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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 19th and 21st 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**

Full time undergraduate entrants 2007/08	Number	Percentage
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)
Other Full time Undergraduate entrants *1		
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)
Part time undergraduate entrants		
Total - England	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

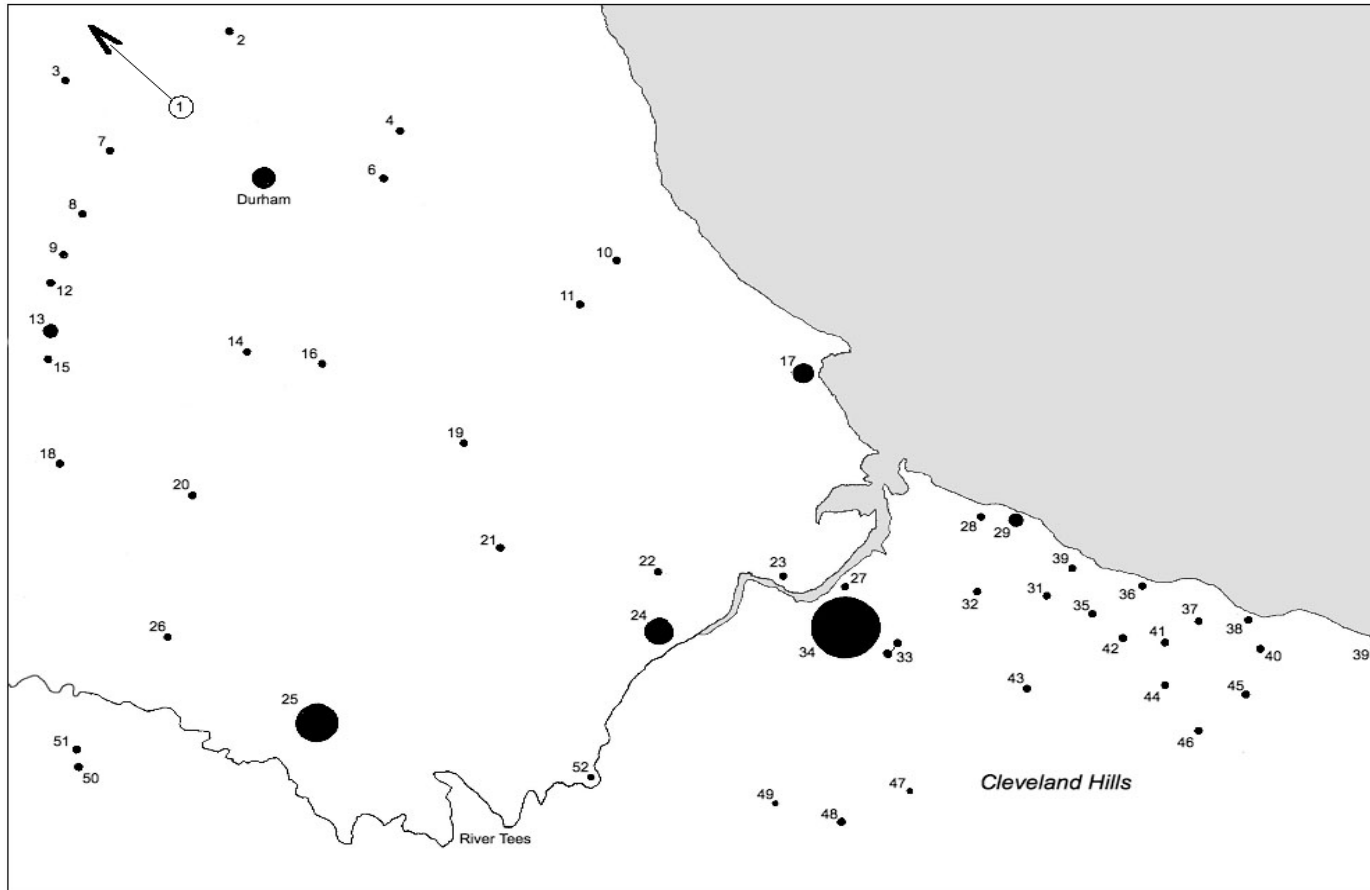
19th Century Working Class Criteria

- 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

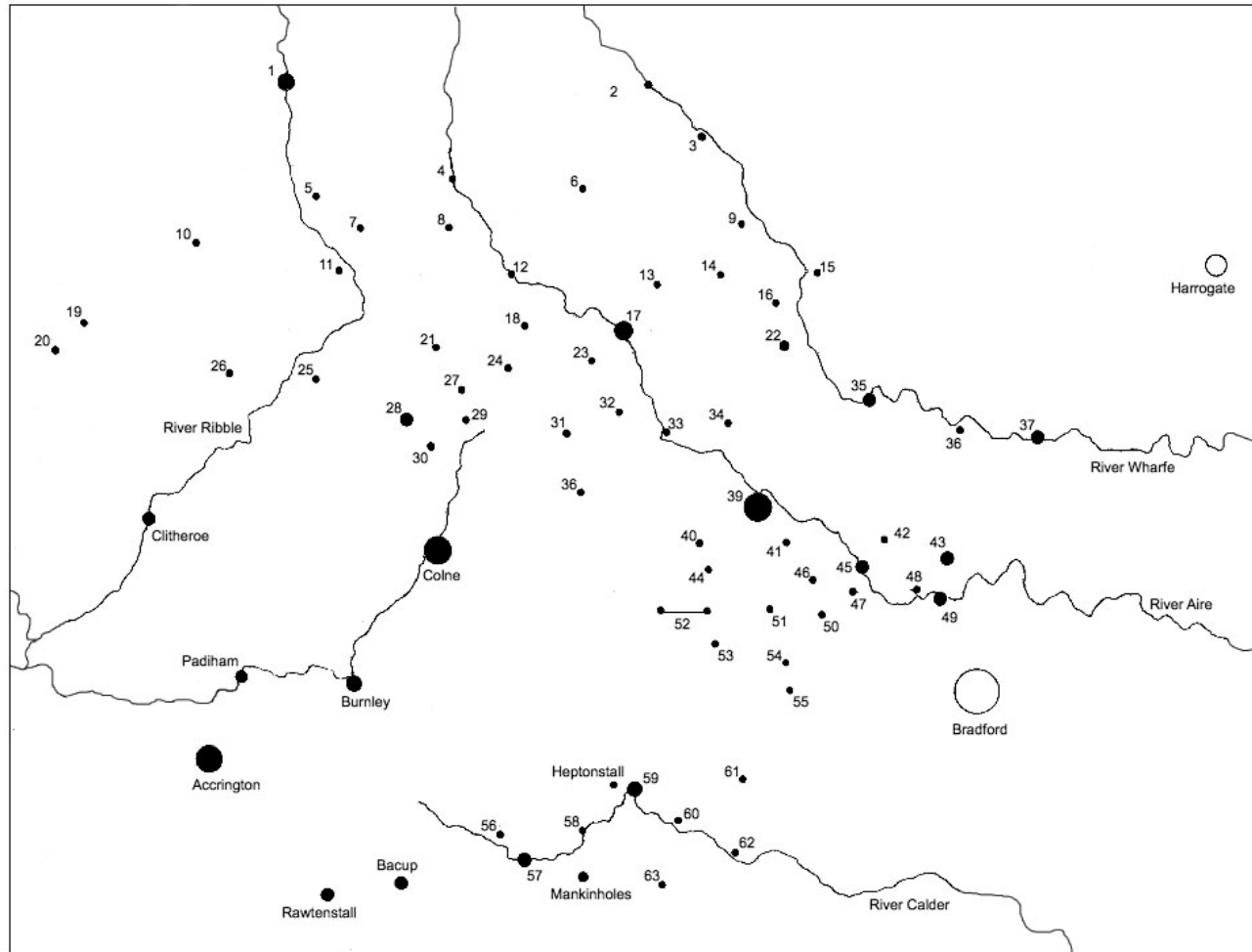
- **Table 1**
Known Occupations of those who attended Keighley Mechanics' Institute 1840.
- **Table 2**
Known Occupations of those who attended Huddersfield Mechanics' Institute 1857.
- **Table 3**
Known Occupations of those who attended Huddersfield Mechanics' Institute 1876.
- **Table 4**
Known Occupations of those who attended Huddersfield Mechanics' Institute 1881.

Yorkshire Union Mechanics' Institutes The North East

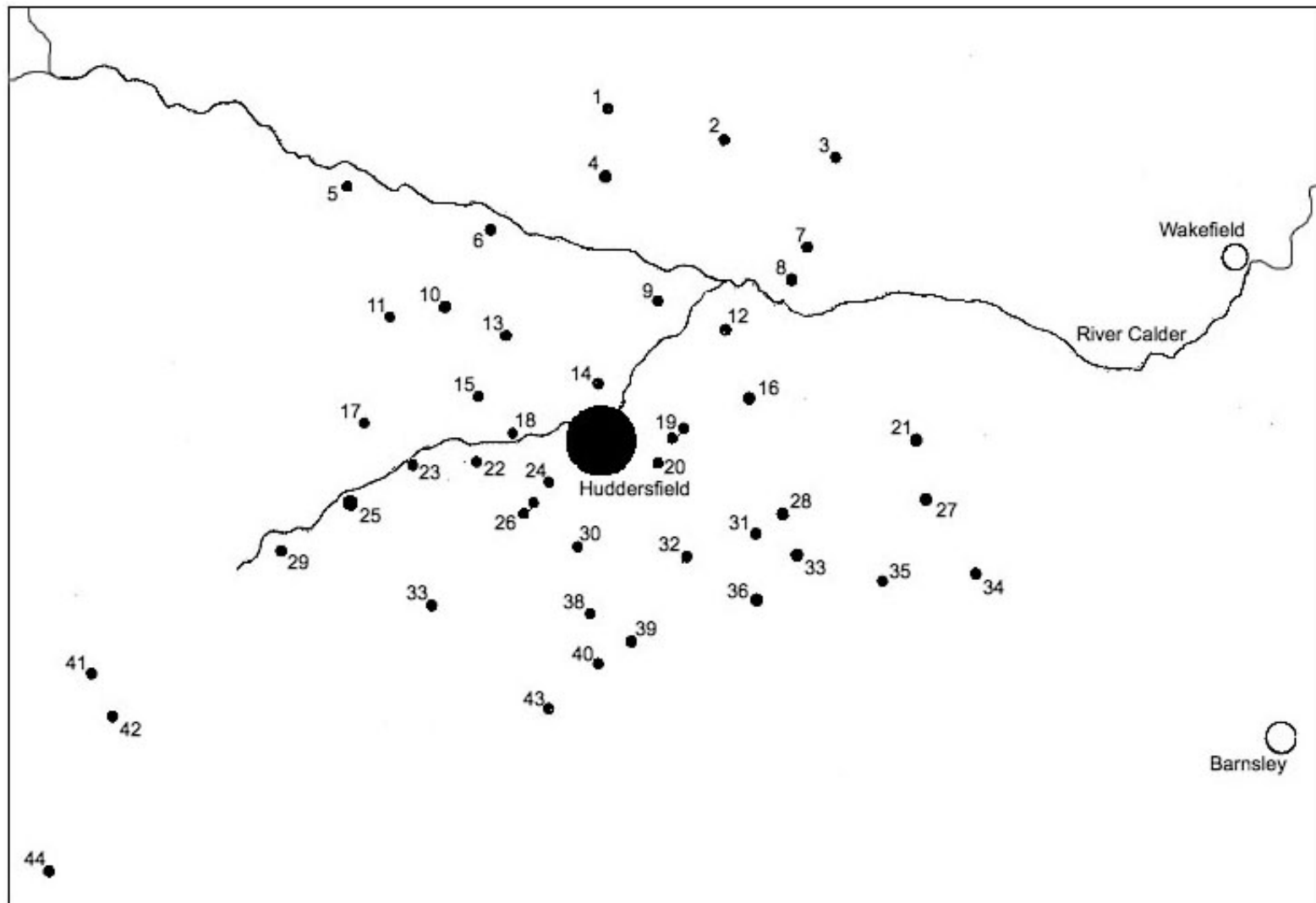


Yorkshire Union Mechanics' Institutes

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