

‘Independent’ in Scotland: elite by education?

Joan Forbes and Gaby Weiner

A central sociological question has been how to understand the ways in which privilege is reproduced by and through education. A key difficulty for such work has been the limited possibilities for conducting research in institutions that successfully transmit power and privilege. This chapter seeks to examine this question through a focus on private and elite schooling in Scotland, both historically and in current times. The chapter opens with an initial discussion of what it means to be ‘elite’ in Scottish education. This is followed by a review of the literature on Scottish private and elite schooling. The role played by the Scottish capital city of Edinburgh is highlighted since fully one quarter of the city’s pupils attend private schools. Discussion then turns to the Scottish Independent Schools Project (SISP), and its research into capitals, power, space, gender and reflexivity, in order to identify the specific practices and processes around elite schooling in Scotland.

The conceptual frame

The Scottish fee-charging education sector discursively positions itself as ‘independent’, rather than as private or elite (see Highet 1969). This positioning promotes the perception that independent schools in Scotland value themselves (and are valued) primarily for their autonomy, ‘freedom’ from state management, as well as for their academic excellence. Similar to other countries (Gaztambide-Fernández 2009; van Zanten 2010) Scottish independent schools exhibit characteristics informed both by their historic foundations and by subsequent efforts to differentiate themselves from others in terms of their values and practices (Lingard et al 2012).

Scottish elite schools are both economically and typologically elite, with many having historical legacies that have had a profound impact on school cultures. Geographically, most elite schools are located in large conurbations, particularly Edinburgh. While some schools educate particular privileged sections of Scottish society, in cities like Edinburgh the range of social groups educated independently is far wider. The most distinctive feature of

the Scottish sector is that these schools, particularly in urban centres, are *academically* and *civically* elite – even if, in an ‘understatedly’ Scottish way (cf. McCrone 2005; see also Paterson 2003). In Scotland, ‘elite by education’ (Highet 1969, p. 288) continues to be promoted through a focus on capitals being institutionalised and credentialised through a selective and exclusive education system (Bourdieu 1984, 1986), that in turn produces ‘people of influence’ (Walford 1990, p. 39).

The independent sector is distinctive from the state sector in the structure and content of curricula, the public examinations pupils sit, and examination success rates. Unlike state schools, which in general enter pupils for Scottish Qualification Authority examinations, independent schools more commonly enter students for English qualifications and the International Baccalaureate. Examination pass rates are consistently higher than in state schools. In 2013, the Higher Examination A-C pass rate for the independent sector was 93%, while nationally it was 77.4% (SCIS 2013). Independent schools are also distinct in having a longer school day; scheduled activities at weekends, during school holidays, before and after the formal school day; and school-organised travel for sports and cultural events within Scotland and beyond.

Research on elite schooling in Scotland

There has to date been little research into elite education in Scotland. The main reason for this, we argue, is that its existence challenges national narratives on the purpose of education. The enduring idea of a ‘peculiarly Scottish form of educational democracy’ (Paterson 2003, p. 3) is premised on education being about ‘general academic, and therefore liberal’ learning in school institutions (ibid. p. 3). Historically, the concern in Scotland has been with collectivism, ‘bookish’ individualism, ‘respect for academic study’ (ibid. p. 8), cooperation rather than competition, and civic engagement rather than market forces or *laissez faire*-ism. Thus, the purpose of Scottish education has been to reconcile individual opportunity with social solidarity characterised by equality of citizenship within a common culture and society.

The independent sector challenges such collective notions of Scottish education by exhibiting exclusiveness in terms of offering secure and confined spaces for schooling in

sought-after, affluent urban residential areas or within extensive grounds in more rural areas, separate from the local communities. Neither do they advocate social democratic values - indeed, following the ending of local and central government grant aid and the comprehensivisation of state education in Scotland in the 1970s, the schools chose 'independence' and separation over inclusiveness and social unity (Highet 1969).

A second significant point is that previous studies of Scottish fee-charging schools have generally been included in edited books on the British private sector as a whole (e.g. Walford 1984, 2003, Griggs 1985) rather than treated as a specific category. Likewise, the move towards educational ethnography within the sociology of education, from the 1970s onwards, tended to focus on 'British' private and elite independent school institutions and settings as a whole, which usually included some content on Scotland (e.g. Walford 1984, 2003).

The exceptionality of the Scottish sector only becomes visible therefore in school histories (see e.g. Shepley 1988 on St George's School for girls, Edinburgh; and Webster 2005 on Robert Gordon's College, Aberdeen), published recollections of former pupils about their schooling, especially in Edinburgh (e.g. Roberts 2007, 2009), specific articles or chapters on the importance of the independent sector in Scotland (see Kerr 1962, Walford 1987), and descriptions of the system in various editions of the publication *Scottish Education* (see, for example, Roberts 2013).

So what studies have been undertaken on elite schools in Scotland? Sara Delamont's noted ethnographic study (1984) of an academically and socially exclusive girls' 'public' (private) school in Scotland - 'St Luke's' - examined how privileged girls endowed with cultural capital achieve academic success, albeit as 'consumers' and not 'active ... users and ... producers of knowledge' (1984, p. 84). A second study, by Walford (1990), prompted by the 1988 Education Reform Act, an English statute, explored the purchase of schooling privilege, how it drives processes of educational and social inequality and how it produces social class disconnections. However, his study did not examine differences *between* fee-charging schools in the Scottish context, or between the Scottish and English sectors, and thus failed to produce a fine-grained understanding of 'Scottish elite education' and its effects.

The most comprehensive study on Scotland's fee-paying schools before our own research was carried out by Highet (1969) some 40 years ago. At a time when the UK government was pursuing a 'comprehensive schooling' policy, Highet's goal was to explore the relevance of such a policy to provision in Scotland, given 'the lack of Scottish evidence' (p. 3) available to justify such education policy change. Using survey methodology, Highet argued that the UK government's 'comprehensive education as all-inclusivism' policy of the 1960s (p. 280) was designed to eradicate the private/state school divide in England which had been seen to produce a 'social elite', 'social divisiveness and ... deep gulfs ... between England's social classes' (p. 289). Highet maintained that such a policy had little relevance to Scotland because, geographically, comprehensive state schools were already the norm in most of the country, with the exception of Edinburgh. Furthermore, at this time there was local and central government funding for some private schools. Highet (1969) argued that the practices of selection by such Scottish fee-paying local authority- and government grant-aided schools had produced an intellectual elite or 'elite-by-education' (p. 288) and therefore concluded that it was important that Scotland should retain its academically selective schools, whether or not they were fee-paying.

Elite or-fee-paying schools in Scotland

The Scottish education system is distinct from that of other UK countries; and since the re-convening of the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh in 1998, responsibility for education has been devolved from the Scottish Office of the UK Government to the Scottish Government. For Scotland, as the 2014 referendum on independence testifies, 'nation' is an ideological and historical category which has political-symbolic implications for the present (McCrone 2005). Also, as already argued, the very presence of elite schooling in Scotland defies the predominant collective ideology underpinning Scottish education as a whole. So what then is the situation currently in Scotland and how did fee-paying schools emerge?

Fee-charging schools in Scotland currently cater for around 4.5% of the population (SCIS 2013), but, as we shall see, their influence is far wider. For example, it was found in 1986 that in Scotland '41 per cent of a wide ranging sample of "people of influence" had a private school background' (Walford 1990, p. 39) and this influence appears to have been

sustained, evident, for example, in the schools attended by current Scottish politicians, judiciary, CEOs, and Rich List members (Commission on Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission [CSMCPC] 2014). For Walford (1990) people of influence include high court judges, first division civil servants, merchant bankers and major life-insurance company chairpersons and directors, and Members of the UK Parliament. Walford notes that the figures offer 'an indication of the long-standing relationship that exists between some private schools and positions of power and influence' (ibid. p. 39). Walford apart, there has been no major research which has explored the relationship between elite schools and take-up of influential positions in Scottish society.

It should be noted that in terms of social structure, Scotland has a relatively small upper class in the form of land-owning aristocracy, who have largely been educated in English 'public schools' (Highet 1969). A few members of the Scottish upper-middle-class also choose to send their children to public schools in England. Otherwise the private sector in Scotland caters for what might be termed the middling classes. Fee-paying schools in Scotland, such as Loretto School near Edinburgh, Fettes College in Edinburgh and Glenalmond College in Perthshire were founded on the English 'public school' model and associated with the 'Anglicisation' of Scottish middle- and upper-class boys and their assimilation into the British upper and upper-middle classes; a process termed 'cultural cloning' (Mangan 1998, p. 71; Paterson 2003). Such 'Anglo-Scottish' boarding schools mainly recruit from the 'middle-middle-class', although may include students from higher social groupings, as well as from lower social groupings who are supported by bursaries and scholarships (Highet 1969). Numerically and perhaps culturally more significant are the large, mainly urban fee-charging day schools such as George Heriot's School in Edinburgh; Hutchesons' Grammar School in Glasgow; and Robert Gordon's College in Aberdeen, all of which have their origins as endowed charitable 'hospitals', though these were later part-funded by central government grant-aid (Highet 1969; Paterson 2003). In Edinburgh, such schools cater for a quarter of the school age population – with proportions considerably higher in some post-code areas. These schools, it can be said, mainly cater for the 'middle-middle-class' from the city and surrounding areas (Highet 1969).

These former hospital schools are distinctive in a number of respects. For example, they like to see themselves as part of the Scottish 'national, democratic tradition' (Paterson 2003 p. 52). In contrast to English-model 'public' schools, they 'regard[ed] themselves as serving a local middle class, augmented (however meagrely) by bursary pupils' (Paterson 2003, p. 52). The schools continue to make some provision for academically-strong pupils from lower income families in the forms of means-tested bursaries, academic scholarships, or free places (Anderson 1983).

In the academic year 2012-3, the numbers of pupils attending any kind of Scottish fee-paying school was 18, 318 (secondary), 10, 721(primary) and 1,682 (nursery) (SCIS 2013). Day-pupil numbers (excluding nursery and schools for children with additional needs) and boarding-pupil numbers were 25,815 and 3,224 respectively. Twenty 'mainstream' independent schools (i.e. not specialist provision for additional support needs) offer boarding provision. The number of day-pupils and boarding-pupils from overseas was 388 and 901 respectively. Average fees were £10, 173 p.a. (secondary day-school) and £26, 910 p.a. (secondary-boarding). For comparison, the median income in Scotland at the time was £23,000 (Scottish Government 2014). In addition, individual schools itemise 'extra' charges for stationery, textbooks, lunch, uniform, English language tuition and so forth.

Some of the Scottish middle-classes also send their children to 'good' state schools. For example, Edinburgh, Glasgow and its environs, and Aberdeen and its environs, have several high-performing state secondary schools (age 11-18) located in middle class catchment areas (Denholm 2013). Such academically successful state schools compete for students with nearby large independent day schools.

As noted previously, Edinburgh has the largest number of independent schools at both primary and secondary stages, followed some way behind by the cities of Aberdeen and Glasgow (SCIS 2013). Reasons for Edinburgh's distinctive positioning include Edinburgh's history as Scotland's capital and home of the Scottish Parliament, state church, and legal system, as well as its status as a major centre for international banking and business. Highly-paid people who desire the most prestigious form of education by which to extend advantage to their children thus drive this particular market.

The historically significant presence in Edinburgh of former 'hospital' schools is another factor. These were charitable educational institutions for poor boys founded by successful Scottish merchants from the mid-seventeenth century onwards. A pivotal legal intervention by the Merchant Company of Edinburgh changed the nature of these schools. The Company petitioned for a 'permissive' clause to be added to the 1869 Endowed Hospitals (Scotland) Bill, to permit the hospital schools to continue to organise their own endowments, rather than have their endowed funding redirected to general state education or their schools absorbed into the state-funded system. As Roberts (2013, p. 122) relates, parents were quick to exploit the situation.

... prospectuses were circulated for low cost boys' and girls' day schools. By the end of September 1870, 3,300 pupils were crammed into the hospital buildings founded by Mary Erskine and George Watson ... The city's many small private schools lost out. As one of the 300 teachers who fruitlessly petitioned Parliament put it ... "... £10 a year for a girl, and £6 for a boy, are sums that cannot be paid by working people". ... Thenceforth large day schools accounted for much of the city's private education. They occupied the middle of a hierarchy linked to the level of fees.

Thus, while in England, the Endowed Hospitals Bill sought to absorb schools into the new state-financed sector and thereby offer education free of charge, the 'hospital' schools in Scotland, which had hitherto offered free boarding and education for poor children, became fee-charging institutions. 1869 therefore was a pivotal moment in the creation of Edinburgh's 'mass-market' for middle-class private schooling, which has continued until today.

In 1969, a century later, the future of private schools across Scotland, was again at issue. In the intervening period, Scottish secondary schools had been reconfigured into four categories: wholly state-funded schools (over 3,000); wholly private schools (120), many with small pupil numbers; local authority schools (26) funded by local councils augmented by low fees; and grant-aided schools directly funded by central government (27) with higher fees scaled according to parental income and equivalent to direct-grant grammar schools in England (Highet 1969). Plans were afoot, however, to withdraw state funding from schools charging fees, thus placing the future of the two latter categories in doubt.

When grant aid finally came to an end in 1979, most schools including the former hospital schools in Edinburgh, Aberdeen, and Glasgow opted for independence rather than join the new 'comprehensive' state system. These schools, it was argued, needed to continue with selection in order to retain their high academic standards. Politics and policy across the rest of the UK moved swiftly towards comprehensive schooling, with academic selection in Scotland and elsewhere only possible thereafter in the newly expanded independent sector.

More recently, Scottish fee-charging schools have benefited from charitable status allowed through the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act (2005) which affords them a variety of tax breaks. In the period 2005 to 2013, for example, the required 'public benefit' criteria of charitable status were met primarily through claims to widen access through means-tested bursaries for 'clever' pupils whose parents are unable to meet the full fees. Historically, as was the case in hospital schools, charitable foundations have offered scholarship and bursary awards, but such funding tripled after the Act from £12.5m (2005) to £35m (2011) following the reinforced requirement for charities to show public benefit outcomes (SCIS 2013).

What then has been the attraction of private schooling? In the case of Edinburgh, it is the 'family' school, attended by previous generations of family members. Strong links exist between particular schools (and the families attending them) and certain professions, particularly (Scots) law. As one Edinburgh mother noted: 'You can say that not merely Edinburgh law but pretty well Edinburgh itself is run by Academicals [Edinburgh Academy] and Watsonians [George Watson's College]' (Highet 1969, p. 221, parenthesis added) – thus constituting a peculiarly Scottish academic *and civic* elite.

In Highet's 1969 study, the reasons given by parents for sending their children to fee-paying schools included the 'schooling process' (Highet 1969, p. 223) – that is, an academic education which incorporates tradition, community belonging, and self-discipline. For about half the parents, 'the old school tie' (that is life-long advantages accrued from the school attended) was felt to be worth paying for. Cultural and social factors aside, however, the 'universal overriding reason for sending [children to these schools] was for "the better education" parents say that fee-paying schools provide' (ibid. p. 245). Parental qualms

about selective schooling focused on the insufficient number of such schools for all who wanted them, rather than as might be expected, on lack of provision for those students who failed the schools' entrance examinations.

These large independent day schools may be judged as displaying less social 'eliteness' than other schools in the sector. However, as we have seen, the idea of 'elite' remains analytically salient to understanding both the role of the sector and differences between schools in the sector (Savage and Williams 2008). The large day schools in Edinburgh and Glasgow are traditionally 'kin', in terms of similarity of fee-level, social ranking and educational standing (Highet 1969). Forty percent of Edinburgh parents in Highet's (1969) study acknowledged social standing or 'snobbishness' (p. 240) as a reason for choosing private education. 'Sending [a child] to a fee-paying school is [seen to be] the done thing in Edinburgh' (ibid. p. 243) both to 'keep up' with the neighbours and/or not wishing one's children to 'feel out of it' (ibid. p. 232). Thus, for certain groups in these cities, private schooling in city day schools is constituted as normal behaviour.

Relatively few of the schools attract many students from outside Scotland. Unlike England and the USA, Scotland has only two or three preparatory boarding schools acting as guaranteed 'feeders' to elite senior schools at the age of fourteen. Nor does Scotland have a significant fee-charging denominational sector such as the Roman Catholic school sector in Australia. Distinctive features of the Scottish elite market today therefore are its relative stability in pupil numbers and institutions, and its affordability for the middling social classes. The financial crisis of 2007-08 and ensuing economic recession hence caused fewer closures of private schools in Scotland than elsewhere in the UK.

In response to the 'charity test' and the need to demonstrate public benefit and confidence in the schools - and no doubt also viewed by the schools as attempts to participate in civic society - the sector has sought to be seen to work with influential partners, such as Scottish Government departments, mainstream education groups and public bodies. Sector teachers have been active, for example, in national curriculum developments and as exam assessors for the Scottish Qualifications Authority. Sector representatives have also organised national conferences open to all teachers.

The Scottish Independent Schools Project

Against this background, the Scottish Independent Schools Project (SISP) set itself the task of exploring the processes of independent schooling in Scotland and, in particular, their use of social and other forms of capital and how the acquisition and extension of such capitals shape the potential futures of students. As part of the Applied Educational Research Scheme (AERS)¹, the aim was to explore the production of advantage as a means of providing insights into the reproduction of disadvantage - the primary focus of other AERS case studies.

The criteria for independent or elite schooling adopted in the study included: registration with the Scottish Government Schools Directorate; being subject to inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education; being independent of local education authority management; providing full-time education for pupils of school age; entering students for senior secondary public examinations; charging tuition fees and/or providing scholarships and bursaries; being affiliated to professional associations such as the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference (HMC) and the Girls' School Association (GSA); and being listed as members of the Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS).

The project initially focused on the identification and classification of the full range of independent schools (70+) in Scotland, as well as how each school presented itself through its website, prospectuses and related literature. This work found that each school promoted a distinctive set of characteristics linked to institutionally-based values and curriculum emphasis, and a specific array of norms and values which could be linked to its particular market positioning (Forbes and Weiner 2008).

In the second phase of work, we undertook in-depth case-studies of three schools: an *urban girls' school*, historically independent of government aid and in the 'Anglo-Scottish' tradition category, all age (preschool to age 18), mainly day students, with a roll of between 500 and 1000 pupils; an *urban boys' school*, also in the historically independent and Anglo-Scottish tradition category, with primary and secondary stages, and a roll of between 400

¹ This project was funded by the Scottish Funding Council with some additional funding provided by the University of Edinburgh, Bell Chair, via the Godfrey Thomson fund.

and 500 students, mainly boarding; and an *all-age (5–18) coeducational school*, in the charitable foundation and former central government grant-aided category, located in a small town, with a pupil roll of 1000–1500, mainly day pupils with around 100 boarders.

The concept of *capital* informed the study, specifically the social capital theorisations offered by Bourdieu (1986). Central to social capital theory is the idea that social relations in the form of social networks, shared norms and relations of trust and confidence constitute valuable assets for individuals, groups and society, nationally and globally. It was hypothesised that independent schools were likely to be particularly successful in utilising such social networks as a means of benefitting their students. The concept of social capital was extended to include Bourdieu's notion of multiple capitals (economic, cultural, and symbolic) whereby the accumulation of resources in these areas is also seen as advantageous. Theoretical insights derived from Foucault (see e.g. Gordon 1980) were also utilised as a means of understanding the flow of power and knowledge in schools and how they are accumulated, distributed and encountered.

The SISP project focused primarily on exploring how elite schools promote themselves, and also their students' acquisition and activation of social and other capitals through their practices. The research team included people with a number of areas of expertise including research on gender and other kinds of educational in/exclusion. Thus, while the original project design did not specify gender relations as a key focus, gender emerged as an important element of the research.

Theoretical contributions provided by the SISP research studies

A number of findings and insights emerged from the research. Website and documentary analysis revealed that schools differentially invoked a range of discourses and practices relating to symbolic and reputational 'branding' in order to appeal to 'their' particular socio-economic fraction of Scottish society. For example, the 'Anglo-Scottish' girls' school sought to attract Scottish and overseas parents seeking a liberal academic and girl-focused education in which learning assuredness and agency were central, via school community and social relationships. The 'Anglo-Scottish' boys' school targeted affluent Scottish families seeking an English-model public school education alongside promoting the development of

softer forms of masculinity, considered appropriate for successful participation in global business. The large co-educational school's reputation for public examination success and its full programme of sport, musical and cultural experiences aimed to appeal to parents seeking an 'academic-plus education' as a point of entry into high status professions (Forbes and Weiner 2008, Horne et al. 2011, Lingard et al. 2012).

Questions were posed about power relations in the case-study schools, for example: whose interests and experiences were seen as central; which – and whose - aspirations and preferences took precedence; whose realities and experiences were legitimated; who decided what constituted appropriate knowledge and practices; what forms of knowledge were understood as needed to change current ways; and who was expected and allowed to act (Forbes and Weiner 2008, and see also Bishop and Glynn 1999). In examining these questions we found that the schools had considerable stocks of social capital which were, however, 'understated', indeed omitted from promotional materials, in keeping with the deep rooted and instinctive Scottish civic value of 'under-statement' (cf. McCrone 2005).

For example, it was striking that the schools' websites did not capitalise on the reputations of famous and influential former pupils, parents, or members of their boards of governors, an omission which might be viewed as a missed marketing opportunity. However, for the schools and 'their' potential clientele, such low-key public representation of their social connectedness symbolises the traits of modesty and self-deprecation that are shared and so highly valued in Scotland. Such understated messages, alongside representations of, for example, abundant academic, cultural, and international resources, was used to 'naturally' connect the schools with their perceived market (Forbes and Lingard 2013, Forbes and Weiner 2008).

It was also found that the schools encouraged distinct, strongly bonded social-spatial relationships and territorial cultures which set them apart from the surrounding community and geographical area (Forbes and Weiner 2012, Forbes and Lingard 2013). For example, schools' distinctive spatio-temporalities, including the rhythms of extended and intensive formal and informal learning schedules, institutionally 'locked-in' their pupils to the schools' multiple capitals regimes. Furthermore, the schools' distinctive institutional architectures, heritages and traditions fostered particular practices that were exclusive, intensively

demanding of staff and students, and gendered in nature (Horne et al. 2011, Forbes and Weiner 2012).

Subsequent analysis revealed discriminatory practices operating at different levels (governance, institutional, individual). For example, markedly different gender-power regimes governed each case-study school, which interestingly also had an impact on the research process, including access, research relationships, and feedback to schools (Forbes and Weiner 2013, 2014a). Unsurprisingly perhaps, SISP showed that the ways in which gender and other structural categories such as social class and economic wealth are drawn on and interpreted within the schools is shaped by schools' historic cultural and social identifications and by the economic and social fraction from which current school students are drawn and identify. Methodologically, such insights demand that theoretically informed studies should engage with these 'intersectionalities', that is, the intricate ways in which such social categories intersect and effect the interlocking identities of individuals (Crenshaw 1991; Forbes and Weiner 2014b).

Finally, the research highlighted the need for reflexivity as a means of examining the norms and expectations of researchers and researched, and for vigilance in regard to networks of power in elite spaces and in particular how the 'powerful researched' seek to control access, process, and outcomes (Gaztambide-Fernández 2009, Forbes and Weiner 2014a). Reflexivity (see e.g. Bourdieu 2007) made it possible to acknowledge researchers' self-positionings and standpoints on power and knowledge and to illuminate and examine, rather than silence, issues of dis/continuities between individuals and institutions which cut across gender, social class, ethnicity and other intersectionalities (Crenshaw 1991, Forbes and Lingard 2013). A substantive finding was the importance of understanding the impact on the research of researchers' and participants' personal biographies (e.g. Scottish or Commonwealth country national) and characteristics such as ethnicity, age, economic status, social status (e.g. 'professorial' status and 'research institution' affiliation categories), all of which intersect in intricate ways (Forbes and Weiner 2014a, 2014b).

Researcher reflections and pointers for the future

This chapter has set out to add to the hitherto limited research on private and elite education in Scotland. It has revealed the continued influence of the fee-paying sector in Scotland – and particularly in Edinburgh – but also how this urban, predominantly local day-school provision serves a broader socio-economic group compared to other elite groups who send their children to English-style ‘public’ boarding schools in Scotland or elsewhere. A review of earlier research opened the way for us to identify the social and economic segments of Scottish society that have used and continue to use independent schooling and to seek to understand the dimensions of capitals and power imbricated in the spaces occupied by the schools.

We found that the schools in our study position themselves as competitive businesses, developing their particular values and practices through close attention to the market (Forbes and Weiner 2008, Lingard, Forbes, Weiner and Horne 2012). Hence, McCrone’s (2005) work on the understated nature of national Scottish cultural capital and existence of specific ‘national’ characteristics, e.g. modesty and self-deprecation, enabled us to explore school relationships and their particular clientele. Most fascinating about the Scottish fee-charging sector is that its *raison d’être* in the form of ‘elite-by-education’, remains very much at odds with central Scottish narratives of democracy and collectivism; yet the sector remains widely accepted as important for the formation of future generations of influential agents within the nation.

To understand more fully Scottish elites, research is needed on how such elite schools continue to play an important role in the production of ‘persons of influence’ or ‘state nobility’ (Bourdieu 1996); and why that role remains broadly uncontested. Thus further studies might focus, for example, on the perceptions and experiences of ‘influential’ former students, thus revealing the effects of schools’ different configurations of capital resources and their strategic spatio-temporal deployments. Currently naturalised, understated and inadequately understood, such educational institutions require closer examination in terms of the life-long advantaging effects they have and their social (re)production practices .

Relatedly, such schools have come to constitute an accepted and symbolic part of Scottish cultural heritage, cityscapes and landscapes – with their familiar ‘iconic’ historic

architecture on open view within a town or cityscape coincident to their privacy and exclusivity as educational spaces. Therefore, another potential research focus might be on schools' particular configurations of capitals and how these are expressed through their physical capital resources, including their architecture and social space (Bourdieu 1984). An additional focus could also be on the effects their particular stocks of physical capital have on the essential daily rhythms of school practices, as well as the schools' position within a wider national socio-cultural imaginery.

In summary then, we need to know more about how interlinking social categories reproduce an unequal 'Elitist Scotland' (to paraphrase the title of the recent examination of schooling background and in/equality of opportunity in the 'Elitist Britain?' report, CSMCPC 2014) and the specific role of independent schooling in this process of (re)production. Accordingly, as a first step, future research, including the UK government-sponsored annual surveys on 'Elitist Britain?' (CSMCPC 2014), will be re-designed to disaggregate Scottish data, thereby producing analyses that are able to inform Scottish educational and policy decisions. Indeed, we suggest that a separate annual survey on school background and social mobility in Scotland should be undertaken by a wholly Scottish Commission.

Finally, our review of studies to date serves to highlight the need for further investigation on Elitist Scotland and how schooling drives such processes, whether in English-model independent schools in Scotland or in 'public' schools in England. Such a focus will also facilitate an examination of the processes by which the majority in Scotland is structurally disadvantaged, in part because of the schooling trajectories open to its members. A key question that remains is how, in this small avowedly equal and democratic country, a small social segment of the population is allowed to maintain, through processes of schooling, the capitals and resources which enable it to continue to dominate civic society.

Note

1. This project was funded by the Scottish Funding Council with some additional funding provided by the University of Edinburgh Bell Chair, Godfrey Thomson fund.

References

- Anderson, R.D. (1983) *Education and Opportunity in Victorian Scotland*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Bishop, R. & Glynn, T. (1999) *Culture counts: changing power relations in education*. Palmerston North, NZ: Dunmore.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction*. London: Routledge.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986) The forms of capital. In *The handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education*. J. Richardson (Ed.) pp241-258. Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Bourdieu, P. (1996) *The State Nobility. Elite Schools in the Field of Power*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bourdieu, P. (2007) *Sketch for a self-analysis*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Commission on Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (2014) *Elitist Britain?* Retrieved 12 September 2014 from:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/347915/Elitist_Britain_-_Final.pdf
- Crenshaw, K. (1991) Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics and violence against women of colour. *Stanford Law Review*, 43.6, 1241-1299.
- Delamont, S. (1984) Debs, dollies, swots and weeds: Classroom styles at St Luke's. In *British Public Schools Policy and Practice*. G. Walford (Ed.) pp65-86. London: Falmer.
- Denholm, A. (2013) *Revealed: Scotland's best 50 schools for Higher exam passes*. HeraldScotland newspaper. Retrieved 2 August 2014 from:
<http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/home-news/revealed-scotland-s-best-50-schools-for-higher-exam-passes.1387466220>
- Forbes, J. & Lingard, B. (2013) Elite school capitals and girls' schooling: understanding the (re)production of privilege through a habitus of assuredness. In *Privilege, agency and affect. Understanding the production and effects of action*. Maxwell, C. & Aggleton, P. (Eds.) pp50-68. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Forbes, J. & Weiner, G. (2014a) Gender power in elite schools: methodological insights from researcher reflexive accounts. *Research Papers in Education*, 29.2, 172-192.

Forbes, J. & Weiner, G. (2014b) *Gender sensitive research in schools: insights and interventions on gender, social class, economic wealth, and other intersections*. Paper given at the Scottish Universities Insight Institute Seminar Series 2013-14: Children's Rights, Social Justice and Social Identities in Scotland: Intersections in Research Policy and Practice. Seminar Three: Intersecting childhood identities, inequalities and social justice: Intersectionality, methods and research. The Scottish Universities Insight Institute, Glasgow, 23 June 2014.

Forbes, J. & Weiner, G. (2013) Gendering/ed research spaces: insights from a study of independent schooling. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 26.4, 455-469.

Forbes, J. & Weiner, G. (2012) Spatial paradox: educational and social in/exclusion at St Giles. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 20.2, 273-293.

Forbes, J. & Weiner, G. (2008) Understated powerhouses: Scottish independent schools, their characteristics and their capitals. *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education*, 29.4, 509-525.

Gaztambide-Fernández, R. (2009) What is an elite boarding school? *Review of Educational Research*, 79.3, 1090-1128.

Gordon, C. (Ed.) (1980) *Michel Foucault. Power/knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. Brighton: Harvester.

Griggs, C. (1985) *Private Education in Britain*. London: Falmer.

Highet, J. (1969) *A school of one's choice. A study of the fee-paying schools of Scotland*. London: Blackie.

Horne, J., Lingard, B., Weiner, G. & Forbes, J. (2011) Capitalizing on sport: Sport, physical education and multiple capitals in Scottish independent schools. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 32.6, 861-879.

Kerr, A.J.C. (1962) *Schools of Scotland*. Glasgow: MacLellan.

Lingard, B., Forbes, J., Weiner, G. & Horne, J. (2012) Multiple capitals and Scottish independent schools: the (re)production of advantage. In J. Allan & R. Catts (Eds.) *Social*

capital, children & young people. Implications for practice, policy and research. Pp 181-198.

Bristol: The Policy Press.

Mangan, J.A. (1998) *Braveheart Betrayed: British by Calculation and Choice – The Scottish Middle Class in the Age of Empire.* In M. Allison, J. Horne and L. Jackson (Eds.) *Scottish Centre Research Papers in Sport, Leisure and Society, Volume 3.* Pp 70-84. Edinburgh: Moray House.

McCrone, D. (2005) Cultural capital in an understated nation: The case of Scotland. *British Journal of Sociology*, 56.1, 65-82.

Paterson, L. (2003) *Scottish Education in the Twentieth Century.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Roberts, A. (2013) *The independent sector.* In *Scottish Education. Fourth Edition: Referendum.* Bryce, T.G.K., Humes, W.M., Gillies, D. & Kennedy, A. (Eds.) pp120-128. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Roberts, A. (2007) *Crème de la crème. Girls' schools of Edinburgh.* London: Steve Savage.

Roberts, A. (2009) *Ties that bind. Boys' schools of Edinburgh.* London: Steve Savage.

Savage, M. & Williams, K. (2008) Elites: Remembered in Capitalism and Forgotten in Social Sciences. *Sociological Review Monograph*, 56, no. s1: 1-24.

Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS) (2013) *Facts and Statistics.* Retrieved 12 September 2014 from: <http://www.scis.org.uk/assets/Uploads/2013-SCIS-Pupil-Numbers-Press-Release4.pdf>

Scottish Government (2014) *Poverty and income inequality in Scotland 2012/13.* Retrieved 27 October 2014 from: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/topics/statistics/browse/social-welfare/incomepoverty/publications>

Shepley, N. (1988) *Women of independent mind. St George's School, Edinburgh and the Campaign for Women's Education 1888-1988.* Edinburgh: St George's School.

van Zanten, A. (2010) The Sociology of Elite Education. In *The Routledge International Handbook of the Sociology of Education.* M. Apple, S. Ball & L.A. Gandin (Eds.). Pp329-339. London: Routledge.

Walford, G. (1984) *British Public Schools: Policy and Practice.* London: Falmer.

Walford, G. (1987) How important is the independent sector in Scotland? *Scottish Educational Review*, 19:3, 108-121.

Walford, G. (1990) *Privatization and Privilege in Education*. London: Routledge.

Walford, G. (2003) *British Private Schools: Research on Policy and Practice*. London: Woburn.

Webster, J. (2005) *The Auld Hoose. The story of Robert Gordon's College*. Edinburgh: Black & White.