

Sociological Explorations: Class and Social Mobility

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Definitions of Social Class

1	Higher Professional and Managerial workers	A
2	Lower Managerial and Professional workers	B
3	Intermediate occupations	C1 / C2
4	Small Employers and non professional self-employed	C1 / C2
5	Lower Supervisory and technical	C1 / C2
6	Semi Routine Occupations	D
7	Routine Occupations	D
8	Long term unemployed	E



Social Class Positions

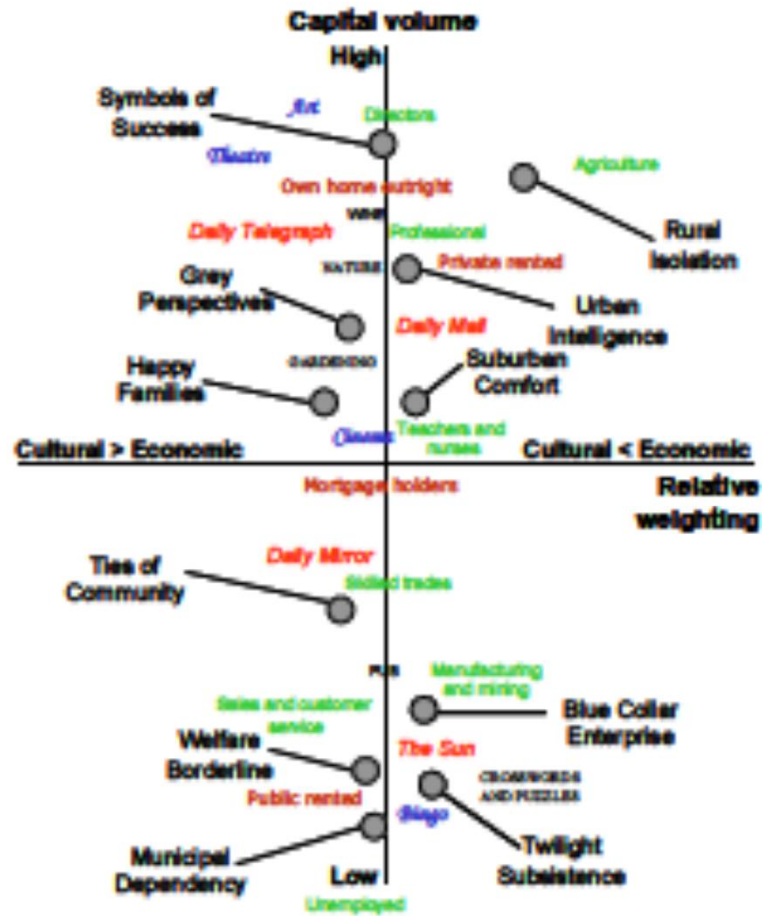


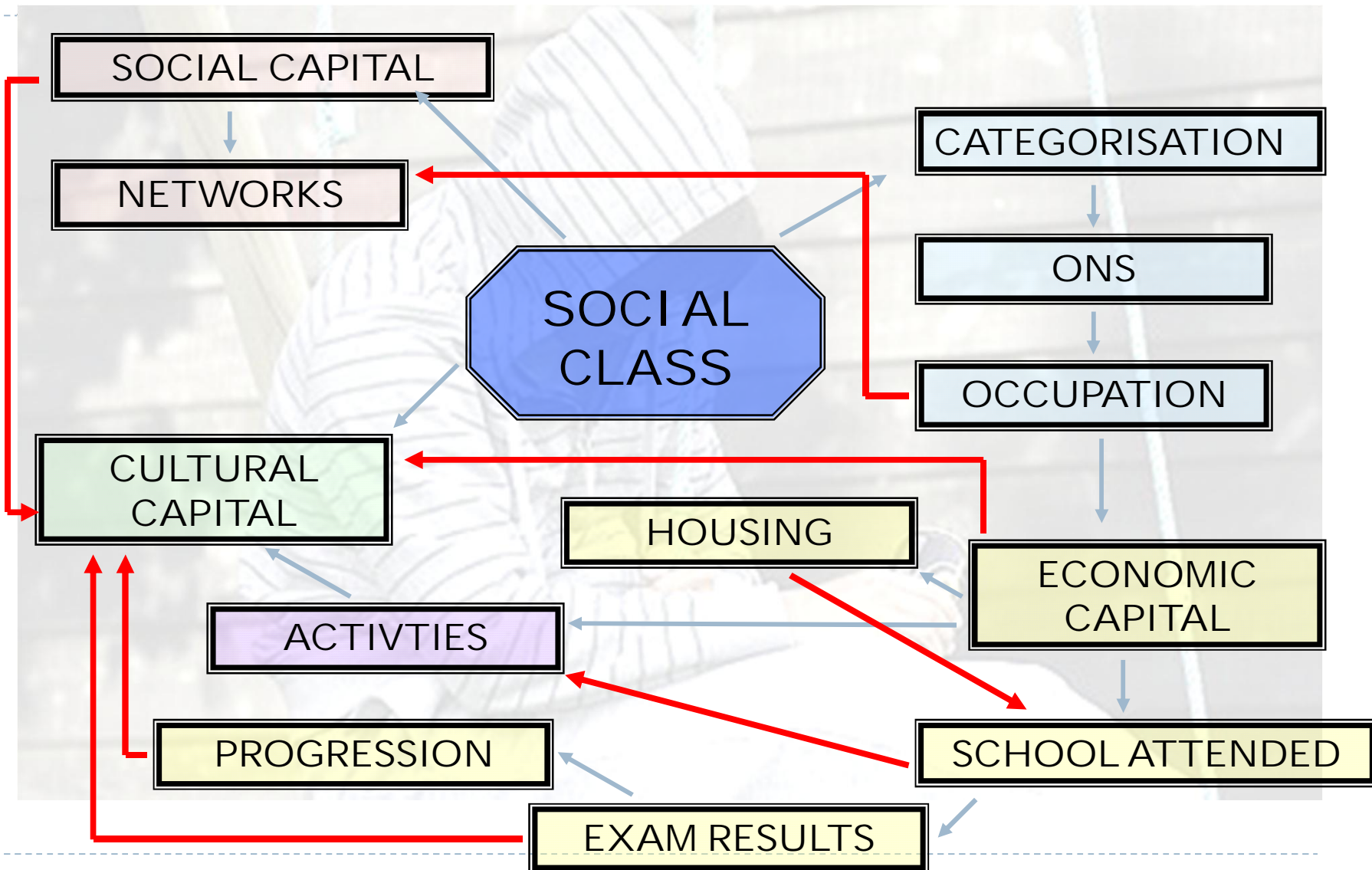
Figure 23: The Space of social Positions and the Space of Lifestyles
(Adapted from Bourdieu 1998: 6)

Myths attached to Social Mobility

- ▶ A good education secures a good job
- ▶ Anyone can achieve well if they put their minds to it
- ▶ There are only winners in the pursuit of social mobility



Complexities of Social Class



Schools and Social Mobility

A big part of getting on in life is doing well at school, and doing well at school is helped by attending a good school. Since not all schools are good schools, places at good schools need to be allocated. These two assumptions – that schools matter and schools differ – mean that education markets have to solve an important assignment problem. In particular, the allocation across pupils from differing family backgrounds is an issue of interest for social mobility.

Schools and Social Mobility

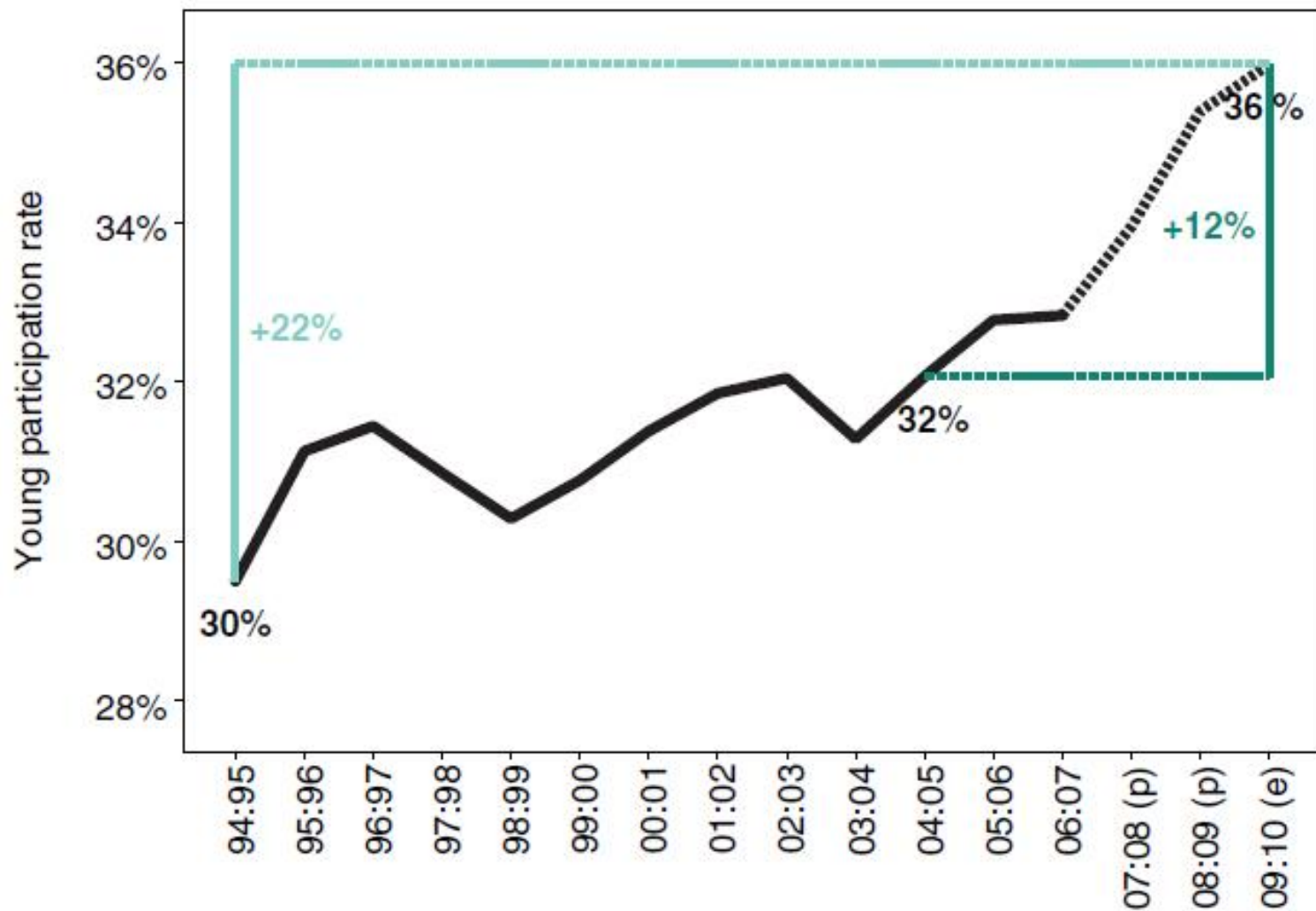


The spatially concentrated demand pushes up house prices and generates a correlation between poverty and distance from a good school...

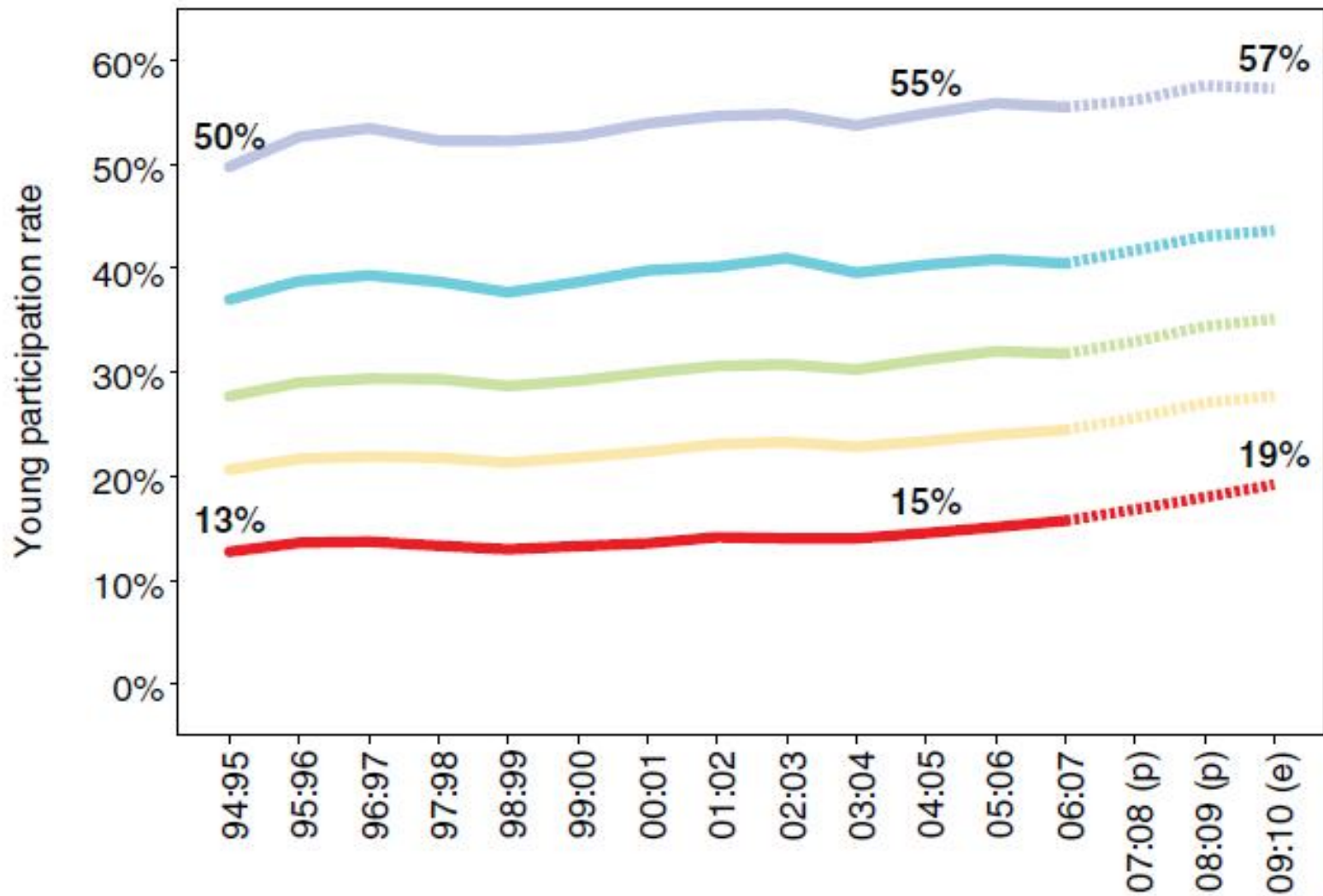
A pupil from a poor family is 17 percentage points less likely to go to a good school...

(Burgess and Briggs, 2006)

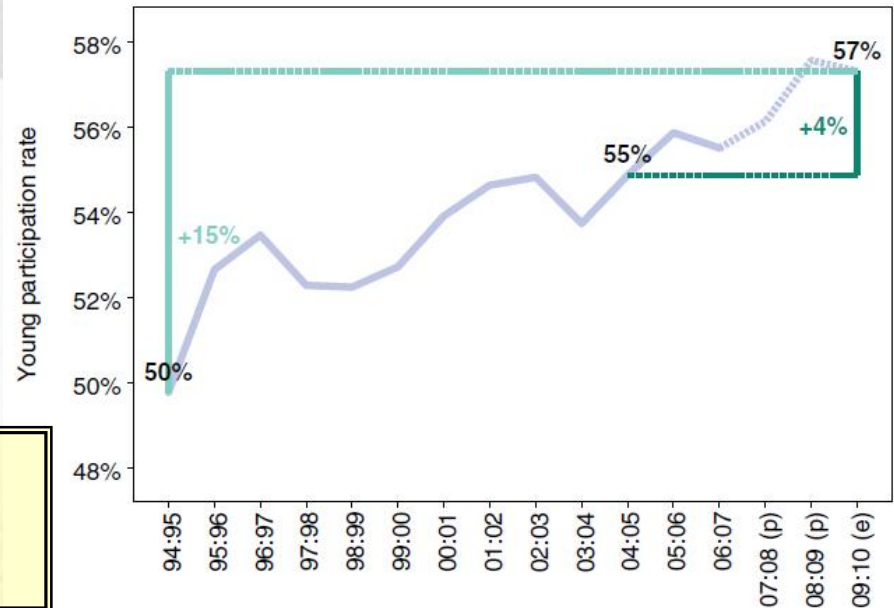
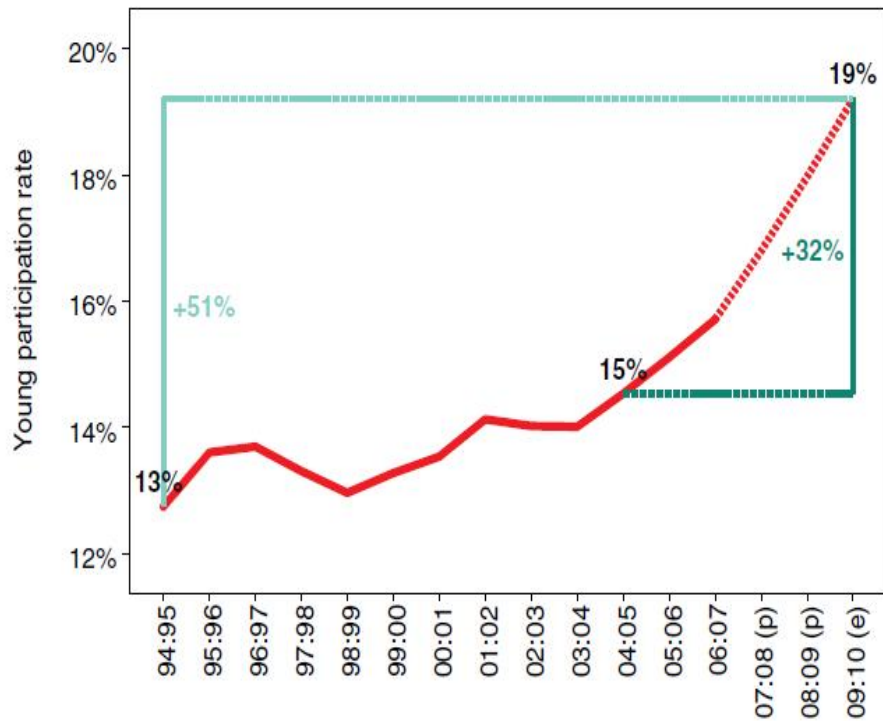
HE Participation



HE Participation




Trends in Participation Rates: Most deprived areas




Trends in Participation Rates: Most advantaged areas

Age Participation Index (%) by Social Class: 1991/2 - 2001

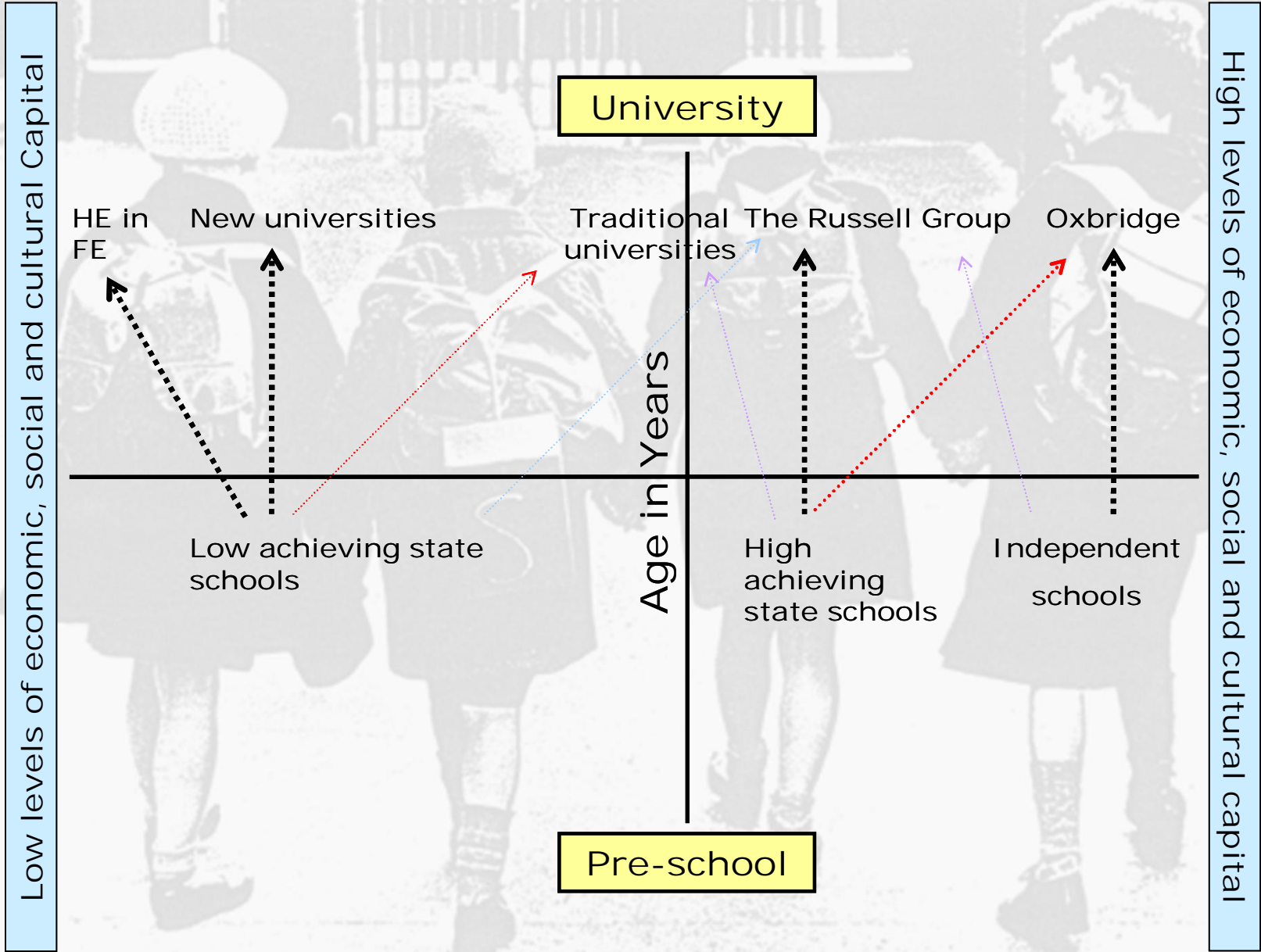


Class	Year of Entry									
	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Professional (A)	71	73	78	80	82	79	72	73	76	79
Intermediate (B)	39	42	45	46	47	48	45	45	48	50
Skilled non-manual (C1)	27	29	31	31	32	31	29	30	33	33
Skilled manual (C2)	15	17	18	18	18	19	18	18	19	21
Partly skilled (D)	14	16	17	17	17	18	17	17	19	18
Unskilled (E)	9	11	11	12	13	14	13	13	14	15
A-C1	40	43	46	47	48	48	45	45	48	50
C2-E	14	16	17	17	18	18	17	17	18	19

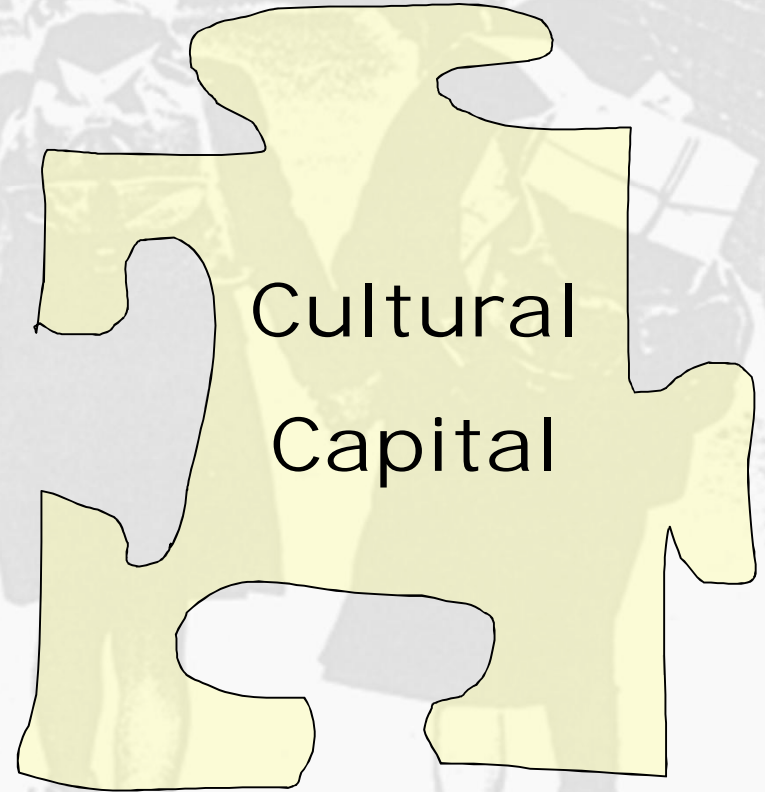
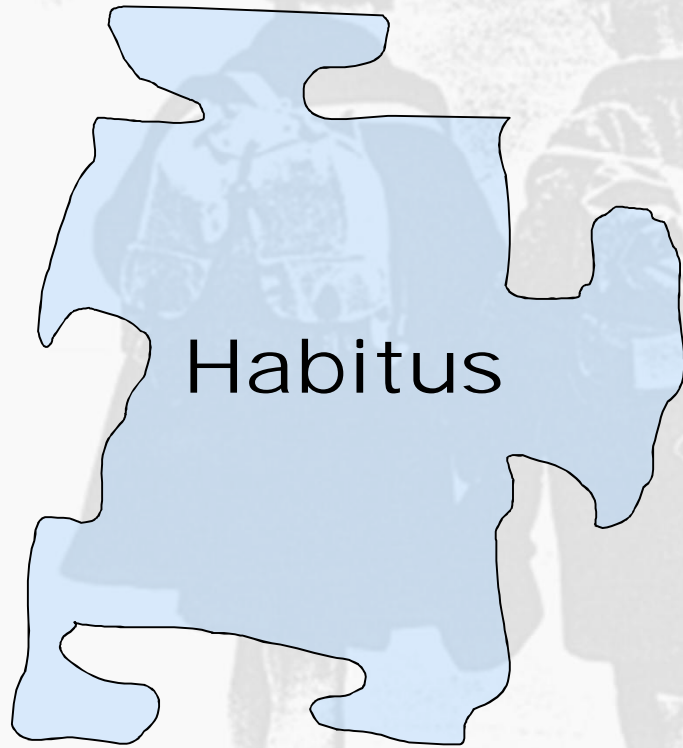


(Gallindo-Rueda, Marcenaro-Gutierrez and Vignoles, 2004)

Schools and Social Mobility: constraints vs. opportunities



Schools and Social Mobility



Understanding Social Movement

Although we are all influenced by the social contexts in which we find ourselves, none of us are simply determined in our behaviour by those contexts. We possess, and create, our own individuality. Our activities both structure – give shape to – the social world around us and at the same time are structured by that social world.

(Giddens, 1989: 6)

Measures of Social Mobility

- IMD Rank Score

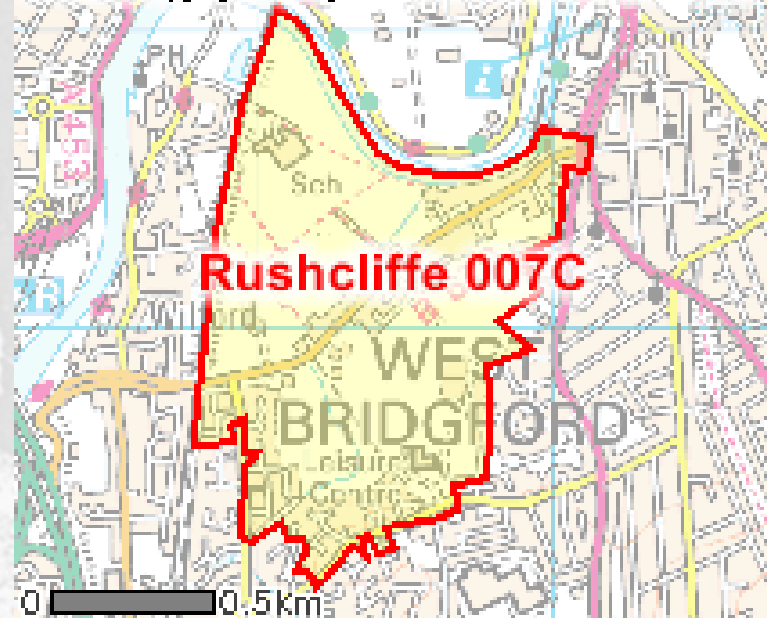
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Effects of Social Mobility?

Resilience and coping with adversity are all qualities that are far more associated with working rather than middle classness but in working-class contexts are taken for granted and often read as stoicism, 'making the best of a bad situation'. However, such qualities of resilience and coping with adversity become productive resources for the working-class students in the middle-class contexts they have moved into, – they help in dealing with the strange and unfamiliar.

(Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009)

The Issue with Social Mobility

Social mobility really is a troublesome idea whose complexity hides some very difficult questions that politicians tend to evade. Let us pass by without really going into the controversy about genetics, which places a major limitation on this entire argument (Collins, 2013: online)

(Taken from: <http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/the-social-mobility-myth-education-philip-collins/>)



Position 1: Social Mobility is not Possible

Habitus

- habitus is a set of dispositions that is linked to social class and is therefore fixed – people do the things they do without consciousness or will
- habitus determines social positions – people are likely to stick with ‘people like them’
- habitus predisposes individuals’ attitudes towards education – working class individuals do not value the ‘rewards’ of a good education with the converse being true for middle class groups



Position 1: Social Mobility is not Possible

Field

- education is built from middle class values and alienates working class values and dispositions
- the field naturally facilitates winners and losers within an assessment structure that favours middle class cultural capital
- progression routes through education are to some extent determined by school attended – those in high performing schools are more likely to access elite HE



Position 1: Social Mobility is not Possible

Capital

- middle class families have appropriate levels and forms of capital to secure their advantage within the educational field
- high levels of one form of capital (e.g. economic) can secure advantage in other forms (e.g. cultural)
- appropriate social networks can ensure middle class access to 'grapevine' knowledge (Ball and Vincent, 1998: 377)

(Ball, S. and Vincent, C. (1998) 'I heard it on the Grapevine': 'hot' knowledge and school choice. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. Vol. 19: 3)



Position 2: Social Mobility is Possible

Habitus

- habitus is a set of dispositions that can be permeable and influenced by experience and context
- institutional habitus of school may support social mobility (ie. through expectations placed in pupils to do well)



Position 2: Social Mobility is Possible

Field

- pupils from working class families can be placed into high performing schools
- mixed ability groups may facilitate higher academic achievement



Position 2: Social Mobility is Possible

Capital

- working class children may accrue appropriate levels of cultural capital through schooling
- increased cultural capital can be gained through school trips (e.g. museum visits; concerts; access to music tuition etc)



Key Questions

- Is social mobility important in modern societies?
- If intergenerational mobility has fallen, does it matter?
- What social consequences are likely to follow from falling levels of social mobility?
- What role do governments play in social mobility?

(Giddens, 2009: 468)

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