

Private Schooling in 21st Century Britain.

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Keynote Presentation, 2018 LLAKES Conference “Young Adults, Inequality and the Generational Divide: Learning and Life Chances in an Era of Uncertainty”, 15/11/2018

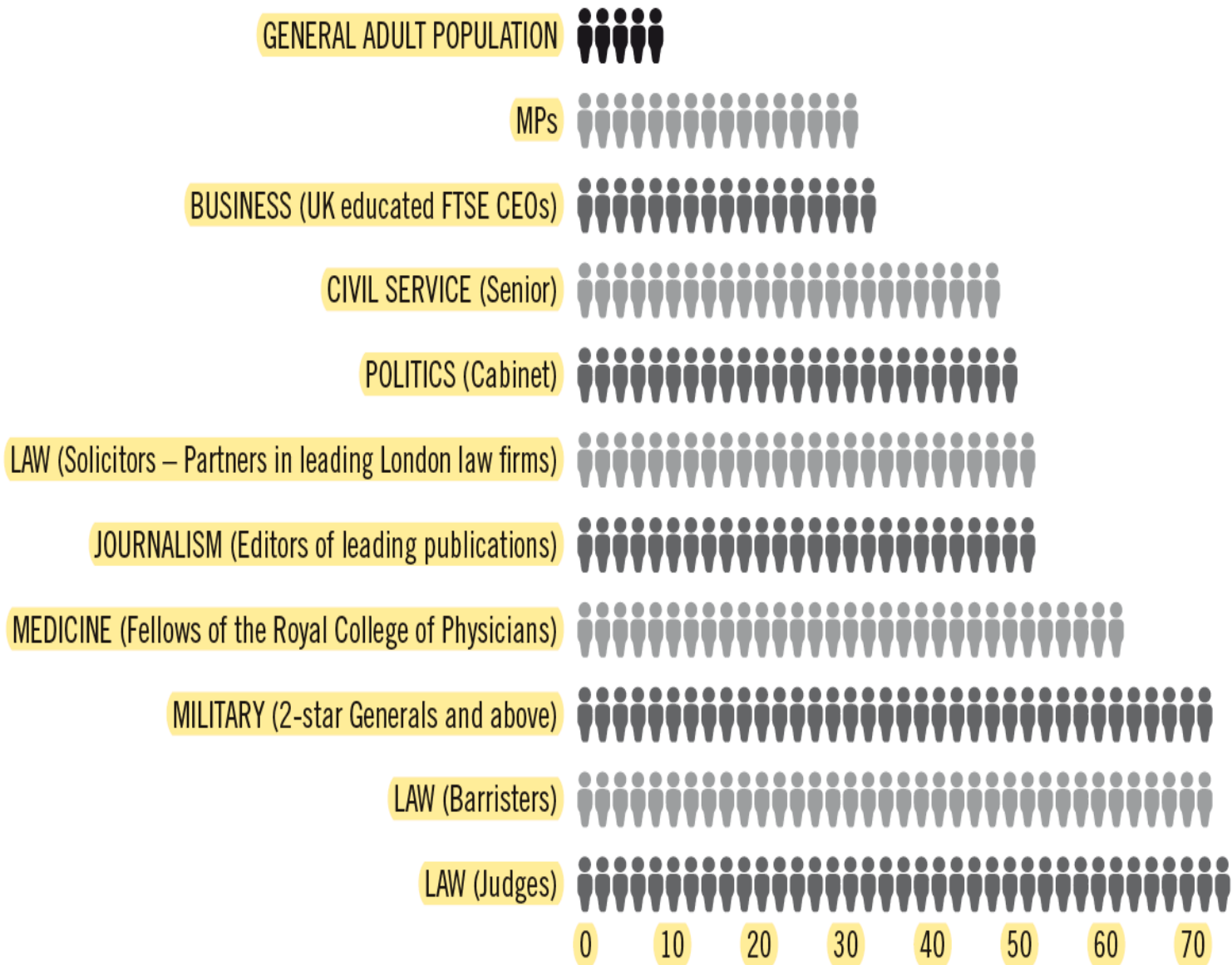


Are private schools worth worrying about?

- Only 1 in 16 pupils overall
- Yet:
 - 1 in every 7 teachers
 - ~ £1 in every £6 of expenditure
 - by sixth form, 1 in every 6 pupils
 - at Oxford & Cambridge, 4 in every 10 undergraduates







Source: Kirby, P. (2016), *Leading People 2016*, the Sutton Trust, London.

Contestable claims

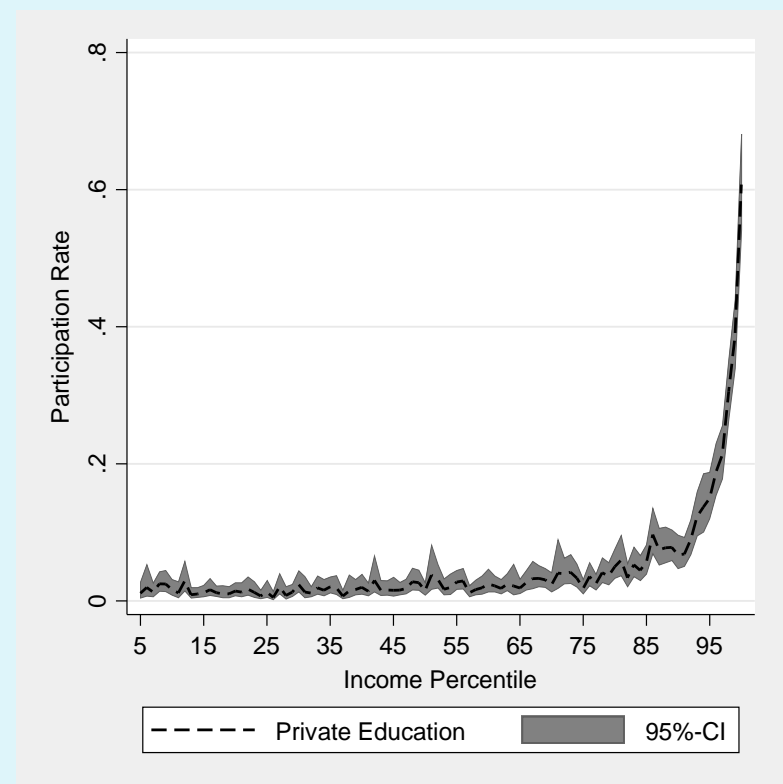
- private schools are not really exclusive, and are becoming less so
- they are not worth the money
- their success stems from their independence and better management

Modern transformations

- expanded resources;
- modernisation of management
 - incl. appraisal and staff professional development
- regulation and other external pressures: ISI & Ofsted in England (1999); league tables (1991)
- rise and fall of government support

However, even in the top 5% of the income distribution, only a minority attend private school.

Participation in private school is concentrated at the very top of the income distribution.



Participation in private school education across family income percentiles

There is no evidence that private school access has become more open in the course of recent decades...

	Attended a private school	
	2003-2005	2013-2015
NS-SEC		
Managerial & professional	0.77	0.78
Intermediate occupations	0.05	0.06
Small Employers/ Own-account workers	0.07	0.09
Routine and manual occupations	0.06	0.04
Other	0.05	0.03

...real-terms fees increases seem to have outweighed any impact from bursaries, scholarships etc.

-- though other factors also matter

- values
- distance to a 'good' state school
- family wealth, e.g. home ownership
- bursaries? Yes, but...

Educational outcomes

- Primary
- Lower secondary (up to GCSEs)
- Upper secondary (sixth form)
- University access
- University performance



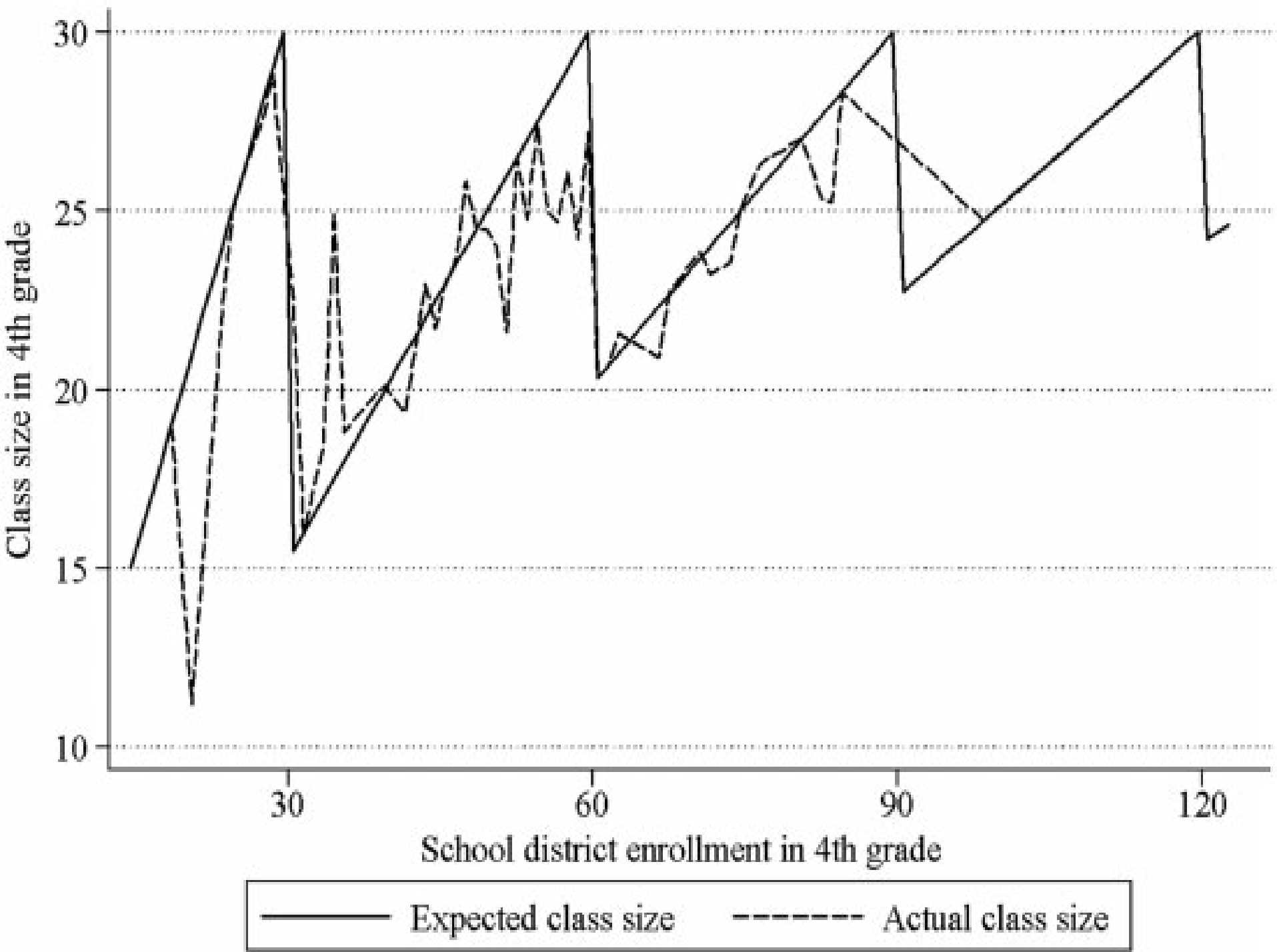
How do they do it?

- Resources gap
- Peer effects
- Efficiency from being private *per se*?

How can we be sure that the resource gap makes a difference?

Key: external sources of variation:

- Class size experiment (Tennessee)
- Court-mandated rulings on school funding (US)
- Class size caps (e.g. Sweden; Israel)



How can we be sure that peer effects matter?

- Knowledge from disaster: the hurricane Katrina studies.
- other studies covering cognitive, behavioural and attitudinal outcomes

Efficiency from being private?

No actual evidence supporting this view. Rather:

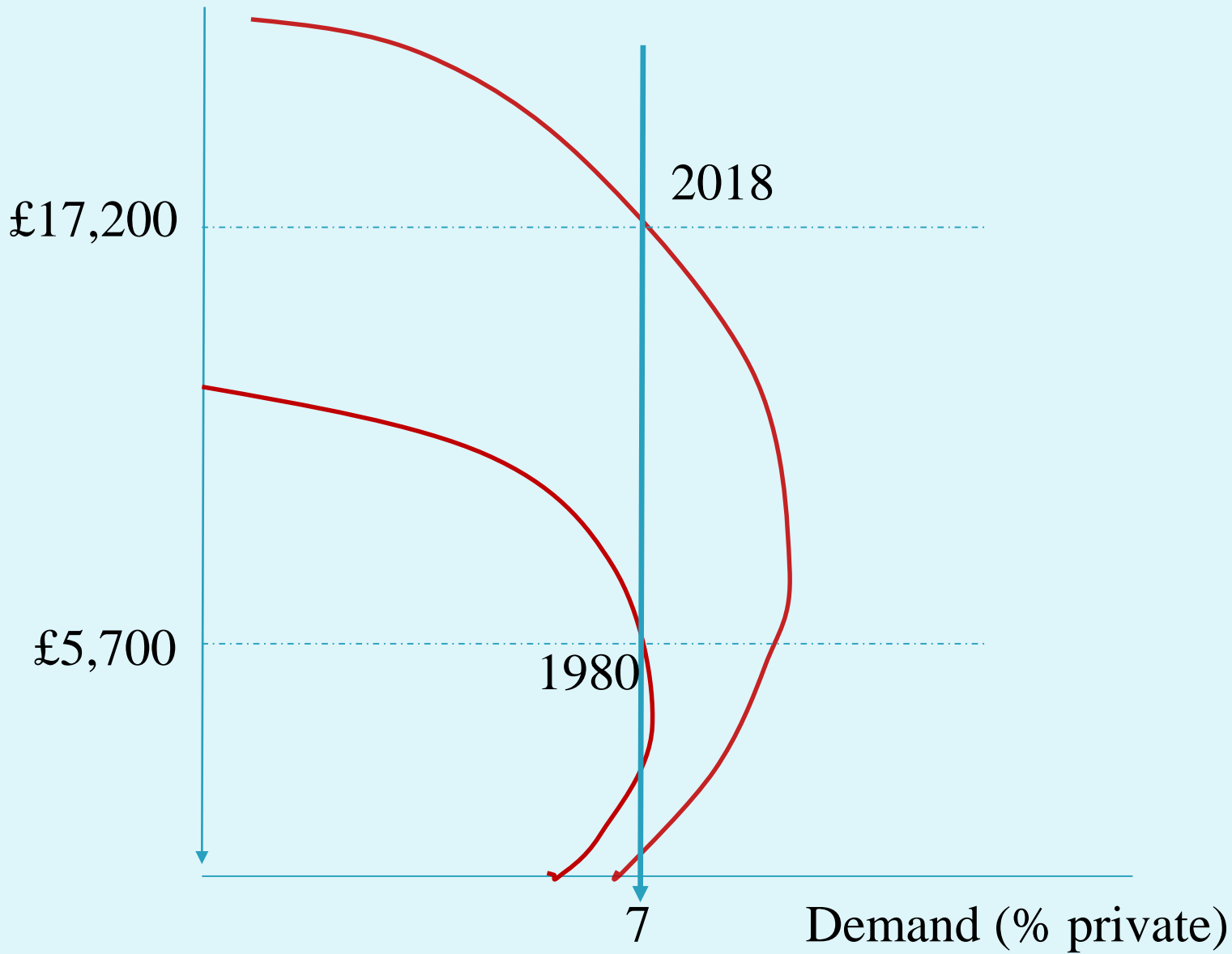
- a) van Reenen et al. No difference.
- b) Bryson and Green If anything, private schools managed less well.

Why is the price so high?

‘luxury country clubs with quite a nice school attached’

- Foreign demand?
- Cartel pricing?
- Veblen effects:
 - Quality
 - Peer composition
 - Luxury and ‘conspicuous consumption’
- rising wealth inequality

Fees (in 2018 prices)



Life outcomes

- Occupational attainment
 - Higher upward mobility
 - Lower downward mobility
- Earnings premium
- Positions of influence
- Life satisfaction



How do they do it?

- Educational attainment
- Something extra? Je ne sais quoi?

What's the problem?

- Systemic inefficiency
- Democratic deficit
- Unfairness/ reproduction of privilege (low social mobility)

Acknowledgements

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Francis Green and David Kynaston.

Engines of Privilege. Britain's Private School Problem.
Bloomsbury.