.

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“A Chance to Talk Like This”: Gender, Education, and Social Haunting in a UK Coalfield

N. Geoffrey Bright

Introduction[1]

In one of north Derbyshire’s former pit villages (we’ll call it ‘Blackwaters’ after its swampy pit tips, now a verdant ‘country park’) entangled aspects of community, belonging, class and (in its glaring absence) gender, are insistently evident. At the west end of the village, beyond the 1950s ‘White City’ colliery housing estate (long privatised, but still known as the ‘pit houses’), is an unassuming memorial to one of the village’s pits, Hillthorpe: “Opened 1923, closed 1984”. At the east of the village, the site of one of the other pits, Harebell Drift, renowned as the most militant pit in Derbyshire (where “they came out whenever the sun came out”), the only memorial is a scraped and brazen absence in the landscape.

[1]The study draws on ethnographic materials gathered between 2010 and the present day mainly in four neighbouring former coalmining villages—‘Beldover’, ‘Coalbrook’, ‘Cragwell’ and ‘Longthorne’—in the northern coalfield area of Derbyshire, England. Names of all locations below county level, and all names of individuals have been changed.

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> Harebell closed in 1989, as the defeat of the 1984–1985 miners' strike took its toll. Claiming a dominant space at the very heart of the village, though, is a newly dedicated war memorial that, insistent under its fluttering Union Jack, proudly proclaims the names of the village's war dead: from the World War One recipient of the Victoria Cross to the most recent casualty of the Afghanistan campaign in 2010. Neatly wrapping this uneven compass of remembrance, official District Council signs on every road into and out of Blackwaters bizarrely proclaim the village's 'pre-Norman name' in a post-coal remarketing exercise deemed somehow appropriate to a now "popular commuter suburb"—a place, incidentally, where you'll still bump into cammo-smocked lads and their leash of coursing dogs going out 'rabbiting' (as they have through coal's 200 year history) or hear, in the local tattoo studio, a shaven-headed fifty-year-old talking excitedly about throwing the dart that embedded itself so pictorially in a police officer's cheek during one of the early mass pickets of the 1984–1985 strike. He shows me the yellow press cutting he always carries in his pocket; just in case I doubt him (Field note excerpt, April 2017).

It is almost 35 years since the miners' strike ended, and the scale of deindustrialisation that followed remains shocking. In 1984, around 250 pits across England, Scotland and Wales employed more than 200,000 workers in Britain's coal-mining industry. By the mid-1990s most of those pits had gone, though a score or so limped on under privatisation. Finally, in December 2016, the last deep mine in the UK, Kellingly in Yorkshire, closed. In June 2016 the coalfields had voted heavily for Brexit, a phenomenon that, astonishingly, secured a prompt welcome into the ranks of the Conservative government's newly conjured 'people' for those once so viciously positioned beyond the pale as an insurrectionary 'enemy within'.

Yet, five years ago, those same men, women and children were celebrating the death of former Conservative British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher with visceral gusto and all the unfinished business around policing and State interference still refuses to go away as do a whole set of other continuities that I have drawn attention to in my work (see Bright 2016 for example). That said, any serious attempt to understand Brexit in the coalfields needs to pay detailed attention to the ravelled memorial voices discernible in places like Blackwaters. Trailing off in different directions, they speak invariably from strongly masculinist conventions of nation, class, community and loyalty that hover

incoherently between insubordination on the one hand, and chauvinism on the other, and still foreclose one of the oldest questions in the coalfields (Beynon and Austrin 1994): that of the relationship of class, gender and, from my particular point of interest, education.

On the ground, people across the Derbyshire and South Yorkshire coalfield tell me that rather than *everything* having changed "*nothing* has changed", except in so far as "things have just got *worse*". They are referring, not directly to gender continuities, but to their daily experience of a continuing, and locally deepening, precariousness of their lives. Such precaritisation of the coalfields has, however, plainly involved a significant regendering of work; a feature of de-industrialisation that has psychosocial—or 'affective'—implications for what Valerie Walkerdine, in her work in the Welsh steel towns has called 'community being-ness' (Walkerdine 2010). It's that question—how does the gender legacy of coal play out affectively, particularly *in relation to education?*—I intend to explore here.

In my published work I've been developing an argument that contested events such as the 1984–1985 UK miners' strike and its aftermath of pit closures, are not merely matters of local historical interest. Like conflicted aspects of other national and international de-industrialisations they have an active 'half-life' that persisits in complex ways, remaining as a continuing, but rarely spoken, *affective* context in which the lives of adults, young people and children alike continue to be lived. How this context is influential at the interface of community and education is fascinating, as the impact of affective relationships to the past, I contest, cannot be fully explained in terms of nostalgia, social memory, trauma or hysteresis and an understanding of that is important for education practice in any setting where rapid, market driven de-industrialisation occurs.

De-industrialisation's sticky effects do not disappear, even though their material foundation has to all intents and purposes been erased. In the case of the UK coalfields, they remain as that particular brew of oscillating, contrary intensities of militant autonomist localism and its nemesis, radical conservativism (Samuel 1986), that I rendered in the Blackwaters field note with which I opened. These two dynamics still entangle everyday gender practices and education, as we'll see, and on

the ground are unfailingly read as a merely retrospective, detrimental deficit in the lives of young people: as "they just can't change round here!" As ubiquitous as that reading is, I want to take this opportunity to argue in a different direction with the aim of reclaiming aspects of coalfield gender relations for a counter-hegemonic approach to working-class community education in the period following Brexit. In doing so, I'll be using the overall frame of a social haunting (Gordon 1997) and some particularly relevant feminist research, to make that case.

In the discussion that follows, I'll begin by explaining why I think the idea of a social haunting offers a uniquely productive approach to illuminating how the past remains present in the UK coalfields. I'll then introduce the places where my work has been situated and some of the key participants—men and boys, women and girls—before summarising the particularly vexed coalfield gender question. A detailed empirical account of how gender plays out in the intergenerational groups with whom I've worked will then follow. In conclusion, I'll return via some critical feminist accounts of gender in the coalfields to the topic of a social haunting, indicating why its "utopian grace" (Gordon 1997, p. 57) allows us, perhaps counter intuitively, to draw a broadly positive conclusion about gendered futures in the coalfields.

Why a 'Social Haunting'? The Empirical Context

The notion of "a kind of haunting" began to emerge early in my fieldwork, with empirical materials suggesting that something invisible and unnamable persisted in the coalfields, even a generation after the strike and pit closures. In "weird" ways (according to participants), "*it*"—whatever it was—seemed to be influencing how young people from coalmining backgrounds were experiencing education. It appeared as the un-named context of their almost ubiquitous sense of fury and their need to 'fight back' against what they perceived as the imposition, through schooling, of an alien culture—as if classroom relations were somehow an extension of the policing of the strike. It made itself suddenly present as young people from neighbouring villages used received territorialities of solidarity and vilification with equal facility (and

ferocity) in enforcing geographies of labour conflict going back to the 1930s, about which they knew nothing. A generation after the 1984–1985 strike, "*it*" was everywhere. And nowhere.

This same idea of there being a kind of unexplainable hangover from the past was commonplace among those who worked with the young people. They would often talk about fixed repetitions in a halted time where the industry and culture had rapidly been 'rubbed out' but, at the same time, refused to go. Such repetitions, they suggested, were embodied in the very comportment of local youth (the boys' "pit walk", for example) in ways that commonly provoked the wrath of authority, particularly within school, with unfailing ease.

The first phase of my research registered, then, a latent presence of that "very clear sense of the past as struggle" (Fentress and Wickham 1992, p. 115) that had always been prominent in the coalfields but remained hidden in plain sight after the pits had closed. In my observation, local young people were somehow held in its psychosocial embrace, reprising the affective repertoire of their collective past by re-performing its dramaturgy, often with stereotypical coalfield gender practices as a key motif:

> …you see it on the skate park. The lads all sit around doing what they do, and the girls sit over here. There's a clear divide…You know you see a lass come over …And the [lads] say: No! Go over there!.. [she's] not allowed to come and sit over here. It's like a having a taproom in a workingmen's club —Stacey

Why a 'Social Haunting'? The Theoretical Context

According to Avery Gordon (1997), a *social* haunting is an entangling reminder of lingering trouble relating to "social violence done in the past" and a notification "that what's been concealed is very much alive and present [and] showing up without any sign of leaving". As such, it "alters the experience of being in time, the way we separate the past, the present, and the future" (Gordon 1997, p. xvi). Additionally, social

ghosts, while strongly *felt,* are not easily *known*. Indeed, they are "often barely visible or highly symbolised" (p. 50) and hidden in the 'blind field' of our usual disciplines of social inquiry. Getting at such phenomena is consequently challenging.

Of course, other work over the last thirty years has probed similar territory: in the overlap, for example, between memory studies' focus on collective/social memory and emotional geographies of place and culture. Equally, interrogation of the idea that the past acts in the present through historical geographies of gender, class and race is reasonably well developed. The notion of a social haunting, however, breaks new ground by allowing us to address two significant and related problems—one of theory, one of method. First, it facilitates a fuller understanding of "modern forms of dispossession…and their concrete impacts" (p. xv); secondly, it allows us to develop "a method of knowledge production…that [can] represent the damage and the haunting of *the historical alternatives*" (p. xvii, my emphasis). The important point here being that a social haunting is a 'socio-political-psychological state' that cannot be reduced to individual or social pathology, that generates a *political imperative* addressed to futurity, and that illuminates how the past "could have been and *can* be otherwise" (p. 57, my emphasis):

> It is precisely the domain of turmoil and trouble, that moment… when *something else, something different from before, seems like it must be done*. (Gordon 1997, p. xvi, My emphasis)

The Places

The social haunting of the coalfields and its gender aspect is, of course, *placed*. The former pit villages in which most of my research has been most concentrated—Longthorne, Beldover, Coalbrook, and Cragwell (their pits closed in 1978, 1993, 1993, and 1991, respectively)—sit within five miles of each other on the Derbyshire-Nottinghamshire-Yorkshire border. The colliery 'model villages' were built in the last decade of the nineteenth century in established agricultural settlements and exemplified for around a hundred years the 'ideal type' of the traditional

mining community, their traditional "geography of gender relations" (Massey 1994, p. 181) solidly intact.

Nearly ten years after all the local pits had gone, when my fieldwork was at its most intensive, the decline of the area was nearing its nadir. Particular wards were counted in the top 1 per cent most deprived areas nationally, having around a third of the working-age population inactive due to illness, disability or caring responsibilities. In some wards almost three quarters possessed no qualifications and the villages were severely affected by socio-economic problems relating to unemployment, sickness, deepening material poverty, and problems of drink, drug use and domestic violence. Although local statistics today suggest a reduction of deprivation in the coalfield area of Derbyshire, my local experience attests, rather, to an intensification of deprivation, but into smaller hotspots, the statistical significance of which is lost even with ward level data collection. All of these phenomena together continue to have an impact on educational attainments (CRRB 2010).

The Coalfield Gender Question

The question of gender in coalmining communities has been notoriously laden with cultural and political meaning. The outlawing of women's labour underground in 1842 was a major aspect in the cultural production of working-class 'femininity' and 'respectability', and the gendered division of labour in coalmining was a key factor in installing patriarchy as the unassailable authority within the emergent British labour movement as a whole and within coalmining in particular (Campbell 1986). Meanwhile, and articulated to the very same process, the "paternal order" thus produced (Beynon and Austrin 1994) was invested in maintaining its privileged position within that very division of labour. Resurfacing regularly, the tension between the men's need for freely given gender solidarity, and their imposition of subservient domestic roles on women, remained unresolved. At the 1984–1985 strike, however, what Campbell represented as a battle with "proletarian patriarchs" presented itself with renewed vigour with the growth of women's support groups (the "real radicals" for Campbell)—one of

the most, if not *the* most, significant features of the strike, transforming it from an industrial dispute to a community-wide social movement involving, among many others, the women whose voices we'll hear below.

After a flowering of women's literature that occurred around that time, the topic of 'the women' has only been periodically reprised and some of that work is relevant to my purpose here, as I'll address. It is worth noting for now, though, that while the interrogation of gendered aspects of class, gender and schooling in a context of deindustrialisation has moved on considerably (see MacDowell 1999, 2003; Walkerdine and Jiminez 2012, as examples) there has been little attention paid to how the gender legacy of coalmining (or the strike in particular) might illuminate gender construction among young people growing up *nowadays* in the former coalfields.

The Participants: Staff

To recap, the research that I've done is *intergenerational*. It draws on ethnographic materials gathered in pit villages in Derbyshire and South Yorkshire over the last dozen or so years to examine gendered responses to education through the experience of two groups: mid- and late-teenage working-class girls and boys commonly deemed 'marginalised' or 'at risk of exclusion'; and men and women youth workers, further education and 'pre-employment' programme staff who work with them. Key women contributors have been: Christine a youth support manager; Liz, likewise, a youth support manager; Maggie and Pat, pre-employment course 'tutors'; Karen, a classroom support assistant; Stacey, a youth worker; Bebi, a youth worker, and others in similar roles. Among the men have been Chris, a Police Community Support Officer; Frank, a community tutor; Roger, a guidance manager; Ray, a senior youth support manager: and Gary, a National Union of Mineworkers full-time officer. All, except Gary, have been shunted around between differently-funded posts and managed in different sectors over the period I've known them.

All of the above workers originated in the local working-class communities and all have had non-traditional, mature student, routes into

the roles they now occupy. The women worked variously in hairdressing, catering, factory work and clerical work. Of the men, three were coalminers and another worked in coal by-product manufacturing and construction. All had a family background in coalmining and most were actively involved in the 1984–1985 strike, and the campaign against pit closures. For all of these staff, the strike has remained a reference point for their commitment to the young people with whom they work.

The Participants: Young People

The young people—Karl, Dave, P.-J, ASBO-Jonnyo, Cocker, Lianne, Beth, Heartbreaker; the 'Cavs lasses'; the 'Model crew', and around a hundred others that I have spent time with—positioned themselves in a near caricature of pit village solidarity as from "round here"; from places that are "not exactly *tough* tough, but [have] got a *name*"; where "[e]veryone just knows everyone"; where "it's a bit rough and that…"; where "we just all stick together, really". All, in the targeting taxonomy imposed on the multi-agency services that worked with them, were identified as already being, or 'being at risk of becoming' NEET (not in education, employment or training); involved in catastrophic drinking and drug use; 'offending'; or becoming teen parents. In fact, these young folk—mainly from extended families whose members formerly made their living in the coalmining industry and had gone through the strike—were experiencing a host of factors that made their relationship to education and schooling difficult to maintain: from strip search, to curfew, to parental imprisonment.

Coalfield Men

So how is gender imagined, articulated and performed among men and boys after the end of coal? In terms of those that I've observed and spoken to, accounts of gender are often initially represented within the frame of what Connell (1995) definitively labelled 'hegemonic masculinity', a masculinity associated with toughness, power, and

heterosexuality, that are stereotypical of the coalfields in their heyday. One of the men, Frank Rowe, for example recalled how material weight carried in the pit supported cultural 'weight' (status) in the village: "Me grandad were foreman blacksmith at Longthorne pit. He carried a lot o' weight in village". At the height of the coal industry, such weight came to boys almost as a patriarchal birth right:

> It were hereditary from a lot o' people to be a good grafter. I can pick heaviest ring up! Look at me! If people could see me as a good worker, that were me gettin' status in the village.

Choices between classically hegemonic masculinity roles—the pit or the armed forces—are commonly presented within participant's narratives as having been the only choices. After 'not enjoying school at all: you went because you went', Frank couldn't wait for the glamour of working underground:

> Underground! They were a better cut! It were like being in Marines, goin'down pit. I [couldn't] wait for it.

Chris Stevens also talks of how, on becoming a miner at Coalbrook Colliery, he slotted into a masculine culture framed by physical toughness and violence when he "left school on Friday and got the pit bus on Monday" two years before the strike. Both Frank Rowe and Gary Charlesworth followed their fathers to Longthorne pit in the late-1960s. There they learned, rehearsed, and performed masculinity in a set of common circumstances that sustained patriarchal hierarchy and enforced narrow masculine identities that, as young men, they had no wish to get beyond.

In more reflective conversations, however, all of the men were able to abjure nostalgia to varying extents and see their current professional and quasi-professional roles as pragmatically necessitating a broader, subtler performance of gender. Indeed, they spoke of how they determined *not* to make any explicit reference to their own past as part of their everyday professional identity, feeling it to be inappropriate or as 'giving too much away'. Interestingly though, each emphasised how he felt his past

left him uniquely able to understand, relate to, and counsel the needs and aspirations of their young male clients—a form of availability that was a specific expression of what each himself had found meaningful in the workplace and community solidarity of local male culture where, according to Chris, "it weren't about the toughness, but the tenderness". In deploying this vernacular attribute, each of the men adopted a kind of 'double track' approach to their roles: concealing their 'class selves' from non-local peers, and sharing themselves more 'naturally' with local clients.

Now, of course, Connell's work in developing the notion of 'heroic' masculinity as the exemplary form of hegemonic masculinity speaks clearly to coalmining culture and the "ideology of virility" noted by Doreen Massey (Massey 1994, p. 181). But it does not fully explain it. Connell's recognition that "masculinities are distributed between social groups, such as ethnic communities, regions or social classes' (Connell 2005, p. xviii) and are made through "situationally specific choices from a cultural repertoire of masculine behaviour" (p. xix) helps, and we can see this with these men. They adapt choice fully, even as they continue to deploy their specialised *gnosis* of local geographies (Hopkins and Noble 2009) of 'tender' masculinity, to establish intergenerational working relationships. But as much as coalmining conferred access to hegemonic masculinity via heroic labour it also reached beyond it to a specifically *politicised* masculinity developed through trade unionism and participation in established forms of political education such as that offered by the Derbyshire Miners Educational Association. In union roles, hegemonic masculinity had its uses: Roger Williams, a former NUM lay official, who was an adult guidance services manager when I spoke to him said: "You'd got to be a combatant, you'd got to have a good mouth, you'd got to be able to stand your ground, quick wits". *Politicised* masculinity, however, was expansive enough to accommodate the necessary softening of gender roles that men, as well as women, found liberating during the strike and as such still holds promise, as I will argue:

> I were quite content to sit at 'ome. I thought: yippee! Me an' wife enjoyed each other's company. That might 'a been best time o' our lives…We 'ad

> like a job share partnership and we sort of worked together at being parents, a family. —Frank Rowe

Coalfield Boys

Let us move now from the men to the boys. In terms of the boys—at least in public performances of gender—another of Connell's concepts has traction but, equally, does not fully explain. Connell developed the idea of 'protest' masculinity to pinpoint a "marginalised masculinity, which picks up themes of hegemonic masculinity in the society at large but reworks them in *a context of poverty*" (Connell 1995, p. 114, my emphasis). If we look at the two prime sites in which gender was performed—school and the various 'community' spaces available locally (a very definite context of poverty)—then much of the material I have gathered over the years looks like protest masculinity, as Connell conceived it. Karl, P.-J, ASBO Johnny-O, Dave, and Danny all talked about adopting a persistent low-level resistant behaviour in school that they called 'doing daft stuff'. It took fairly inane forms, incrementally achieved a bad 'reputation' by virtue of escalation, and led inevitably in each of their cases to permanent school exclusion—an outcome usually met with a mix of anger and relief:

> I used to like goin', just used to like goin' to mess about an' that. Yeah just to ay a laugh… Daft stuff. Puttin' porno on their computers an' that, so when they go to lift their lap top up…! —Dave

Territoriality (see Kintrea et al. 2008) was also a familiar aspect, Young men, like the young women to be discussed below, commonly referred to a struggle with teachers who came from 'elsewhere', represented alien values, and talked to them 'like shit':

> They come from round Chesterfield area an' stuff like that…Yeah. You'll get some from Chesterfield, some from Sheffield and places like that. —P.-J

Eventually, the boys would pitch against this and fight back in defence of what they felt were the core values underpinning life in their working-class localities:

> There were odd few in year who, like, 'd think: 'Bollocks to ya! I'm not tekkin nowt off you! I 'an't been brought up to tek shit' —Karl

My early ethnographic material also commonly contained accounts that testified to heavy drinking; widespread use of amphetamine, cocaine and marijuana; the 'twoccing' of cars and motorbikes; and massed village fights. Specific sites within the community going back to the hot spots of the 1984–1985 strike—the 'Leisure', 'the Model Village', 'the Wimps Estate'—tended to be the spaces where this behaviour was enacted, and patterns of territoriality were configured around the geography of coal industry conflict:

> Fighting has…always been goin off. Cos like all me dad an that, like, they use always go down Cragwell, fightin'. So it's part o' Longthorne, Coalbrook and Cragwell. —ASBO Johnny-O

Yet, in all the accounts that I took from of the young men from pit families in the period up to before Margaret Thatcher's death in 2013 (though things changed then), knowledge of the 1984–1985 strike was almost wholly absent. They had "never 'eard on it". Also common throughout the period of my research has been a kind of dystopian celebration of "living in a shithole" which, as much as it reactively glamourised local circumstances, actually provided a tellingly accurate picture of these "villages Santa Claus has forgot" as Frank Rowe described them.

In the more intimate space of private conversation though, most of the boys would—like the men—become expansive and sensitive, freely discussing matters such as the personal difficulties of work, maintaining relationships, imprisonment, sexuality, and in one case the experience of faith. In actual fact, many of the young men that I spoke to aspired, however 'hard' they were on the outside, to conventional lives where work and family were key elements:

> I'd like a job… me own car, bit o' money, somewhere to live on me own or somewhere to live wi' me girlfriend, possibly…Yeah, wi' a kid or summat like that. —Karl

That the young men relished the opportunity of having "a chance to talk like this" (ASBO Johnny-O)—in this intimate 'tender' way—but never found it available is not unrelated, I would suggest, to a change that my research partners have noticed more and more over the last five years or so. There has been, they say—as if need must find its outlet—a noticeable shift away from the externally directed angry protest masculinity that was previously universally visible, to increasing diagnosis, 'medication' and 'counselling' of problems now named as anxiety, depression, and self-harm.

Coalfield Women

As much as we've noticed refreshing complexities within the men's lived experience of gender, data referencing the frequency and depth of women's reflection on their experience of growing up is noticeably richer and more nuanced. The women remain strongly exercised by unfinished coalfield gender business, particularly in relation to girls' and women's educational opportunities. For the younger women in the group of staff—all of whom were teenagers or younger at the time of the miners' strike, and none of whom went into further and higher education until considerably later—there are certainly parallels with the men's early experiences of disaffection from school, but there is a key difference. Research conversations with Pat, Maggie, Karen, Stacey and Bebi, *do* reference a similar element of 'protest'—a kind of protest *femininity*—but expressed (usually as truancy) in *domestic* space:

> Just hanging out in people's houses whose parents were at work basically. There would be about 6/7 of us, we'd watch TV, go and get some beer or, just sit and just do nothing, and we did that, you know. —Stacey

The same 'sense of… righteous indignation that once underpinned a strong working-class politics' (particularly among boys) to which Reay

has drawn attention (Reay 2009, p. 26) also features but it has as a different spatiality, and this is key. While it abhors the same impoverished employment binaries—where "the lads 'd be in pit and lasses 'd be in knicker factory" (Bebi)—it *is* classed, but always through the *disciplinary surveillance of the male gaze.* In all cases (except Liz, who went away to art school), employment and education prospects for *girls* were positioned by the ubiquitous authority of patriarchy enforced, more often than not, by their fathers:

> I used to think it was unfair but I had like, I think my dad was, I don't know, from everyone I know, everyone looked at the male figure as he had the authority, he was the strongest, and what he said sort of goes, so it was just the norm of everyday life, you didn't argue with it…you always had to have permission to do anything. —Karen

> Yeah, the men ruled the roost and they say 'jump!' and she says 'alright'. It got to a point where if I went out in the street, my dad had known what I'd done before I got home, you know I, could go out drinking when my dad worked at the pit, and you know my dad knew every pub I'd been in, the next day —Stacey

For the duration of the strike, though, things changed as women's involvement developed out of their own community position into a 'politics of the doorstep' (Spence and Stephenson 2007) that ranged out of and beyond the domestic space, journeying via a wider gender politics even to masculine spaces of (sometimes violent) action on picket lines:

> All the family were on the picket line. Yeah, if you weren't on the picket line, you'd be down at the miners' welfare collecting your food or you'd be sat in your house, all the women would be sat in the house. —Karen

The lineage of 'struggle' remained, however, resolutely male as Christine attests here:

> My dad was a very strong trade union bloke. His dad was a collier, and went through the 1926 strike. One of my two brothers who were both on strike in 1984 used to say, you know, "My grandad lost his job in the

> 1926 strike" and, you know, he thought it was really important to be out on strike and stick it through and through and that's what he picked up from my dad. I'd say girls were outside that.

Educational and social ambitions that had flowered during the strike became once again difficult to express, as the 'gender question' retreated after the strike and employment was re-gendered, the domestic space re-privatised inside the doorstep once again, and the old pattern of 'having to hold back' re-established:

> When I went back to college and did my teacher training, [my dad] said what you going back to college for? I said oh I'm doing teacher training. He said what you doing that for? I had to sit him down and say, well what do you mean what am I doing it for? And he said *you* can't possibly teach kids! That's what he said to me, meaning I'm too thick. —Karen

> Yeah about 1990. That's when they started talking about mothballing pits and what have you. And I did go down and have a look at these places to live [in another coalfield], but I knew in my heart I couldn't go, I wanted to stop near my mum. —Christine

> Yeah, because what had happened was in Coalbrook for instance… pits close, so the women went back out to work in the factories. I *know* I'm going to have to hold back! —Stacey

For Christine, Liz, Pat, Maggie, Karen, Stacey and Bebi, day-to-day contestation of this frustrating legacy of coalfield patriarchy remains *the* core underlying concern of their practice. Like the men, they operate a subversive twin track approach, addressing the requirements of performative management agendas as required, publicly saying all the right things, and ensuring all the boxes are ticked. They do their *real* work, however "behind our hands", cajoling and challenging a structure that still holds Stacey—even after her strike-year teenage experience of living in London, where her striking miner father became a driver for an American broadcasting crew:

> I speak to young people about this, especially young girls. You know you can speak to them now and you can say what are you going to do when you leave school *bla di bla di bla*? They say "I'm going to have a baby aren't I? I'm going to get in a relationship and I'm going to have a baby". I speak to the lads and I say, what are you going to do? You know, and apart from them saying to me, "I'm going to win the lottery!" You know, you get the lads: "*I'm* not washing a pot. *Get real!*" It makes me question for instance, why I'm still here, and when I answer this question, I always say, because this is where I feel *safe*.

Coalfield Girls

For well over a decade now there has been a sharpening focus on the subtle forms of exclusion and withdrawal that impact on girls. Osler and Vincent (2003), for example, comprehensively challenged the notion that girls' school exclusion, both formal and informal, might be located as a secondary feature of the once loudly proclaimed 'crisis of masculinity'. Girls' exclusion is now, consequently acknowledged as widespread and having its own characteristic forms. Recent work looking at women's negotiation of gender and class in a setting of de-industrialisation sharply questions "straightforward notions of (feminine) 'success' and 'fit' against (masculine) 'crisis'" pointing instead "towards the reshaping of exclusions and their intersecting social and cultural dimensions. (Taylor and Addison 2009).

It is the reshaping of these intersecting dimensions that is interesting. My work suggests that feminine 'success' and 'fit' is definitely *classed*. *All* the girls with whom I worked perceived school to be a primary site of class exclusion. Their responses varied across a wide spectrum from simply finding school unsympathetic to the personal situations and needs of girls "like us", through to regular truancy, informal leave in collusion with school ('take exam leave and don't come back'); regular short-term periodic exclusions from school premises; formal permanent expulsion and 'managed moves' between schools. There are significant differences in individual cases, but what was noticeable was that class

was a universal factor. In living class as a domain of struggle about "the positioning, judgements and relations that are entered into on a daily and personal basis" (Skeggs 2004, p. 173), they knew exactly where they belonged: "We're steerage, not posh!" as Nicki said, appropriating the categories of the film *Titanic,* which she had recently seen.

The girls experience class through the 'spatial apartheid' (Skeggs 2004, p. 180) of their domestic geographies, and issues of family precarity related to de-industrialisation relentlessly impact on their lives. If working, their parents are usually unevenly, or sporadically employed: the men in construction, transport, the 'sandwich factory'; the women often doing two or more jobs each day in a 'zero-hours' mix of, say, caring and factory work. During the recent period of 'austerity', those girls' whose parents were employed by 'the council' tended to quickly become victims of public-sector cuts. Other girls' parents are long-term unemployed or 'ill'—often with chronic conditions related to coalmining—and claiming disability benefits that are now under concerted attack. In more extreme cases, parents are working the border of the informal 'cash in hand' economy and some are, or have been, involved in crime and imprisonment related to drug use. A number of the girls themselves have offending records for 'anti-social behaviour' or fighting. Most significantly, they speak routinely of informal caring duties falling on them in an already psychologically strenuous context of heavy drinking within families, problematic mental health and, not uncommonly, domestic violence—a gendered intensification that Christine, Liz, Maggie and Pat all emphasised when I recently re-interviewed them:

> There's always somebody saying go and get that shopping, go and take that kid to school, nurse that kid, he's poorly —Liz

In terms of schooling, many of the standard themes commonly emerging from research on girls' exclusion are evident in my data: the perceived failure of teachers to give respect; the gaining of a negative reputation; bullying and the avoidance of bullying; the skipping of school to carry out caring duties; the withdrawal into the domestic space of 'me mate's house' or the quasi-domestic space of 'shopping' as a site for girls' truancy.

Troubled by a situation where "you din't 'ardly 'ave any [respect] from most o' teachers" Josie, aged 17, recalls how she would: "just walk out lessons. Walk in lessons late. Just don't do nowt. Just sit there… Yeah. Cos all my friends they never used to come". Lianne would head into the local town, part way through the day in most instances,

> I'd go in mornin' an' then I'd think, Oh, I can't do wi' this anymore, I'm goin' out o' school now. Some days, I wou'nt go at all. I'd phone me friend up an' meet 'er straight down [town]. An' we'd just not go into school an' things like that.

Even when mitigated by a teacher who 'listens' and doesn't judge, the petty authoritarianism of the system still prevails in the girls' accounts. Beth was allowed a significant privilege by her Head of Year who "let me write letters to me mum in prison, an' that" but was nevertheless finally excluded for an infraction of school uniform regulations: "it were plain black shoes, but mine'd gor a bit o white on 'em." "Teachers keep pushing and pushing", as Josie says. Pugnacious 'refusal', very similar to that of the boys, appears commonly among the girls' accounts:

> I told em *I'm not doin' what nobody says!* They don't say please or nothin'. They just…they just *demand* you. An' I don't like that! —Josie

The same class protest is prevalent, just as it is for the girls' male contemporaries and just as it was for the previous generation. School is a place where class values have to be defended and where 'what matters'—dignity of self, and solidarity with others—is deeply contested, as Samantha assures us: "We speak us minds in Beldover. They don't like that". While the girls talk freely about possible futures, veering wildly and not always too seriously from the 'army or navy', via 'university'—which is impossible "cos it costs about four grand [£4000] a month" according to Savanna—to being a WAG[1] they talk far more often about "always sticking up for yoursen" and "always sticking together".

The classroom contest has two dominant dynamics: one is sharply instrumental, having its own bitter political economy, as we see here:

> I've 'ad teachers say to me: You're a waste o' space. You're not gonna get nowhere. They don't like kids from round 'ere, I don't think. They're just stuck up. All they're bothered about are getting their wages. —Samantha

The other is primarily symbolic, part of that "class struggle [that] is alive and well [and] highly apparent in the circuits of symbolic distribution" noted by Skeggs (2004, p. 174). For example, in a Beldover 'girls only' group—the 'Cavs Lasses Group' of Heartbreaker, Samantha, Beth, Nicki, Sophie, Ruby, Jimjam, and Savanna—cosmetics play a clear role in demarcating a working-class female space that refuses both the dubious and dishonestly aspirant values of 'plastic girls' who do well at school, *and* the prying eye of patriarchy:

> [At school] if you're not plastic you're not worth it. Basically, if you're not spoilt, they [the teachers] are not bothered in you. —Savanna

> When lads are there it's like…basically, it's a competition who can get most attention…an' lads allus mess about and shout an stuff. —Nicky

In this group, facilitated by the youth worker Bibi, "doin' a bit o' make-up" serves not to reinforce gender stereotypes but to define, rather, an autonomous female space where performances of gender and the girls' version of having "a chance to talk like this" can be explored independently. For the Cavs girls, you have to refuse becoming *plastic*, resisting the pressure to become one of the girls who are "too far up their own arses" and who have supposedly "got everything". Far better embrace "having nowt", which, it seems, is tantamount to having what *really matters*: strong family bonds and enduring friendship loyalties forged on your own patch. As against the plastic girls, the Cavs Lasses conjure, instead, a vision of femininity that is made 'real' by knowing reality as it's lived "at end o' day", in the final analysis, when the niceties of middle-class manners are neither relevant nor productive. Against lasses who are plastic and against lads who are controlling, the girls counter-pose the gendered virtues of "soundness", "being a bit of a bitch" and even, at their most belligerent, of "being a cunt".

"That It Could Have Been and Can Be Otherwise" Back to a Social Haunting

According to Avery Gordon (1997, p. 57), working with a social haunting requires:

> willingness to follow ghosts, neither to memorialise nor to slay, but to follow where they lead, in the present, head turned backwards and forwards at the same time. To be haunted in the name of a will to heal is to allow the ghost to help you imagine what we lost that never existed, really. That is its utopian grace: to encourage a steely sorrow laced with delight for what we lost that we never had; to long for the insight of that moment in which we recognise, as in Benjamin's profane illumination, that it could have been and can be otherwise.

So where, in conclusion, do these ghosts of gender lead us? What are the "liens, the costs, the forfeits, and the losses" (Gordon 1997, p. xvii) that are "no longer being contained or repressed or blocked from view" in the post-coal coalfields and in other places like them? And what is it that can be otherwise, in a manner "different from before"? (p. xvi). Gordon conjures Walter Benjamin's 'angel of history' which perhaps feels a little bit too grand for the pit villages of northern England. Nevertheless, a view turned both backwards (critically) and forwards (hopefully) at one and the same time, *can* be sensed in the unfinished, and potentially reframeable, possibilities of gender. Particularly as feminist work inside and beyond the coalfields has disarticulated gender futures from the grip of residual masculinities deeply compromised a long time ago by attachments, notorious in British labour history, to gendered labour aristocracy, and the race privilege of Nation and Empire (the darker coalfield ghosts that lurk around Blackwaters as we saw, and around Brexit).

Jean Spence and Carol Stephenson, who have done important work on coalfield women, reminded us a decade ago how values associated with 'mining community' remain relevant "for a self-conscious, politicised reshaping of local relationships in post-industrial conditions".

(Spence and Stephenson 2007, p. 309). But only as long as "the apparently gender-neutral ideal of mining 'community' is interrogated" (Spence and Stephenson 2009, p. 68). In ex-mining localities, co-operation—the fundamental bond of 'solidarity'—has, as they noted, "shifted from the industrial front to what traditionally has been the female sphere associated with friendship, kin and neighbourhood" (2007, p. 325) and it is an understanding of the "nature of agency exercised by women activists in these circumstances" that

> suggests the possibility of building new and more extensive forms of political organization which interconnect the separate spheres of work and home, public and private, male and female. (2007, p. 325)

This thread needs to be picked up again, as it is in that very sphere where promise resides, particularly if an additional place can be found for that politicized 'tenderness' of the men that might yet shepherd the boys beyond the limitations of their protest. Valerie Walkerdine's work recognizes this. Drawing on the psychoanalyst Bracha Ettinger, Walkerdine articulates a *matrixial* space of de-industrialised community, where the affective "mantle and burden" of pain and depression might be taken away from the women and, instead, *shared* by men and women together in "a shifting of the distance between femininity and masculinity" (Wakerdine and Jiminez 2012, p. 176, my emphasis) This has to be a classed shift, though.

In an important 2011 article, Beverley Skeggs argues for a feminist "re-ligitimation of classed value practices" based "on reciprocity, care, shared understandings of injustice, and insecurity" (p. 509) which allows us to re-theorise the potential of the coalfield gender question in a productive way that can hold a space for "a chance to talk like this" that answers not only the needs of the Cavs Lasses, but of ASBO Johnny-O and the other young men as well. In producing such value practices it is necessary to "establish which practices [are] just and with value". Such classed gender work will routinely enter "different, nearly always local, circuits of value and generat[e] alternative values about 'what/who matters', 'what/who counts' and 'what is just'" (Skeggs 2011,

pp. 505–506). Time, energy and attention, too, will be given to such “a supportive sociality” in making the best of “limited circumstances in the present where the future seem[s] bleak and [the] best chance of value [is] moral and affective, not financial” (p. 504).

In a provision and funding landscape where the remaining public sector workers are “run ragged”, Christine, Liz, Maggie and Pat do often bemoan the fact that they are locked into a curriculum that is inappropriate in its ‘work readiness’ focus and which leaves young people (increasingly of both genders) being drawn towards low paid, zero hours affective labour (for which they are inadequately qualified) in a poorly regulated care sector. They also despair as

> The girls lift up their heads, but as soon as they finish [the programme] they go into retreat, their posture changes, and they drift very quickly into care work. The boys revert to what they did before, hanging around the streets —Maggie

Undaunted nevertheless, the women continue to work instinctively out of those “autonomist working-class value practices” described by Skeggs. Through such values, they create (and model) a place of committed relationality and welcome, where their quiet ferocity subsumes the remnant militant tenderness of the men in a practice capable of supporting both young women and young men not only beyond the limits of the disappeared workplaces, but beyond the resurgent borders of nation, too. We leave them, respectfully noting how over the last academic year they’ve created, planned and delivered (with very little help) a programme of learning for the very first combined group of British and EU migrant teenagers in their area—in a post-Brexit context that delivered some of the highest ‘leave’ voting figures in the UK. They have managed, moreover, to maintain a group in which the question of Brexit has never arisen in a negative way but has been discussed, rather, as a source of imagining a stronger collective belonging. And they’ve done so steeped in an ethics of remaining real “at the end of the day” (as we’ll recall from the Cavs Lasses), and in perennial “delight for what we lost that we never had” (as we’ll recall from Avery Gordon).

Note

1. WAG: Footballers' "wives and girlfriends".

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The Re-composition of Class Relations: Neoliberalism, Precariousness, Youth and Education

James Avis

Introduction: Meritocracy

The notion of meritocracy, the idea that our position in society should be determined by ability and application, has been endlessly rehearsed by politicians and policy makers since the end of the Second World War. Indeed, this notion has been repeatedly used to justify changes in the education system, from the development of comprehensive secondary education to the renewed and current call to establish new grammar schools in England (May 2016b). The following quotations are illustrative of the manner in which the notion of meritocracy has been used.

> The essential thing is that every citizen should have an equal chance – that is his basic democratic right; but provided the start is fair, let there be the max-imum scope for individual self-advancement. There would then be nothing improper in either a high continuous status ladder… or even

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> a distinct class stratification, since opportunities for attaining the highest status or the top-most stratum would be genuinely equal. (Crosland 1956, cited in Parkin 1973, p. 122)

> [The] government's mission is not to get rid of elites, whose talents we need… to improve our lives. Our mission is to do what we can to ensure that people from all walks of life get the chance to join these elites and that elites use their knowledge to benefit others … I see one of my greatest responsibilities to be, to offer every citizen the chance to be part of an elite judged on merit. (Clarke 2002, Cited in McCulloch 2004, p. 34)

> When we take the big calls, we'll think not of the powerful, but you. When we pass new laws, we'll listen not to the mighty, but to you. When it comes to taxes, we'll prioritise not the wealthy, but you. When it comes to opportunity, we won't entrench the advantages of the fortunate few, we will do everything we can to help anybody, whatever your background, to go as far as your talents will take you. (May 2016a)

The first quotation is from Anthony Crosland who served as Labour's Secretary of State for Education in the 1950s. The second, which echoes the first is from Charles Clarke, Labour Secretary of State for Education and Skills in 2002. Both emphasise fairness and argue that provided competition is fair there is nothing wrong with the existence of elite positions. A somewhat tautological argument, for as Young reminds us, the existence of elites undermines the possibility of meritocracy. The final quotation is from Theresa May, who at the time of writing is the prime minister of a Conservative government. Here again we encounter the notion of fairness and an implicit reference to 'ordinary hard-working families'. This is set alongside a desire that at least some children from this class will be able to take their place alongside the 'fortunate few', that is to say, those who by dint of background allied with 'ability' have secured their elite status.

The rhetoric of meritocracy has been a bulwark of the competitiveness educational settlement (see Education Group II 1991; Avis et al. 1996; Avis 2007). This settlement has associated the pursuit of economic competitiveness with societal wellbeing and social justice. A society and education system that develops every individual to their full

potential will, or so it is claimed, benefit all members of society. This is what May has in mind by her aspiration that England should become, under her stewardship, a 'great meritocracy'.

> But more than anything else, I want to see children from ordinary, working-class families given the chances their richer contemporaries take for granted. That means we need more great schools.
>
> This is the plan to deliver them and to set Britain on the path to being the great meritocracy of the world. (May 2016b)

The irony is that the notion of meritocracy was used originally as a rather problematic term by Michael Young (1958) in his 'dystopian futuristic satire' *The Rise of the Meritocracy* (Beck 2008, p. 1). Young pointed towards the damage that the pursuit of meritocracy could do to society in relation to social cohesion as well as to self-respect and wellbeing (Beck 2008, p. 1). Although such concerns are by no means new they have now largely been eclipsed by an interest in social mobility and a concern with the provision of equal educational opportunities. We may rail against the inequities of meritocracy but nevertheless fall back onto a not dissimilar version of equal opportunities. This is what Lingard et al. (2014) refer to as an equity model of social mobility, predicated upon individualism and the development of human capital which reduces social mobility to a technical issue. Such a version has an affinity with a model of social democracy that seeks to soften structural inequality without posing a significant challenge to patterns of inequality grounded in capitalist relations. Notably, the struggle between labour and capital may result in an apparently more egalitarian social formation as it did in the immediate period following the end of the Second World War when the balance of power between labour and capital shifted in favour of the former. However, such gains have been reversed, or at least stalled in the current conjuncture in an increasingly polarised social formation in which the antagonistic relations have shifted in favour of capital. Whilst such processes are most acutely felt in Anglophone societies, they are also present to a lesser extent in continental Europe.

From Fordism to Post-Fordism and Beyond

It is important to set discussions of meritocracy within the wider socio-economic and political context that followed the Second World War. Although much of the ensuing discussion draws on the English experience we encounter similar debates in the US, Australia, as well as in Germany, France and so on (Althusser 1972; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Bowles and Gintis 1976; Lingard et al. 2014), albeit accented by the particular social formation in which they are located. For example, social democratic concerns were more strongly represented in England and indeed even more so in much of continental Europe, than in the US. However, the salience of Fordism is pivotal as was the development of the Keynesian welfare state, in many societies. We should not forget the significance of the 'new deal' in the interwar period in the US.

Fordism represents a particular stage in the development of capitalism, characterised by the pursuit of full employment and for many, a job for life (Avis 2016). The balance of power between labour and capital was in favour of the former with concessions being won through class struggle. Workers were frequently engaged in mass production characterised by a detailed division of labour. Mass production and consumption of standardised products was a distinctive feature of Fordism, as was its alignment with the Keynesian Welfare State. In the UK this was set alongside a form of social democracy that sought a fairer distribution of income and wealth, and importantly, the provision of continually improving standards of living for most of the population. Ed Miliband (2011), a former leader of the Labour party, described this as the 'British promise' which in turn echoed the dominant version of the American dream (but see Hunnicutt 2013). At the same time changes in the occupational structure enabled a number of working-class young people to be upwardly socially mobile. It is, however, important to acknowledge that this arose as a result of a reconfiguration of the occupational structure and labour market rather than the result of a concerted political attempt to facilitate the upward mobility of formerly disadvantaged groups (see Hoskins and Barker 2014). Significantly, upward mobility was not matched by the downward mobility of privileged groups and poverty, whilst not clearly visible

to at least some members of society, remained a significant feature of the social formation (Coates and Silburn 1970; Townsend 1979).

The successes of the post-war welfare state paved the way for a re-articulation, or at least, a strengthening of the significance of knowledge as a route to competitiveness and value-added waged labour. Such ideas are readily apparent in conceptualisations of the knowledge/information society as well as in those of post-Fordism, immaterial labour, and to some extent, cognitive capitalism. Notions such as the information society not only emphasise the importance of knowledge and creativity but also the promise of upskilled and fulfilling work (Brown and Lauder 1992). Whilst post-Fordism embodied an imaginary of collective and collaborative team work, the reality for many workers, especially professionals, was one of individualisation and the intensification of labour. Importantly, the notion of team work can readily sit alongside individualisation, inasmuch as membership is predicated on satisfactory performance, with the team being composed of a number of individuals (Woods and Jeffrey 2004).

Theorists of Cognitive Capitalism understand the shift towards post-Fordism and immaterial labour as capital's response to working-class struggle and the 'refusal to labour' (Lazzarto 2006; Tronti 2007), that is to say workers' resistance to Fordism and Industrial Capitalism. This position sees post-Fordism as a vehicle through which capital sought to reassert its authority. Lotringer writes: 'It was Italian workers' stubborn resistance to the Fordist rationalization of work… that forced capital to make a leap into the post-Fordist era of immaterial work' (2004, p. 11). There is an affinity between these processes, the ascendance of the New Right and the dominance of neoliberalism (Education Group II 1991). This affinity can be seen in a number of features, the interest in adaptability and flexibility of labour, the increased salience of individualisation, de-industrialisation, the fragmentation of traditional working-class cultures of work and community, and the growth of financialisation. In the latter case,

> The financialization of the economy has been a process of recovering capital's profitability after the period of profit margin decreases, an apparatus

> to enhance capital's profitability *outside* immediately produc-tive processes. (Marazzi 2011, p. 31)

However, these processes extend beyond financial institutions and are also engaged in by transnational corporations who are able to secure larger profits by investing in finance rather than 'production'. Marazzi (2011, p. 27) cites General Motors as an example. Such developments in western economies have had a number of consequences which have been felt most strongly in those most tightly wedded to neoliberalism, including many of the Anglophone societies.

Decent Jobs, Marginalised Youth and the Rest

From the end of the Second World War until the 1970s inequalities in the distribution of income and wealth were being reduced in England (Dorling 2011, 2014, 2015). However, since then these inequalities are being reasserted in an increasingly polarised distribution of wealth and income. In the latter case this has been reflected in a hollowed out labour market in which many middle-level jobs have been eradicated leading to low-skilled low-waged labour being set against a smaller elite who command high rewards (Roberts 2013; Goos and Manning 2007). Such processes are not restricted to the UK with similar patterns being found in other European societies (for a Portuguese example see Cairns et al. 2014; for a discussion of Germany Rohrbach-Schmidt and Tiemann 2016; see Cedefop 2012 and in the US see Schmitt and Jones 2012). A number of consequences have flowed from the hollowing out and polarisation of the labour market whereby under-employment and over-qualification have become a feature of many, and especially, young people's working lives. Those with few if any qualifications or skills are squeezed out of the labour market and churn between periods of low-waged work and unemployment (Shildrick et al. 2012). McDowell (2014) suggests this is particularly the case for marginalised working-class boys whose 'performance' of masculinity may place them at a disadvantage in the labour market.

Graduate workers, particularly those who attended less prestigious universities, find themselves shuffling down the occupational scale working in jobs that formerly would not have required a degree. However, over-qualification and under-employment face many graduates as do precarious working lives in which job security has become a thing of the past (Brown 2016). Decent jobs (Orr 2016) become increasingly rare, being replaced by precarious, rotten and lousy work (Keep and James 2010, 2012). Notably, such work carries with it, what the Resolution Foundation (2016) describes as, a 'pay penalty', with Standing (2014) drawing our attention to the increasing importance of precarious work noting the significance of a highly-skilled educated fraction engaged in such labour.

> It [the precariat] consists of the educated plunged into a precariat existence after being promised the opposite, a bright career of personal development and satisfaction. Most are in their twenties and thirties. But they are not alone. Many drifting out of a salariat [professional middle class] existence are joining them. (p. 30)

It is easy enough to explain these processes as deriving from the impact of neoliberalism and capital's pursuit of accumulation. However, care has to be taken, Jessop (2015) points out the messiness of capitalist relations referring to the variations of neoliberal capitalism contrasting the finance dominated version found in the US and UK with German neo-mercantilism. But even in this instance, which echoes earlier discussions of the varieties of capitalism, there are significant differences within each category. Perhaps one of the erstwhile 'successes' of neoliberalism has been to break down national borders whilst simultaneously emphasising the importance of regionalisation and localisation. On a simplistic level this can be seen in England with the division between the north and the south, with the former having higher rates of disadvantage in terms of unemployment and restricted labour markets. Paradoxically, and despite the rhetoric, such regional disparities are also found in continental Europe, the different situations facing East and West Germany being a case in point. Social geographers

(Martin and Morrison 2003) draw our attention to the spatial and constructed nature of labour markets as well as their porosity. Alongside a local labour market that features low-waged intermittent work, or indeed no work, there may be other workers lodged within a global labour market of high-skilled/waged work. Such global and local labour markets may in some senses overlap but will also be on-goingly constructed and subject to change (Martin and Morrison 2003). This also means that within a social formation, areas of full employment and putative skills gaps/mismatch sit alongside regions/localities characterised by multiple disadvantages and the lack of decent jobs.

Although it is important to acknowledge complexity and the resulting messiness, we should not lose sight of the manner in which socio-economic and political structures have been re-organised and re-structured in recent years. Part of this process relates to neoliberalism and financialisation as well as internationalisation and the manner in which this has impacted upon the nation state. Keynesianism was predicated upon the nation state's ability to generate sufficient taxation to support the development and maintenance of the welfare state and its numerous institutions from schools to hospitals. However, since the 1970s the state's ability to generate sufficient income has been compromised, leading to what O'Connor (2001 [1973]) has described as the 'fiscal crisis of the state'. This crisis has been on-going, exacerbated by neoliberal globalisation which in turn has resulted in the reconfiguration and restructuring of the state.

Deregulation of the constraints on capital, allied to the easy flow of money across borders has meant that the state exercises less control over taxation than it did at the height of Keynesianism. These processes rest with a particular *zeitgeist* whereby it is thought that increasing rates of taxation of top earners or indeed key transnational companies will harm the economy and by default the welfare of all members of society. For Streeck (2014) such processes impact upon the nature of the state leading to what he describes as a shift away from the tax state to that of the debt state (pp. 72–97). In addition, the former processes reflect an ideological stance that rests with a very particular understanding of economic relations (Dorling 2014), one having very real material consequences. Paradoxically, this particular stance has become increasingly

prominent following the 2008 'Great Financial Crisis' (Foster and Magdoff 2009). This position has brought with it a number of perverse consequences. The state's role in bailing out those financial institutions deemed 'too big to fail' has deepened the state's debt embedding it in what Streeck (2016) refers to as the 'consolidation' or what might be described as the austerity State. The overarching concern here is not only to reduce the deficit but more importantly to service the debt whilst at the same time maintaining economic competitiveness. In order to service debts, the confidence of financial markets has to be secured. Streeck writes,

> To continue lending, financial markets want to be assured that public debt is under control, certified by a demonstrated capacity of governments to halt and indeed reverse its long term growth… Consolidation as a confidence-building measure proceeds, almost as a matter of course, *not by raising revenue but by cutting expenditure…* **A budget surplus is preferably used to pay off debt or cut taxes, to suppress political temptations to restore previous spending cuts**. (my emboldening) (2016, pp. 122–123)

These activities undermine the ability of the state to raise taxes and service debts. The result is a vicious cycle that calls for cuts in state expenditure whilst simultaneously compromising the state's ability to service its debts. This in turn results in further cuts and so it goes on. The logic here is inherently anti-democratic being presented as a technical solution to the problems facing the economy. However, the result is not only that of fiscal consolidation but also the construction of the austerity state that is embedded in these processes. The concern to reduce the fiscal deficit allied with cutting taxes means that the monies available to support the institutions of the welfare state are reduced, as is the quality and extent of its provision. Increased responsibility is thus placed on the individual to respond to this shortfall, which for those with resources means that they can resort to the private sector. This in turn leads to a resistance to increases in taxation to support the welfare state and compounds the fiscal crisis of the state. It should not be forgotten that these processes also reflect capital's interest in marketising

areas of life formerly outside the market in pursuit of profit. Such processes are compounded by the hollowing out of middle-level positions in the occupational structure allied to the increasing significance of low-waged work within a polarised distribution which also contributes to the fiscal crisis. Those who have wealth and high income can readily minimise their tax liabilities and in addition have little commitment to the institutions of the welfare state.

There are a number of ways in which these changes in the labour market can be understood. It has been argued that globalisation in the 1970s was linked to de-industrialisation which led to low-waged manufacturing processes being relocated in the emerging economies. This impacted most heavily upon US and UK's manufacturing sectors. It is also allied to changes in technology and the accompanying changes to labour processes. This can be seen in the spectre of 'jobless growth' as well as the way in which the internet can effectively lead to a 24-hour labour process, which follows time zones and reflects the compression of time and space. This has consequences for the global labour market with respect to particular skills and can be seen in the manner in which design processes can be distributed across the globe resulting in a high skill/low wage nexus (Brown et al. 2011). Brown et al. (2011) draw our attention to digital Taylorism, that is to say the use of digital technologies to deskill and standardise the formerly skilled jobs of knowledge workers. This represents, in part, the hollowing out of middle-level jobs but also moves in the direction of 'technological unemployment' with digitised jobs leading to a loss of employment (Peters 2016). In some of the arguments that stress technological unemployment there is an element of determinism whereby digitalisation and the increasing use of algorithms carries with it the inevitability of job losses. Frey and Osborne write citing a technical report produced by McKinsey Global Institute (MGI),

> Estimates by MGI suggests that sophisticated algorithms could substitute for approximately 140 million full-time knowledge workers worldwide… The trend is clear: computers increasingly challenge human labour in a wide range of cognitive tasks. (MGI 2013, p. 19)

Not dissimilar arguments are a feature of recent research that addresses robotisation (Ford 2016) and the fourth industrial revolution, or what some term the second industrial age (Brynjolfsson and McAfee 2011, 2014) as well as that addressing 'job polarisation' (Heyman 2016). There are three points to be made. Firstly, such processes have an impact upon the graduate labour market. Green et al. (2016, p. 128) suggest that,

> The number of graduates in the labour force has begun, especially in recent years, to outpace the number of graduate jobs. This is why, increasingly, some graduates are finding themselves in lower-ranking jobs… by the middle of the 2000s it became evident that there was an increasing dispersion in the graduate pay premium.

The dispersion of this pay premium is related to the subject studied, the university attended, the individual's race and gender as well as their class origins (DBIS 2016; Reay et al. 2005). Unsurprisingly, labour market analyses are predicated upon waged labour and therefore underestimate the significance of unwaged work. For example, user activity on the Internet can be construed as a source of 'free' unwaged labour as it may contribute towards the profits of capital, as can the development of open source software (see Avis and Reynolds 2017; Frayssé 2015). It is also important to acknowledge forms of labour that are unwaged but which are in many senses 'productive' inasmuch as this produces value for participants and contributes to their wellbeing. The domestic labour of women would be a case in point as would be other activities in the wider community—volunteering, visiting neighbours, caring for the environment and so on. The important point is that there is an infinite potential for 'productive' labour—what could be described as 'really useful labour' in a capitalist and post-capitalist society. Rustin (2013) for example, calls for a different economic and institutional architecture that would prioritise the cultivation of human needs and capacities. This necessitates the re-evaluation of the way in which we understand economic relations and growth. Rustin suggests,

> There is no conceivable material or technological excuse for unemployment, when there is abundant work which could and should be done, in nurturing, developing and expressing human capabilities. (Rustin 2013, no page number)

This argument faces in several directions at once. It could align itself with Marxist conceptualisations of 'species being' and 'unalienated' labour. Alternatively, it could sit alongside an inclusive capitalism predicated on a model of 'workfare' with all the difficulties that portends. The danger is that leftist strategies can easily fold over into a form of capitalist reformism rather than one committed to revolutionary reformism predicated upon an anti-capitalist stance.

To engage in 'really useful labour' necessitates the financial resources that would facilitate access to these opportunities. The difficulty is that most lack the resources, or where they do exist, these are in the form of workfare. To address this would require a fundamental rethinking of the nature of waged work and demand the provision of a universal basic income (Standing 2014), allied to a revolutionary desire to struggle for a post-capitalist society.

Although it is correct to argue that over-qualification and underemployment are features of western labour markets, it is incorrect to imply that there are insufficient opportunities, the need for graduate-level labour or indeed any type of 'productive' work. In this instance 'productive' work is synonymous with 'really useful labour'. This type of analysis demands that we address the distinction between waged work/labour, setting this against unwaged work/labour and their validation. With respect to waged labour, whilst many on the left condemn exploitative and oppressive labour, they nevertheless come near to celebrating such work in its absence (see Avis 2014). Exclusion from waged labour is seen to carry a raft of negative social consequences deemed harmful for both the individual and society (see for example, Wilkinson and Pickett 2010). A rather different emphasis that draws on 'really useful labour' resonates with Marx's imaginary of 'unalienated' labour. For Marx labour is central to our 'species being'. Italian workerism, cognitive capitalism and antiwork (Weeks 2011) offer a rather different view of waged labour. These analyses question the productivist and

economistic assumptions that underpin much of the debate and is particularly salient in the current conjuncture faced by western economies. Blacker suggests,

> The current neoliberal mutation of capitalism has evolved beyond the days when the wholesale exploitation of labor under-wrote the world system's expansion. While "normal" business profits plummet and theft-by-finance-rises, capitalism now shifts into a mode of elimination that targets most of us – along with our environment – as waste products awaiting managed disposal. (Blackler 2013, p. 1; see Marsh 2011)

Those neoliberal processes that have hollowed out middle-level occupational positions and exacerbated the development of a polarised labour market and income distributions have created a socio-economic context in which the winner-takes-all, referred to by Piketty (2014) as 'meritocratic extrem-ism' (p. 416). Such a context questions the 'British Promise' and the myth of meritocracy. Many of those who are located at the margins of the class structure, will experience materially the collapse of the opportunity structure (Brown 2013). The result is that aspirations for mobility will be stalled, or the aim may be to avoid downward mobility in what is experienced as an increasingly precarious and insecure situation. Roberts (2016) has drawn our attention to similar conditions facing East German youth, but in this instance he suggests this anticipates our futures in the west rather than being a glitch in the modernisation of the former GDR.

The Re-composition of Class Relations

In this section, I want to locate the above discussion in a political economy of class that is sensitive to the cultural processes involved. Importantly, at a cultural level classes are on-goingly made and re-made. They also articulate with race and gender, as well as place (region, locality and so on). This articulation is in part captured by the notion of intersectionality, at the same time it is also important to acknowledge the salience of material, cultural, social and political resources and

specifically the play of power in the formation of the social relations of class. This is what Savage et al. (2005) refer to as 'capitals', 'assets', and 'resources' that can be used and converted into class advantage. The important point is that various class fractions have access to resources and networks that can be used to secure, if not enhance, their position, which may be described in Bourdieusian terms as cultural and social capital.

More than ten years ago Savage argued that the middle class constituted the 'particular universal class'.

> That is to say, although it was in fact a particular class with a specific history, nonetheless it has become the class around which an increasing range of practices are regarded as universally 'normal', 'good' and 'appropriate'… The practices of the middle class have increasingly come to define the social itself. (Savage 2003, p. 536)

The consequence was that whilst the middle class was normalised, it was also rendered unremarkable, unnoticeable and, in this sense, invisible. It became constituted, in Savage's terms, as the paradigmatic class (see Avis 2008). Yet whilst,

> Class is effaced in new modes of individualization, by the very people – mainly in professional and managerial occupations – whose actions help reproduce class inequality more intensely… class cannot be completely effaced. Class creeps back, surreptitiously, into various cultural forms. (Savage 2000, p. 156)

It is here that the hidden injuries of class arise and we meet various terms to describe such processes that through the normalisation of the 'cultural arbitrary' of the middle class serve to pathologise the working class and in particular its young people. Terms such as 'symbolic violence' allied to the normalisation and celebration of middle-class cultural capital capture this process. Whilst the normalisation of middle-class cultural forms may remain in place in the current conjuncture, the class structure is being transformed. Although those in the top of the top 1% (Dorling 2014) are able to secure their position this is

far less certain for those further down the class structure. The changed socio-economic conditions following 2008 have served to rekindle the visibility and salience of class relations, albeit accented by individualisation. Although traditional working-class communities of work have been to a large extent fragmented this is not the same as saying that the cultural forms and 'fund of knowledge' of the class has been completely eradicated (Tett 2017). At the same many class analyses discuss the manner in which the middle class secures its position in the social structure, conflating middle with what might be called the ruling class.

It is important to consider the salience of particular constructions of class and its analysis in the current period, one in which class relations are being re-composed. There is a tension in discussions that address cultural capital and the struggle for positional advantage of the middle class. These have, for example, drawn on Boudon (1974) and Bourdieu (1984) amongst others (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). A tension arises from the conflation of the middle and upper 'ruling' class, which can readily lean towards a gradation of structural relations. Thus, in language which mirrors both Savage and Bourdieu, we encounter arguments that emphasise the differential resources, assets and valued capitals available to middle-class young people that enable them to be acquainted with the 'rules of the game', in contrast to their working-class peers (see for example, Bathmaker et al. 2013). However, if we rethink the way in which we conceive class, acknowledging the complexities and changes that are a feature of the current conjuncture, a rather different picture emerges. I have already discussed notions of precariousness, over-qualification and underemployment together with the recalibration of class relations. Additionally, for many located in quasi-professional and managerial occupations, experiences of performativity and managerialism, accompanied by the threat of redundancy, may lead such workers to have a qualitatively different experience of waged labour to previous generations - a lived experience that brings to the fore exploitative and oppressive class relations. Much the same could be said about the lived experience of many of those working in graduate-level jobs. Although, in comparison to other groups, these workers have undoubted privileges and possess the valued capitals and improved life chances that Bathmaker et al. (2013) discuss. Yet at the

same time such workers complain about intensification and increasing levels of exploitation at work accompanied by deskilling and proletarianisation. It is also important to consider the stakes and investments such workers have in the status quo which serves to blunt their radicalism. Wright's (2015) notion of contradictory class location captures this ambiguity. Rikowski (1999) from a somewhat different standpoint has discussed the manner in which the 'human is made capital'. Here he has in mind the way in which we introject the contradictions of capitalism and become complicit, not only in the exploitation and oppression of others, but also of ourselves (pp. 70–71). This is a particular feature of professional and managerial occupations but extends to many workers where self and identity become entangled in these processes.

Paradoxically, an acknowledgement of these contradictory locations can return the discussion to a gradational model of class with different structural positions having contrasting interests in the status quo or societal transformation. The pivotal question turns on the way in which we understand these class relations, particularly in the current conjuncture. A gradational position conceives of class structure as embodying differential interest with class fractions struggling for positional advantage. There is a reformist politics here that calls for a politics of access and a fairer distribution of life chances set within a flatter distribution of income and wealth. This can easily fold over into a social democratic concern with equal opportunities, a stance that stops short of a revolutionary and anti-capitalist project. Byrne (2017) in a critique of Wilkinson and Pickett's *The Spirit Level*, (2010) sets this with a Fabian and technicised discussion of inequality that seeks to minimise the inequities of capitalism but leaves these relations in place. In this sense social democracy represents an ideology that celebrates a move towards a more egalitarian social structure whilst simultaneously attempting to secure the interests of capital. The limits of this reformist politics set in the current context in which class structure is being hollowed out, could prefigure a rather different class politics. Byrne (2017) in a paper which references the past as well as the present seeks to resuscitate the notion of the aristocracy of labour. He uses this term to refer to those in the top half but outside the 'top decile and certainly the top 1 per cent' (p. 111) of the income distribution. This group depends on its income

from waged labour but has experienced a decline in real wages, faces growing insecurity and whose children face an uncertain future. Brown (2016) in a rather different vein refers to 'a crisis in middle-class reproduction that has yet to find expression in class opposition' (p. 205). Gradational models of class serve to fracture class relations. Byrne's analysis suggests the possibility of a common cause across the gradients of class structure amongst those who have to sell their labour in order to survive. Perhaps the specificity of the current socio-economic context prefigures this possibility. The alternative is a politics that continually shuffles class positions in a hierarchy, for as Brown reminds us 'positional conflict and inequalities in power are defining features of the competition for livelihood within capitalist societies' (2016, p. 202). Such a stance poses questions about the way in which we conceive capitalism and the possibilities for its reform/transformation. The issue is whether we conceive of neoliberalism as a distinctive form or merely an expression of the logic of the system that is driven by the pursuit of capital accumulation. In the latter case the particular variety of capitalism attained is the outcome of the struggle between capital and labour and the subsequent balance of power. This means that in those forms akin to social democracy there is a constant struggle by capital to reassert its power and under neoliberalism by labour to constrain the power of capital. This toing and froing fails to resolve these tendencies and can only be addressed in a post-capitalist society forged through struggle.

Conclusion

This chapter has addressed the notion of meritocracy relating this to the pursuit of economic competitiveness and a fraudulent model of equal opportunity. Changes in the occupational structure following the Second World War facilitated some upward social mobility for members of the working class. However, this derived from changes in the occupational structure rather than a rigorous pursuit of social justice. The subsequent discussion addressed Fordism, post-Fordism and ongoing changes to the socio-economic context in which young people are placed and an analysis of the social relations of class. Here the critique

is directed towards a tension in analyses that serves to constitute an antagonistic relationship between class fractions manifested in gradational models of social class. This is illustrated in arguments that depict antagonistic relations between marginalised and disadvantaged fractions of the working class and those located in more privileged middle-class positions. It is important to consider on-going changes in class structure reflected in the growth of precariousness and the hollowing out of middle-level occupational positions that have led to a crisis in what Brown (2016) refers to as middle-class 'reproduction'. The former advantages attached to 'middle' class positions are being undermined in a context in which the winner-takes-all. This poses the possibility of a politics organised around those changes leading to the re-composition of class structure, one located in an anti-capitalist project. The alternative, expressed in 'positional conflict theory' (Brown 2016, pp. 202–204), is an ongoing struggle for advantage which can lead to a shuffling of class positions but without undermining these or their embeddedness in capitalist relations. To the extent that conceptions of class veer towards a gradational model they implicitly conspire with a hierarchical model of the social formation and sit alongside the logic of capitalist accumulation—a logic that should be resisted.

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An Intersectional Approach to Classed Injustices in Education: Gender, Ethnicity, 'Heavy' Funds of Knowledge and Working-Class Students' Struggles for Intelligibility in the Classroom

Louise Archer

An Intersectional Perspective on Social Class

This chapter is written from an 'intersectional' (Crenshaw 1989) conceptual perspective which understands social class as 'culturally entangled' (Hesse 2000) with, and produced both through and against, multiple axes of identity and inequality, such as gender, ethnicity and sexuality. I argue that it is not useful or desirable to theoretically 'separate out' class and to treat it as culturally homogenous or clearly bounded. Rather, I explore how classed subjectivities and inequalities are produced in ways that are simultaneously gendered and racialized.

For instance, Skeggs' (2005) claims that white working-class hetero-femininity, as epitomised by the 'hen party', is pathologised as 'vulgar' and 'tasteless' by dominant discourse. This production of class is differently configured compared with the positioning of 'dangerous', urban Black working class hetero-masculinity (e.g. Collins 2005).

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Each of these working-class subjectivities differs in its specific gendered and racialized constitution, yet class remains a key and integral feature of both. Moreover, both constitute demonised others of white middle-class heteronormativity. Indeed, if we replace 'working-class' with 'middle-class', then both of the above examples are re-made differently, with different subjective, material and discursive outcomes. Thus, the (materially and discursively) constituted role of class is not diminished by recognising and attending to its different realisation and inflection through gender and ethnicity.

Class nevertheless remains a central, yet disputed, concept within sociology of education. There is a tautological quality to social class—being both 'solid' and elusive, dynamic and enduring, reality and 'fiction'. The expression and 'content' of classed identities/subjectivities and processes may change with time and context (e.g. Savage 2015), but patterns and relations of classed power, subordination and privilege endure. The boundaries, production and expressions of classed collectivities change—and yet classed subjectivities and inequalities persist.

Sociology of education needs to continue to develop, update and refine our understandings and evidence in order to identify, understand and challenge classed injustices. This requires holding onto the 'reality' of classed injustices and the heterogeneity of class, while not falling into the trap of normalising or romanticising classed subjectivities nor elevating any version of class as being more important than others.

Power and Intersectional Classed Inequalities in the Classroom: School Science

This chapter draws on data from a five year research and development project[1] aimed at understanding the production of classed, gendered and racialized inequalities in science. Examples are drawn from eight secondary science classrooms (with students aged 11–16) from five co-educational schools observed over the course of an academic year by the research team in London and Newcastle and discussion groups conducted with 59 students. The schools were all situated in areas of deprivation serving predominantly working-class communities. While the

Newcastle school was in a predominantly white, working-class local community, the London schools were highly ethnically diverse, apart from one school with a predominantly South Asian Muslim student population.

School science is a 'high status' subject area in which practices and experiences of subordination/privilege are heightened because of a socio-historical normative alignment of science with whiteness, masculinity and middle-classness (e.g. Harding 1988). This is particularly the case for the physical sciences, where the 'typical' graduate remains white, male and middle-class (e.g. AAUW 2010; Smith 2011). Ethnicity, class, and gender intersect to shape students' engagement with science (e.g. Atwater 2000; Calabrese Barton et al. 2008; Carlone and Johnson 2007), such that working-class, Black and female students are less likely to consider science as being 'for me' (Archer and DeWitt 2016). Science education thus provides a particularly apt context for examining the operation of classed inequalities, as intersectionally constituted, expressed and experienced by young people.

We found that, across gender and ethnicity, students from working-class backgrounds were less likely to see themselves as 'science people' compared to those from more affluent backgrounds. For instance, many experienced science classes as abstract, boring and alienating. Likewise, the ESRC-funded Aspires2[2] national survey of over 13,000 Year 11 students (age 15/16) showed that students with low cultural capital (used as a proxy indicator of class) were less likely than the whole sample to agree that science lessons are interesting (48% cf. 57%) and were less likely to aspire to future science careers (8% cf. 14%).

This is not to say that all working-class students found science boring—certainly, both studies included working-class students (male, female and from a range of ethnic backgrounds) who loved science and who aspired to pursue the subject post-16 (e.g. Archer et al. 2014). However, longitudinal tracking revealed that, compared to their middle-class peers, these students tended to have lower levels of science capital (Archer et al. 2015), were less likely to have a science-focused family habitus (Archer et al. 2012) and were more likely to drop science aspirations over time (e.g. see Archer et al. 2017). Within these broader classed trajectories, we also found patterns by ethnicity and gender, with white and black working-class girls being the least likely students to (aspire to) continue with science post-16.

Who Is (Un)Intelligible in the Science Classroom?

We identified a dominant discursive regime across schools in which celebrated performances of science revolved around the practice of 'talking science through muscular intellect' (see Archer et al. in press). This involved confident, competitive, often aggressive, public verbal displays of 'talking science' (Lemke 1990) using scientific vocabulary and concepts. 'Talking science through muscular intellect' was aligned with middle-class performances of masculinity (Butler 1990) which constrained the potential intelligibility of many working-class students.

Working-Class Boys' Exclusion and Struggles for Intelligibility in Science

(i) ***Performing intelligibly—working-class boys 'talking science through muscular intellect'***

As discussed in Archer et al. (in press/forthcoming), some working-class boys (from a range of ethnic backgrounds, but most frequently from South Asian communities) did produce legitimated, high-status performances within the science classroom through the practice of 'talking science through muscular intellect'. These performances required particular embodied resources, for example, consistent high attainment, a sound grasp and confidence in using scientific concepts and terminology, social confidence—often arrogance—and the ability to frequently 'get the answer right'. These boys performed competitive masculinity, such as verbally cutting in ahead of, and over, the contributions of other students, even interrupting the teacher on occasions; taking up significant physical and discursive space in classes; and 'policing' the answers of other students, deriding those who do not answer in the 'proper' or 'correct' register, and those who 'get it wrong'. For instance:

> Mr Hobbes is writing an example on the periodic table to exemplify the point he has been making about metalloids. He starts saying "If I have metal on this side and a non-metal on this side…". Mubid and Ali (both South Asian Muslim working-class boys) shout out to interrupt. Mubid calls (loudest): "a metal that is not actually a metal! Yes!". (Year 7 class, London school)

> Mr. Okello calls on a few students to read out their questions (…) Moira starts her sentence, "How do the vibrations, wait …" [she pauses and looks for her notes]. Raja speaks abruptly to Moira: "Come on, say it properly!". (Year 8 class, London school)

Performances of masculinity are key in such performances of science—reflecting the dominant alignment of science with masculinity. The boys can be read as navigating classed inequalities through their mobilisation and enactment of gender privilege, while girls' attempts to talk science through muscular intellect were generally ignored or sanctioned by teachers. Indeed, girls' attempts were treated as illegitimate, presumably because of their 'incorrectly' gendered bodies. However, boys' performances were also often precarious, with not all attempts at talking science through muscular intellect being successful. The intelligibility of these performances was easily disrupted by giving a 'wrong' answer. A fine balance was also needed to ensure that performances did not stray too far from 'popular' working-class masculinity—that is, working-class boys needed to ensure that their performances did not too closely resemble (middle-class) performances of 'boffin' identity (Francis 2009).

(ii) ***Struggles for intelligibility—'quiet, good' boys***

The celebration of 'talking science through muscular intellect' also meant that working-class boys who did not perform hegemonic versions of masculinity were less intelligible. The scientific authenticity of 'quiet, good' boys, like Dwayne (Black British working-class Year 7 boy, London) was questioned by many students. Even though Dwayne regularly achieved high marks in his written science work, his legitimacy as a 'good science student' was widely questioned by his classmates because he did not perform science in the 'right' (gendered and classed) way,

due to being very quiet, well behaved and often 'invisible' in class. As students in the discussion groups explained:

> I don't know if Dwayne is good [at science] because he's always quiet, but he does the work and his book is normally full of sums. (Jana, Y7 South Asian Muslim working-class girl, London school)

While Dwayne was thus recognisable as a 'good student' he was not seen as 'a science person', because scientific authenticity was dominantly recognised through public performances of talking science through muscular intellect.

(iii) *Struggles for intelligibility—'laddish' performances*

Performances of 'laddishness' (e.g. Francis 1999)—as epitomised by 'having a laugh', heterosexist, anti-intellectual, jokey behaviours—are a common component within performances of popular working-class masculinity within schools. Our research highlighted how performances of popular 'laddish' working-class masculinity were enacted by boys from a wide spectrum of ethnic backgrounds, often involving resisting particular aspects of science. The following discussion from a group of Year 11 white, working-class boys from Newcastle, were among the most critical of science lessons in the whole study.

> *SG*: [3]Do you like your science lessons?
> *Logan*: No they're boring.
> *Bobby*: They're boring. They're all boring.
> *Oliver*: Aye, at this point they are quite boring.
> *Logan*: You're just sat at the back with like sinus fluid dripping out of your lugs [ears] … like you have to think about something else before your brain starts to shut down and that. //
> *SG*: What do you do in Science class, Bobby?
> *Bobby*: Sit and watch a film [on his phone].
> *Oliver*: Daydream.
> *Logan*: Launch rubbers at each other.
> *Bobby*: That's what I do, I just daydream.

The boys' accounts were also borne out by our observations of the classes. Similar laddish talk and behaviour were noted among minority ethnic working-class boys at most of the other schools, like Damon (Black British working-class Y8 boy, London school) who was frequently loud and disruptive, playing around, joking and making other students laugh with his constant 'banter' and interjections (often resulting in his being sent out of the classroom).

These examples are reminiscent of Willis' (1977) study in which the white working-class 'lads' resisted 'boring' middle-class education. Similarly, we found that ethnically diverse working-class boys' performed resistance to stereotypically 'middle-class' (e.g. intellectualised, abstract, 'dull', 'book work') and feminised aspects (e.g. passive, silent, invisible) of education generally and prototypical science, in particular. This resistance was enacted through oppositional performances of 'loud', active and visible working-class masculinity.

However, the boys' performances did not solely resist education and/or science. As noted by Frosh et al. (2002), some boys used performances of laddishness to 'hide' their educational engagement. For some boys, performances of laddishness helped them to remain intelligible (in terms of popular working-class masculinity) by 'off-setting' their science engagement. Jafi (South Asian Muslim Year 8 boy, London school) was often 'laddish' in class but he was also highly engaged with science, naming it as his favourite subject while claiming that, despite his frequent disruptive behaviours, he liked 'everything' and disliked 'nothing' about his science lessons. Through a skilled combination of performances, Jafi managed to remain intelligible in both his performance of science and popular working-class masculinity.

We also found that even boys who appeared to be the least keen on science lessons and most dismissive of schooling, still wanted to be engaged in science and blamed their behaviour as reactions to uninspiring teachers and a performative school system that does not 'care' about them. Like many students across the wider study, the white working-class Year 11 boys from Newcastle said they wanted 'lively' and 'active' lessons with more experiments:

Bobby: If the lesson was actually like …
Logan: If the lesson was interesting we wouldn't have to do that, but we sit there and watch films and stuff. If you've sat through one of her lessons it's like … I don't know, you'd be dead by the end of it.
Bobby: Aye like Mr Collier … like we've got the head teacher for Maths, so … he's one of the best teachers to teach.
SG: Yeah.
Oliver: So lively, active.

Logan suggested that if his (female) science teacher were more 'lively' and 'active' (like their male maths teacher) then they would engage and "wouldn't have to" misbehave. Indeed, discussion groups and observations indicated that, despite 'mucking about', Logan and his friends were also among the most active participants in class discussions, often volunteering answers to the teacher's questions when other students remained silent (a behaviour which the boys themselves also discussed).

We thus suggest that even boys who were most critical of science lessons were not wholly resistant to, or disengaged from science per se. Rather, they seem to be calling for science to be formulated differently, in a way that aligns better with their own values, interests and ways of being—which we read as constructed in gendered and classed terms. Elsewhere in their discussion group—like many other working-class students in the study—these boys emphasised how they wanted 'hands on' work, notably more 'experiments'. In this respect, we suggest that their talk can be interpreted as not merely resisting, but re/constructing science (and what is valued as being school science) through the lens of working-class masculinity. That is, while they resisted middle-class and/or 'feminised' 'academic' performances of the subject, they valorised working-class, masculine performances of science as 'active', 'hands on', 'interactive', 'lively' and 'relevant' to their everyday lives. In short, they constructed spaces and ways to engage with science *through* working-class masculinity.

Working-Class Girls' Exclusion and Unintelligibility in Science

Our analyses indicated that working-class girls found it even harder than boys to achieve intelligibility as science students—even when they were performing well academically (for example, getting good or top grades in the subject). Across many of the classes, our field notes recorded working-class girls, from a range of ethnic backgrounds, being quiet and marginalised within science lessons—verbally and physically, often sitting in small groups at the periphery of the classroom. The very small number of working-class girls who did try to perform talking science through muscular intellect tended to be silenced and their efforts not recognised by teachers. As the following field notes from a Year 10 London class illustrate:

> The class are checking through their answers on their worksheets. Sadia (South Asian Year 10 girl) continues calling out responses to most of the questions. But Ms. Dennis never responds and does not acknowledge Sadia's responses. Sadia calls out again, 'Insulin!' Ms. Dennis finally responds – 'Insulin, don't shout.'

Most working-class girls did not attempt such performances, but as discussed next, their other ways of being in the science class were also largely unintelligible as legitimated performances of science.

(i) *Performances of 'shy' hetero-femininity*

> *Charlotte*: I never do, like I never put my hand up in any lesson, even if I know the answer, I'm too shy.
> *Tess*: No we're all really shy.
> *AM*: Okay. How come you won't put your hand up?
> *Charlotte*: Just get embarrassed easily.
> *Tess*: I don't like everyone looking at us when I'm speaking. Specially when you're wearing no make-up.

> *Hannah*: If they pick your name … like if she picks your name everyone like turns around and stares at you, waiting for your answer, and it just like puts you on the spot and you feel bad. //
> *Tess*: We're like really shy and we've just been brought up shy really.
> (White working-class Year 11 girls, Newcastle)

Similar comments were made by girls from a range of ethnicities in the London schools. Indeed, the majority of working-class girls whom we observed and interviewed positioned themselves as 'quiet' and 'shy' within science classes -a view that most boys also concurred with:

> Most of the time, like, in this class, the girls in it, yeah, they don't even talk and stuff, but in other subjects, they act differently, they talk somewhat. (Qadir, South Asian Muslim working-class Year 7 boy, London)

Tess constructed their shyness as due to upbringing ("we've just been brought up shy, really"), but across the groups, issues of shyness were raised primarily in relation to girls' discomfort with being "put on the spot" and having to give a 'correct' science answer in front of the class. We suggest that this discomfort is exacerbated by the celebrated performance of talking science through muscular intellect—which demands both a technical, correct performance of talking science and a 'masculine' performance (a confident, assertive public display), with 'wrong', tentative or 'feminine' answers being met with ridicule and derision from peers. Indeed, as one Year 10 London boy put it, "our class is quite judgemental, so if you say something wrong people will just laugh". For many girls, such performances felt alien and uncomfortable, exacerbated by the alignment of femininity as being an object (rather than subject) of the (male) gaze—hence Tess' embarrassment and dislike of being 'looked at' when speaking, "specially when you're wearing no make-up".

Even those girls recognised by peers and/or teachers as attaining well in science were rarely observed making public contributions in class—a phenomenon also noted by students in the discussion groups. Of course, not all working-class girls were 'shy' in class and we recorded a few examples of girls who asserted themselves more loudly and visibly. However, unlike their male peers, these girls were more likely to

assert themselves through performances of working-class femininity that resisted notions of passivity and the dominant behavioural norms of the classroom. Notably, these girls tended *not* to try to possibilise themselves specifically as *science* students. For instance, girls' 'louder', more assertive and publicly visible contributions tended to be 'off task' (e.g. 'talking back', challenging boys' sexist 'banter', chatting with friends or making jokey comments), rather than making bids for scientific legitimacy.

'Fancy Words' and 'Feeling Stupid'

Working-class girls also struggled for intelligibility in science due to the intersectional exclusion of working-class femininity from the ideal student notion of 'cleverness' (see Archer and Francis 2007). We argue that this association is exacerbated through prototypical science's privileging/celebration of talking science through muscular intellect. Across the discussion groups, many girls described their alienation from 'middle-class', technical and elitist science language (whereas boys rarely, if ever, raised this as an issue) and their dislike of and exclusion from the 'competitive' (which we would code as 'masculine') culture of the science class, which celebrates (and demands) performances of 'getting the answer right'. For instance:

> I don't know… (pause) You know when they use like … when they're speaking to you and they use like the big words and they don't tell you exactly what it means so you don't have a clue what they're saying. Like they should like say like the easier words so you understand more. Do you understand? […] Just sometimes it's too hard, and I always think like I'll never be able to do it, and I think that's what like puts us off doing it. Cos I always tell myself that I can't do it. (Charlotte, white working class Year 11 girl, Newcastle school)

Similar sentiments were shared by Sharifa (South Asian Muslim working-class Year 8 girl, London) and her classmates, Leonore and Aliyah, when describing Adnan, a boy in their class who consistently performs talking science through muscular intellect:

SG: Like do you think you're a Science person?
Sharifa: Kind of, but I don't know everything, I'm not like so clever. //
SG: Is there anyone in your class who you think is good at Science?
Leonore: Adnan, that's it.
SG: Adnan.
Leonore: He always comes with fancy words, like blood cell B, blood cell A, white blood cells, blah, blah, blah.

Sharifa and Leonore's talk illustrates how public recognition and legitimation for being 'clever' and 'good at science' is achieved by the appropriate use of 'fancy words', specifically, scientific vocabulary. Across the groups, girls said that they lacked the confidence to produce such performances, as Charlotte put it, "I always tell myself I can't do it". These 'fancy words' were experienced by many girls as alienating due to the interaction of talking science with 'cleverness', which is dominantly configured in racialized, classed and gendered ways that make it difficult for working class, female and some minority ethnic students to inhabit successfully (Archer 2008). Hence the dominant discursive alignment of science with 'cleverness' is integral to its elite construction as 'naturally' aligned with whiteness, masculinity and middle-classness.

Structural Approach: Habitus, Field, Capital and Funds of Knowledge/Use-Value Capital

Funds of knowledge (FoK) approaches (Moll et al. 1992) have been proposed as a non-deficit way of enacting education with under-served communities. Originally developed with Latino/a communities, the approach has since been extended and applied by researchers across a range of contexts as a means for identifying, valuing and working with subordinated cultural resources (Zipin 2009). As Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011) discuss, there is considerable commensurability between the concepts of FoK and capital—both share a central focus on 'practice' and both are interested in the different value that forms of resource/capital may hold across contexts (or 'field' in the Bourdieusian formulation). Both address how the value of capital/FoK is (dis)abled, (mis)recognised

and (de)legitimated by field/context and recognise how the activation of capital/FoK depends on particular configurations of power relations (see also Zipin 2009). However, whereas Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011) distinguish between FoK (as held by the poor/disadvantaged) and capital (as held by dominant/privileged groups), we find the conceptual distinction between use-value (the intrinsic, inherent value) and exchange value (the economic, cultural, social or symbolic value that is produced through exchange) more useful.

Proponents of FoK and capital approaches have argued that education should accord greater value to FoK/use-value capital. In other words, education should value what working-class (and Other) students 'bring with them' (their FoK, experiences, identities, use-value capital) and should link more directly and meaningfully with the lives, values, interests and concerns of underserved communities.

We were struck by how, across our data, almost all students claimed that they wanted school learning to be made more directly relevant to their lives—and those students who did experience more 'personalised and localised' science teaching (which drew upon their own FoK/use-value capital), were very positive about it. However, as we discuss below, not all FoK were unproblematic.

The Desire for 'Relevance'—Even Among the Least Engaged

SG: Is there anything else that you think would just make it [school] a bit more bearable?
Bobby: All relevant things in life. //
SG: Yeah. What do you guys think?
Oliver: What were we doing the other days? Like … cows with big [inaudible]
Logan: Them super-cows or something …
Bobby: Super-cows … big massive cows that we just didn't need to know about. When am I ever going to need that? //
SG: Okay is there anything else maybe you can think of that would make it a bit more engaging for you to be in a lesson at all? […]
Logan: Just something practical like …

Bobby: Aye something practical that we can actually get into and do.
SG: If you were in charge of this school what would you change? What would you want students to learn about? […]
Logan: Driving. Aye, you should do stuff like that.
Bobby: Like something that everybody does.
SG: Okay.
Logan: Cos like nearly everybody drives, you know like to get round, most people do … who wants to be a brain surgeon you know things like that? Not many.
Oliver: They don't really prepare you for the world either. They don't teach you how to sort your tax and bills and that.
Bobby: Aye, they don't really help you with your CV, looking for a job. They do, but not that much. The most they've probably got is a Word [document/template], how set up for it.

The majority of working-class students claimed that they wanted education (both generally and specifically in the case of science) to be more 'relevant' to their lives. As exemplified by the above extract, relevance was constructed as something "practical" that they would regularly and reasonably expect to have to do or deal with in adult life, such as "driving" or learning "how to sort your tax and bills" or "help you with you CV, looking for a job". They argue for the value of a "practical" and applied form of learning that values common and everyday aspects of life ("something that everybody does") rather than abstract or specialist ideas and concepts (like "super cows […] when am I ever going to need that?"). We interpret the boys as arguing for use-value capital, in that they seem to resist knowledge which only has value in its potential for exchange (i.e. the 'value' of learning about super cows lies more in its designation as symbolic scientific knowledge and as an examination topic) and argue instead for capital with an immediate use within their daily lives.

In the context of science lessons specifically, almost all working-class students (across gender and ethnicity) said they wanted more 'practical' learning, as epitomised by 'hands on experiments'. As Yolanda, a Black British Year 10 girl (London school) put it:

> I feel like we enjoy practicals just 'cos they're like fun and they're just practicals, but I feel like if it's more like interactive, like general like, "oh, what do you think about this?" or "what happens in your life?" that like is associated with like this thing, instead of just like copying down from a book or something.

The students' desire for and valuing of 'hands on' learning is commonly aligned with and recognised as a popular working-class discourse. Yolanda also expresses a wish for student views to be sought, recognised and valued ("what do you think about this?") and for teaching to make clear the links between science content and their own lives ("what happens in your life that like is associated with like this thing") rather than a passive and didactic form of learning ("like copying down from a book"). In Bourdieusian terms, Yolanda's talk might exemplify the gendered, racialized and classed desires of many 'subaltern' students for a more 'respectful' form of education that minimizes symbolic violence and reduces the distance between their habitus and the field of school (science).

Personalised and Localised Education

In our wider project, teachers and researchers co-developed a pedagogical approach to teaching the existing science curriculum (see Archer 2017; Archer et al. in press; Nomikou et al. 2017). Building on FoK/use-value capital approaches, key features of the approach included the personalisation and localisation of science topics and the consistent eliciting and valuing of students' FoK (as a valued and legitimate way to do science). Observations and discussion group interviews with students and teachers indicated that diverse working-class students liked this form of teaching. Students were observed to physically sit up ("like meerkats", as one teacher put it) and engage more in lessons when the approach was used. Teachers referred to these as "lightbulb" moments, when students experienced moments of personal connection to the science content ("you can see it in their eyes"). For instance, Logan and his friends were quite animated and engaged during a science class topic

that elicited and valued their knowledge about charging their mobile phones. Teachers' personalised and localised their lessons differently according to their students (for instance, working-class students in a more rural school in the wider study were more engaged when teachers valued their FoK around farming, whereas South Asian Muslim students in one of the London schools engaged when their chemistry teacher drew on their knowledge of making curry). The key to this tailoring of the science content was the legitimation and validation of students' use-value capital (as an appropriate and valued way of 'doing science') and the opening up of science discourse (beyond 'getting the right answer') that valued students' FoK, which meant that as one student put it, 'more people have something to say'.

'Heavy' FoK—Issues of Power

Zipin (2009) argues that not all funds of knowledge/use-value capital are 'light' in the sense that they can be unproblematically 'celebrated'. In addition to FoK relating to cooking, hobbies, agriculture and popular interests, students might also bring cultural knowledge and experiences of oppression, poverty, crime, violence and so on. Zipin argues that while these 'darker' (sic)—or what we would term 'heavier'—Fok can be challenging for educators to engage with, engaging with them gives important symbolic recognition to diverse learners' lives, potentially opening up discussions around power, inequality and subordination.

We observed instances of where students' 'heavier' FoK were elicited, valued and linked to science. These related predominantly to students' personal experiences of crime and their experiences of policing, but also on a couple of occasions, experiences of alcohol within their communities. These moments seemed to be associated with 'meaningful' student engagement and were enacted within relations that recognised the authenticity and validity of the students' experiences. However, as teachers discussed with us afterwards, staff experienced these moments as 'risky' and uncomfortable and tended to shut discussion down quickly, not least because of concerns about implications for child protection policies (e.g. under-age students sharing experiences of alcohol consumption).

More frequently, we observed that 'heavy' FoK were mobilised by some working-class students as part of their enactments of power. Most common were boys' performances of laddishness and sexist 'banter'. These performances of can be understood as FoK/use-value capital in the sense that they were (for the proponents) largely pleasurable expressions of subjectivity located and produced through relations of gender, class and 'race'. They were intersectional expressions of 'culture' that were strongly classed, gendered and racialized (in different ways for different boys). However, while some boys explained their performances as ways of 'passing the time' and compensating for the 'boredom' of class work, girls and 'quiet' working-class boys often experienced these performances as oppressive, distracting and/or silencing.

Indeed, numerous girls and 'quiet' boys complained that such performances disrupted learning, took up teacher time through behaviour management and prevented them from hearing and/or taking part in the class. When asked if there was anything that could help him to "do even better" in science, Abu replied "if people would stop being silly". Likewise, Mohammed and Haroon complained how Youssef's laddish behaviour was distracting and annoying ("like Youssef, he's just like, he's so stupid, he like distracts me from my work and stops me a lot", Mohammed). In a different school, Sharifa and her friends complained about Damon's laddish behaviours ("they answer, yeah and they answer silly, like they just try to be funny but they ain't").

As other studies also note, working-class boys (from a range of ethnic backgrounds) habitually dominated the class space, making far more noise and claiming more physical and discursive space, compared to working-class girls. Boys who performed 'laddishness' also often exerted power and control over others, notably girls and non-hegemonic boys, through performances of (hetero)sexist jokey talk ('banter') (for example, Connell 1989; Jackson 2002). Francis (2000) discusses how such performances can be interpreted as part of a 'laddish' performance of masculinity which resists education and asserts dominance through objectivising girls and women and the use of heterosexist (and homophobic) language. For instance, when teacher Ms. Enoh asked why people have cars (during an environmental topic), one boy called out 'to get

[attract] girls'. Likewise, during another lesson (on DNA) a boy shouted out how no boy would want to have only daughters as that would not enable him to continue his 'family name'.

In classes where boys engaged in high levels of heterosexist 'banter' and dominant performances of talking science through muscular intellect, girls were observed to move to margins, symbolically and physically, staying within a close-knit small groups and being largely silent/silenced within lessons. That is, working-class girls were silenced through enactments of both scientifically 'legitimate' and resistant working-class masculinity. This happened most in those London classes where boys outnumbered girls, but the theme was recognised by girls across discussion groups:

Tess: I think it would be easier without boys in the class.
AM: Right.
Tess: It would be lot like less … I don't know …
Hannah: I think it's better without boys in the class when you do stuff about like the body and like sex and things like that. They just sit there and everyone just laughs and you just feel (inaudible).
Charlotte: Yeah, boys are more immature (inaudible) not trying to be sexist but it's true, like.

Reading these examples, it is perhaps unsurprising that analysis by the Institute of Physics (2012) found that 49% of state co-educational schools are failing to send a single girl on to study A-level Physics—with Physics being widely recognised as the most 'elite' science. The above examples also highlight the importance of recognising how injustices (e.g. sexisms) can be intersectionally constituted in ways that can make it hard for some educators to challenge.

Limited Recognition of 'Other' FoK

Although our project worked with teachers to support the valuing of a wider range of use-value capital and ways of being in science, some student performances remained unintelligible. Notably, we found limited possibilities for working-class girls to (intelligibly) perform differently or agentically in science. As discussed above, many of the girls we

observed were very quiet within science classes and tended to huddle in small friendship groups to 'do our own thing'. Whereas girls described this 'huddling' as a 'safe space', boys constructed the girls' use of their 'safe space' as an unintelligible way of performing science—because the performance of talking science through muscular intellect requires confident public displays of 'talking science', rather than quiet, small group discussion.

We observed a small number of occasions when girls more radically reconfigured and challenged talking the practice of talking science through muscular intellect—asserting instead the validity of engagement with science through femininity. For instance, girls in several classes 'did' science through displays of 'art' and 'creativity', such as doodling, drawing, colouring and making paper crafts and engaged with science through specifically 'feminine' topics, such as childbirth. For instance:

> Taylor and Moira are drawing clouds, hearts and pretty letters. //One girl is making origami, Moira and Taylor at the back still drawing. (Year 8 class, London school)

In the discussion groups, girls defended these performances as both valuable in their own right and as authentic ways of doing science. For instance, when asked why they liked and spent so much time colouring during science, Tanisha (mixed African Caribbean/White working-class Year 7 girl), explained:

> It's more neater because, like, where it's in colour, we want to make it look, like, nice, instead of just being black and white, so we put more effort into it.

One reading of this is that the girls resisted performances of muscular intellect and traditional, stereotypic performances of science (as 'male', 'black and white', 'not creative') and either engaged engaged (colouring science diagrams) with or resisted (off-task doodling) science through performances of femininity and 'feminine' funds of knowledge. However, boys tended to argue vehemently against the legitimacy of these practices, which they derided as 'mucking about'.

> The girls mess about more than boys (…) They just like get coloured pens and they just like draw in their books and that. (Ahmed, South Asian Muslim Y7 boy, London school)

It was also notable that such performances were not always read as authentic ways of doing science by teachers—as illustrated by the following field notes:

> The teacher chastises: "Aynur you're obsessed with colouring in. Stop it now!". (Ms. de Luca, London School)

Likewise, Ms. Dennis commented to the researchers, 'Boys like physics and experiments. Girls would like more cells, drawing beautiful diagrams'.

Yet when girls engaged with science through performances of femininity, in ways that leveraged their feminine funds of knowledge, they seemed to engage more enthusiastically. For instance,

> Ayesha suddenly notices the fume cupboard in the corner of the class and calls out: "Sir, what is that? That, sir, it looks like an incubator" (she points at the fume cupboard). Mr. Hobbes asks "Do you know what an incubator is?" Ayesha answers "yeah, like when the baby comes out early". The girls all get excited and start to talk over each other and chip in. Mr. Hobbes asks them "what does 'incubator' mean?" Ayesha says that "it warms it up". Mr. Hobbes replies "yes, so it keeps the baby warm". (Year 7 class, London school)

However, boys often resisted such moments—for example, in the above case, no boys attempted to join in the discussion about the incubator but rather tried to shift the conversation back 'on topic' (with Youssef calling out "I don't know what global warming is"). Ms. Dennis also noted a similar pattern among her students, with boys resisting the validity or relevance of topics that they perceived to be linked with femininity:

> Teaching reproduction, there were only girls listening. The boys started arguing about things—they feel that they don't need to know this.

We interpret these findings as suggesting that, within many science classrooms, the symbolic weight accorded to performances of talking science through muscular intellect tends to afford greater power and status to boys—such that some working-class boys are able to possibilise themselves as good science students. However, the dominance of such performances can contribute to the closing down of alternative ways of doing science, such as girls' (and some quieter boys') practices of working quietly, engaging 'artistically', their strategies of self-preservation (e.g. withdrawing, 'doing our own thing') and attempts to perform science through femininity.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued the value of bringing an intersectional lens to bear on analyses of working-class students' educational experiences. Using the context of school science, as a site with particularly stark configurations of elitism and power, I have sought to unpick how dominant, celebrated notions of the 'good science student' are gendered, racialized and classed, in ways that make it difficult for working-class students, particularly girls, to be intelligible in such spaces.

As Spivak (1988) reminds us, "the colonized subaltern subject is irretrievably heterogenous" (p. 79), hence the Other does not speak in a singular 'voice'. Likewise, there is no singular working-class subjectivity or 'culture'. As I have attempted to explicate, power is enacted both over and through different working-class 'cultures' and some classed performances can be oppressive to and silencing of other working-class subjectivities. In this respect, an intersectional lens offers a tool for examining a range of classed positionings and configurations that are structured by complex axes of privilege and subordination. Such an approach offers a useful way through the quagmire of identity politics, resisting efforts to homogenise and locate the 'essence' or working-classness within a singular collective, foregrounding the heterogeneity and polyvocality of 'working class' communities, while also identifying how multiple, interacting axes of inequality are part of the construction of the material and discursive positionings and subjectivities of those who experience a

common, pathologised location in economic, social and cultural terms. In this respect, it feels more useful to look at ‘classed’, rather than ‘class’, positionings and injustices.

I have discussed how the symbolic economy of school science is set up to defend/produce the ‘authentic’ scientist as white, male and middle-class, which entails pejorative judgements and de-legitimation of working-class ways of being and doing science. A few working-class boys were able to mobilise particular gendered performances (of masculinity) to possibilise themselves as legitimate science students. Yet, these performances— along with differently racialized working-class ‘laddish’ performances of resistance, were precarious and could entail the exclusion and silencing of Other students—particularly working-class girls.

Funds of knowledge/use-value capital approaches have been proposed as useful avenues for pursuing more socially just forms of education for/with working-class students. Most working-class students in this study were strongly in favour of more ‘relevant’ (science) education, that would be ‘hands on’ and valuing of/resonant with their everyday lives, experiences and concerns. They were also very positive about instances of teaching that were more ‘personalised and localised’. However, not all FoK mobilised in the classes were ‘light’ and some (boys’ performances of heterosexist masculinity) were oppressive. Moreover, some of the girls’ performances and other ways of being in science were beyond the limits of intelligibility for their teachers (and some boys). In this respect, efforts need to be targeted at changing the ‘field’ of science and re/constructing dominant notions of intelligibility, i.e. answering the question as to what performances are recognised as legitimate/valued ways of doing and being in science?

Finally, this chapter has focused primarily on representational issues, while being mindful that such approaches are only part of the toolkit for building a more just education system, as they do not necessarily engage with distributional injustices and the crucial role played by economic, social and cultural capital in producing classed inequalities. Focusing on issues of intelligibility and representation—while invaluable—also need to be enacted alongside efforts to redistribute and make more equitable the economic relations that form the basis of working-class oppression.

Notes

1. The Enterprising Science research project is a five year research and development project conducted by University College London, IOE and King's College London in partnership with the Science Museum and funded by BP. Details on the project can be found at: www.kcl.ac.uk/enterprisingscience. The wider data set from which these data are drawn comprises fieldwork conducted with nine teachers in six London schools and twelve teachers in four schools, in York, Newcastle and near Leeds.
2. See http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/departments-centres/departments/education-practice-and-society/aspires.
3. Interviewers are denoted by their initials (SG—Spela Godec; LA—Louise Archer; AM—Ada Mau).

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Education, Social Class and Marxist Theory

Dave Hill

Part One: What Is Social Class and How Is It Measured?

> The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles… Our epoch… has simplified the class antagonisms… into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat. (Marx and Engels 1848 [1978], pp. 35–36)

What is Social Class?

What social class are you? What social class were the people you went to school with, or work or study with? One classification, social class, is generally recognised as having particular significance, as both reflecting and causing major social, economic, and cultural differences in, for example, income, wealth, status, education, and lifestyle. Income (pay

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packet, salary, and dividends) and wealth (what we own, such as housing, shares, money in the bank, and possessions) reflect our social class position. However, not only does social class *reflect* such social differences, it also *causes* them. Our socio-economic background, social class, social class-related ways in which we present ourselves, tend to affect the ways in which we are treated by teachers, the police, friends, employers, sexual partners, and by many others in society. As with racism and sexism, this can take the form of *personal discrimination*—positive or negative stereotyping labelling and expectation. It can also take the form of *structural discrimination*—taking place on a systematic, repetitive, embedded nature within particular social structures such as schooling, housing, employment, credit agencies, police, armed forces.

In the education system there are different social class-related patterns of: attainment (such as SATs scores, GCSE exam passes, university entrance); teaching methods (or pedagogy);'hidden curricula' or patterns of expectations and labelling of individuals and social groups; formal (subject) curricula (despite the existence of a National Curriculum in schools in countries such as England; where you go after school (work, vocational education, low or high-status university); and job destinations. Of course, not all sons and daughters of the upper class go into higher education and subsequently take up jobs with high social status, a high degree of power over others, and a high income. But most do.

Official Measurement of Social Class

The Registrar-General's classification of occupations used for official government purposes) was the most commonly used system in the UK of classifying people between 1911 and 1998. It is based on Weberian notions of the status value of different occupations. Unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled manual workers—workers engaged in manual labour—were denoted 'working class'. The 'working class' (Classes C2, D and E) was differentiated from 'the lower middle class'—employees such as those in 'routine', low-paid white-collar jobs (Class C1). These, in turn, were differentiated from other, better paid, more highly

educated, and higher status sections of the middle class (Classes A and B). These 'official' classes are still used as the basis for the A, B, C1, C2, D and E social class/consumption group indicators used by sociological research, market research bureaux, opinion pollsters and advertisers (Adapted from Ipsos 2009).

> In November 1998 the Registrar-General's classification was amended to take into account changes in the occupational structure, and has been used for the census since 2001. (Office for National Statistics 2016)

A similar 'gradational' model of social class, grading social groups hierarchically, developed by Mike Savage and his associates, and popularised in the UK by the BBC's website, 'What Social Class Are You' (BBC 2013) includes seven classes (Dorling 2015; Savage et al. 2013; BBC 2013). These were based on Bourdieu's (1997) analysis of cultural capital and social capital (existing alongside economic capital). Participants were asked if they enjoyed any of 27 cultural activities including watching opera and going to the gym. According to their lifestyle cultural choices (impacted of course by ability to buy these choices) people were identified as belonging to one of seven classes.

BBC/Savage et al. Classification of Seven Classes (Adapted from BBC 2013/Savage et al. 2013)

- Elite: This is the most privileged class in Great Britain who have high levels of all three capitals.
- Established Middle Class: Members of this class have high levels of all three capitals although not as high as the Elite. They are a gregarious and culturally engaged class.
- Technical Middle Class: This is a new, small class with high economic capital but seem less culturally engaged.
- New Affluent Workers: This class has medium levels of economic capital and higher levels of cultural and social capital.
- Emergent Service Workers: This new class has low economic capital but has high levels of 'emerging' cultural capital and high social capital.

- Traditional Working Class: This class scores low on all forms of the three capitals although they are not the poorest group. The average age of this class is older than the others.
- Precariat: This is the most deprived class of all with low levels of economic, cultural and social capital. The everyday lives of members of this class are precarious (BBC 2013).

These are *gradational* categorisations. People are graded in a hierarchy, a ladder, according to how much income, wealth, education, power over others, their choice of leisure activities for example. Positions within this wealth/income/status hierarchy have important correlation, with for example, health, diet, conditions at work, years of healthy life, age of death, and, of course, educational attainment.

Increasing Inequalities—Immiseration/Austerity Capitalism

Reports by organisations such as The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2016) testify to the depth of poverty, low pay, and reduction in welfare benefits. (see Hill et al. 2016). In the social universe of austerity capital, there are huge differences in living conditions, shown for example in the 2016 Ken Loach film *I, Daniel Blake* highlighting the inhumanity and deliberate humiliation of the welfare claimant system run by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in the UK. And there are huge social class differences in years of healthy life—in London:

> Women living in Richmond can look forward to 72 years of "healthy life"- compared with just 54 for women in Tower Hamlets. That equates to people in the East End's most deprived borough losing almost a year for every stop on the District line that links them to Richmond. The difference is only slightly less for men - with 70 healthy years for those in Richmond, compared with 55 in Tower Hamlets'. (Lydall and Prynn 2013)

Under 'Austerity Capitalism' 'the gap between the lifespans of rich and poor people in England and Wales is increasing for the first time in almost 150 years' (Pells 2016).

Part Two: Marxist Analysis of Social Class

Workers are paid only a proportion of the value they create in productive labour. The rest of the value they create, surplus value, is taken by the capitalist class as profit. The capitalist mode of production is a system of exploitation of one class (the working class) by another (the capitalist class). It is the Labour–Capital Relation, *the economic relation of production.* While superficially it appears that the worker receives a 'fair day's work for a fair day's pay', the extraction of surplus value reveals the deep reality of class exploitation.

> Classes are large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation (in most cases fixed and formulated by law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organisation of labour, by the dimensions of the share of the social wealth of which they dispose and their mode of acquiring it. (Lenin 1919 [1965], p. 421)

For Marx this class exploitation and domination are reflected in *the social relations of production*. These are how people relate to each other—for example relationships between 'bosses' and senior management, supervisors/foremen/women/middle management and, for example, shop-floor, chalk-face, workers.

Class Consciousness

Marxists believe that the point is not simply to describe the world but to change it. In Marx's words, 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it' (1845). Class consciousness does not follow automatically or inevitably from the objective fact of economic class position. Marx's *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847) distinguishes between a 'class-in-itself' (an objective determination relating to class position) and a 'class-for-itself' (a subjective appreciation of class consciousness). The Communist Manifesto (1848)

explicitly identifies 'the formation of the proletariat into a class' as the key political task facing communists. In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* (1852) Marx observes,

> In so far as millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that divide their mode of life, their interests and their cultural formation from those of the other classes and bring them into conflict with those classes, they form a class. (Marx 1852 [1974], p. 239)

The process which links economic and social class is that of *class consciousness*. The class conflict arising from class consciousness and class struggle is fundamental to understanding economic, political and educational change. It is in periods of extreme class differentiation, periods of the intensification of the extraction of surplus value—profit—from the labour power of workers, that more and more workers perceive, subjectively, the objective nature of their exploitation. Nineham (2010, p. 15) draws on Lukacs concerning periods of capitalist crisis: 'in the midst of panic, the role of state institutions is exposed, as politicians vote to bail out the banks, or police forces attack unemployed protestors'.

Since the global crisis of finance capital of 2008, and the subsequent years of austerity politics, which David Harvey calls 'war from above' (Harvey 2005) there is now a broad understanding and appreciation of the 99% being ruled, fooled and exploited by the 1%, as for example, represented by the banner on myriad anti-austerity marches and demonstrations, 'We are the 99per cent'.

The Changing Composition of Social Classes

In the introductory quotation to this chapter Marx refers to two mutually antagonistic classes, the proletariat (working class) and the bourgeoisie (the capitalist class). However, social class, for Marx, is not static. Under capitalist economic laws of motion, the working class, and indeed, the capitalist class, is constantly decomposed and reconstituted due to changes in the forces of production, technological changes in the type of work. New occupations, such as telesales and computing have come into existence; others, such as coal mining, manufacturing and

other manual working-class occupations, decline. Within the capitalist class there has been a change from the mill owner, the factory owner, to chief executives of national and global corporations—together with their owners and (other) major shareholders.

Class as Internally Differentiated

There are manifestly different layers, or strata among the working classes. Professional workers and skilled workers in general have a higher standard of living than semi-skilled or unskilled workers, and those in 'the precariat' (Standing 2014) for example on zero-hours contracts, or unemployed workers. Whatever their stratum, or 'layer' in the working class, however, Marxists assert that there is, objectively, if not subjectively, a common identity of interest between these strata.

The Middle Class, The 'Petit Bourgeoisie' and Intermediate Class Locations—*The 'new middle class'*

Marx never completed his writing on social class (Rikowski 2002). As well as the bourgeoisie/capitalist class and the proletariat, Marx did at various times refer to other classes. Marx and Engels, in various writings (e.g. Marx and Engels 1848; Marx 1852), referred to a third class, the 'lumpenproletariat', 'people who live in poverty, an underclass, a rabble proletariat'. However, Marx, Engels and subsequent Marxist sociologists analyse the old middle class or petit bourgeoisie, and, separately, the new middle class, of professional, often state, workers. Marx wrote of the 'petit bourgeoisie' (e.g. Marx and Engels 1848), and various subsequent Marxists from Pannekoek (1909) have analysed this 'middle class', a class standing between capital and labour, the old middle class, or petit bourgeoisie.

Since the 1960s in particular there has been the growth of what is termed the new middle class—the professional and managerial stratum, such as supervisors, personal managers, social workers, teachers, lecturers. These are 'between capital and labour' in the sense that while being entirely dependent on capital, employed by the national or local state,

or in private companies/corporations, they exercise *supervisory functions* over the working class. Teachers or supervisors or office managers are not capitalists—they do not themselves take profit from the surplus value extracted from working-class labour. Nor are they working class in this specific, particular sense—inasmuch as they do not have surplus value directly extracted from their own labour. For many sociologists and analysts, they are a new middle class, occupying a contradictory class location (e.g. Wright 1989, 2002).

For Poulantzas (1975) they are not part of the working class, because their work is 'unproductive labour'. Thus, 'I have a rather limited and restricted definition of the working class. The criterion of productive and unproductive labour is sufficient to exclude unproductive workers from the working class' (pp. 119–121). Poulantzas assigned non-productive workers to the 'new petty bourgeoisie' (p. 117) asserting that '… the new petty bourgeoisie constitutes a separate class' (p. 115). However, their conditions of work and pay have been proletarianised—with loss of autonomy, status, pay and also loss of jobs. Many of 'the new middle class' identify with the aims and values of the working class. Many Marxists adopt a binary notion of class (e.g. Kelsh and Hill 2006), where the 'new middle class' workers are defined as part of working class. There are basically two classes in society—those who sell their labour, the working class on the one hand, and the capitalist class—those who buy workers' labour and labour power, on the other. This is a relation, a relationship, the Capital–Labour relation. To repeat, in summary, the criticism of the sociological, gradational, life-style, categorisations above, the 'box-people', those who classify people according to umpteen criteria into umpteen 'social classes' are missing that essential relation (Rikowski 2001).

Criticisms of Marxist Social Class Analysis

There are a number of objections to Marxist social class analysis put forward by rival sociological theories such as Weberian analysis, Structural-Functionalism and Postmodernism.

1. Social class and individualism

Some say, 'we are all individuals, why can't we treat people simply as individuals?'

This ignores '*the economic relationships of production*'. Are we owners/ senior share-holding managers, or are we employees. It also ignores the social relationships we have with our employers/employees, our teachers, '*the social relations of production*', the power relations of patterns of control or deference between bosses, managers and workers.

2. Social class and post-Fordism/Post-Modernism

Since the consumer boom of the 1950s, some claim that social mobility—moving from one class to another—has been made easier by the expansion of higher education since 1960s, people are less imprisoned (or liberated) by their class—'anybody can become anything they want'.

Postmodernists argue that as a result of economic changes such as the transition from a mass production ('Fordist') to a specialist production ('post-Fordist') economy, the *relations of production* have been superseded in political, educational and social importance by *relations of consumption*, that there is no mass production assembly line culture, no longer mass production or mass consumption. Instead there are myriad ways of working, types of work, types of product, types of consumption, brand names, niches in the market. The social and cultural order organised around class has been replaced, they allege, by a 'new order' based on individual rights, social mobility, job mobility, geographical mobility, consumer choice, lifestyle choice, choice over sexual identity and type of sexuality. However, individuals work in computer—and consumer-driven niche production, their relationship to the means of production is essentially the same.

3. Social class and identity

Postmodernists proceed to say that people no longer identify themselves by their social class, or if they do, it is one, not a hugely important, self-identifier. They suggest that class identity and affiliation are

outdated concepts, class it is taken as one amongst a plurality of social relations shaping education and the social world. They criticise the Marxist project of class struggle on the grounds that it denies or suppresses 'social difference'. David Harvey summarises their critique: 'Concentration on class alone is seen to hide, marginalise, disempower, repress and perhaps even oppress all kinds of 'others'' (Harvey 1993, p. 101).

4. Nomenclature

Issues of nomenclature—what we call people—are crucial in understanding the nature of social class. For example, the use of the terms 'upper class' and 'lower class' can set out not simply a description of a group's/class' place on a ladder of possession, but also a justification for the existence of differentiated social classes, and indeed, a moral hierarchy. Such a 'gradational' classification says very little about the relationship between these classes. For Marxists, the terms 'ruling' and/or 'capitalist class', on the one hand, and 'working class', on the other, however, implies a specific relationship between them. To repeat, for Marxists, class is a relational concept.

5. Hiding the ruling capitalist class and its solidarity

Weberian, official, consumption-based classifications hide the existence of the capitalist class—that class which dominates society economically and politically. This class owns the means of production (and the means of distribution and exchange). These classifications mask the existence of the super-rich and the super-powerful—the ruling class. In the Registrar-General's classification, mega-rich capitalists are placed in the same class as, for example, university lecturers, journalists and solicitors.

6. Hiding working-class unity and its solidarity

A related criticism of consumption-based classifications is that, by segmenting the working class, they both hide the existence of the working class and serve a purpose of 'dividing and ruling' the working

class. They inhibit the development of a common (class) consciousness against the exploiting capitalist class.

Similarly, Marxists see the promotion of ethnic or 'racial' divisions between black and white workers, between women and men and between heterosexuals and homosexuals, between public and private sector workers, between the employed and those on benefits, between the young and the retired. It serves to weaken the solidarity and 'muscle' of the working class.

Marxists recognise that sex or 'race' exploitation (and other exploitations) are deep, widespread and damaging, and sometimes murderous. However, in contrast to the exploitation of women and particular minority ethnic groups, Marxists note the *fundamental* nature of class exploitation in capitalist economy (Hill 2009). Social class exploitation is necessary for the continuation of capitalism. Capitalism can (and may) survive with sex and 'race' equality—indeed, for some neo-liberals these are desirable attributes of an economy and education/training system—but to conceive of equality between different social classes in a capitalist economy and society is impossible. Capitalism is defined as the exploitation of one class by another. This is not to trivialise the issue of identity and of identity politics. However, for millions, the duality 'worker/boss' is not abstract. Indeed, the proportion of British voters believing there is a 'class struggle' in Britain rose from around 60% in the early 1960s to 81% in the mid-1990s, according to Gallup (Deer 1996). The 2015 British Attitudes Social Survey found that 60% of Britons regard themselves as working class (Butler 2016).

7. Demobilising the Working Class: Social class, class conflict and political strategy

Various media, Conservative MPS and Labour MPs opposed to Jeremy Corbyn argue that 'the class struggle is over', that we live in a free and meritocratic society where class struggle belongs in the history books only. These are attempts to demobilise, ideologically and organisationally, a class-conscious working class. There is not just 'class war from below', such as workers on strike, or occupations of factories, workplaces, universities, or protest movements, there is permanent class war

from above, sometimes open, sometimes disguised. The ruling capitalist class controls and uses the ideological and repressive apparatuses of the state to weaken organisations of actual or potential working class power such as trade unions, seeking to promote nationalism, jingoism, racism, young against old, employed against unemployed, and identity politics, as 'Divide and Rule' strategies in the ongoing class struggle.

Part Three: Marxist Theory and Education

What are the detailed explanations for working class under-achievement in schools and in education, and what, therefore, should be the locus and focus of policy? Should 'blame' be attached to:

- the individual child, as 'lazy' or individually unintelligent?
- the working class itself—its 'defective culture' and child-rearing patterns, its supposed attitude to life such as the demand for 'immediate gratification', or its 'defective genetic pool'?
- individual schools and 'ineffective' teachers? Will the problem of differential social class achievement be resolved by naming and shaming and improving ineffective schools and going along with the 'Effective Schools Movement', improving school management and performance, appointing 'superheads'?
- Capitalist society itself—where schools' formal curriculum and the hidden curriculum are deliberately geared to failing most working-class children, and to elevating, middle—and upper-class children above them? In other words, is the problem with the way society is organised around the exploitation of the working classes by the ruling capitalist class with the assistance—willing or unwilling—of teachers?

Marxist Analyses of Education

In this section, I set out salient Marxist analyses relating, seeking to critically analyse and understand capitalist education. In addition, Marx and Marxism have influenced a broad range of critical scholars,

including Bourdieu and Bernstein. Such thinkers offer ideas, concepts and arguments which *complement* Marxism rather being Marxist per se.

Bukharin and Preobrazhensky

Marxist analysis of the role education performs in capitalist society was set out by Bukharin and Preobrazhensky in 1920 (1920 [1969]):

> In bourgeois society the school has three principal tasks to fulfil. First, it inspires the coming generation of workers with devotion and respect for the capitalist régime. Secondly, it creates from the young of the ruling classes 'cultured' controllers of the working population. Thirdly, it assists capitalist production in the application of sciences to technique, thus increasing capitalist profits.

Bukharin and Preobrazhensky describe each of these tasks:

> Just as in the bourgeois army the 'right spirit' is inculcated by the officers, so in the schools under the capitalist régime the necessary influence is mainly exercised by the caste of 'officers of popular enlightenment'. The teachers in the public elementary schools receive a special course of training by which they are prepared for their role of beast tamers. …. The ministries of education in the capitalist régime are ever on the watch, and they ruthlessly purge the teaching profession of all dangerous (by which they mean socialist) elements.

In Western capitalist economies, we can say that the aim is to 'withhold 'critical' secondary and higher education from working class youth. Despite the best efforts, and love indeed, of many teachers, education is perceived for working-class youth as 'skills training', devoid of 'deep critique'.There is the suppression of critical space in education, the strict control of teacher education, of the curriculum, of educational research (Hill 2006). Of course, many teachers resist. As Althusser notes,

> I ask the pardon of those teachers who, in dreadful conditions, attempt to turn the few weapons they can find in the history and learning they 'teach' against the ideology, the system and the practices in which they are trapped. They are a kind of hero. (1971)

Some of the most influential Marxist theorists of education, and those influenced by Marxism (such as Bernstein and Bourdieu, and Duffield and associates) are:

- **Gramsci** (1971**)** and his concepts of (capitalist) hegemony of ideas, of the social role of teachers as intellectuals, his insistence on developing counter-hegemonic 'good sense' (as opposed to hegemonic capitalist 'commonsense', in settings outside the school as well as within, his call for and notion of 'resistance' (and the role of an organised party) and his (culturalist) asserting of the importance of ideology and ideological contestation.
- **Bourdieu** (1990, 1997), Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) and the theory of Schooling as Cultural Reproduction, and the concepts of Habitus, Cultural Capital and Symbolic Violence, whereby schools recognise and reward middle-class/upper class knowledge, language, body language, and diminish and demean working class and some minority-ethnic cultures.
- **Anyon** (2011), **Bernstein** (1977), **and Duffield** (1998) addressed the significant social class differences in pedagogy, with middle-class students being given more discussion time and less time-consuming writing and reading tasks than working class children, with there being distinct differences in the 'ethos' and the hidden curriculum—the pattern of expectations and acceptable/desired norms of behaviour for children/students from different social classes.
- **Bowles and Gintis'** (1976) theory of Schooling as Economic Reproduction, whereby 'The Correspondence Principle' explains the way in which the hidden curriculum of schools reproduces the social (and economic) class structure of society within the school, training school students for different economic and social futures on the basis of their social and economic pasts—their parental background.

- **Althusser's** (1971) theory of Schooling as Ideological Reproduction, whereby schooling as an Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) works to persuade children that the status quo is fair and legitimate, and if that doesn't work—then schools (and other sate apparatuses) also function as a Repressive State Apparatus (RSA), disciplining and punishing what they regard as unacceptable 'deviance' or non-conformity/rebellion.
- **Rikowski's** (2001, 2002) theory of the crucial role of schooling (at all levels) of developing labour power-, firstly, skills, and secondly, attitudes, personal personality characteristics, potential, suitable for capitalism. For Rikowski (2001) 'teachers and trainers are implicated in socially producing the single commodity—labour-power—on which the whole capitalist system rests. This gives them a special sort of social power' which includes the power to subvert, to teach against capital.

Gramsci: Hegemony, Intellectuals and Contestation

Other than Gramsci, the above are Marxist Reproduction theorists. Giroux (1983) expertly summarises the differences between Marxist Reproduction Theorists and Marxist Resistance Theorists. This latter group have been very much influenced by Gramsci. For Gramsci, the state, and state institutions such as schools, rather than being the servant of the interests of capitalism and the ruling class, were, instead, an arena of class conflict and a site where hegemony has to be continually striven for. Thus, schools and other education institutions are seen as relatively autonomous apparatuses, providing space for oppositional behaviour. For Gramsci, as for Marxists in general, education is class struggle. Banfield (2016) notes, '[I]t is part of what Gramsci has aptly called the "war of position" (Gramsci 1971) where the trenches of civil society are won in classrooms, workplaces, pubs and on street corners such that socialism becomes the "enlightened common sense of our age"'. For Gramsci, teachers/educators have a very special role, 'All men (sic) are intellectuals but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals'.

Common Sense and (class conscious) Good Sense

For Gramsci, and indeed for millions of communist, Marxist, critical, Freirean teachers and educators (and cultural workers) historically and today, this means challenging. critically interrogating, deconstructing accepted wisdoms, curricula, pedagogies, and working—as part of the working class (as 'organic intellectuals')—developing its own world view, its own 'good sense', its own analysis, vision, programme. Gramsci's influence on the Critical Pedagogy movement globally (and of Revolutionary Critical Pedagogy) has been immense (coupled with the work of Freire and of the Frankfurt School).

Bourdieu: Schooling as Cultural Reproduction

Concepts of culture and cultural capital are central to Bourdieu's analysis of how the mechanisms of cultural reproduction functions within schools. For Bourdieu, the major function of the education system is to maintain and legitimate a class-divided society. In his analysis, schools are middle-class institutions run by and for the middle class. Cultural reproduction, for Bourdieu, works in three ways.

Cultural capital—knowing that

Firstly, through the formal curriculum and its assessment. The curriculum and examinations privilege and validate particular types of 'cultural capital', the type of elite knowledge that comes naturally to middle—and, in particular, upper-class children, but which is not 'natural' or familiar to non-elite children and school students. At the same time, and as a consequence, it disconfirms, rejects, invalidates the cultures of other groups, both social class groups and ethnic minority and immigrant groups.

Cultural capital—knowing how

Secondly through the hidden curriculum. This type of cultural capital is 'knowing how', how to speak to teachers, not only knowing about books, but also knowing how to talk about them. It is knowing how to talk with the teacher, with what body language, accent, colloquialisms, register of voice, grammatical exactitude in terms of the 'elaborated code' of language and its associated habitus, body posture, or way of behaving.

> In a number of social universes, one of the privileges of the dominant, who move in their world as a fish in water, resides in the fact that they need not engage in rational computation in order to reach the goals that best suit their interests. All they have to do is follow their dispositions which, being adjusted to their positions, 'naturally' generate practices adjusted to the situation. (Bourdieu 1990, pp. 108–109)

For Bourdieu, and for non-Marxists such as Stephen Ball (2003) and sociologists in general, children and teenagers bring their social-class backgrounds into school with them. Ball (2003) points out, '[W]ithin the educational system almost all the authority remains vested in the middle classes. Not only do they run the system, the system itself is one which valorises middle rather than working-class cultural capital'. This echoes Bernstein (1977) and his theory of class specific Language Codes, whereby schools privilege and reward middle-class so-called 'Elaborated Language' and devalue and demean working-class so-called 'Restricted Language.'

Cultural reproduction through separate schooling

Thirdly, cultural reproduction works, in Britain, through the separate system of schooling for the upper and upper-middle classes, nearly all of whom send their children to private (independent) schools. The system of secondary education exemplifies and reproduces class differentiation, which is rigidly separated into a flourishing, lavishly-funded private sector, as compared to demoralised, underfinanced public sector, itself divided into schools in wealthy areas and those in inner-urban/inner-city areas.

Class-Based Pedagogies in the Classroom: Jean Anyon, and Jill Duffield and Her Colleagues: Jean Anyon and Class-Based Pedagogy

Jean Anyon's studies of the early 1980s (summarised in Anyon 2011) were in five schools of four different social class types (two of the schools were 'working class', one was 'middle class', one 'affluent professional' and one 'executive elite' (capitalist) class. She showed distinct differences in pedagogy and expectations of teachers of children/students from different social classes.

The Working-class school

> In the two working-class schools, work is following the steps of a procedure, usually mechanical, involving rote behavior and very little decision making or choice. Steps are told to the children by the teachers and are often written on the board. The children are usually told to copy the steps as notes.
>
> Rote behavior was often called for in classroom work. The children had no access to materials. These were handed out by teachers and closely guarded. The teachers continually gave the children orders. Only three times did the investigator hear a teacher in either working-class school preface a directive with an unsarcastic "please," or "let's" or "would you." Instead, the teachers said, "Shut up," "Shut your mouth," "Open your books,"

The Middle-class school

> In the middle-class school, work is getting the right answer. If one accumulates enough right answers, one gets a good grade… Answers are usually found in books or by listening to the teacher. Answers are usually words, sentences, numbers, or facts and dates; one writes them on paper, and one should be neat.

The Affluent-Professional School

> Work is creative activity carried out independently. The students are continually asked to express and apply ideas and concepts. Work involves individual thought and expressiveness, expansion and illustration of ideas… The products of work in this class are often written stories, editorials and essays, or representations of ideas in mural, graph, or craft form. The products of work … should show individuality.

The Executive-Elite School

> In the executive elite school, work is developing one's analytical intellectual powers. Children are continually asked to reason through a problem, to produce intellectual products that are both logically sound and of top academic quality… The teachers were very polite to the children, and the

investigator heard no sarcasm, no nasty remarks, and few direct orders. The teachers never called the children "honey" or "dear" but always called them by name.

Jill Duffield and associates

Pedagogies—the teaching and learning methods used by teachers and pupils—vary according to the pupils' social class. Duffield (1998), influenced by Bourdieu, followed two classes in each of four Scottish schools through their first two years of secondary education, observing 204 lessons. They found that children in the two working-class schools spent between 3 and 6% of their time in English class discussion compared with 17–25% in the middle-class schools. Pupils in predominantly working-class secondary schools were given more time-consuming reading and writing tasks than children in middle-class schools and had less opportunity for classroom discussions. 'Teachers of English in the two middle-class schools were more likely to give a reading or writing assignment as homework leaving time in class for feedback and redrafting written work'.

This seems in many ways to replicate the findings of Bowles and Gintis' (1976) *Schooling in Capitalist America* referred to below, concerning the class-based reproductive nature of the curriculum of schools and to Bernstein's (1977) work on pedagogies in the classroom.

Bowles and Gintis: Schooling as Economic Reproduction

For Bowles and Gintis (1976) it is the 'hidden curriculum' rather than the actual 'formal' or subject curriculum which is crucial in providing capitalism with a workforce which has the personality, attitudes and values which are most useful. The structure of social relations in education develops the types of personal demeanour, modes of self-presentation, self-image, and social-class identifications which are the crucial ingredients of job adequacy. Specifically, the social relationships of education—the relationships between administrators and teachers, teachers and students, students and students, and students and their work—replicate the hierarchical division of labour. Thus there is a structural correspondence between the social relations of the education system, and those of production.

Bowles and Gintis suggest that school values correspond to exploitative logic of the workplace, whereby pupils learn those values necessary for them to toe the line, to fit uncomplicatedly, into menial manual jobs. For such children/students, the passive subservience (of working-class pupils to teachers) corresponds to the passive subservience of workers to managers, the acceptance of hierarchy (teacher authority) corresponds to authority of managers, and the system of motivation by external rewards (that is, grades rather than the intrinsic reward of learning and discovering) corresponds to being motivated by wages rather than job-satisfaction.

Althusser: Schooling as Ideological Reproduction

Althusser was concerned with a specific aspect of cultural reproduction, namely, ideological reproduction, with the recycling of what is regarded as 'common sense'—in particular, with an acceptance of current capitalist, individualistic, inegalitarian, consumerist society and economy.

How does the school function as an ISA? Althusser suggests that what children learn at school is'know-how'.

> [b]esides these techniques and knowledges, and in learning them, children at school also learn the 'rules' of good behaviour, rules of respect for the socio—technical division of labour and ultimately the rules of the order established by class domination. The school takes children from every class at infant-school age, and then for years in which the child is most 'vulnerable', squeezed between the family state apparatus and the educational state apparatus, it drums into them, whether it uses new or old methods, a certain amount of 'know-how' wrapped in the ruling ideology in its pure state. (Althusser 1971)

Rikowski: Schooling as the Development of Labour Power, and the Crucial Role of Teachers

For Rikowski (2001, 2002) schools do not just play a major role in reproducing educational, social, cultural and economic inequality, schools and colleges and universities—education—is 'is a key process in

the generation of the capital relation; this is the skeleton in capitalist education's dank basement' (2001). Explains,

> The substance of capital's social universe is value. Or, more specifically, capital's existence rests on surplus value -Labour-power, the capacity to labour (or labour capacity) is the primordial form of social energy within capital's social universe. (Rikowski 2001)

Rikowski highlights two aspects to the social production of labour-power—skills—and willingness to use those skills—attitude! Firstly (Rikowski 2001) 'the development of labour power *potential*, the capacity to labour effectively within the labour process'. Secondly, there is 'the development of the willingness of workers to utilise their labouring power, to expend themselves within the labour process as value-creating force'. He points to the focus on 'attitudes' in recruitment studies, and 'the exhortations of employers that schools must produce 'well motivated' young people, with sound attitudes to work, recruits who are 'work-ready' and embody 'employability'.

Rikowski ascribes a special place for teachers, trainers and educators, because they are crucial to 'producing the single commodity—labour-power—on which the capitalist system rests. This gives them a special sort of *social power*. They work at the chalkface of capital's weakest link, labour-power'. Hence '[T]eachers are in a special position regarding their capacity to disrupt and to call into question the capitalist class relation'—they can subvert, colonise, hegemonic curricula and pedagogies, and 'insert principles of social justice into their pedagogy' (2001).

Part Four: Two Types of Marxist Analysis: Culturalist Neo-Marxism and Structuralist Neo-Marxism

Culturalist neo-Marxists, such as Resistance Theorists, criticise Structuralist neo-Marxists for focusing on the way in which the capitalist economic structures '*determine*' state policy, with the capitalist state 'inevitably' reproducing the capitalist system within and through

education. Culturalist neo-Marxist writers suggest that teachers and schools can make a difference, that they can work to, and have some degree of success in promoting, an ideology, understanding of, and commitment to, for example, antiracism and anti-sexism. Culturalist neo-Marxists emphasise the degree of 'relative autonomy' that teachers in classrooms, individual schools, and Departments of Education, and governments can have in relation to the demand of Capital, in relation to what capitalists, the large corporations, would like them to do. As such they refute what they see as the pessimism, determinism and fatalism of structuralist neo-Marxists, and stress the power of human agency, the power of people to intervene and to change history.

A further feature of Culturalist neo-Marxists is the retreat from class analysis into forms of identity analysis and identity politics. 'Race', gender (and other) oppression(s) are deemed to be of equal, or 'parallel', or in the case of Critical Race theory for example, of being more important to focus on academically, programmatically, politically, than issues of social class and the Capital–Labour Relation.

Deborah Kelsh and Hill (2006) and Hill (2001) present a detailed critique of Culturalist neo-Marxism, for example that of Michael W. Apple, and his neo-Weberian analysis of class. We criticise those 'who have participated in the conversion of the Marxist concept of class to a descriptive term by culturalizing it—pluralizing it and cutting its connection to the social relations of exploitation that are central to capitalism'.

We continue,

> As the revisionist left now uses class, the term 'social class' refers to social divisions, social strata, that are effects of market forces that are understood to be (relatively) autonomous from production practices, that is, from the social relations of capitalism that are the relations of exploitation between labor and capital. (Kelsh and Hill 2006, pp. 4–5. See also Farahmandpur 2004)

Apple (2006, p. 680) accuses an unspecified 'mid-Atlantic' group (by whom he was referring to Peter McLaren, Mike Cole, Dave Hill, Paula Allman, Glenn Rikowski and co-thinkers) of being Marxist fundamentalists, of being 'Bowles and Gintis look-alikes, of being mechanistic and deterministic, seeking to purify 'the' Marxist tradition of the taint

of culturalism and of the sin of worrying too much about, say, gender and race at the expense of class'. He was, in turn replied to, by Glenn Rikowski who critiques Apple's 'neo-Weberian, mainstream sociology of education, with its radical veneer (in which Marx plays an inhibited role) and its dalliances with postmodernism' (2006, p. 68).

Conclusion

Neoliberals and Postmodernists explain contemporary developments in society and the restructuring of schooling and education systems, for example the 1988 Education Reform Act in England and Wales, and the subsequent marketisation of and fragmentation of the schooling system through diversity in types of schools, as reflecting the increased diversity of society, the increased self-perception of people as consumers. Marxist interpretation, whether Culturalist neo-Marxist or Structuralist neo-Marxist, is quite different. Such changes are seen as rendering the schooling and education systems as more locked into and more supportive of the current requirements of capitalism. I think that Culturalist neo-Marxists have two major theoretical, and thereby, political agitational and organisational flaws.

Firstly, they are too starry-eyed about the 'relative autonomy' of teachers and schools and education state apparatuses, and about the possibility of major change through the education system. With 'human agency', with human resistance, and collective class consciousness and action, Marxists would argue, then, although there are major difficulties, people can successfully struggle to change events and systems—at micro-levels and at societal levels. In this struggle for social justice the ideological state apparatuses of education can play an important role. But educational change, to mis-quote Basil Bernstein (1970), cannot compensate for or overthrow (capitalist) society.

Secondly, I do think that Culturalist neo-Marxists, and, in the political field, reformists, social democrats, downplay, indeed, subvert and impede, class analysis and class struggle prioritising identitarian analysis and identity politics.

We are faced with the imposition of the capitalist dream for education—to produce and reproduce a hierarchically skilled and unequally rewarded labour force that is socially and politically quiescent and

integrated with no dissonance, resistance, into capitalism. The capitalist strategy, in the USA, in England and elsewhere, is the same at various times and in different countries, to:

- rubbish and underfund the state school system, then propose vouchers/pre-privatisation (e.g. Academy Schools and Free Schools in England, Charter Schools in the USA);
- outlaw or circumscribe teacher membership of trade unions;
- enforce individualised pay bargaining/merit pay/Performance Related Pay for teachers;
- end tenure/secure contracts for teachers.
- suppress and compress deep (societal) critical thought, critical pedagogy and critical teachers.
- Welcome to education's dystopia in the USA. And perhaps England and other countries in 5 or 10 years' time? Unless we successfully resist.

Anti-hegemonic, socialist, Marxist struggle, must take place in arenas outside the classroom, school and education apparatus, and needs, as I and others argue (e.g. in Hill 2012, 2017) (Marxist) analysis, activism, organisation, party, (socialist/Marxist) programme. And that analysis must be a Marxist class analysis. This is a revolutionary Marxist programme, to replace, overcome, overthrow, go beyond capitalism, to abolish the Labour–Capital relation, to progress into a democratic Socialist Society. In this, in the forthcoming period, youth have a major role to play.

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Beyond the Vocational/Academic Divide: Inclusion Through Craftwork and Embodied Learning

Terry Hyland

Vocationalism: The Perennial Problems

A recent article in *The Economist* exploring the background to the McKinsey report (2014) on the high rate of European youth unemployment noted that many students pursuing academic courses would have preferred vocational ones but were discouraged by the 'low status' and 'lack of prestige' of vocational options on offer (Schumpeter 2014). In a similar vein, a presumed 'bias against vocational education' was cited in a recent piece praising the current Finnish approach to tackling youth unemployment through systematic technical education (Subrahmanyam 2014). Of course, this is not new, for the problems of the vocational/academic divide and the inferior status of the vocational go back at least as far as the last quarter of the nineteenth century when the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction was convened to make recommendations for the improvement of the English system in the light of superior European models (Musgrave 1964).

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Examining the historical development of vocational studies in British schools, Coffey (1992) noted that its 'place and scope …has been sparse, limited in intent and fragmented' (p. 2), and Maclure (1991) has referred to the 'historic failure of English education to integrate the academic and the practical, the general and the vocational' (p. 28). Moreover, Lewis (1991) suggests that 'whether in the developed or developing world…vocational education has been conceived of as being unworthy of the elite, and more suited to the oppressed or unprivileged classes' (p. 97). Similarly, Skilbeck et al. (1994) note that, in England and Wales, the 'educational tradition has been inhospitable to a broad and comprehensive vocational philosophy' (p. 138), and all this in the face of a 'resurgence of interest in the world's industrialised countries in the vocational dimension of education' (p. 22).

In spite of what Keep (2006) has described as a 'permanent revolution' (p. 47) in VET policy initiatives, the central problems remain and—according to recent research reports (Coughlan 2015)—the 'recurrent theme' of low status and investment in vocational programmes is a global problem which defies interpretation against the background of current skills shortages and high youth unemployment around the world. Coughlan expresses the position in graphic terms:

> Everyone says it's a good thing and it's vital for the economy. But—and there is always a but, it's still the academic pathway that has the higher status. As the saying goes, vocational education is a great thing… for other people's children. Another side of this conundrum is that there is more need for vocational education than ever before. Youth unemployment, particularly among those without training or qualifications, is a scourge in many countries. But at the same time employers are warning about skills shortages and not being able to find the right staff. (ibid., p. 1)

Various reasons have been offered to explain the intractability of these problems, in addition to a vast array of suggested solutions. The following (necessarily overlapping) list is representative though not exhaustive:

Structural—rigid curriculum divisions between vocational and academic subjects (Walsh 1978; Silver and Brennan 1988; Pring 1995; Hyland 2014a); restrictive apprenticeship training models (Fuller and

Unwin 2011); centralist planning and control in England as opposed to the state partnership models on the Continent (Keep 2006).

Historical—aristocratic ethos derived from Ancient Greek ideas held by powerful interests which defined and established state education systems, and still control their direction (Schofield 1972; Corson 1991).

Cultural—social class interests differentiating curricula in terms of intellectual and manual pursuits (Kenneth Richmond 1945; Lewis 1991; Hyland 1999).

Biological—manual pursuits directly linked to evolutionary survival became less valued than intellectual/aesthetic activities far removed from everyday toil (Pinker 1997; Hickman 1990; Hyland 2002).

Philosophical—deriving from the ideas of Plato and Aristotle, the intellectualist thrust (with its attendant devaluing of practical studies) of much of mainstream Western philosophy upon which modern education systems were built (Curtis and Boultwood 1970; Wilds and Lottich 1970; Hickman 1990).

Reconciliation strategies designed to bridge the divide are legion and their principal prescriptions follow from which particular form of diagnosis of the problem is favoured. An interesting early example can be found in Sir John Adams' (1933) *Modern Developments in Educational Practice* which insists that 'all education must affect our future life either adversely or favourably, and to that extent all education is vocational, as preparing us for the vocation of life' (p. 50). A more recent example of this sort of strategy is Silver and Brennan's (1988) advocacy of 'liberal vocationalism' in higher education which involves the introduction of hybrid courses combining arts and science subjects, in addition to the incorporation of liberal/general educational elements in vocational programmes in fields such as engineering and business studies (not unlike the general/liberal studies introduced into British further education vocational programmes from the 1950s to the 1980s; Hyland 1999; Simmons 2014). Pring (1995) has also suggested a number of similar remedies for bridging the gap in this domain.

In the last few decades suggested remedies for the chief ills in this sphere have come thick and fast in the form of government reports or

think tank reviews and prescriptions and, since they have been examined at length elsewhere (Winch 2000; Wolf Report 2011; Pilz 2012), I will not rehearse them all here. As mentioned at the outset, the chief concern of the present analysis—while not denying the relevance of the other characteristics of the hard problem listed above—is with the broadly philosophical aspects of the vocational/academic divide, and to this end it is suggested that recent work on craft and craftworking has much to offer in terms of both theoretical insights and suggestions for the reform of educational practice.

Craft and Education

According to Marchand (2016), craft is said to belong to a 'polythetic category' of concepts which are messy and 'not absolutely fixed'; such a category 'is one in which any of its members possess some, but not necessarily all, the properties attributed to that category' (pp. 3, 8). This description seems to owe much (though unacknowledged) to Wittgenstein's (1974 edn.) notion of 'family resemblances' which explains how omnibus conceptions ('games' is Wittgenstein's famous example) may belong to a common group—not by virtue of any common characteristic—but by features which 'overlap and criss-cross' as with 'various resemblances between members of the same family' (p. 32). Thus, one type of craft may involve meticulous planning and systematic execution, another spontaneous creation, another novel use of materials, and yet another theoretical inventiveness and imagination. Noting the fact that 'craft, crafting and crafted are commonly employed to describe or praise ideas well-conceived, activities well-executed, or things well made', Marchand moves from denotation to connotation in the ironical observation that contemporary usages of craft (typically by advertisers) tend to 'rouse longing for an alternative, idealised way of living and working – one that is ethical, guided by high standards of quality, and characterised by direct, unmediated connections between mind, body, materials, and the environment' (p. 3).

Broadly similar accounts are offered by Sennett (2009) who suggests that 'all craftsmanship is founded on a high degree of skill' typically involving 'about ten thousand hours of experience', and that

craftspeople 'are dedicated to good work for its own sake' (p. 20). Such work is inextricably linked to codes of ethics. As Sennett explains:

> Craftsmen take pride in skills that mature. This is why simple imitation is not a sustaining satisfaction: the skill has to evolve. The slowness of craft time serves as a source of satisfaction; practice beds in, making the skill one's own. Slow craft time enables the work of reflection and imagination – which the push for quick results cannot. Mature means long; one takes lasting ownership of the skill. (ibid., p. 295)

Crawford (2009) makes much of the idea of craftworking as 'being good at something specific…dwelling on a task for a long time and going deeply into it, because you want to get it right' (p. 20). Moreover, both these accounts refer in different ways to the hard problem in this sphere which—in Sennett's description of the 'troubled craftsman'—regrets the fact that:

> History has drawn fault lines dividing practice and theory, technique and expression, craftsman and artist, maker and user; modern society suffers from this historical inheritance. But the past life of craft and craftsmen also suggests ways of using tools, organizing bodily movements., thinking about materials that remain alternative, viable proposals about how to conduct life with skill. (2009, p. 11)

Crawford (2009) in concerned to emphasize the 'cognitive demands of manual work' and, within the context of craftwork, explains that:

> Skilled manual labour entails a systematic encounter with the material world, precisely the kind of encounter that gives rise to natural science. From its earliest practice, craft knowledge has entailed knowledge of the "ways" of materials – that is, knowledge of their nature, acquired through disciplined perception. At the beginning of the Western tradition, *sophia* (wisdom) meant "skill" for Homer: the technical skill of a carpenter, for example. (p. 21)

Contemporary conceptions of craftwork seek to challenge such dualistic thinking—and their philosophical underpinnings—in a number of ways.

Problem Solving

Marchand (2016) argues that solving problems of various kinds is at the heart of craftwork, and its central place is illustrated by reference to a wide range of accounts of the multifarious and ingenious ways in which problems are conceived and solved in different craft domains. Solving problems in the production of digital videography—explains Durgerian (2016) for example—involves technical knowledge of recent innovations in the field, in addition to having a grasp and feel for the history of film making and a heightened sensitivity to diverse audiences. Often solutions to problems in the field call for 'stargazing breaks' which allow 'unconscious processes to work' on non-linear difficulties (94). The field of bike mechanics, on the other hand, is described by Martin (2016) as:

> An interesting case for the craft paradigm because the problems that the bike mechanic works with are not result of his or her own processes going awry; rather, problems are the starting point from which the mechanic approaches the craft. (p. 73)

Martin provides a fascinating account of how workers go about repairing the many faults that can befall cycles and how, in the workshop, there can be 'severe limitations of language as a basis for problem solving' (p. 83). In the context of the 'social habit of work in the mechanics' workshop' a form of 'group problem solving' emerges in which communication about faults and problems is conveyed through diagrams, direct interaction with tools and bike components and, at times, 'fruitful misunderstandings' (pp. 80, 84).

This apparently ad hoc and context-independent aspect of craftwork—which Crawford (2009) suggests gives a 'cognitive richness' to skilled physical work (pp. 21ff.)—arises from the need to constantly adapt tools and materials (and our own bodily functions) to the ever-changing demands and requirements of making, altering and repairing objects. It is also connected with what Pye (1968) has called the 'workmanship of risk' (p. 5) which is inherent in processes which often (as in designing, manufacturing and repairing) involve techniques and skills which are adaptive and emergent as the craftsperson responds to problems

encountered. Sennett's (2009) historical account of the craft 'workshop' (pp. 55ff.) from the medieval guilds to the industrial revolution provides a graphic illustration of how uncertainty and risk have shaped the development of work in a wide range of craft fields.

Intellectual vs Manual Work

Crawford's (2009) fond and careful description of his own journey from Ph.D. and think tank to motorcycle repair shop was partly an attempt to escape the uniformity of a de-skilled post-Fordist society which had led to the 'degradation of blue-collar work' (p. 38). His response to this—described as an attempt to show how 'manual work is more engaging intellectually' than 'knowledge work' (p. 5)—takes the form of a critique of the divisions between intellectual and manual work against the background of the way Taylorist scientific management and automation has degraded the nature of much productive work. A strand of this thesis takes the form of the attempt to challenge the assumptions that 'all blue-collar work is as mindless as assembly-line work and… that white-collar work is still recognisably mental in character' (p. 31). Crawford questions relentlessly the standard educational distinctions between propositional/theoretical and practical/operational knowledge and—by examples drawn from the activity of chess players, firefighters and electricians—demonstrates the importance of tacit, personal and intuitive knowledge in all human activity so that 'thinking and doing' are inseparable not distinct processes (ibid.: 161ff.).

Sennett (2009) offers similar observations in his description of 'operational intelligence' (pp. 280ff.), and Marchand, in a recent dialogue with Nigel Warburton for the *Big Ideas in Social Science* collection of readings (Edmonds and Warburton 2016), defines his role as a craft worker, researcher and writer in terms of addressing the misguided and harmful distinction (attributed here to Da Vinci) 'between manual labour and intellectual work reflected in the division made between "craftwork" and "fine art"'. Criticising an education system in which 'working with the hands is perceived as a fallback position – a second

choice', he defines his mission in terms of 'challenging the mind-body dichotomy' and explains that his:

> research aims to explore and expose the complexity of knowledge that is actually involved in handwork, and thereby raise its status in the eyes of educationalists, the government, and the general public. (Marchand in Edmonds and Warburton 2016, p. 124)

This holistic view of knowledge—which is very similar to Dewey's (1916/1966) instrumentalist conception employed in his attempts to break down the 'antithesis of vocational and cultural education' based on the false oppositions of 'labour and leisure, theory and practice, body and mind' (306)—is well illustrated in the collection of accounts of craftworkers edited by Marchand (2016) in which practitioners operating in diverse fields describe their activities.

Describing the relationship between designer, artist and gaffer (the glassblower) in glass production, for instance, O'Connor and Peck (both glassblowers at New York Glass) explain how contemporary craftworkers in the field now take on multiple roles in imagining and designing 'protoptypes' of objects (ibid.: 33–49). Craftwork is thus foregrounded as being essentially a 'process…anchored in the gaffer's tacit knowledge of the craft, the organisation of labour, and the product end-goal'. The process from imagination and prototype design to final production is complex, drawing on many forms of knowledge and experience, and one in which 'discovery and the generation of new problems can be part of the problem solving process in prototyping' (p. 48). Similarly, Gowlland's account of the work of ceramics manufacturing in Yingge, Taiwan (ibid., pp. 183–196), explains how 'embodied problem solving' serves, in practice, to break down the 'distinction between design and workmanship' since the 'intellectual' and the 'pragmatic' aspects of ceramics production are realised at all stages of the process. The experience led Gowlland to conclude that:

> It is striking that the discourse in Yingge resembles so closely the distinctions made in Europe and North America concerning the dichotomy between the work of the mind and that of the hands. It is important for scholars (and artisans) to deconstruct such discourses to reveal the relations of power revealed within. (p. 195)

Social Ethics

The moral dimension of vocationalism—though marginalised and neglected in the research literature—has received increasing attention in recent years (Pring 1995; Winch 2000; Hyland 1999, 2014b) and takes pride of place in the discussion of craftwork. When Crawford (2009) makes the claim that 'as workers and consumers, technical education seems to contribute to moral education' (p. 60) he is referring to the ways in which developing an understanding of the design and manufacture of material objects helps to generate an autonomous agency which is vital in making decisions and judgements in an increasingly complex technological world. The other side of this is that craftsmanship may serve to foster both individual ethical values (linked to standards and the pride which goes with good work) and a social ethics which arises from the need to learn from and co-operate with others in serving a wider community (Sennett 2009).

Marchand (2016) makes much of what he calls the 'social politics' of craftwork which are said to 'accompany the pursuit of alternative ways of working and living, typically in opposition or resistance to alienating technologies, neoliberalism, globalisation and consumer capitalism' (p. 10). Overt political radicalism does not seem to play a major role in the accounts of craftwork selected by Marchand though the second half of his recent collection concerned with social, economic and philosophical factors highlights interesting evidence about internal power relations, social values, and the way craftworkers respond to external pressures and forces. The overriding theme in all the accounts is that craftwork is a socially-collaborative process shot through with the collective values of constantly evolving forms of working life in response to changing political and economic conditions.

Collard's work with Agotime weavers in Ghana, for instance, led her to conclude that:

> The ability to produce high-quality cloths was therefore closely related to the strength and successful management of the numerous social ties between weavers, customers, patrons, and traders. The crafted product thus became a material manifestation of sociality; a sedimentation of the relationships that went into its making. (ibid., p. 53)

Indeed, this social dimension of craftwork—linked to values and relationships—is so prominent that, in the Afterword to the Marchand collection, Ferris suggests that the notion of 'craft as problem solving' has the potential to promote:

> More subtle human sympathies of relational interdependence, empathy, equanimity, humility, and a certain generosity of spirit. These lend the craft encounter a decidedly moral dimension. Taken into the social domain, they point to an inherent "civility" embodied in craftwork, to the sense of it having affects than can empower us to make a better world. (ibid., p. 260)

Handwork, Learning and Education

As indicated earlier, various forms of working with the hands are at the core of the theory and practice of craftwork. Dewey's 'theory of occupations' (DeFalco 2010) places various forms of craft and handwork activities—wood and metalwork, designing, making and using tools—at the centre of a project designed to break down antagonisms between liberal and vocational pursuits. The overriding importance of the hand in human development generally is now widely acknowledged and has broad implications for all forms of learning. Noting Kant's famous remarks that the 'hand is the window on to the mind', Sennett (2009) devotes a whole chapter in his study of craftsmanship to the role of the 'intelligent hand' (p. 149ff) in human evolution in general and human achievement in the arts, humanities and sciences in particular. The extraordinary versatility and flexibility of the hand—in terms of prehension, sensitivity of touch, opposable thumb dexterity, hand-wrist forearm capability and hand/eye co-ordination—is described in painstaking detail and demonstrated to be a primary component in human achievement and progress. Sennett concludes that 'the unity of head and hand… shaped the ideals of the eighteenth century Enlightenment: it grounded Ruskin's nineteenth century defence of manual labour' (ibid., p. 178).

Crawford (2009) asserts the importance of manual work in that it 'entails a systematic encounter with the material world' (p. 21) which is at the heart of the search for knowledge in all its forms. Recent work by

Leader (2016) on the role of the human hand throughout history serves to supplement and consolidate the foregrounding of handcraft in learning and education. Our hands, observes Leader, 'serve us' in countless ways:

> They are the instruments of executive action, our tools. They allow us to manipulate the world so that our wishes can be fulfilled. We show our hands to vote, to seal an agreement, to confirm a union, to such an extent that the hand is often used to stand for the human agent that bears it. (Kindle edn., loc. p. 55)

Leader takes us on a kaleidoscopic tour of a broad sweep of history and culture to show the importance of the hand in shaping the human story which includes recent changes in the use of our hands in response to digital technology and the communications revolution. Given the importance of working with the hands, we may ask why handwork and related manual skills seem to have so little prominence in contemporary education systems. Indeed, as Crawford (2009) observes:

> Given the intrinsic richness of manual work – cognitively, socially, and in its broader psychic appeal – the question becomes why it has suffered such a devaluation as a component of education. (p. 27)

The general answer to this question can, of course, be found in the standard explanations for the vocational/academic divide and inferior status of vocational pursuits examined above, and considerations of social class, as indicated earlier, play a significant role in this devaluation of practical activity and manual work.

Ainley's (1993) investigation of the differential values linked to class and various levels and types of skill noted their persistence and reproduction over centuries in spite of philosophical arguments such as those of Polanyi that:

> there is no basis for any distinction between 'higher' and 'lower' order intellectual skills and faculties, and that the elevation of mental over manual labour is merely a social preference for the skilful manipulation of symbols as a more respectable activity than the skilful manipulation of objects. (p. 8)

Schofield (1972) locates the original source of these divisions in the emergence of the idea of a liberal education in Ancient Greece. This form of education came to be associated with 'freeing the mind from error' in Plato's distinction between 'genuine' knowledge (based on the rational reflection of logic and mathematics) and mere 'opinion', that is, applied knowledge used for specific purposes (pp. 151–152). The former conception, disinterested and objective knowledge, came to be thought of as superior and intrinsically valuable, whereas the latter, instrumental or applied knowledge, came to be associated with more practical and less valued vocational pursuits (Lewis 1991).

Moreover, such hierarchical divisions were from the outset inextricably linked to social class stratification and an axiology of relative values about educational activities. In the *Republic*, the relative value accorded to the 'Forms' of knowledge by Plato are fully realised in the various kinds of education provided for rulers, guardians and workers in the ideal state (in addition to the distinctions between 'banausic' knowledge, suited to slaves, and knowledge worthy of free citizens). The 'foundation myth' of the ideal state suggests that God 'added gold to the composition of those of you who are qualified to be rulers…he put silver in the auxiliaries, and iron and bronze in the farmers and the rest' (1965 edn., p. 160). Similarly, in *The Politics* Aristotle (1962 edn.) offers an account of rival educational aims and purposes—essentially valuing disinterested theory above applied practice—which is uncannily similar to the vocational/academic (technical/liberal) discourse which has characterised educational debates since the establishment of state schooling in England in the nineteenth century.

Once such hierarchical and normative distinctions had been made it was almost inevitable that they should come to be connected—through formal systems of education—to social stratification and political power. As Schofield (1972) explains:

> The passing of time merely emphasised the distinctions which Plato made. Studies which were valuable in themselves, especially the Classics, became associated with the privileged class or elite in society. They were directly related to the concept of a courtier, a gentleman, a man of affairs, and later the public schools. Liberal education always carried with it a suggestion of privilege and privileged position, of not needing to work for one's living. (pp. 151–152)

The linking of such ideals to classical studies and the public school/university elite in nineteenth century Britain (which produced the politically powerful who were to define mass compulsory schooling after 1870) served to bring about a class-dominated, bifurcated curriculum—in which vocational studies were always subordinate to academic pursuits—which bedevils British education to this day. Educational debate at the time was distorted by such irrational prejudice which, as Skilbeck et al. (1994) say, was 'compounded by anti-democratic sentiments and arcadian ideals' (p. 160) which, throughout the twentieth century, were to stand in the way of the development of a national, unified system of education in which vocational studies and the preparation for working life had its rightful and proper place.

What seems to underpin the hierarchical divisions in this sphere is not so much the *nature* of knowledge in terms of arts, sciences, or disciplines but whether it is viewed as intellectual or theoretical as opposed to being applied or productive. Now, although such epistemological distinctions are challenged by critics who seek to break down the general/vocational studies dichotomy, there can be little doubt that their centrality in Ancient Greek philosophy had played a major part in reinforcing such dualisms in educational systems. In Plato's scheme of education outlined in the *Republic*, 'dialectic' (philosophy) is the 'crown of the educational process' (Nettleship 1935, p. 133) since it leads us to a knowledge of the 'Forms' which represent the one source of unchanging, eternal truths. Similarly, for Aristotle, practical knowledge was inferior to theoretical knowledge because it involved 'choice among relative goods' whereas theoretical knowledge was linked to 'certainty' (Hickman 1990, pp. 107–108); productive knowledge was even more inferior because it was linked to the 'making of things out of contingent matter' (ibid., p. 108).

The contingency of the values underpinning relationships between knowledge and production may be elaborated and explained in terms of more fundamental connections between educational values and genetic/biological traits identified in Pinker's (1997) work in cognitive psychology. He begins by observing that the 'more biologically frivolous and vain the activity, the more people exalt it. Art, literature, music, wit, religion and philosophy are thought to be not just pleasurable but

noble'. Pinker then goes on (mischievously) to ask 'Why do we pursue the trivial and futile and experience them as sublime?' (p. 521). There is an open admission that such a question may be 'horribly philistine' and Pinker is well aware that there are ways of assigning values to activities outside the perspective of evolutionary biology. However, although it is always necessary to distinguish biology from culture, there are considerable insights to be derived from considering Pinker's challenging arguments. Many of the activities which humans consider to be so intrinsically valuable and profound are, in biological terms, 'non-adaptive by-products' of the consequences of having a mind which, in turn, is the result of the impact of natural selection upon DNA molecules. Our most prized possessions—art, music, philosophy—can thus, as Dawkins (1991) observes, be explained in terms of the 'blind watchmaker' of natural selection which has 'no purpose in mind…no vision, no foresight, no sight at all' (p. 5). Although the mind, on Pinker's account, is primarily 'driven by goal states that served biological fitness in ancestral environments, such as food, sex, safety, parenthood, friendship, status and knowledge. That toolbox can be used to assemble Sunday afternoon projects of dubious adaptive value'. This perspective is explained in terms of the fact that:

> Some parts of the mind register the attainment of increments of fitness by giving us a sensation of pleasure. Other parts use a knowledge of cause and effect to bring about goals. Put them together and you get a mind that rises to a biologically pointless challenge: figuring out how to get at the pleasure circuits of the brain and deliver little jolts of enjoyment without the inconvenience of wringing bona fide fitness increments from the harsh world. (ibid., p. 524)

Of course, once the mind has created cultural and scientific objects these come to have a life of their own, and Pinker would not deny that their existence and justification can then be found outside of human biology. What this perspective does, however, is provide us with an alternative explanation of why certain educational pursuits (typically thought of as liberal or academic) come to be prized more highly than others (labelled vocational studies) connected with work and survival.

In relation to this form of intellectual elitism, Billett (2014) reminds us that 'it has largely been "privileged others" who have shaped the societal standing of occupations and the means of their preparation' (p. 3).

There are more particular educational factors at work here too, and these may be located in general distinctions between mind and body or, using old-fashioned curriculum terminology, divisions between the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of education. Although curriculum planners and designers have had access to the detailed descriptions of the cognitive, affective and psychomotor components of learning since they were analysed systematically in the construction of taxonomies of educational objectives by Bloom et al. (1956) and Krathwohl et al. (1964), mainstream educational textbooks—having mentioned the affective and psychomotor domains—tend to quickly forget them in their concentration on purely cognitive aims (Weare 2004; Hyland 2011). This oversight has generated a cognitive/affective divide as wide as the vocational/academic divisions and led to an overly intellectualist conception of the educational task which marginalises values and emotions in teaching and learning (Hyland 2014b). Moreover, the neglect of the psychomotor domain—the importance of the body and physical operations in the learning process has reinforced such false dualisms and perpetuated the undervaluation of handwork, and the practical embodied elements at the core of vocational studies.

Recent work within philosophy of education—drawing mainly on the writings of Merleau-Ponty (1962)—has attempted to bring the 'embodied subject' back into educational discourse as a way of remedying the undermining of the physical in the learning/teaching encounter. O'Loughlin (1995), for example, asserts that:

> [B]ringing bodies back into the picture has been crucial for education. As teachers, educational theorists and the like, we need to direct our attention to the realities of bodies in discursively constituted settings. Western philosophy can be seen as the history of successive periods of Western humanity's cultivation of its own "mind." (p. 76)

In attempts to embody the cultivation of mind, similar arguments have been proposed in terms of the role of bodies in relation to language

learning (Okui 2013), and all this serves to underscore the arguments of Crawford and Sennett that it is largely through our physical acting on the world that we may develop knowledge, understanding and skill. Connecting such themes with the moral dimension of craft and vocationalism noted earlier, Kotzee (2016) observes that 'there is a rich seam of thought connecting what it is to be moral to skilled practical action'. He goes on:

> Thus, Aristotle draws many analogies between virtuous action in the moral sphere and practical expertise or *techne*; the competent moral actor and especially the good citizen or politician is like an expert craftsman in the moral domain. (p. 225)

Our physical actions in the world are indispensable to learning and the development of knowledge, understanding and capability in all domains. Indeed, according the Bohr's philosophy-physics—described as 'agential realism' by Barad (2007)—it is not meaningful to claim knowledge of anything until we have physically arranged, observed and measured some aspect of it. As she expresses this interpretation of Bohr's position:

> The causal relationship between the apparatuses of bodily production and the phenomena produced is one of agential intra-action…For example, the notion of position cannot be presumed to be a well-defined abstract object…position only has meaning when an apparatus with an appropriate set of fixed parts is used. (Kindle edn., loc. p. 2781)

Such a conception may be used to justify Crawford's (2009) idea of manual work which involves the 'learning of aesthetic, mathematical and physical principles through the manipulation of material things' (p. 31), and has echoes in Marchand's (2016) interpretation of craftworking as one which:

> counters the classical emphasis on internal "mind" operations and challenges the separation drawn between the mental arithmetic and the physical doing, by making the sensing, feeling, acting, and socialised body the locus of its enquiry. (p. 12)

Mental, Physical and the Vocational/Academic Divide

Recent work on the hard problem of consciousness drawing on neuroscience and quantum theory (Chopra et al. 2015) has resulted in a perspective in which:

> Consciousness and matter are not fundamentally distinct but rather are two complementary aspects of one reality, embracing the micro and macro worlds. (Kindle edn., loc. p. 119)

Strawson's (2016) conception of 'panpsychism' in relation to the same problems goes even further by considering seriously the notion that 'consciousness is itself a form of physical stuff'.

> This point, which is at first extremely startling, was well put by Bertrand Russell in the 1950s in his essay "Mind and Matter": "We know nothing about the intrinsic quality of physical events," he wrote, "except when these are mental events that we directly experience." In having conscious experience, he claims, we learn something about the intrinsic nature of physical stuff, for conscious experience is itself a form of physical stuff. (p. 1)

This conception of reality relates to the points about handwork and the holistic and interconnected nature of knowing, thinking and doing outlined earlier in the context of Merleau-Ponty's notion of the 'embodied subject'. Just as our understanding of the physical world cannot be separated from our subjective conscious experience through bodily sense perception, so the cognitive/affective/psychomotor elements in all forms of learning need to be given due emphasis. Thus, acting in and on the world brings about knowledge and understanding and the sharp divisions between knowing how and knowing that become as redundant as the other dualisms discussed above.

Moreover, the entanglement of mind and matter noted in Barad's interpretation of Bohr noted earlier serves—along with the collapsing of the mental and physical in suggested solutions to the hard problem of consciousness—to offer insights into the false dualisms which support

the hard problem of vocationalism. Knowledge, understanding, skill and capability are developed by embodied subjects in their actions and operations in the world. At this level there can be no privileging of theory over practice, mind over body, the intellect over the emotions; all are equally necessary to learning, development and performance. The perspectives on craftworking outlined above encapsulate all these elements for they point to a domain of activity which is, as Marchand (2016) describes, 'one that is ethical, guided by high standards of quality, and characterised by direct, unmediated connections between mind, body, materials, and the environment' (p. 3).

Implications for Practice

An inclusive and holistic perspective which foregrounds the crucial role of craft, handwork and embodied learning is recommended as a way of bridging the vocational/academic divide and enhancing the status of vocational studies. If such a philosophical sea change could be translated into school and college curricula—perhaps through a general craftwork/art, design and technology (ADT) element which emphasizes the importance of hand and body in human activity—then such inclusion would have important implications for working-class students. Such a move would be even more transformational if embodied learning inspired by such a holistic vision was to be incorporated as a dimension of *all* school and college programmes, including traditionally academic ones.

As the recent work by Savage et al. (2015) which draws on the Great British Class survey indicates, although the old class divisions may have been replaced by new and different categories, inequalities between and within new groupings are still established and reproduced through differential access to economic, cultural and social capital. The researchers' conclusions that 'growing class economic inequality is closely associated with growing class inequality between top and bottom' (p. 3) is illustrated graphically in the links between educational achievement/underachievement arising from the intersection of economic, cultural and social capital which determine life chances. The positive correlations between social class, university education and socio-economic

status are reinforced in the Savage research (pp. 232–257), and, in the non-graduate categories, there is a large 'precariat' group (18% of the survey, p. 232) with little or no access to any of the forms of capital and relegated to low-paid, unskilled temporary employment and long periods of under-/unemployment.

The conclusion by Savage et al. that 'new mountains of inequality have opened up in Britain in recent decades' (p. 391) has been endorsed by many contemporary commentators (Judt 2010; Stiglitz 2012; Seabrook 2015) and relate directly to the concerns expressed in other chapters of this collection about the impact of growing educational and social disadvantage on working-class students in particular. Although traditional notions of the working class have now been replaced, the new categories have served to emphasize the increasing relative impoverishment of the most disadvantaged groups (Evans and Tilley 2015; Avis and Orr 2016). Research connected with the investigation of white working-class educational underachievement by the House of Commons Education Committee (2014) reported that it was the most disadvantaged pupils—those in receipt of free school meals—who 'were most likely to study vocational programmes' (p. 58). The report concluded by observing that:

> We consider that vocational education is an important subject that deserves future scrutiny. In particular, a careful balance needs to be struck between ensuring that young people are given access to an academic education while avoiding portraying vocational routes as a second-class option. (ibid., p. 59)

Similarly, the recent report on the transition from school to work by the *House of Lords Select Committee on Social Mobility* (2016) decried the 'unspoken snobbery in favour of academic qualifications rather than vocational qualifications' (p. 49), and made a raft of recommendations for the improvement of this state of affairs. Such recommendations are worthy but are unlikely to have much impact on vocational curricula, training and qualifications until the misguided and damaging divisions noted above are replaced by an inclusive and holistic conception of education in which the cognitive, affective and manual aspects are given due emphasis within a framework of embodied learning.

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Education and Social Class: How Did We Get to This and What Needs to Change?

Robin Simmons and John Smyth

This book draws together eight chapters on education and social class written by leading scholars based in the United Kingdom, Australia and the Republic of Ireland. The different chapters are based on a range of conceptual and empirical research, and focus on how class-related inequalities are enacted in schools, universities and the various locations in which vocational education and training is carried out. The authors draw on a range of traditions and use the ideas and arguments of a variety of critical thinkers. These range from Plato and Aristotle to Gramsci and Althusser, Pierre Bourdieu, and Raymond Boudon to Avery Gordon and Valerie Walkerdine. Taken together, the different chapters

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represent a varied and wide-ranging critique of the classed nature of education but certain key themes run throughout the text. These deal with various objective and subjective dimensions of social class and include patterns of educational participation and non-participation; the interface between class, gender and other forms of difference; and debates about the relationship between education, work and the economy more broadly. Or, as Dave Hill points out in his chapter, the different ways in which social class affects where we live; the type of school we attend; the qualifications we are likely to get, and the jobs we obtain; how we are treated by teachers, careers advisers, employers and others in authority; and various other dimensions of our lives.

This concluding chapter locates the classed nature of education within a critical socio-historical framework, and reflects on some of the conundrums facing young people as they attempt to navigate the vicissitudes education and work. It also considers a number of strategies which may begin to ameliorate the multiple disadvantages facing working-class youth, or at least prevent their situation from worsening. These relate, on one hand, to the subjective practices of education as well as the more systemic matters which also shape young people's experiences of learning. We also deal with broader, structural questions about the relationship between education, work and social class more generally. Whilst lived experience is deeply important, we need to recognise that the social, economic and political context in which learning takes place can both intensify and exacerbate inequality or else go some way towards promoting equity and social justice.

Education and Social Class: Continuity and Change

Much political discourse in 'advanced' Western nations presents education as performing numerous positive functions for the individual, the economy and society more broadly. Typically, these include boosting national competitiveness and economic growth, 'up-skilling' the workforce, promoting social cohesion and driving social mobility. Education can be a progressive force and many working-class children, adults and

young people have, over time, benefited socially, culturally and materially from various forms of education and training—not only in formal settings like schools, colleges and universities but also through trade union and adult education, in early-years settings, or via the numerous spheres of informal education through which learning also takes place. We should, however, also remember that education, at least for the working classes, has always been bound up with social control as much as emancipation (Lawton 1975).

The notion that those from different social backgrounds are more or less suited to particular forms of learning can, as Terry Hyland reminds us in his chapter on craftwork, be traced back to Ancient Greece and the relative value of different 'Forms' of education proposed in Plato's *Republic*. Such divisions have traditionally characterised Western education systems and, in England, the ruling classes have attended exclusive fee-paying schools since the Middle Ages. For most of the population though, formal education, where it has existed at all, has been provided mainly by religious and voluntary groups—a trend which has also been encouraged more recently through the introduction of academies and the free school movement (Ball 2012). Notions of education for democracy and the social good had nevertheless become popular by the nineteenth century, at least in some quarters—although events such as the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the 1867 Paris International Exposition also illustrated the inadequacies of laissez-faire in fighting increasing economic and military competition from Europe and further afield. Introducing the English 1870 Education Act, W. E. Forster claimed that:

> Upon the speedy provision of elementary education depends our industrial prosperity… uneducated labourers are for the most part, unskilled labourers, and if we leave our workfolk any longer unskilled they will become overmatched in the competition of the world. (Forster 1870)

Forster's words resonate with contemporary discourses about skill, globalisation, the knowledge economy and so forth but the social upheavals of industrialisation and urbanisation, and the rise of Chartism and other working-class movements, also led to a belief that formal

schooling would help make the lower orders both more civilised and compliant. Adam Smith, for example, saw education as a means through which the working classes would become:

> [M]ore respectable…more capable of seeing through the interested complaints of faction and sedition… less apt to be misled into any wanton or unnecessary opposition to the means of government. (Smith 1785, p. 305)

Eventually the provision of mass schooling became unavoidable but this brought to the fore questions about how, where and for what purpose(s) working-class children were to be educated (McCulloch 1998; Brown 1987). Either way, state involvement initially related mainly to elementary education; state secondary schools continued to charge fees until after the end of World War II and no coherent system of technical and vocational education existed in England until the middle of the twentieth century. Whilst the mechanics institutes can be traced back to the Victorian era, provision was patchy and uneven, and many of England's major industrial centres were still without any adequate vocational education as late as the 1930s (Bailey 1987). The universities meanwhile remained exclusive institutions, catering essentially for the privileged few, at least until the 1960s.

Most orthodox analyses present the 1944 Education Act as an integral part of the social settlement between labour and capital which took place after the end of World War II (Gewirtz and Ozga 1990; Batteson 1999). Undoubtedly, the 1944 Act introduced some significant reforms, including the replacement of elementary schools with a new system of primary and secondary education, and the abolition of fees for all state-run schools. It also raised the school-leaving age to 15, recommended new arrangements for special education and nursery provision, and triggered a great expansion of post-compulsory education across England and Wales. The Act has, however, also been criticised for its role in maintaining the existing social order (see Simon 1990). Both Church-controlled education and the public schools were, for example, left untouched despite considerable public support for the abolition of fee-paying schools and the exclusion of religious bodies from

state-funded education. Meanwhile, the tripartite system of secondary schooling introduced by the 1944 Education Act arguably did more to maintain social divisions than reduce them. It is important to remember that leading figures within the Conservative Party were among the Act's most enthusiastic supporters and arguably they, in conjunction with a privileged civil service elite, were able to ensure continued selection and other socially-divisive practices (Chitty 1989).

The institutional structure of grammar, technical and secondary modern schools was also predicated largely on the assumption that children could be classified according to aptitude and ability, and the notion that different categories of pupils required different forms of schooling which would, in turn, best suit their character and intellect. Criticisms of the tripartite system are, of course, well known—not least its discrimination against working-class children and the central part it played in the reproduction of class-based inequalities in education and society more broadly (Batteson 1999). The flawed nature of the 11-plus examination upon which pupils' educational future was decided—and, by extension, their working lives thereafter—is also widely recognised. Though presented as an objective measurement of intelligence, the 11-plus was in fact heavily loaded in favour of the middle classes, and systematically biased against girls who had to achieve a higher mark to pass the examination—arrangements justified by a discourse of fairness and objectivity as well as ancient beliefs about the existence of different kinds of minds able to function more or less well at different levels of cognition (Humphries 1981, p. 48).

Cherry-picking 'bright' working-class pupils to go to grammar school was, however, championed as a way of increasing social mobility, and no doubt many such children rose above the status of their parents. This, of course, ignores the alienation and disillusion felt by many working-class grammar school pupils, and the tension and turmoil associated with leaving behind their social and cultural roots (see Jackson and Marsden 1962). It also overlooks the fact that much of the limited upward social mobility which took place in post-war Britain was driven by the expansion of professional and white-collar work across the welfare state, as much as anything else (Roberts 2011, p. 186). Various figures within the Conservative Party, including the current British

Prime Minister, Theresa May, have nevertheless called for the return of grammar schools because of their supposed ability to 'kick start' social mobility. Others on the Right are uneasy about the prospect of more state grammar schools, fearing they will undermine the fee-paying sector and prefer other methods of social sifting and sorting through free schools, academies, studio schools, and so on. Either way, neoliberal discourses of diversity and choice, efficiency and competition mean that virtually all forms of education now subject to commercialisation and marketisation—processes which systematically disadvantage those who lack the social, cultural and material capital necessary to make informed consumer choices in an increasingly complicated and cluttered marketplace (Ball 2003).

Education, Youth and the Labour Market

The tripartite system was partly justified by certain beliefs about the relationship between education and employment. Or, in other words, the notion that a basic education was sufficient for the majority in an economy characterised by mass production and a relatively low demand for highly-skilled, professional or managerial workers (Avis 2016). Generally though, young people enjoyed a relatively privileged labour market position in post-war Britain. The majority of school-leavers entered full-time employment immediately after finishing compulsory education at the age of 15 (16 from 1973) and this was usually followed by leaving home, marriage and parenthood in rapid succession thereafter (Jones 1995). At the beginning of the 1970s the average age of first marriage was 20 for women and 22 for men; forty years later this had risen to 28 and 30 respectively (Ainley and Allen 2010, p. 21). Relatively few entered higher education and, even after the expansion of HE in the 1960s, only around eight per cent of young people attended university, the majority of whom were white, male and at least relatively privileged. Whilst pockets of unemployment existed, most school leavers were able to find jobs consistent with their ambitions and expectations, and the majority of young people were eager to leave education behind and enter the world of work (Willis 1977).

For young men especially, the transition from school to work was often collective as well as speedy and the mass movement of boys from school into the factories, mines and mills of post-war Britain was commonplace. Meanwhile, girls and women suffered systematic discrimination at home, in the school and at work but females were still an integral part of the workforce—not only in retail, administration and the service sector but on the factory floor of British industry. All in all, readily available work, increasing prosperity and relatively affordable housing meant that youth transitions were at their most condensed, coherent and unitary during the 1950s and 1960s (Jones 1995, p. 23). Employment alongside peers, siblings and older workers offered working-class youth a degree of continuity and stability that is largely absent today.

It would be wrong, however, to romanticise the past. Hugh Beynon's (1973) *Working for Ford* illustrates some of the bleakness of industrial labour in post-war Britain and, whilst proletarian employment was often linked with particular forms of solidarity, overt sexism, racism and homophobia were commonplace at school, work and across society more broadly. Similarly, Dennis et al. (1956) study of a Yorkshire coal-mining community and Young and Wilmott's (1962) research in the East End of London provide some insight into the harsh realities of working-class life during that time. The role of education in all this must not be forgotten and Dave Hill's chapter in this book provides an overview of a variety of Marxist and neo-Marxist critiques of the role of education in the reproduction of labour power in capitalist society. Hill reminds us, amongst others, of Bowles and Gintis (1976), Gramsci (1971), and Althusser (1971) as well as the work of Bourdieu, Bernstein and others influenced by Marx to a greater or lesser extent. It is, however, also necessary to recognise the importance of critiques rooted in other traditions. Durkheim (1903/1956), for example, argued that one of the key functions of education was to produce a common social and cultural heritage, but he also recognised its role in the differentiation and selection of the social division of labour.

Either way, the demise of much of the UK's industrial base was accompanied by the disintegration of the youth labour market and employment opportunities for school leavers have been severely

attenuated, especially in terms of access to stable, full-time jobs. Consequently, most young people remain dependent on their parents for far longer periods of time than was the case for previous generations and they remain in education, especially on a full-time basis, far longer than in the past. For large sections of youth, attaining the traditional signifiers of adulthood has become disordered, delayed or, in some cases, suspended almost indefinitely (Ainley and Allen 2010, pp. 40–42). Youth transitions—if transitions remains the right term—are increasingly fractured, individualised and unpredictable, not only in the UK but also in North America (see Cote and Bynner 2008), continental Europe (see Roberts 2009), and elsewhere (see Scarpetta et al. 2010).

Alternative ways of conceptualising the lives of young people have emerged in response to the profound the social and economic changes that have taken place in advanced Western societies, such as the UK. Postmodern perspectives, for example, tend to downplay social class and foreground other forms identity, emphasising the fluidity of social relations in increasingly uncertain times. The basic argument is that the relatively stable trajectories and predictable life chances associated with Fordist societies such as post-war Britain have been superseded by circumstances in which choice, risk and agency have come to replace the certainties of traditional 'modernist' societies (Maffesoli 1996). Admittedly, such ideas have some appeal and there is evidence to suggest that many young people no longer see social class as their primary source of identity (Cohen and Ainley 2000, p. 83). We undoubtedly live in a highly-consumerist society; style and fashion are often fetishised, and the rise of new technology increasingly blurs virtual experiences with reality. The notion that are people free to negotiate their identities unimpeded by the restrictions of social class is, perhaps understandably, attractive for many—as well as expedient for those keen to divert attention from the gross inequalities associated with neoliberal capitalism (Simmons and Thompson 2011, p. 56).

There are, however, other ways of understanding the increasingly complicated, fractured nature of contemporary society. Ulrich Beck (1992), for example, recognises that Western societies have experienced far-reaching social and economic restructuring, and that the collective

experiences which characterised post-war society are no longer central to the lives of many young people. But such processes, he argues, should not simply be conflated with notions of freedom or empowerment. Beck (1992, p. 35) uses the term 'enforced emancipation' to describe the ways in which individuals are now compelled to make decisions about education, work and other facets of social life against a backdrop of social and economic insecurity. Geoff Bright's work in this book and elsewhere (for example, Bright 2016) provides important insights into processes of continuity and change in post-industrial settings, and how class, gender and other forms inequality are reconstituted in such locales. Bright's research and that of Walkerdine (Walkerdine and Jimenez 2012), Michael Ward (2015) and others helps us understand how working-class communities—and the education of young people within such settings—remain structured and constrained by narratives of the past, even now the industries upon which were once based have gone and labour is now largely affective rather than manual. What is clear is that the restructuring of the UK economy has led, over recent decades, to a massive redistribution of wealth and life chances in favour of the most privileged sections of society at the expense of the rest of the population. Evidence suggests that Britain is a more unequal society than at any time since Queen Victoria was on the throne (see, for example, Dorling 2014; Wilkinson and Pickett 2010).

Education, Knowledge and Social Class

The collapse of the UK's industrial base meant that mass unemployment was commonplace across much of Britain by the end of the 1970s, especially among young people. As the youth labour market slumped, various government-funded training schemes were created to fill the void, the first of these being the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP), established in 1978. Five years later over three million young people were engaged in such provision. YOP and successor programmes, such as the Youth Training Scheme (YTS), were, however, often criticised as low quality and undoubtedly many (though not all) employers used school leavers as cheap labour and offered little meaningful training

or work experience in return. Consequently, increasing numbers of teenagers chose, almost by default, to stay on at school or go to college to pursue more conventional forms of education and training (Simmons and Thompson 2011, pp. 49–50).

The YOP can nevertheless be regarded as something of a watershed. On one hand, YOP represented a recognition that the days of readily available work for young people were coming to an end. At the same time though, the assumptions which underpinned YOP, YTS and the like problematised both the education system and young people themselves rather than Britain's relative economic decline, and the rise of structural unemployment which accompanied it (Ainley and Corney 1990). The introduction of YOP and YTS also marked a turning point in terms of the curriculum, and here Basil Bernstein's work on pedagogic discourses helps us to consider the significance of such programmes. On one level, the rise of such programmes was linked to an increasing incursion of the state into educational policy and practice, and the entry of 'non-educational discourses' into the education system—at least for provision aimed at young working-class people (Bernstein 1999). Previously, there had been a reluctance to impose direct state control over either teachers or the curriculum, a stance influenced, in part, by the rise of totalitarianism in continental Europe, as well as a far greater spirit of trust and partnership between central and local government than that which exists today (Grace 2008). There was, in Bernsteinian terms, a substantial insulating boundary between educational discourses and those of the state (Bernstein 1977, p. 42). The introduction of YOP, however, signalled a significant shift and thereafter successive governments have intervened more and more intrusively in the education system. Ewart Keep (2006) described this as akin to 'playing with the biggest train set in the world'.

Bernstein (2000) identifies three forms of pedagogic discourse which he links to different forms of knowledge, and which he also argues are related to different levels of explanatory power. Bernstein describes these discourses as the singular and regional modes of knowledge which he associates with high-status forms of education and training, and the generic mode which, he avers, is more recent and largely associated with lower-status programmes of learning. The singular mode is, according

to Bernstein, found mainly in traditional academic subjects such as English, mathematics, history *et cetera*, whereas the regional mode is normally associated with quasi-professional preparation, such as social work or teacher training—although such forms of learning have, over time, become more and more procedural and instrumental in nature as the state has increasingly intervened in such programmes. Those planning to work in more prestigious areas of employment, such as law or medicine, are, it is argued, generally provided with access to both singular and regional modes of knowledge. The generic mode, in contrast, tends to prioritise 'everyday experiences' of education, work and social life at the expense of more traditional forms of learning based in principled, conceptual knowledge, or established professional or vocational practice.

Today, many employability programmes aimed at young people outside education and employment are largely based upon CV building, interview techniques, communications exercises and other generic modes of learning deemed relevant to the world of work. This is often accompanied by discourses of compassion, care and student-centred learning, and justified by claims about various deficits experienced and exhibited by those on the margins of education and work (Simmons and Thompson 2011). Bernstein, however, points out that generic modes of learning are not only lowly regarded by educationalists and employers but also deficient in terms of explanatory power. In contrast, conceptual knowledge, it is argued, provides access to forms of understanding and critique which the generic mode is simply unable to provide. For him, it is the distance or 'discursive gap' between general and theoretical principles and everyday knowledge which provides the 'crucial site of the yet to be thought' (Bernstein 2000, p. 31). This, according to Bernstein, is the space where powerful, perhaps dangerously powerful, knowledge is created—where new and novel ideas can be generated, convention challenged and inequality questioned. Simmons (2015) argues that:

> The exclusion of working-class learners from forms of knowledge which allow them to challenge inequality and oppression is obviously problematic for those interested in notions of education and social justice, but…

> is awkward even if one accepts dominant discourses about…education and social and economic wellbeing. The rigors of the 'knowledge economy' will, we are told, mean that young people are required to repeatedly change occupations and develop new forms of knowledge and skill… Yet education and training, at least for the working classes, increasingly excludes creative, critical and analytical learning. (Simmons 2015, pp. 98–99)

This leads us to think critically about the notion of the knowledge economy. Whilst there are pockets of high-skill employment and labour shortages in some niche areas, there has in fact been a substantial 'hollowing out' of employment at craft and technician level. In Britain, the largest areas of employment growth have, since the 1980s, been in care work, retail, hospitality and catering, and routine call centre jobs (see Elliott and Atkinson 2007). Qualitative research provides us with some insight into the realities of life at the bottom end of the labour market where workers serially 'churn' between various forms of poorly-paid, insecure and transitory employment and low-level training programmes which purport to equip them for labour market success but usually fail to do so (see, for example, Shildrick et al. 2012; Simmons et al. 2014).

Meanwhile, there is significant evidence to suggest that low-level vocational qualifications often provide little labour-market return (Wolf 2011). This is perhaps unsurprising as there has always been prejudice against such forms of learning, especially in class-conscious England—although this has arguably been exacerbated by the promotion of various courses devoid of a coherent knowledge-based curriculum. Many practitioners working with young people on employability programmes are hard-working, well-meaning and provide significant levels of support and encouragement to learners, but such provision often fails to provide meaningful progression for those who undertake them. Simmons and Thompson's (2011) study of Entry to Employment (E2E), an employability programme for 16–18 year olds classified as NEET (not in education, employment or training), found that the most common outcome for young people undertaking E2E programmes was a return to being NEET, and that the second most common outcome was embarking on another employability programme.

Progression to higher-level training was rare and labour market entry was, where it occurred, usually unrelated to their experiences on E2E.

Aiming Higher?

Education plays an increasingly dominant role in young people's lives although the nature and purpose of participation varies considerably according to social class, and the reduced availability of waged labour means that education's role as a mechanism of social control has become more important than ever (Ainley 2016, pp. 40–41). It is also difficult to avoid the Marxist concept of the reserve army of labour (Marx 1867/1976, p. 781) when considering the position of working-class youth in contemporary society—although 'army' also implies a degree of organisation and solidarity which has been largely shattered by the processes of de-industrialisation, unemployment and underemployment which have taken place since the end of the 1970s (Bourdieu 1998, p. 98). The effects of all this are painfully apparent in Geoff Bright's chapter, and the pain and suffering associated with de-industrialisation should not be underestimated, especially for working-class youth who have effectively been relegated to various forms of alienated learning intermingled with intermittent employment in low-skill, low-pay and insecure service-sector jobs.

Whilst such processes are experienced most sharply in working-class communities, large sections of middle-class youth are, as James Avis points out in his chapter "The Re-composition of Class Relations", are also vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the neoliberal project. The words of Lisa, Assiz and the other young people featured in Diane's Reay's chapter in this book illustrate how increasingly even a 'good degree' from a prestigious university is not sufficient to secure a graduate job. Nowadays more and more employers demand a variety of other abilities, experiences and achievements over and above formal qualifications—whether this takes the form of creative, expressive or sporting achievements, 'gap-year' internships, extensive overseas travel or other accomplishments (see Brown et al. 2011). Such demands systematically favour those with the family support, economic resources

and social connections necessary to enable them to accrue the forms of human capital increasingly demanded by many employers, especially in sought-after roles in finance, law, the media and so on. So, whilst all students find themselves squeezed in a more and more crowded and competitive labour market, those from working-class backgrounds are particularly disadvantaged by such processes (Brown 2013).

It is worth considering the classed nature of higher education in a little more detail. On one hand, there has been a massive expansion of participation in HE. Until the 1960s, as little as 2% of the population went to university, whereas approximately a third of all young people in the United Kingdom now go into higher education. This remarkable growth is due to various factors, although successive governments have all to a greater or lesser extent encouraged the growth of the student population. This has been more or less overt but all mainstream political parties have, at least since the 1960s, argued that increased participation in higher education will both aid economic competiveness and offer various individual and societal benefits—including, of course, driving social mobility and increasing economic competitiveness. On the other hand, the collapse of the youth labour market has, as we know, reduced viable alternatives for young people, especially in terms of access to stable, full-time employment. Meanwhile, vocational and work-based learning continues to be regarded as low-status and undesirable by most young people and their parents (Ainley 2016). The expansion of university education in Britain is nevertheless remarkable both in absolute and relative terms, and a significantly larger proportion of its population now attends university than is the case in most OECD countries, including the UK's long-standing economic rival, Germany.

The fact that so many young people now go to university is generally presented as a cause for celebration, especially in official discourse. But crude figures conceal various dimensions of inequality which have, somewhat paradoxically, actually been exacerbated by increased participation. We have long known that not all forms of HE are equal and that students from different social backgrounds tend to go to different institutions to study different subjects—which, in turn, generally lead to different outcomes and destinations (see, for example, Ainley 1994).

This is still the case today: usually working-class participation takes place at lower-status institutions and entails studying less prestigious vocationally-orientated subjects. This can, in part, be explained by the fact that working-class students generally achieve lower grades, although this is not the full story: generally, high-achieving working-class students do not apply to elite institutions even when they are qualified to do so. There are different ways of understanding such processes and dominant neoliberal discourses often berate working-class youth, especially those from the so-called White working class, as lacking in ambition, aspiration and so forth—although this has been criticised as inaccurate or over-simplified by much academic research (see, for example, Nayak 2009; Stahl 2012, 2015). Evidence suggests that working-class students are often deterred from applying to elite universities because of their reputation for snobbery and exclusiveness. Diane Reay's reflections in this book on her own experiences of attending an elite university in her youth provide some sobering insights into the tensions and struggles endured by working-class students at such institutions.

The ideas of Pierre Bourdieu have been used extensively to analyse working-class students' orientations to higher education and their experiences of HE (see, for example, Reay et al. 2009, 2010). Raymond Boudon (1974) offers a rather different—but nevertheless important—explanation of class-based inequality. Ron Thompson's chapter "Performance, Choice and Social Class" draws on Boudon's distinction between the primary and secondary effects of social stratification to explain the impact of social class on educational performance and choice. For Boudon (1974), the primary effects of social stratification—in other words, the cultural and material dimensions of class help explain why children from working-class backgrounds generally achieve less well than their more advantaged peers. But even when these differences in performance are allowed for, educational and social aspirations remain strongly influenced by social class. The secondary effects of social stratification help explain why even high-achieving young people from working-class backgrounds are still less likely to go to university, or do not attend more prestigious institutions even when they are qualified to do so. For Boudon, those from lower-status

backgrounds have 'further to travel' and the costs of remaining in education—including tuition fees, living expenses and opportunity costs such as lost earnings—must be weighed against the potential benefits of participation and the risk of failure. Arguably, such concerns have intensified over time both in absolute and relative terms, as tuition fees have risen and first-rate qualifications no longer guarantee labour market success. Even more able students from poorer backgrounds are therefore likely to be deterred from going to university or decide to study locally at less-prestigious institutions alongside other working-class students (Ainley 2016, p. 65).

What is clear is that the graduate labour market has not kept up with the massive expansion of HE and so large swathes of young people are effectively over-qualified and underemployed despite dominant discourses about the demise of low-skill work, the rise of the knowledge economy and so forth. For Allen and Ainley (2013), many young people are effectively 'running up a descending escalator' as they put in more and more time, effort and money for diminishing returns. Schools, colleges and universities have, in turn, been recast as cogs in an educational conveyor-belt increasingly driving debt and disappointment. Meanwhile, many occupations which traditionally offered secure professional (or at least para-professional) employment are becoming proletarianised—not least teaching.

An Agenda for Change

Historically, formal education has been largely alien and hostile territory for working-class youth. Education for the lower orders, where it existed at all, focused mainly on discipline, morals and religious instruction although, as we have seen, a combination of political expedience and economic necessity eventually led to mass schooling in Britain. Access to education expanded throughout the twentieth century but the tripartite system introduced at the end of World War II meant that the experiences of those from different social backgrounds remained deeply divided. The relatively buoyant labour market, the creation of the

welfare state and the limited redistribution of wealth nevertheless helped facilitate at least some reduction of social inequality—processes supported by the introduction of comprehensive schooling in the 1960s and 1970s. The rise of neoliberalism then marked a significant turning point and the 'rolling back' of the limited gains in social justice associated with the post-war consensus have, since the 1970s, been both far-reaching and profound. Virtually all forms of learning have been progressively colonised by neoliberal discourses of performativity, competition, choice, and so on. Diane Reay's (2017) book *Miseducation* provides some sobering insights into how working-class culture is often disregarded, disrespected and violated by the strictures of the neoliberal school—from the vicissitudes of setting and streaming to the narrowing of the curriculum and the overt discipline meted out in 'super-strict' schools.

Successive governments, in the UK and elsewhere, have nevertheless promoted education and training as the supposed solution to a variety of social and economic ills—many of which are related, in large part, to the gross inequalities caused by the neoliberal project. This remit is as unrealistic as it is wrong-headed but the structures and processes of education have nevertheless been fragmented and reconfigured to produce a complex quasi-market which systematically disadvantages working-class youth whilst simultaneously masking increased inequality in discourses of excellence, opportunity and ambition. Meanwhile, the anxiety and paranoia surrounding education is now palpable—not only for children and young people but also teachers, parents, administrators and policymakers. The consequences of all this takes many forms—whether in terms of teacher turnover, sickness and disillusion, the rising incidence of mental health problems among young people, student dropout, or the various forms of estranged learning which increasingly take place in our schools, colleges and universities (Ainley 2016, pp. 66–67). Education could, in Habermasian terms, be said to be facing a legitimation crisis (Simmons and Smyth 2016).

To begin to putting this right is no small challenge but there are nevertheless tangible ways in which the current situation could be improved. These we describe as the pedagogic, the institutional and the structural.

The Pedagogic

The introductory chapter of this book considered ways in which schools and other sites of learning can become more accessible and positive places for working-class youth. One challenge is to devise a curriculum and a pedagogy which engages working-class youth, and provides an alternative to the frankly oppressive forms of schooling which now characterise the state education system. We argued that the ways in which schools are structured and run can either exacerbate inequality or help promote a climate of inclusion. We discussed the importance of space and place; school culture; and different approaches to teaching and learning, drawing on the work of Smyth and McInerney (for example, Smyth and McInerney 2007, 2013; Smyth et al. 2014) and others (for example, Moll et al. 1992; Gonzalez et al. 2004). Louise Archer's chapter, which uses a 'funds of knowledge' approach to consider social class in the classroom, also has important things to say about creating more socially-just forms of pedagogy.

There has, over time, been a significant narrowing of the curriculum, especially in state schools and particularly for working-class youth, who are increasingly exposed to a more and more utilitarian approaches based largely upon the '3Rs' alongside various forms of employability training. Art, drama, music and other forms of creative learning have largely been stripped out of state education and so working-class children, whose parents often lack the economic and cultural capital to source and fund alternative provision, usually miss out (Reay 2017). Arguably, such injustices could be addressed through the re-introduction of a more balanced and, frankly, more interesting curriculum but it is also important to think about the role of teachers in all this. Teacher's work has, over time, become more and more measured, managed, monitored and controlled, as greater and greater expectations have been placed upon them by parents, employers and especially the neoliberal state (Smyth et al. 2000; Smyth 2001). Teaching has, in many ways, been reduced to the conditions of waged labour, undergoing processes of deskilling and fragmentation not unlike those described in Harry Braverman's (1974) *Labour and Monopoly Capital* (Ainley 2016, p. 49). The increasingly performative and pressured nature of

schooling leaves teachers and lecturers little space to engage in creative and critical practice, but the immiseration and alienation of teachers is no accident. Successive waves of neoliberal reform have led to a combination of conservatism, competition and fear in our schools, colleges and universities (see Smyth 2017 on the latter). A combination of repeated aggressive inspection, increasing performativity and discourse of derision (Ball 2012) is, on one hand, driving many teachers out of teaching—especially those who are newly qualified—whilst also demotivating those that remain, and deterring others from pursuing teaching at all (Ainley 2016, pp. 90–91).

Respecting teachers, providing teachers with better terms and conditions, a more agreeable working environment and greater degree of freedom would entail substantial changes both in terms of the allocation of resources and a broader reassessment of the way in which teachers' work is organised and managed. It would also require a rethinking of the knowledge and skills that teachers need in order to engage young people in more critical and creative ways. Teacher training programmes are now dominated by a largely procedural and utilitarian curriculum at the expense of conceptual knowledge rooted in traditional academic disciplines and this, we believe, is problematic for various reasons. On one hand, teachers need access to forms of learning which allow them, individually and collectively, to critique and challenge the oppressive policies and practices of the state, and its impact both upon them as practitioners and educational processes more broadly. On the other hand, teachers also need to be provided with opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to foster creative and critical learning in young people—and this, we argue, can only be achieved if teacher training provides alternative ways of thinking about the nature and purpose of education in society, as well as the practical and operational tools needed to function effectively at the 'chalk face'. This, in turn, is also necessary if young people are to be developed not only as productive workers but also as well-informed consumers and active, critical citizens (see Simmons 2017). Such initiatives would allow a significant remodelling of the role and function of teachers in society but they cannot be realised in isolation. Radical institutional change is also necessary.

The Institutional

The first thing to say is that the notion that there is an education system at all is increasingly questionable. The word system implies a degree of coherence and rational organisation which simply no longer exists, especially in England where power has been incrementally stripped away from local authorities, and organisational structures have been fractured and splintered into a confusing and disjointed quasi-market without any meaningful or effective form of co-ordination. The waste of time, energy and resources associated with all this should not be underestimated, though nor should the damaging effects of institutional and individual competition, both for teachers and young people. The basic unfairness associated with the hyper-diversity we witness in England—seen, for example, in the favourable funding given to academies and free schools at the expense of comprehensives—also needs to be addressed (Reay 2017). A far more equitable funding regime and a radical decluttering of the institutional landscape are therefore necessary.

The promise of a better-funded publicly-accountable National Education Service based upon cooperation rather than competition; improved pay for teachers and support staff; a comprehensive review of assessment; and a much needed remodelling of apprenticeships and vocational education are central to the British Labour Party's current education policy—and would, at least in principle, go some way towards improving these matters. As would the proposal to abolish university tuition fees in England, which are now extraordinarily high, both in absolute and relative terms. Opponents of progressive reform point to the significant costs implications of all this but there are at least two strands of counter-argument. First, current arrangements are, contrary to official discourse, actually incredibly expensive both in financial and human terms. Substantial savings could be made simply by jettisoning much of wasteful duplication and complex machinery needed to service, maintain and measure the confusing jungle of funding, institutions and qualifications which now exists. The deeply flawed and hugely expensive English university tuition fee regime is an obvious case in point, although the extensive processes of privatisation, outsourcing and

subcontracting which we now see across virtually all forms of education and training is also incredibly inefficient and wasteful. Second, of all the things on which public money is spent, education, in our opinion, is one of the worthiest. Expenditure should therefore be regarded as a wise investment rather than as a cost to be cut.

The Structural

Curriculum and institutional reform are, we have argued, badly needed if we are to create a more socially just and inclusive education system. But education, as Basil Bernstein (1970) notably said, cannot compensate for society's ills. Consequently, educational change needs to be accompanied by a far-reaching programme of social and economic reform. On one hand, there needs to be an extensive programme of job creation, especially for young people—although this needs to foreground sustainable, skilled jobs which offer working-class youth the prospect of meaningful and rewarding careers. An extensive programme of public works, restoring housing and building new homes, environmental initiatives, improving local and national infrastructure and so on would go some way towards bridging the opportunity gap that currently exists. Importantly though, such initiatives should not to be left to the market which has, over the years, only served to dispossess the working classes. The state will need to intervene both directly and indirectly—in terms, for example, of returning the railways to public ownership, creating a national care system, re-empowering local authorities to build new homes, and so on—and also by introducing a comprehensive system of licences to practice across a broad range of work, and through legislation to encourage high-quality production strategies throughout the economy.

Such measures would go some way towards providing young people with forms of opportunity and security which have been incrementally stripped away over time. But making such substantial change would be no easy task, not least because it would require the abandonment of the neoliberal project which has served the rich and powerful so well

over recent decades, and the construction of a viable democratic alternative. This would require not just political will and ability but also a significant redistribution of wealth and resources throughout society. Those with vested interests will, of course, be keen to resist such ideas but there are at least some signs of a will for change. Politics is, as we have seen of late, increasingly fluid and unpredictable but there is at least some sign of a rejection of the status quo. This is perhaps especially the case among young people in the UK who, in 2017, voted overwhelmingly for the democratic socialist policies proposed by Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party—although, of course, the Conservatives were nevertheless re-elected. Brexit meanwhile presents complex and multifaceted challenges but we should remember that the Leave vote was strongest in places like Stoke, Hull, Sunderland and Doncaster—or, in other words, the working-class towns and cities that have suffered most from deindustrialisation and neoliberalism.

All this presents considerable conundrums. Whilst the Right undoubtedly sees Brexit as an opportunity to further exploit the working classes, leaving the European Union may also open up progressive possibilities, for example, through the renationalisation of key industries and utilities which is not possible under current EU regulations. This would, of course, require the election of a Labour government committed to its present agenda and this is by no means a foregone conclusion. There is, however, no doubt that substantial social and economic change is necessary if we are, as Jackson and Marsden expressed so eloquently, to build an education system which:

> [A]ccepts and develops the best qualities of working-class living and brings these to meet our central culture. Such a system must partly be grown out of common living, not merely imposed on it. But before this can begin, we must put completely aside any earlier attempts to select and reject in order to rear an elite. (Jackson and Mardsen 1962, p. 246)

These words are as relevant today—indeed perhaps more so—as when they were written over fifty-five years ago.

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Index

A

Academies 204, 235, 238, 252
Affective domain 223, 225
Affective geographies 7, 12, 13, 17, 107, 109
Affective labour 127, 241
Ainley, Patrick 219, 238, 240, 242, 245, 246, 248–250
A-levels 14, 172
Althusser, Louis 134, 193, 195, 200, 233, 239
Anyon, Jean 194, 197
Apprenticeships 210, 252
Aristotle 211, 220, 221, 224, 233
Asian 157–161, 163–165, 170
Austerity 29–33, 37, 67, 122, 139, 184, 186

B

Ball, Stephen, J. 197, 235
Bernstein, Basil 15, 96, 193, 194, 197, 199, 203, 239, 242, 243, 253
Beynon, Huw 107, 111, 239
Black 155, 157, 159, 173, 191
Boffin 159
Boudon, Raymond 22, 80–82, 87–97, 145, 233, 247
Bourdieu, Pierre 13, 36, 44, 57, 66, 70, 80, 81, 83, 96, 98, 145, 166, 169, 183, 193, 194, 196, 197, 199, 233, 239, 245, 247
Bourgeoisie 181, 186–188
Breen, Richard 81, 82, 84, 89, 91–94, 98
Brexit 1, 21, 31–34, 36, 49, 106, 108, 125, 127, 254

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Brown, Phil 61, 68, 93, 135, 137, 140, 143, 147, 148, 236, 245, 246

C
Charter schools 204
Coal mining 106, 108, 111–113, 115, 122, 186, 239
Cognitive capitalism 135, 142
Colleges of further education 87, 200, 226, 235, 248, 249, 251
Conservative Party 31, 106, 132, 237, 254
Corbyn, Jeremy 191, 254
Craftwork 19, 24, 212–218, 224, 226
Critical pedagogy 196, 204, 249, 250
Critical race theory 202
Cultural capital 66, 69, 98, 144, 157, 176, 183, 194, 196, 250

D
Degrees 44, 46–48
Deindustrialization 2, 11, 112, 126, 254
Deskilling 140, 146, 250
Digital technology 140
Dorling, Danny 136, 138, 144, 241

E
Education Act (1870) 61, 235
Education Act (1944) 236, 237
Education Act (1988) 203
Educational transitions 80, 94
Elementary schools 61, 193, 236
Elite (political) 1, 31, 237
Elite (schools and universities) 38, 43, 44, 46, 198, 221, 247
Elite (social) 38, 43, 44, 46, 198, 220, 247
Elite (universities) 38, 44, 46, 87
Employability 192, 243, 244, 250
Employers 30, 83, 189, 201, 234, 243–245, 250
Ethnography 105, 112, 117
European Union 31, 254. *See also* Brexit

F
Fee-paying schools 14, 42, 43–44, 141, 197, 235–237
Femininity 111, 118, 124, 126, 155, 164, 165, 173–175
Fordism 134, 135, 147, 189, 240
Free school meals 44, 62, 79, 83, 85, 227
Free schools 204, 235, 238, 252
Funds of Knowledge 18, 23, 157, 166–172, 173, 174, 176, 250

G
GCSEs 62, 64, 69, 80, 182
Germany 134, 136, 137, 143, 246
Giroux, Henry 34, 195
Globalization 2, 9, 138, 140, 217, 235
Goldthorpe, John 82, 85, 89, 96, 98
Graduate debt 46, 48
Graduate earnings 34, 47
Graduate employment 46, 47, 136, 140, 142, 145, 245, 248
Grammar schools 37, 38, 131, 237

Gramsci, Antonio 194, 195, 233, 239

H
Habermas, Jurgen 50, 249
Habitus 81, 98, 157, 166–169, 194, 196
Halsey, A.H. 85, 89
Harvey, David 186, 190
Human capital 94, 133, 246

I
Individualism 4, 10, 14, 38, 56, 64, 68, 69, 71, 133, 135, 144, 189, 240, 241
Insecurity 9, 23, 32, 126, 143, 147, 241, 244

J
Jackson, Brian 41, 49, 237, 254

K
Keynesianism 134, 138

L
Labour markets 32, 134, 136–138, 140–142, 147, 238–241, 244, 248
Labour Party 32, 55, 191, 252, 254
Labour process 83, 140, 141, 187, 188, 201, 250
Laddishness 59, 109, 124, 160, 161, 171, 176
Leaving home 238
Leaving school 236, 238, 239
Low wages 9, 136, 138, 140

M
Manual labour 182, 187, 213, 215, 218, 219, 224
Marginalization 29, 32, 62, 112, 116, 136, 148, 163
Marriage 238
Marxism 12, 83, 142, 185, 187, 188, 190–196, 202–204, 239, 245
Masculinity 59, 60, 64–68, 71, 106, 113–116, 118, 119, 125, 126, 136, 155, 157–162, 166, 171, 172, 176
Massey, Doreen 12, 23, 111, 115
Masters' degrees 47, 48
May, Theresa 34, 37, 131–133, 238
Mechanics institutes 236
Meritocracy 23, 38, 49, 80, 131–133, 143, 147
Middle-class culture 3, 144
Middle-class jobs 34, 44, 46, 83, 148
Middle-class parents 17
Middle-class schools 3, 8, 10, 14, 15, 37, 40, 48, 56, 96, 144, 157, 161, 194, 196–199
Middle-class students 2, 15, 40
Middle-class universities 42–44
Miners' strike 22, 106, 107, 111, 113, 117–119
Muslim 157, 159–161, 164, 165, 170

N

NEET 113, 244
Neoliberalism 1, 3, 21, 24, 56–59, 63–70, 97, 143, 203, 217, 238, 240, 245, 247, 249, 250, 253, 254
New middle class 187–188. *See also* petit-bourgeoisie
Nursery schools 236

O

OECD 84, 246

P

Performativity 68, 120, 145, 161, 249–251
Petit-bourgeoisie 187
PhDs 47, 215
Plato 211, 220, 233, 235
Polytechnics 87
Post-Fordism 134–135, 147, 189, 215
Post-modernism 189, 203, 240
Poverty 30, 42, 47, 62, 65, 111, 116, 134, 170, 184, 187
Precariousness 23, 30, 107, 122, 137, 143, 145, 148, 184, 187, 227
Professions (access to) 34, 47, 83, 93, 94, 144–146, 187, 237
Proletariat 146, 186, 187, 239
Proletrianisation 188, 248

R

Racism 31, 58, 155, 156, 182, 191, 192, 239
Reay, Diane 6, 13–15, 21, 55, 56, 61, 71, 87, 97, 118, 141, 245, 247, 249, 250, 252
Registrar General's Scale 182, 183, 190
Religious bodies 235, 236
Reserve army of labour 245
Rikowski, Glenn 146, 195, 200–203
Ruling class 190, 192, 193, 195, 235
Russell Group 39, 47, 87

S

Savage, Mike 69, 144, 145, 183, 226, 227
School exclusion 116, 121
Science 156–172, 174–176
Secondary modern schools 237
Selective schooling 37, 45, 235–237
Self-esteem 56, 66
Sennett, Richard 212, 215, 217, 218, 224
Sexism 165, 171, 172, 182, 239
Simmons, Robin 242–244, 249
Skeggs, Beverley 14, 57, 58, 60, 70, 72, 97, 122, 124, 126, 127
Social capital 20, 44, 144, 183, 184, 226
Social congestion 93
Social exclusion 13, 22, 32, 112, 121
Social haunting 108–110, 125–126
Social mobility 21, 33, 34

Solidarity 4, 10, 60, 92, 108, 111, 113, 115, 123, 126, 190, 191, 239, 245
Special education 236

T

Teachers' labour 15, 20, 123, 170, 171, 187, 189, 195–199, 201–203, 249–251
Teacher training 120, 193, 243, 251
Technical education 209, 236, 237
Technical schools 237
Trade unions 31, 60, 112, 115, 119, 192, 204, 235
Tripartite system 24, 61, 237, 238, 248
Truancy 118, 121, 122
Trump, Donald 1, 33, 36

U

Underclass 187
Underemployment 142, 145, 245, 248
Unemployment 31, 62, 93, 111, 122, 136, 137, 140, 142, 187, 192, 209, 210, 227, 238, 241, 242, 245
University tuition fees 71, 95, 248, 252
Unwaged labour 141, 142
Upper class 29, 33, 35, 37–39, 41, 43–47, 145, 182, 190, 192, 196, 197

V

Vocational education 24, 56, 59, 60, 71, 81, 97, 218–223, 225–227, 233, 236, 243, 244, 246, 252

W

Waged labour 135, 141, 142
Wages 30, 59, 124, 145, 147, 200
Walkerdine, Valerie 2, 9–11, 13, 107, 112, 126, 233, 241
Welfare benefits 2, 31, 122, 184, 191
Welfare state 31, 134, 135, 138–140, 237, 248
Wellbeing 19, 36, 132, 141, 244
Widening participation 38, 42–44
Williams, Raymond 6, 8, 10
Willis, Paul 59, 161, 238
Wolf Report 244
World War Two 91, 131, 133, 134, 136, 147, 236, 248

Y

Youth Opportunities Programme 241, 242
Youth Training Scheme 241, 242
Youth transitions 239, 240

Z

Zero-hours contracts 30, 187