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Title

If they've had a middle class upbringing that's not their fault : the professional practices and personal identities of admissions staff at selective universities in England / Steven Jones ; David hall ; Joanna Bragg

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Abstract

The role of staff involved with undergraduate admissions and recruitment has changed since the turn towards marketisation in higher education. This article focuses on the system in England following both a sharp rise in student fees and an associated tendency for the public university agenda and related social priorities, such as widening participation, to come up against more private and commercial priorities, such as business engagement, league table performance and internationalisation. Drawing on evidence from detailed interviews with admissions personnel, both academic and non-academic, across three disciplines within one higher prestige university, we revisit the notion of selectivity and the practice of selection. Tensions are revealed between two opposing approaches: a more traditional model of university admissions, as based on local knowledge and sensitivity towards underrepresented groups, and a purportedly merit-driven model, as driven by

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perceived market position. We explore the intricate and often unexpected ways in which staff reconcile their professed beliefs with their professional practices, and the complex identity work needed to renegotiate personal values in light of shifting institutional needs. Findings are offered as a microcosm for broader trends in the higher education sector. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Jones, Steven, E-Mail: SJ@manchester.ac.uk