Social Class and Access to Higher Education

A Report of findings from the Social Class and Widening Participation to HE Project, University of North London

Dr. Louise Archer

SUMMARY

This report summarises findings from the *Social Class and Widening Participation in HE Project*, based at the University of North London. Findings are identified for the following issues, and implications outlined:

- Encouraging working class groups to choose to go to university
- Working class 'cultures of resistance' to participation
- HE culture as 'alien' and 'middle class'
- Vocational and educational advice
- The Hierarchy of UK universities
- Do alternative entry routes widen participation?
- Negative images of studying
- Differential participation by gender
- Differential risks of participation
- Financial barriers to participation
- Racism
- Graduate Employment
- Retention of working class students

Implications for Schools/FE sector, HE sector and government are summarised at the end of the report.

INTRODUCTION

The British Higher Education system has undergone a period of considerable growth and expansion in recent decades and yet participation among certain 'non-traditional' social groups remains persistently low (NCIHE, 1997). This phenomenon is not restricted to Britain, and is echoed throughout virtually all industrialised countries (Goldthorpe, 1996; Hatcher, 1998; Schuetze & Wolter, 2000). This summary paper reports a two-year research project, funded by the University of North London, to investigate the barriers to HE participation among British working class groups.

Government-funded policies and intervention strategies have succeeded in raising the numbers of working class young people entering higher education (see, for example, Bigger, 1996; Robertson & Hillman, 1997). There has, however, also been a dramatic increase in the numbers of middle class entrants, who have often colonised the entry routes designed to encourage working class participants (Davies, 1995; Wakeford, 1993). Thus inequalities between social classes remain constant and extremely resistant to change (Blackburn & Jarman, 1993; Hatcher, 1998).

'Working class' people do not constitute a unitary, homogenised category, and rates of participation in higher education have been shown to vary between different working class groups. For example, participation is lowest among those from unskilled occupational backgrounds (Robertson & Hillman, 1997) and among inner-city working class groups (Robertson, 1997). There are also complex patterns of participation in terms of race and gender: overall slightly fewer working class women than men participate and ethnic minority groups appear to participate in greater proportions than white groups. However, the very lowest participation rates occur among African Caribbean men and Bangladeshi men and women (Coffield & Vignoles, 1997; CVCP, 1998; Modood, 1993). Furthermore, it is agreed that when graduate earnings between gender/race groups are taken into consideration, the picture becomes yet more complex. This research addresses these complexities as a central concern: working class participation is understood as located within a complex web of multiple, intermeshed

social power relations, comprising a combination of institutional, personal, social and economic factors[i].

METHOD

The research project was conducted in three main phases and utilised a mixture of methods. Focus groups were conducted with inner city, ethnically diverse working class respondents, including both 'non-participants' (people who were not in higher education and who were unlikely to apply) and 'participants' (current HE students from working class backgrounds). The 'generalisability' of focus group findings was explored through a national survey.

Phase One: Focus groups with 'non-participants'

Sixteen focus group discussions were carried out with a total of 118 working class[ii] people aged 16-30 living in north and east London. Approximately one third of the sample identified themselves as 'black' (Black African, Black Caribbean, Black-Mixed race), one third 'Asian' (Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Asian-Mixed) and one third 'white' (white-British, white-Italian and white-Turkish)[iii]. Ten groups took place in further education (FE) colleges, where respondents were attending courses from which they were considered to be unlikely to progress to HE (e.g. NVQ Level 1).

Six further groups were recruited from the general public according to gender and ethnicity (African Caribbean, Bengali, white). These 'single sex/separate ethnicity' groups mostly included people who were not participating in any form of education, (many of whom had left school at 16 and were now working or unemployed) although some respondents were studying part-time in FE. Of the non-participant sample, 16 said that they definitely hoped to go to university (though only 9 of these were currently taking level 3 courses). About the same number explicitly rejected the idea. Many of the remainder expressed some interest, but said they were unlikely to enter HE.

Phase Two: A National Survey

Focus group findings informed the design of a national survey questionnaire. Questions were administered through the MORI Omnibus survey to adults from social classes C1, C2, D and E, aged 16-30 years living in England or Wales. Questions were asked over three survey sweeps and a total of 1,278 respondents were successfully targeted. Of these respondents, 56% were female and 44% male. 91% of respondents were white and 9% from ethnic minorities. Overall, 17% of the sample had been/were at university, 17% expressed possible plans to apply and 59% did not plan to go to university at all.

3.4 Phase Three: Focus groups with 'participants'

Seventeen focus group discussions and interviews were conducted with a total of 85 new first year undergraduates at an inner-city, post-1992 University. Respondents were recruited from a range of courses from across the faculties. Of these respondents, 51 were women and 34 were men. Approximately 30% of respondents could be identified as 'white British', 20% as Asian, 20% as black and 27% were from other (mainly white European) backgrounds.

FINDINGS

1. ***Issue***: *Encouraging working class groups to choose to go to university*

   Finding: For many focus group respondents, the possibility of going to university was a 'non-choice', it had never entered into their choice/decision-making horizon. The MORI survey also revealed that 59% of the sample did not plan to ever go to university, and almost half of all respondents (49%) had never thought about doing a degree (this figure rose to 60% among social class E interviewees). Qualitative analysis revealed that few working class respondents were able to draw on a family history of HE participation to support and guide them through the process of application and entry. As a result, most respondents knew relatively little about how to apply to university, what it might be like there or what studying in higher education might cost and entail (See Hutchings & Archer, 2001). It could be argued that working class families are highly disadvantaged within the HE process as compared to middle class applicants, who are able to draw upon greater cultural capital and resources (e.g. Reay, 1998). Indeed, the working class student interviewees said that knowing someone who had been to university was a very important factor in their decision to apply. This personal contact not only introduced university into respondents' horizons of choice but provided a trusted/valued information source (see below), support and advice on how to apply and represented the 'achievability' of university participation for 'people like us'.

   Implication: As Diane Reay argues, these findings point to the need for radical structural changes: "The solution to class inequalities does not lie in making the working classes more middle class, but in dismantling and sharing out the economic, social and cultural capital which goes with middle class status" (Reay, 1997; p.23).

2. ***Issue***: *Working class 'cultures of resistance' to participation*

   Finding: Evidence suggests that even among suitably qualified working class groups there are low levels of participation. In line with this, respondents voiced various reasons opposing the possibility of personally going to university. For example, a number of non-participants felt that it would take too long to pursue university entry routes and it would be a costly and remote possibility. Both non-participants and

participants (but particularly women) identified family and social/ community opposition to the idea of their going to university because it would entail getting 'above your station' (Hutchings, Archer & Leathwood, 2000) and/or because for those with children it was considered 'irresponsible'. However, ethnic minority respondents, particularly black women, were more likely than white respondents to frame their motivation for going to university in terms of making their families proud. The greater encouragement to study among ethnic minority working class families was framed within a struggle against racism rather than solely as an aspiration towards 'middle class' values. A number of respondents criticized a middle class motivation of going to university for fun or 'a laugh' and contrasted it with the huge costs of participation that render such a motivation as impossible and unthinkable for working class students.

Implication: Improved links between local communities and HEIs may help reduce negative perceptions of HE participation. Issues around the length of study, and the financial burden participation places upon working class families, could also be usefully addressed. This evidence suggests that the strategies needed to encourage different ethnic and gender groups will vary; the working classes cannot be treated as homogenous.

3. *Issue: HE Culture as 'alien' and 'middle class'*

Findings: Higher Education was talked about as a middle class system in which working class students were disadvantaged and 'different' and 45% of the MORI sample agreed that 'the student image is not for me'. Some focus group respondents anticipated, or recounted, being intimidated by middle class students. Mature students were particularly likely to voice fears of being 'out of place'. Some mature female students also felt they did not understand the culture and language of the middle class staff. A number of non-participant women talked about universities as 'big and scary' and 'snobby'. Independent of whether respondents personally expressed a wish to go to university or not, 'students' were widely represented as middle class (and white) and therefore 'different' to oneself. Images of (middle class) students were largely negative, with students positioned as 'lacking common

sense', 'immature' and as socially inadequate. This latter view was particularly prevalent amongst white respondents. Many respondents shared a view of university student life as characterized by 'drinking and partying', but this stereotype was generally regarded as negative for a number of reasons. For example, participants and non-participants emphasised the risks of alcoholism and debt associated with a culture of 'cheap drink'. Mature and Muslim students felt that the 'partying' image promoted by university student unions marginalised and did not represent their own experiences and values.

Implications: HEIs need to attend to and change their cultures (and how they market themselves) if they are to widen participation to diverse working class students. Careful attention will need to be paid to how this change is managed, so that working class students feel a 'right' to belong (a sense of ownership) and are not just expected to fit, or be 'special cases' within a middle class system.

4.   *Issue*: *Vocational and educational advice*

Finding: Respondents largely lacked (and distrusted) information and encouragement from schools or colleges. Within the MORI survey, 44% reported receiving no information from their schools or colleges regarding higher education. Ball & Vincent (1998) found a wide mistrust of particular 'official' sources of information among working class families and a heavy reliance upon 'hot' or 'grapevine' knowledge. Similarly in this research, qualitative analysis revealed that official sources were regarded as biased in that they represented institutional or governmental interests. These sources of information were contrasted with 'informal', local sources, which were regarded as more useful and reliable. FE respondents were also highly critical of the careers advice they received from independent, 'professional' careers advisors, who (it was perceived) did not know them or hold their interests at heart. In comparison, working class HE students narrated the importance of having had trusted friends or family members who encouraged them through entry routes and provided an important motivation to apply for university.

Implication: Schools and colleges need to work closely to develop partnerships and community links. Mentoring schemes, where pupils are matched with students from similar backgrounds to themselves, may be particularly important in providing pupils with trusted 'hot knowledge' about higher education. Careers advice may be better used coming from known, familiar teachers, rather than independent careers services. Careers advice from known, familiar teachers may be better valued and used than that from independent careers services.

5. *Issue: The hierarchy of UK universities*

Finding: The majority of respondents, both participants and non-participants, talked about how only certain (less prestigious) universities are accessible for working class students. Access to the 'dream' universities (which were 'nice looking', had 'grass', were further away and guaranteed better graduate jobs) was considered the domain of middle class students who had the necessary money, status and whose families were able to 'plan ahead'. In comparison, working class respondents recognised that a mixture of social ('keeping close', family responsibilities) and financial factors (cost of transport, need to carry on in paid employment) necessitate attending a 'local' university. Some ethnic minority respondents also mentioned that these 'better' universities tended to be dominated by white students, although some black women were motivated to try and access such institutions 'to prove a point'.

Implication: Giving more money to elite universities to attract working class students may not provide a solution. Many working class students need to attend a local university, and these universities (which tend to be ex-polytechnics) will require higher levels of funding to support non-traditional learners and to ensure the experience is worthwhile for working class applicants. Issues of social justice demand that the whole HE system is opened to working classes, and this will require radical funding and institutional changes. Otherwise, there is little incentive for working class people to undertake the huge risks and costs of participation for what is perceived as a 'second rate' higher education, which will be of lesser value in the job market.

6. *Issue: Do alternative Access/entry routes widen participation?*

   Finding: The majority of non-participants were unclear about what entry qualifications are required for university, but it was widely assumed that whatever these were, they would be higher than the ones they personally held. The MORI survey also revealed that only 32% of respondents thought that had grades or qualifications which would allow them to go to university, and this figure fell to 17% among social class E. Where focus group respondents had knowledge of alternative entry routes, the legitimacy of these was often questioned. Both HE participants and non-participants thought that the qualifications they held (such as GNVQ, BTEC, Access courses) were regarded less highly than A Levels. It was also argued that within universities, working class students with 'non-traditional' qualifications are 'labeled' and/or unprepared. The non-participant respondents were largely employed in occupations from which it is difficult to accumulate the forms of accreditation that are currently recognised as routes for entry to HE. Mechanisms that do recognise more diverse forms of potential and life experiences, such as APEL, remain marginalised within the HE system and thus offer limited potential for widening participation. Many respondents appeared to be skeptical of the educational system as a whole. For example, they regarded routes designed to widen access as 'money-making' schemes.

   Implication: The new Curriculum 2000 may well help to reduce confusion and give equal status to different forms of vocational and academic qualification. However, while elite universities continue to accept a narrow range of academic entry qualifications, it is inevitable that vocational, and other, access routes will be perceived as less valuable.

7. *Issue: Negative images of studying*

   Finding: Non-participants were almost unanimous in their views that study is hard and boring, although there was divided opinion as to whether it is worth enduring to gain the benefits of a degree. Only one or two respondents identified satisfaction, or interest, in studying as a reason to go to university. These views contrasted with findings from the MORI survey, in which just under half of all interviewees (48%)

agreed that 'I enjoy studying' and 49% thought that universities offered courses that they would find interesting.

Implication: The large number of respondents who reported not finding study enjoyable suggests that perhaps schools (and post-compulsory institutions) need to place greater emphasis upon allowing pupils the opportunity to develop personal interests and learning identities (as opposed to the current drive towards curriculum delivery).

8.   *Issue*: *Differential Participation by Gender*

Findings: Within the MORI survey, men appeared to hold slightly more negative views of university participation than women: For example, slightly fewer reported enjoying studying and higher percentages of men said they would 'rather earn money' and thought university and the student image was 'not for them'. In comparison, women appeared to be slightly more constrained by situational barriers; higher percentages of women said they would only study locally and part-time, and would do a degree 'if it did not cost so much'. Compared to the men, a slightly higher percentage of women doubted their own ability to pass a degree. Male focus group respondents (from all ethnic groups) were particularly likely to view 'being a student' as incompatible with their own lives and identities. The majority of non-participant men defined themselves through paid employment, and educational choices were addressed solely through discourses of work and money. The content of these discourses varied between men from different ethnic groups, but shared a common theme that the men faced particular responsibilities that rendered HE participation impossible/unattractive. Men were particularly likely to cite economic/ instrumental motivations for going to university. In comparison, women more often framed the benefits of participation in terms of increased personal self-worth or social status. Women were also more likely to talk about class mobility and change as a positive outcome of participation.

Implication: Findings suggest that slightly different strategies may need to be adopted to encourage participation for men and women. Strategies aimed at men may need to consider the image of the 'feminisation' of studying and the importance

of links between higher education and the workplace. Findings from working class women, however, highlight the structural barriers to participation and the importance of providing adequate financial support as well as academic support to raise learners' confidence levels.

9. *Issue*: *Differential Risks of participation*

Findings: As Beck (1992) has stated, risks are not distributed evenly across social class and consequently HE participation will entail considerably greater risks for working class students. Across all phases of the study, working class respondents recognised that participation will entail considerable social and economic risks, costs, financial hardship and insecurity, and all with no guarantees of success. Respondents could recognise benefits but were in 'impossible' positions and constrained by material situations and needs as well as identity/attitudinal. This combination of risk, cost and uncertainty permeated through the HE process, from application, to participation and graduate employment prospects. It is widely agreed that debt is riskier for working class groups and respondents highlighted the diverse, but very real, possibilities of failure (drawing upon their own experiences of educational failure) and the diverse social and economic consequences of failure for themselves and their families. In the face of these risks, many respondents' reasons for not wanting to participate could be identified as using pragmatic rational strategies of risk management, 'sticking to what you know'. For example, non-participant men stressed the importance of maintaining the 'security' of working and earning as opposed to gambling with a long period of study. Whilst a number of respondents acknowledged the benefits of the middle classes' use of educational 'plans', this was contrasted with the working classes' riskier positions, which hindered the possibility of such plans.

Implication: There are no simple solutions to the issue of how to reduce the unequal risks and costs of participation faced by working class students. It is suggested that a combination of (often quite radical) social, structural and financial changes (as suggested throughout this report) will need to be undertaken.

10. ***Issue***: *Financial Barriers to Participation*

   Findings: The impact of financial barriers for working class participation were emphasised consistently and uniformly across the research. Even the most academically qualified respondents, and those already at university, felt hindered by poverty and actual, or potential, debt. Both HE participants and non-participants appeared confused about grants/loans and fees, and even current applicants reported that they did not know about recent changes in the funding system. Not a single non-participant respondent had any knowledge of means testing within the assessment of payment of tuition fees or loan applications. There was also confusion among students with regard to the necessity for LEA assessment to set the levels of fees paid. Student loans were widely assumed to be same as bank loans and were associated with a fear of debt. They were thought to be 'unfair' and part of a governmental 'money-making scheme', a form of 'double tax' for graduates who would later contribute through higher earnings tax. The process of applying for financial support was found to be highly complex and repetitive; different authorities (LEA, Student Loans Company, the University) all requiring the same information.

   Implications: There is an urgent need for better information about the current funding systems and arrangements. At present the system is opaque and widely misunderstood. It would also be helpful if the processes could be simplified. The introduction of student tuition fees and student loans (instead of grants) appears to be a widespread disincentive for working class students, who are unfairly disadvantaged within such a system. While changes (such as Access bursaries) have been introduced to improve the situation, our evidence suggests that potential working class applicants are not adequately informed about financial arrangements.

11. ***Issue***: *Racism*

   Findings: A number of ethnic minority participants and non-participants raised issues around racism. Some black male and female respondents recounted their experiences of racist teachers and their fears that white university staff may also 'mark them down'. Black women in particular talked about their family's efforts to counter teachers' low aspirations for their daughters, for example confronting

teachers to allow their daughters to be entered for higher level examinations and to apply to university. Similar findings are reported in the work of Mirza (1992). A few ethnic minority respondents suggested that racism hinders their prospects within the job market.

Implications: Issues around racism and differential encouragement of ethnic minority students require action. The problem of racism in the job market also impacts upon HE participation and perceptions of 'employability'. The dominance of white staff within academic institutions also requires redressing.

12. *Issue*: *Graduate employment*

Findings: Throughout the research study, respondents identified the current shift to mass higher education as a barrier to participation. These disadvantages were framed in terms of the resultant 'over-crowded' graduate job market in which working class graduates (having attended 'second rate' universities and having achieved lower qualifications as a result of juggling work, financial and social pressures) would be the first to be 'squeezed out'. The consequences of being 'overqualified' and unable to get a graduate job were identified as depression, increased family poverty and lost time, money and employment prospects.

Implications: The issue of graduate employment/ employability again points to the problems of the current hierarchy between HEIs. Universities may also wish to develop closer links with workplaces and may benefit from increased funds for strategies to prepare working class students for their post-graduate job seeking and employment.

13. *Issue*: *Retention of working class students*

Findings: Issues around retention crosscut with many other themes, such as finance, 'risk' and access routes. Many students identified that they were at risk of 'dropping out' due to financial difficulties. Single mothers and those students previously on benefits were particularly at risk. The necessity for working class students to continue in paid employment throughout their period of study was widely identified as a disadvantaging factor.

Implications: Retention is as much of an issue as access. For working class students, the importance of improving financial support cannot be stressed too highly. It is also crucial that the government recognise that those universities that accept high numbers of working class students will inevitably have high drop-out rates. A higher level of funding is needed to enable such universities to keep students on course.

CONCLUSIONS

FOR SCHOOLS AND FE SECTOR

- Forge closer links with local partner institutions (HE and community groups)
- Address the provision of careers advice
- Address inequalities in encouragement of pupils (race, class and gender)

FOR THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

- Address institutional cultures (including class, race and gender inequalities)
- Employ more ethnic minority staff (across all levels)
- Provide additional support for working class students
- Address employability issues through closer links with workplaces and through additional support
- Forge closer links with local partner institutions (schools, colleges, community groups)

FOR THE GOVERNMENT

- Address the current hierarchy of institutions in the UK
- Funding should follow working class students. Those institutions that attract high proportions of working class students need additional funding to support them adequately.
- Re-consider student funding arrangements: simplify the current system and provide better information about it

REFERENCES

Ball, S.J. & Vincent, C. (1998) 'I heard it on the grapevine': 'hot' knowledge and school choice. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 19(3), 377-400.

Beck, U. (1992) *Risk Society: Towards a new modernity* (London, Sage).

Bigger, S. (1996). 'Post-16 Compact in Birmingham: school and college links with higher education'. In: Abramson, M., Bird, J. and Stennatt, A. (Eds) *Further and Higher Education Partnerships: The Future for Collaboration*. Buckingham: SRHE and Open University Press.

Blackburn, R. M. and Jarman, J. (1993). 'Changing inequalities in access to British universities', *Oxford Review of Education,* 19, 2, 197-215.

Coffield, F. & Vignoles, A. (1997) *Widening participation in higher education by ethnic minorities, women and alternative students* (Report 5, NCIHE).

CVCP (1998) *From Elitism to Inclusion: good practice in widening access to higher education Main Report* (London, CVCP).

Davies, P. (1995). 'Response or resistance? Access students and government policies on admissions', *Journal of Access Studies*, 10, 1, 72-80.

Goldthorpe, J. (1996). 'Class analysis and the reorientation of class theory the case of persisting differentials in educational attainment', *British Journal of Sociology,* 47, 3, 481-505

Hatcher, R. (1998) Class Differentiation in Education: rational choices? *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 19,1 pp. 5-22.

Mirza, H.S. (1992) *Young, Female and Black* (London, Routledge).

Modood, T. (1993) The number of ethnic minority students in British Higher Education: some grounds for optimism, *Oxford Review of Education*, 19,2, pp.167-182.

NCIHE (1997) *Higher Education in the Learning Society* (London, Stationery Office).

Reay, D. (1998) '"Always knowing" and "never being sure": familial and institutional habituses and higher education choice', *Journal of Education Policy*, 13, 4, 519-529.

Reay, D. (1997) The double bind of the 'working class' feminist academic: the success of failure or the failure of success? In P. Mahony and C. Zmroczek (eds) *Class Matters*. London, Taylor & Francis.

Robertson, D. (1997). 'Growth without equity? Reflections on the consequences for social cohesion of faltering progress on access to higher education', *Journal of Access Studies*, 12, 1, 9-31.

Robertson, D. & Hillman, J. (1997) *Widening participation in higher education for students from lower socio-economic groups and students with disabilities* (Report 5, NCIHE).

Scheuze, H.G. & Wolter, A. (2000) Higher education and non-traditional students in industrialized countries- developments and perspectives. Paper presented at ESREA Access Network Conference, September 2000, Barcelona.

Wakeford, N. (1993) Beyond Educating Rita: mature students and Access courses, *Oxford Review of Education*, 19,2, pp.217-229.

Publications from the Project
Archer, L. & Hutchings, M. (2000) 'Bettering Yourself'? Discourses of Risk, Cost and Benefit in Ethnically Diverse, Young Working Class Non-Participants' Constructions of HE. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 21(4) 553-572.

Archer, L., Pratt, S. & Phillips, D. (2001) Working class men's constructions of masculinity and negotiations of (non)participation in higher education. *Gender and Education,* Vol. 13 No. 4

Archer, L., Leathwood, C. & Hutchings, M. Engaging with commonality and difference: Theoretical tensions in the analysis of working class women's educational discourses *International Studies in Sociology of Education,* 11(1)

Archer, L., Hutchings, M., & Ross, A. (with Leathwood, C & Gilchrist, R. & Phillips, D.) 'Higher Education and Social Class: Issues of exclusion and inclusion' Book proposal agreed for publication with FalmerRoutledge.

Hutchings, M. & Archer, L. (2001) 'Higher than Einstein': constructions of going to university among working class non-participants. *Research Papers in Education,* 16(1), pp. 69-91

Conference Papers
Archer, L. 'Detours, dead-ends and blocked roads': Inner-city, working class adults' access to higher education. Paper accepted for SCUTREA July 2001, University of East London.

Archer, L. & Hutchings, M. "University: is it worth it?" Views from working class Londoners. Invited lecture, University of East London Millennium Series in Lifelong Learning, 13 June 2000.

Archer, L., Leathwood, C. & Hutchings, M. 'The influence of class, 'race', and gender in working class women's negotiations of participation in higher education'. Paper presented at Gender and Education conference April 2001, Institute of Education, London.

Hutchings, M., Archer, L. & Leathwood, C. (2000) 'Above my station'? Gender, race and class in women's discourses of higher education. Paper presented at *ESREA Access Network Conference*, University of Barcelona, 25-26 September 2000. Published by University of Roskilde, Denmark.

Archer, L., Hutchings, M. & Leathwood, C. Beyond cross-cutting and intersections: towards a useable framework for theorising multiple social identities and inequalities. Invited seminar, University of Greenwich, 22 November 2000.

Archer, L., Hutchings, M. & Leathwood, C. 'The costs of hgiher education: perceptions of young, working class participants and non-participants', invited paper at 'Widening Participation, Access and Choice in Higher Education, King's College Conference March 30th 2001.

Archer, L., Hutchings, M. & Leathwood, C. 'Class, race and gender in working class negotiations of participation in HE', invited paper at 'Widening Participation, Access and Choice in Higher Education, King's College Conference March 30th 2001.

Other articles/reports
Social Class and Widening Participation in Higher Education Project: Counting the cost of Higher Education. Article in *Network*, April/May 2001.

Archer, L. & Ross, A. 'The Report Falls Short', Article in *The Times Higher Educational Supplement,* February 16th, 2001, p.16.

Archer, L. (2000) *Social Class and Access to Higher Education: A Report of findings.* Paper presented as evidence to the House of Commons, Education and Employment Select Committee, October 2000, IPSE Occasional Paper 2.

NOTES

[i] See Archer & Hutchings, 2000; Archer, Hutchings & Leathwood, forthcoming; Archer, Pratt & Phillips, forthcoming; Hutchings & Archer, 2001.

[ii] It is not possible to assign individuals to specific social class groups. Respondents filled in a form indicating their own and their parents' employment. However, more detail would be needed to allocate to a class. Some parents were unemployed, and their class category is therefore ambiguous. However the range of parental and personal occupations fall within the lower socio-economic groups.

[iii] Respondents used a range of labels to classify their ethnicity, and in this paper we use these self-descriptions to identify speakers (this accounts for the lack of strict continuity of description, whereby speakers from similar backgrounds may label themselves differently, e.g. as 'black British' or 'black Caribbean').

Report prepared by:

Dr. Louise Archer

Institute for Policy Studies in Education

University of North London

166-220 Holloway Rd.

London N7 8DB

Tel. 020 7753 3295

Email: L.Archer@unl.ac.uk