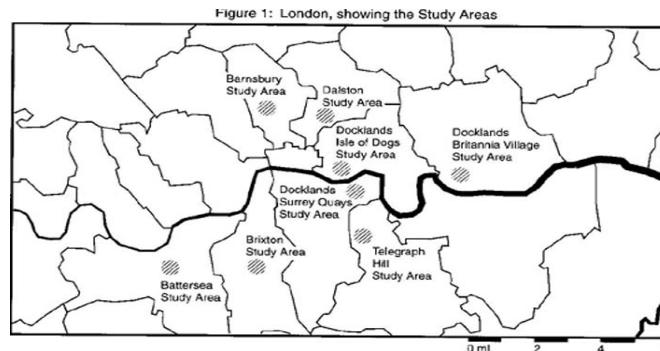


to with their social composition; considerable energy and time was devoted to devising strategies to compensate for these shortfalls which we attempted - with some success - to understand by reference to the Stephen Ball's 'circuits of schooling' approach

Map of Six Areas



With the exception of Battersea, none had any secondary schools acceptable to our middle-class respondents. What they shared was a marked reluctance to send their children to secondary schools within the area: despite their differences, in both Brixton and Barnsbury not a single respondent had a child at secondary school within the borough. If the preferred response in Telegraph Hill was 'voice' (that in Brixton was 'exit' and in Barnsbury the cheque book); nowhere however was 'loyalty' (in other words, making the system work) given a chance. Generally, we found parents 'adopting' a particular primary school which had a 'critical mass' of middle-class children – our prime example of this was drawn from our work in Telegraph Hill in south east London where the local school (Edmund Waller) had become the school of choice for the local middle class and the *de facto* social centre of the local middle-class community. It was not that it was an outstanding school in terms of results but its social composition was middle class – that was the key concern. The problem arose when the time came to make the transfer to secondary schooling.

Edmund Waller



Haberdashers' Aske



For years, parents in Telegraph Hill had sent their children to Haberdashers Aske School. However, when this became a City Technology College following the 1988 Education Act, its selection criteria changed and it had to recruit from a wider sub regional area and 'banded' (EXPLAIN) its applicants thus frustrating many of the best- laid local middle-class strategies. Those unwilling or unable to access the area's high-achieving private schools (Dulwich College, Alleyns and Sydenham GPDST) were forced to adopt a wider-ranging strategy of seeking out acceptable secondary schools that involved them and their children travelling widely across south east and central London.

Ironically, the local middle class got their 'local school' back when, in 2005, Haberdashers Aske Hatcham College became an 'all through' City Academy, taking children from 3 to 18. It is now one of the most over-subscribed schools in the country with an applicant to place ratio of more than 12:1 (to give some measure of this – the highly popular Seven Kings school in Redbridge that I discuss later had a ratio of ‘only’ 7:1). It uses a distance from school admissions criterion which privileges those in the Telegraph Hill.

Brixton contrasted dramatically. Much of Brixton's appeal to the in-coming middle class, lay in its 'gritty' urbanity and multi-ethnicity which often evoked the descriptor 'frisson' amongst respondents. There was no single primary school that the middle class were able to congregate around: the most favoured (Sudbourne) had a very tightly-constrained catchment area – so much so that a number of parents who had failed to get their child in to Sudbourne agreed to send them to ‘Fenstanton’ (not its real name) - hoping to inculcate the school with a middle-class ethos such as we noted at Edmund Waller. They failed however to achieve critical mass.

Sudbourne



‘Fenstanton’ Quote

It’s difficult to know what to do. Sudbourne is our nearest school, but I couldn’t get my daughter in there. A few of us in this street had the same problem, so we decided together to send our kids to Fenstanton, (name altered) try to bring it up that way . . . it hasn’t really worked, that group of kids have just sort of become an isolated clique in the school in general. It’s not ideal . . . (White British, female, Brixton)

Brixton respondents had little of the cultural and social capital of Telegraph Hill and were unable to access or were unaware of the private circuit of schooling available in the neighbouring borough of Southwark to the Telegraph Hillers and yet were totally appalled by the local provision – the OFSTED summary of one school played to their worst fears

Lillian Bayliss Quote

Nearly two-thirds of pupils are from minority ethnic groups Fifteen per cent of pupils are of white UK heritage. Nearly half of the pupils have English as an additional language and 10 per cent are at an early stage of learning English. . . . There are 28 refugees, most of whom have come from Somalia. Twenty-five per cent of pupils are on the special educational needs register and nearly four per cent have statements Twelve per cent of pupils are on the child protection register and a significant proportion are or have been in the care of the local authority. The mobility of pupils is an issue . . . for example, in Year 10, only 43 out of 84 pupils started in Year 7. A high proportion of the pupils who join the school after Year 7 have been excluded from schools elsewhere. (Office for Standards in Education 2001: 8)

Oliver Letwin, currently a senior Government minister and Brixton resident once famously claimed he would prefer to beg on the street than send his daughter to this secondary school. Those who stayed educated their children in Westminster or Wandsworth and it is unsurprising that there was a strongly-articulated 'exit' strategy.

Leaving London

Secondary education is a real problem here. The local school (Stockwell Park) has a very bad reputation. The primaries are OK, but it’s very hard to find secondaries. This is part of the reason why we have decided to move, which we are doing in six months or so My husband has been offered a job in [elsewhere in the UK], which is a relief in a way, because

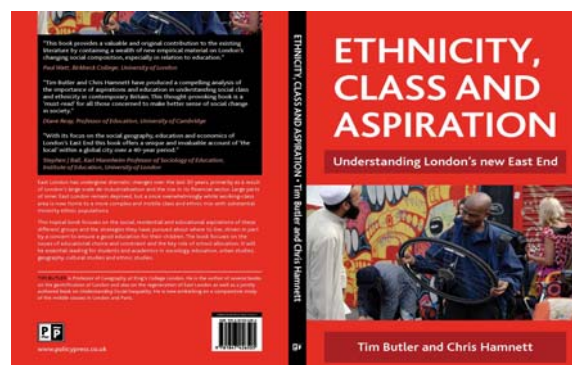
that gives us the motivation to move *and* solve the school problem. If not for that, we would have had to go through the struggle of conscience over education that many of our friends have. The new job has got us out of trouble, really. (White British, female, Brixton)

In Brixton, the coming of children meant that a prime residential location had become an educational nightmare.

Thus in the space of ten years between these two studies, a dislocation had occurred between middle-class residential preferences and their local educational provision; attitudes had been transformed from those of conscience, confidence, altruism and 'getting by' (optimising) to those of anxiety, strategising and 'getting ahead'. There was a crisis of middle-class confidence and conscience; it was this that drove the last and most recent research project in which issues of education were foregrounded.

Aspiration and the pursuit of choice

Ethnicity Class and Aspiration

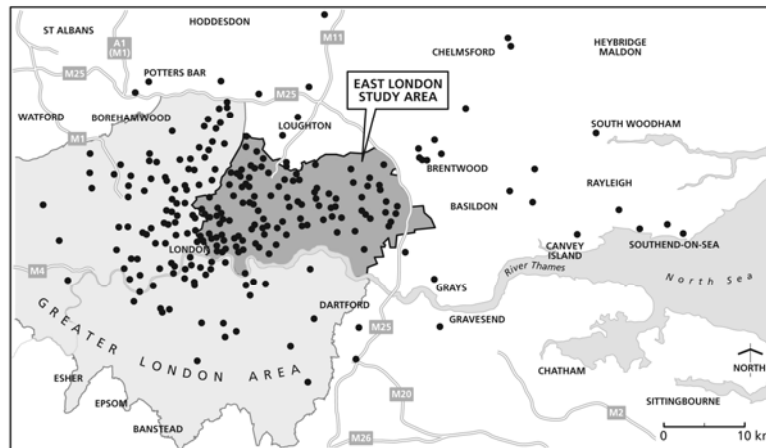


ELSA

Fig 1.1 The study area showing London and the surrounding region.



Figure 6.1 Location of schools attended by respondents' children



This third and most recent project focused explicitly on the issue of education: Chris Hamnett – my co-investigator - and I were interested in why there was so little attention being paid in the gentrification literature to non white middle-class groups and to the role played by education. East London was thus a natural focus in the sense that it had apparently been transformed from a working class area but not to a gentrified white middle-class one. Whilst East London might be London's last 'gentrification frontier' it might also be one that the white middle classes were avoiding precisely because of a 'toxic mix' (as they might perceive it) of educational failure, working-class heritage and recent minority ethnic settlement. None of these in themselves were barriers to gentrification – Hackney, Battersea and Islington, for example, were at the heart of old working-class London and the appeal of Brixton lay precisely its multiculturalism. However these factors in combination with the growing emphasis on educational attainment and fear of an educational underclass might, we reasoned, 'trump' the housing market advantages.

The Study Areas

Fig 1.2 Map of East London Study Area (ELSA) study area showing individual research areas with relation to megaprojects.



Education plays a determining role in these very different research areas across East London but in rather different ways depending on the mix of social class background, ethnic group membership and the pre-existing educational infrastructure. Unless you are able to trade financial resources (or in some case faith assets) geography in every case exerts a powerful hand over choice. This is in fact what happened for at least some of our respondents in our inner most area of Victoria Park.

Victoria Park



Only those living in spitting distance of Lauriston – Hackney’s best performing primary school and the only one acceptable to its local middle class could get their children in. Many bought, ironically, flats in the old school when a new school was built opposite it – thus guaranteeing them a place. At secondary level, most simply went private assuming they had the assets (and many did as that was the criteria by which they could afford to live in the area)

The Old Lauriston School