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978-1-107-01805-1 - Social Class and Educational Inequality: The Impact of Parents and Schools

Iram Siraj and Aziza Mayo

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Social Class and Educational Inequality

Social class is often seen as an intractable barrier to success, yet a number of children from disadvantaged backgrounds still manage to show resilience and succeed against the odds. This book presents the findings from fifty Child and Family Case Studies (CFCS) conducted with 13–16 year olds. The authors look specifically at the roles that people and experiences – at home, in schools and in the wider community – have played in the learning life-courses of these children; how these factors have affected their achievement; and explanations and meanings given by respondents to the unique characteristics, experiences and events in their lives. Featuring the voices of real parents and children, and backed up by a decade of quantitative data, this is a compelling record that will help readers to understand the complex nature of social disadvantage and the interplay between risk and protective factors in homes and schools that can make for a transformational educational experience.

IRAM SIRAJ is Professor of Education in the Department of Early Years and Primary Education in the Institute of Education, University of London. She is also Visiting Professor at the Universities of Melbourne and Waikato, with some part-time secondment to the University of Wollongong, Australia.

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‘This book is a stupendous achievement and deserves to be very widely read. The authors’ large-scale longitudinal research into why some children succeed “against the odds” and others do worse than expected given their relatively privileged start in life is already widely known. This book puts “flesh” onto the bones of the data, providing case studies of fifty children (those who succeed and those who don’t from both working-class and middle-class backgrounds) that exemplify their findings in a truly marvellous way. Equally impressive, Siraj and Mayo illustrate the power and importance of a solid theoretical foundation. They draw on scholars such as Urie Bronfenbrenner to show that the everyday activities and interactions that occur between children and their parents, their teachers, and people in the wider community have profound effects on academic performance from early childhood through adolescence. The authors also do a wonderful job revealing the way that these interactions also influence, and are influenced by, personal characteristics of the children themselves and of the various people with whom the children interact. The book’s combination of intellectual rigour and ease of reading makes it a resource that will serve equally for undergraduates interested in understanding development and scholars working in the area of risk, resilience, parenting practices, and school achievement.’

Professor Jonathan Tudge

*Human Development and Family Studies,
the University of North Carolina at Greensboro*

‘The child and family case studies presented in this important book add considerable value to the large-scale longitudinal study from which they are drawn. In studying children who succeeded against the odds or did not fulfil expectations, the authors lay bare the human stories that, in particular cases, confirm or interrupt the prevailing link between social background and educational achievement. By identifying what – in the home, the school and the community – can make a difference one way or the other, the message is ultimately an optimistic, though realistic, one.’

Professor Geoff Whitty

*Director Emeritus, Institute of Education,
University of London and Research Professor in Education,
Bath Spa University*

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University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107018051

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First published 2014

Printed in the United Kingdom by Clays, St Ives plc

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Siraj, Iram.

Social class and educational inequality : the impact of parents and schools / authors, Iram Siraj, Aziza Mayo.
pages cm

ISBN 978-1-107-01805-1 (Hardback)

1. Education–Social aspects. 2. Social classes. 3. Educational equalization. 4. Children with social disabilities–Education–Case studies.

5. Youth with social disabilities–Education–Case studies.

6. Education–Parent participation. I. Mayo, Aziza. II. Title.

LC191.S525 2014

306.43–dc23 2013049911

ISBN 978-1-107-01805-1 Hardback

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Acknowledgements

The Effective Pre-School, Primary and Secondary Education (EPPSE) project is a major longitudinal study funded by the UK Department for Education (1997–2014); we are grateful for the funding of this and for the funding of the sub-study Child and Family Case Studies (CFCS) upon which this book is based. The contents of this book are the sole responsibility of the authors and should not be taken to represent the views of the Department or of the other EPPSE investigators.

The research would not be possible without the support and co-operation of the six local authorities (LAs) and the many pre-school centres, primary schools, children and parents participating in the research. We would like to give special thanks to the children, parents and teachers who met with us to discuss their experiences and thoughts on school and learning. Their welcoming enthusiasm to meet with us face to face and their ongoing loyalty to EPPSE were heartwarming and extremely valuable. We are particularly grateful for the support and guidance we have had from John Blatchford in the early stages of this sub-study and for the training and expertise he provided in the NVivo software, and thanks to Edward Melhuish who helped us with the attainment models to extract our sample. We would also like to thank Kit Endean and Rachel Whitehead for their diligent transcribing and Wesley Welcomme for his contribution in preparing this book.

The biggest thanks go to our colleagues the Principal Investigators (PIs) of the EPPSE project. Iram Siraj, one of the authors of this book, is a PI, and the other four are Brenda Taggart and Professors Edward Melhuish, Pam Sammons and Kathy Sylva. The study rests on their collaboration and fifteen years of sustained data collection and intellectual rigour in the interpretation of results. We draw heavily on all these data to make sense of our fifty sub-study, in-depth Case Studies. We would like to thank all the researchers on the EPPSE project over the years and our fifty families in particular.

Abbreviations

BAS II	British Ability Scales, Second Edition (Elliot et al., 1996)
CFCS	Child and Family Case Studies (also referred to as ‘Case Studies’)
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families (now Department for Education)
ECERS-E	Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales – Extension (Sylva et al., 2003, 2006)
ECERS-R	Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales – Revised (Harms et al., 1998)
EPPE	Effective Provision of Pre-School Education project
EPPE 3–11	Effective Pre-School and Primary Education project (1997–2008)
EPPSE 3–14; 3–16	Effective Pre-School, Primary and Secondary Education project (1997–2014)
EPPSEM	Effective Primary Pedagogical Strategies in English and Maths study
EYTSN	Early Years Transition and Special Educational Needs project
FSM	free school meals
HLE	home learning environment
LA	local authority
PI	Principal Investigator (EPPSE project)
sd	standard deviation
SEN	special educational needs
SES	socio-economic status