

# University for the Working Class? Seriously?

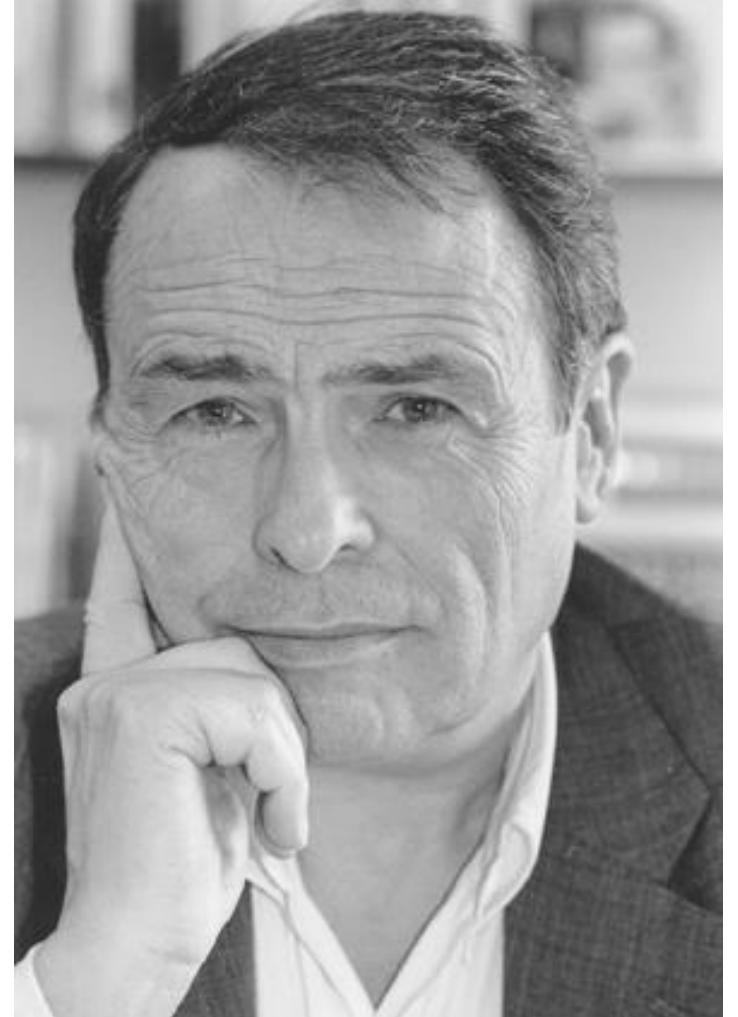
Lorraine Delaney, PhD  
Dublin City University



Ollscoil Chathair  
Bhaile Átha Cliath  
Dublin City University

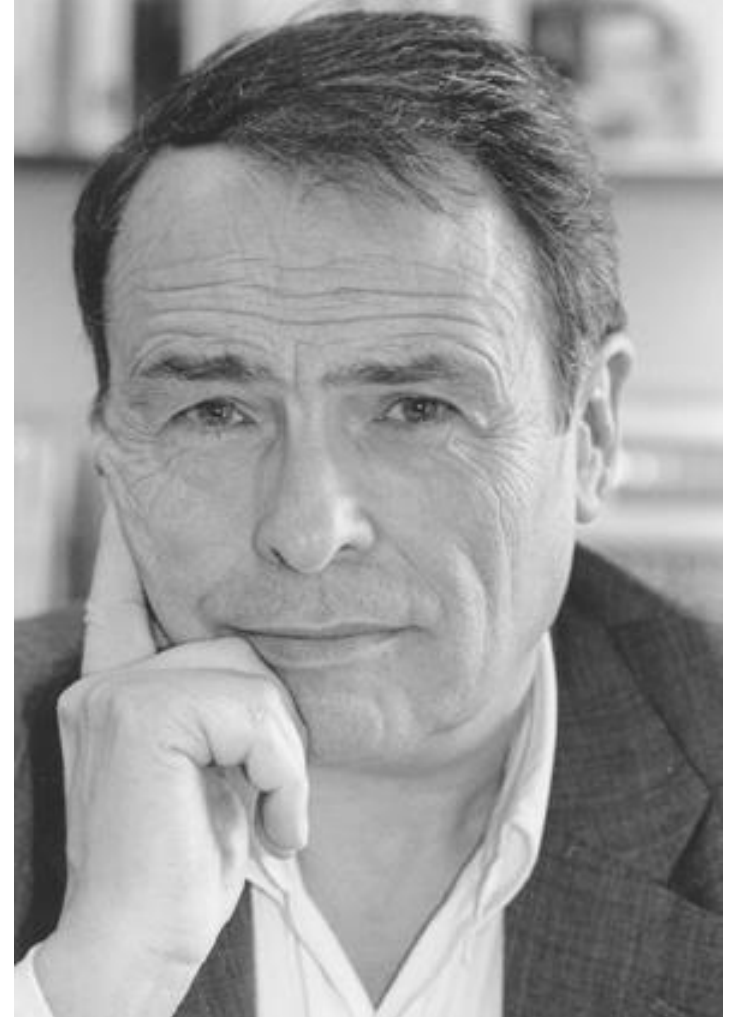
# Let me introduce you.....

- Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002)
- French Educational Sociologist
- Social Reproduction Theorist



# Social Class

- Common external conditions of existence
- Common internalised dispositions
- Unique contribution to knowledge



# Persistent Inequality

- Institutional Status (Denny 2010; Ianelli 2011)
- Level of Study (Furlong 2010; Ianelli 2011; McCoy et al. 2014  
Smyth & McCoy 2009; Sutton Trust 2010)
- Field of Study (Fleming & Finnegan 2011; Furlong 2010)

# HE Access Policy in Ireland

- Under-represented socio-economic groups
- First time mature students
- Further Education Award Holders
- Part-time/flexible learners
  
- Students with disabilities
- Irish Travellers



# Funding Policy

- Full-time course provision
- Labour Market Activation



**Case Study**  
**Recent distance graduates (2012-21015)**  
**Institutional records (n=268)**  
**Survey (N=126)**  
**Interviews (n=18)**

# Research Question

*Who are distance graduates?*

- ❖ *Are they new to HE?*
- ❖ *Are they from socio-economic groups underrepresented in HE?*





# The literature

- Lack of evidence regarding access in Distance Education (Bray et al. 2007)
- Adults delayed participation in full-time HE relates to social class (Chesters & Watson 2014; Croxford & Raffe 2014)
- Adults and part-time study (Butcher 2015; EC 2013)

# Findings

- 34% graduates had never been in HE
- 40% (n=106) graduates had completed level 6 or 7 course
- 68% had completed this prior study part time
- 74% (n=198) new to university
- 64% survey respondents from working class background
- 89% interviewees from working class background



# Findings

- Participation in HE *protracted* rather than *delayed*.
- As a result they lose out on economic capital.
- Social class determined whether, when and how they participated in university study.
- Preference for part-time study options
- Limited advice about part-time study

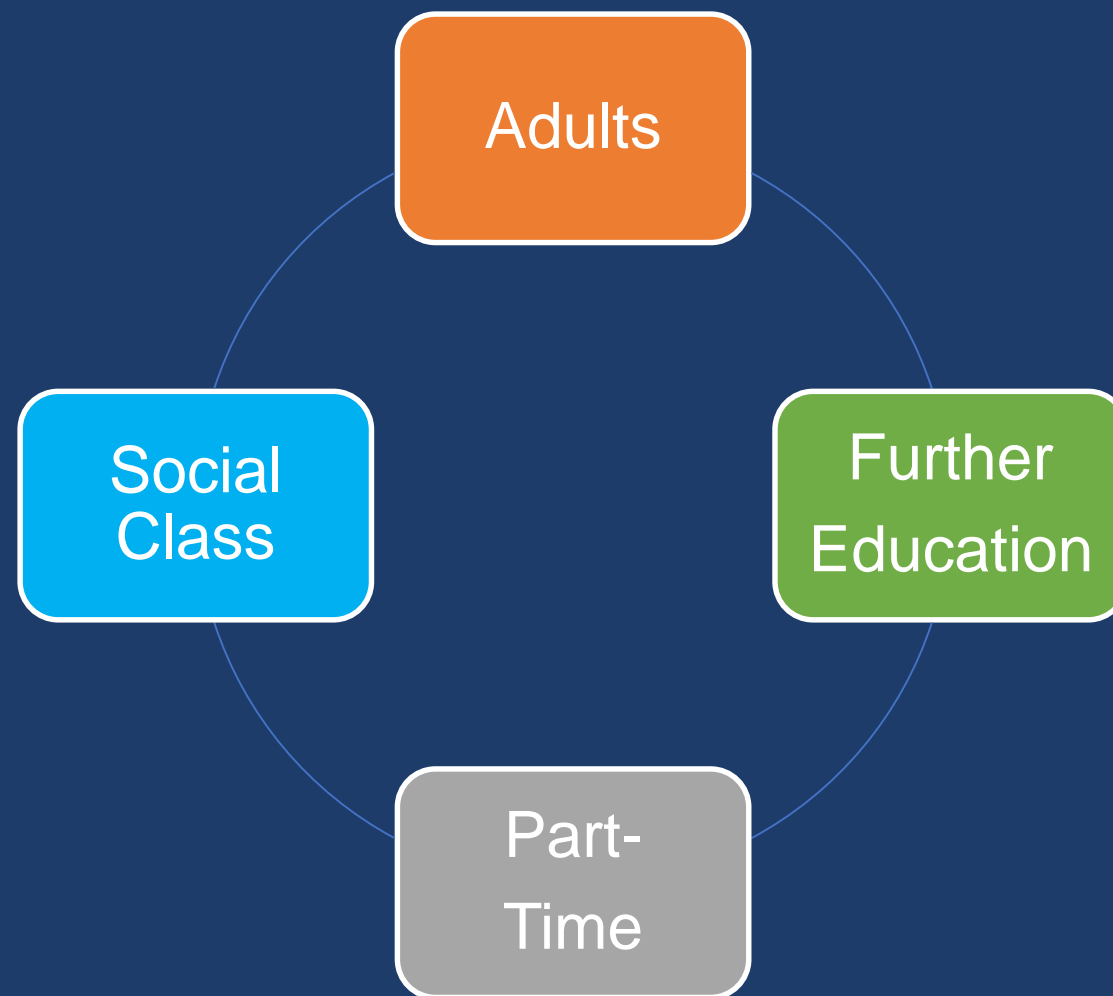


# HE Access Policy in Ireland

- First time mature students
- Under-represented socio-economic groups
- Further Education Award Holders
- Part-time/flexible learners
  
- Students with disabilities
- Irish Travellers



# Findings: Intersectionality



# Recommendations

- Fund and mandate part-time/flexible university programmes to support earlier and broader participation
- Provision of coordinated public information and guidance to school leavers on part-time HE options.
- Accessible, coordinated application system for part-time courses

Go raibh mile maith  
agaibh!



Ollscoil Chathair  
Bhaile Átha Cliath  
Dublin City University

# References

- Bourdieu, P. 1977. *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. 1979. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (R. Nice, Trans.) London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Croxford, L. and Raffe, D. 2014. Social class, ethnicity and access to higher education in the four countries of the UK: 1996-2010. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 33(1), pp. 77-95.
- Denny, K. 2010. *What did abolishing university fees in Ireland do?* University College Dublin: Geary Institute, Discussion Paper Series, School of Economics & Geary Institute. [Online] Available from: <http://www.ucd.ie/geary/static/publications/workingpapers/gearywp201026.pdf>
- Fleming, T. and Finnegan, F. 2011. *Non-traditional students in Irish Higher Education- A research report*. [Online] Available from: <http://www.ranlhe.dsw.edu.pl/>
- Furlong, A. 2010. Extended Review of Transitions from education to work: new perspectives from Europe and beyond, edited by Rachel Brooks, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2009. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 31 (4) pp. 515-518.
- Ianelli, C. 2011. Educational expansion and social mobility: the Scottish case. *Social Policy and Society*, 10 (2), pp. 251-64. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McCoy, S., Quail, A., and Smyth, E. 2014a. The effects of school social mix: unpacking the differences, *Irish Educational Studies*, 33 (3), pp. 307-330.
- Smyth, E. and McCoy, S. 2009. *Investing in Education: Combating Educational Disadvantage*, Research Series No. 6, May. Dublin: Economic and Social Research Institute
- Sutton Trust, The.2008.. *University Admissions by Individual Schools*. [Online] Available from: <http://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/02/UniversityAdmissions.pdf>