

**'It's just part of what they do': Habitus, social class and youth volunteering policy**

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**'It's just part of what they do':  
Habitus, social class and youth  
volunteering policy**

Jon Dean

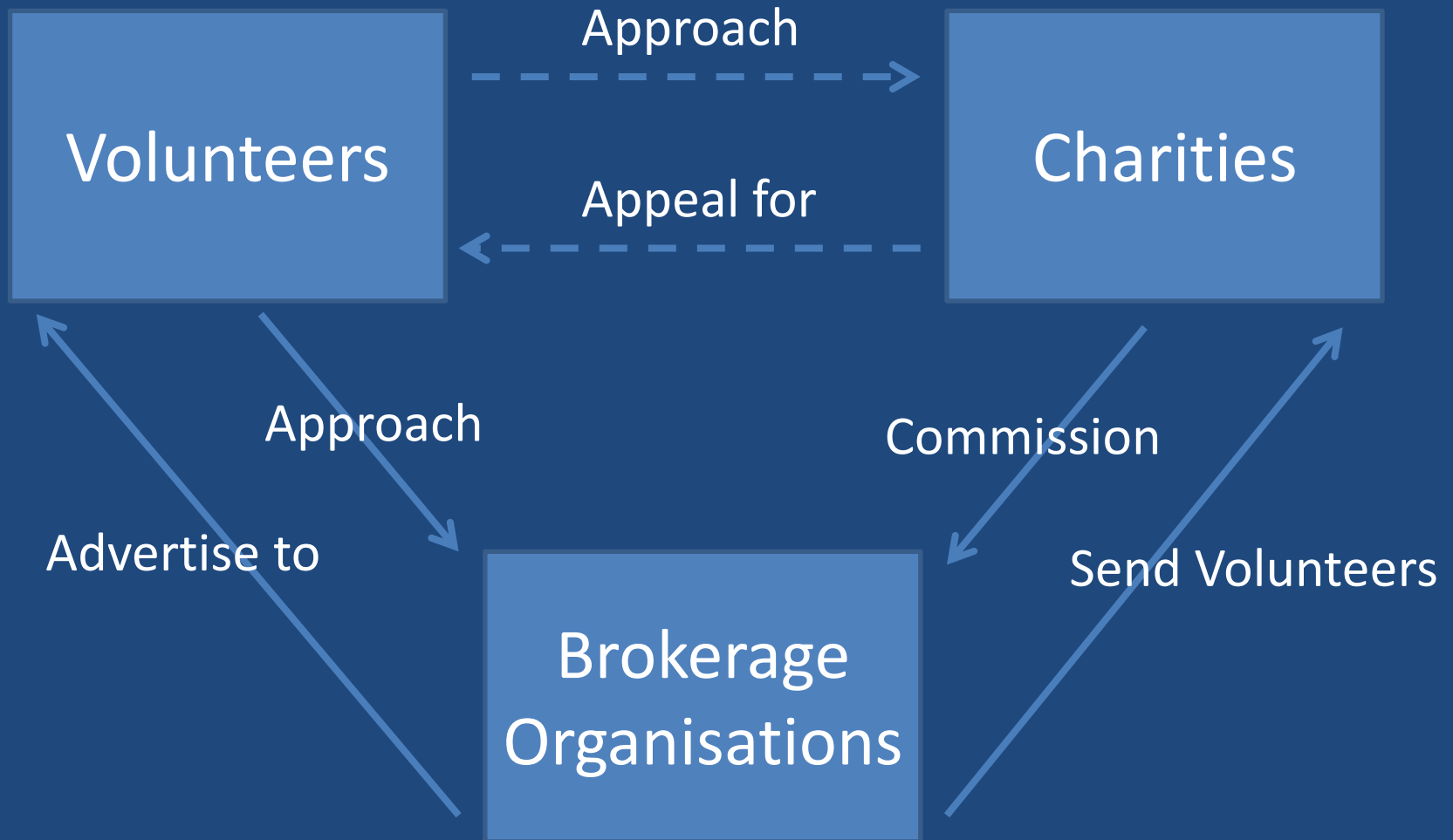
Centre for Philanthropy, SSPSSR

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# The Problem

- How does social class impact the implementation of youth volunteering policies?
- [Images of v, Volunteer Centres and NCS removed for purposes of copyright]

# The Growth of Volunteer Brokerage



# Methodology

- Two areas: Eastwood an industrial town in the West Midlands, and Croft, a suburban borough in the South East.
- 38 interviews with volunteering brokerage workers, and statutory and voluntary sector policymakers.
- Ethnographic work at volunteering events with young people

# Why social class?

- ‘Class is something beneath your clothes, under your skin, in your reflexes, in your psyche, at the very core of your being’ (Kuhn, 1995: 117).
- ‘something in the blood, in the very fibre of a man or woman’ (Reay, 2005: 911).
- ‘The habitus – embodied habitus, internalised as second nature and so forgotten as history – is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product’ (Bourdieu, 1992: 56).

# Formal and Informal Volunteering

- The difference between structured volunteering and unstructured neighbourliness.
- Mohan (2011) demonstrated that 49% of formal volunteering hours in Britain are contributed by 8% of the population. Furthermore, 89% of volunteering is given by 37% of the population.

# Confidence

- *“volunteering has born other volunteer experiences, that’s how it works”*  
(Erin, Youth Volunteering worker, Croft)
- *“In Eastwood, if a volunteer comes forward and the placement doesn’t work, we lose them – and they won’t pluck up the courage again.”*  
(Helen, Volunteering Policy officer, Eastwood Council)
- *“do it, do the work, go home”*  
(Kathryn, Youth Volunteering worker, Croft)



# The Grammar / Comprehensive Dichotomy

- *“I think they’ve got different priorities [comprehensives and grammars]. The grammar schools very much assume that you’re going to university and you have to tick these boxes – and I’m one of those boxes”*  
(Kathryn, Youth Volunteering worker, Croft).
- ‘The hysteresis effect is proportionately greater for agents who are more remote from the educational system and who are poorly or only vaguely informed about the market in educational qualifications’ (Bourdieu, 2010: 142).

# What's next?

- The instrumentalisation of youth volunteering: 'abandon commitments and loyalties without regret' (Bauman, 2007: 5)
- The barriers to volunteering.
- Middle-class advantage.
- An end to universal volunteering service provision.