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**'Working -class' education:  
notions of widening  
participation in the nineteenth  
and twenty-first centuries.**

Denise Robinson

and

Martyn Walker

# Introduction

- Background – our particular interests and perspectives
- Aim – To explore Widening Participation (WP) in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century contexts and whether WP is not a new notion.

# Definitions of working-class

- a social group that consists of people who earn little money, often being paid only for the hours or days that they work, and who usually do physical work (Cambridge dictionary)
- Socio-economic groups - From 2001 the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC) has been used for all official statistics and surveys. It replaces Social Class based on Occupation (SC, formerly Registrar General's Social Class) and Socio-economic Groups (SEG). 8 categories. NS-SEC has been constructed to measure employment relations and conditions of occupations. Conceptually these are central to delineating the structure of socio-economic positions in modern societies and helping to explain variations in social behaviour and other social phenomena.  
(<http://www.ons.gov.uk/about-statistics/classifications/current/ns-sec/history/index.html>- Office for National Statistics)

# Widening participation

## Questions

- *Definitions of W/P Widening participation is presented as a means to achieve two main objectives for government – social justice and economic success within a globalised context.*
- *Is Widening Participation new?*
- *More of the same?*

# NS-SEC

1. Higher Managerial & Professional occupations
2. Lower M&P Occupations
3. Intermediate
- 4. Small employers/own account workers**
- 5. Lower supervisory/tech occupations**
- 6. Semi-routine occupations**
- 7. Routine occupations**

# Definitions of Widening Participation (HE)

## **HESA**

- **Lower NS-SEC 4-7**
- **No previous higher education**
- **From a low participation neighbourhood**

<b>Full time undergraduate entrants 2007/08</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Total UK	352,400	
England	302,875	
Mature (over 21 years of age) entrants - England	63,600	21
No previous higher education and from a low participation neighbourhood (mature)	6,906	11.5 (of mature entrants)
<b>Other Full time Undergraduate entrants *1</b>		
England	47,195	
Mature entrants	28,555	60.5
No previous higher education and from a low participation neighbourhood (mature)	2,850	11.2 (of mature entrants)
<b>Part time undergraduate entrants</b>		
<b>Total - England</b>	253,695	
Young	19,205	7.6
Mature	234,695	92.4
No previous higher education and from a low participation neighbourhood	13,660 * 2	6.8



# 19th Century Working Class Criteria

- E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1968).
- R.S.Neale, *Class and Ideology in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1972).
- E. J. Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men, Studies in the History of Labour* (London, 1965).
- E. J. Hobsbawm, *Worlds of Labour, Further Studies in the History of Labour* (London, 1984).

# Occupations

- **Table 1**

Known Occupations of those who attended Keighley Mechanics' Institute 1840.

- **Table 2**

Known Occupations of those who attended Huddersfield Mechanics' Institute 1857.

- **Table 3**

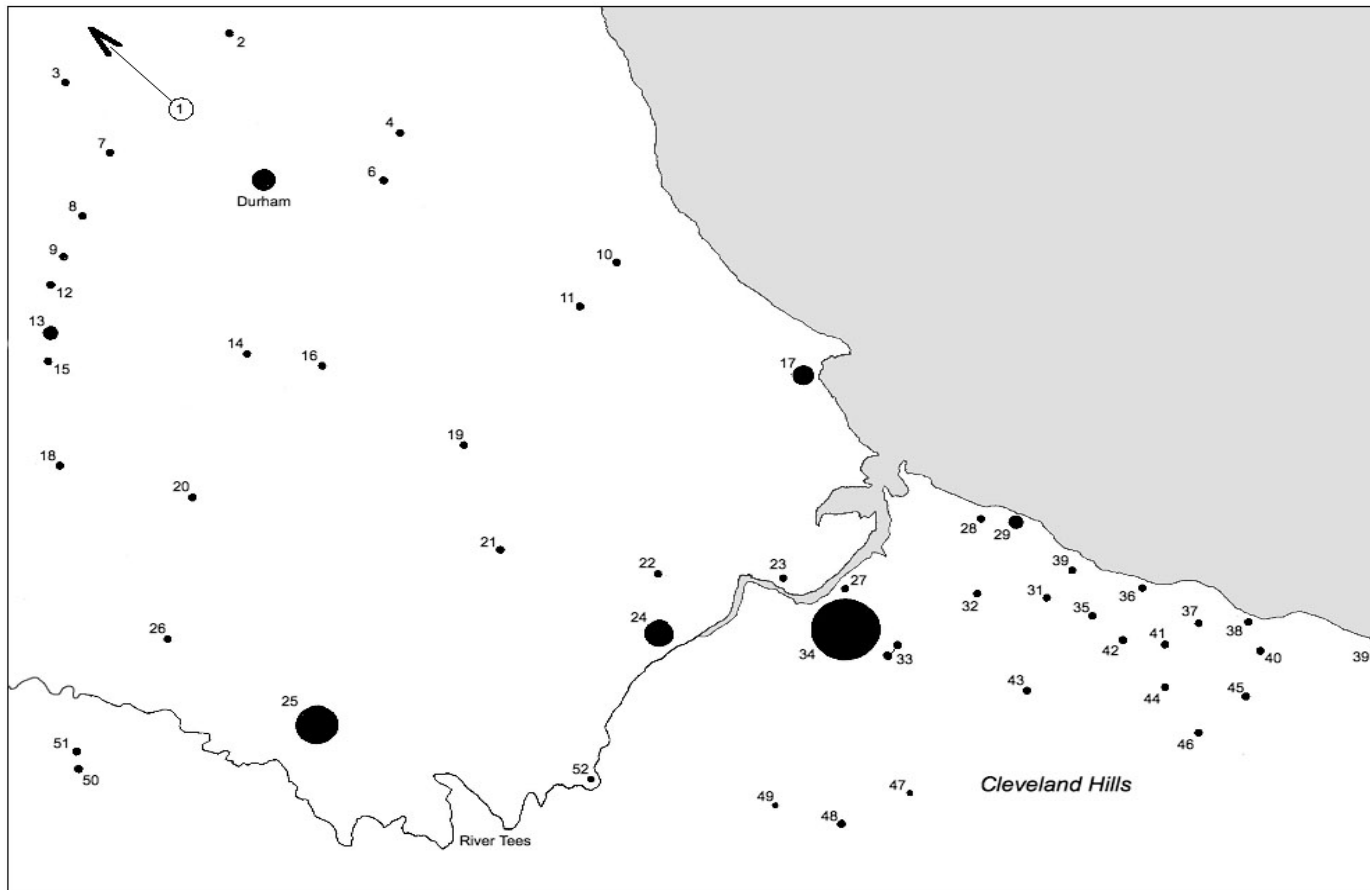
Known Occupations of those who attended Huddersfield Mechanics' Institute 1876.

- **Table 4**

Known Occupations of those who attended Huddersfield Mechanics' Institute 1881.

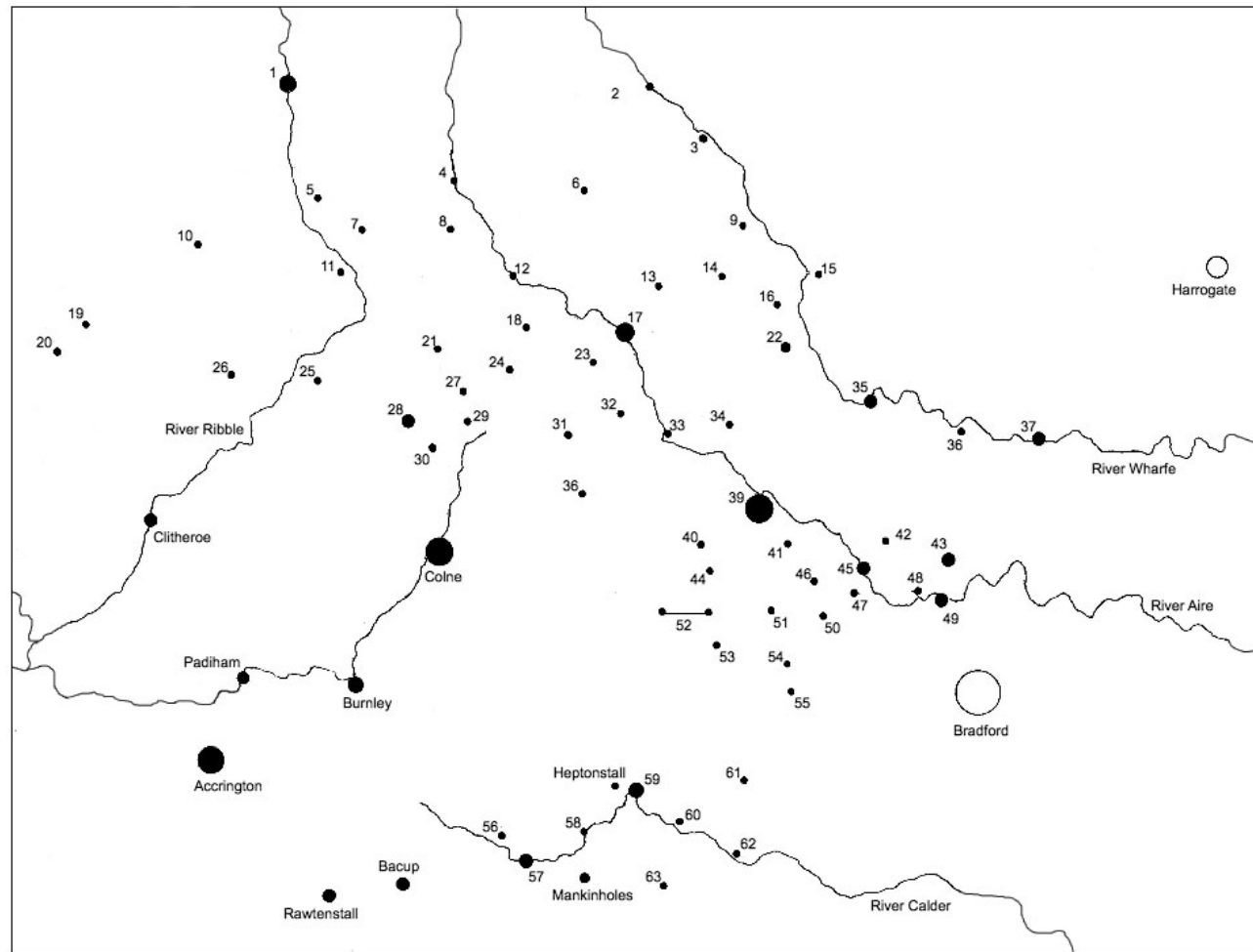
# Yorkshire Union Mechanics' Institutes

## The North East

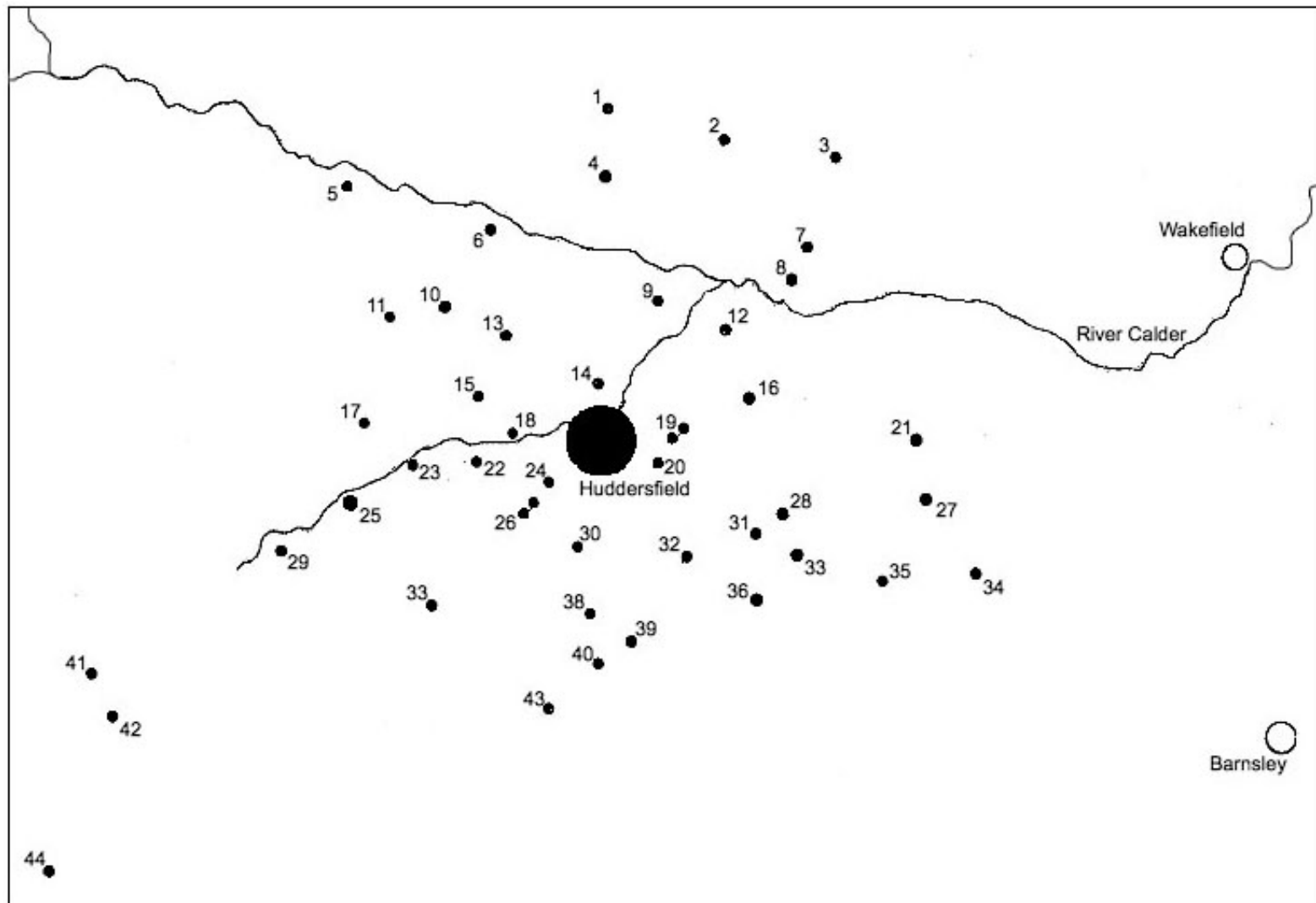


# Yorkshire Union Mechanics' Institutes

## The Dales and Pennines



# Yorkshire Union Mechanics' Institutes Huddersfield and District



# Challenging the WP model

- *Maintenance of social & economic inequalities through a hierarchical differentiated HE structure (meritocracy supports enhanced opportunities for m/c)?*
- *Exacerbates the academic/vocat. divide; debases vocational routes?*
- *Alternatives that offer real value in informal adult education?*

# Conclusions

- Both WP and class as it is applied to education are contested notions
- WP is not new
- Importance of structure and individual agency
- Awareness of historical developments can be illuminating