

➤ **Social class and educational achievement: home environment; cultural capital, material deprivation; language (Bernstein); school factors, relationship between achievement by class in education and social mobility.**

- **Bourdieu – Cultural capital - Class Subcultures;** the education system is biased towards the MC. It uses knowledge and skills of MC culture, MC kids therefore have an advantage over WC kids and also has the specific aim of excluding working class children from educational success. MC parents also carried cultural, economic and educational capital themselves which not only allowed them to access the best education for their kids but allow them to acquire the ability to grasp, analyse and express abstract ideas.
- **Gewirtz – Marketisation – Parental Choice -** Since the creation of the 'education market' this has led to the creation of 3 types of parents. 'Privileged skills choosers', 'Disconnected-skilled choosers' and 'semi-skilled choosers'. MC often fall under the privileged SC's as they possess the capital which allows them to understand how school admission systems work including using appeal procedures to get what they want as well as possessing the financial capital to move closer to schools or paying for travel costs to a better area. WC lack both the understanding of the education system as well as the money to move their kids around to the best schools.
- **Hasley - Material Deprivation - Class Differences;** He found material factor central to whether pupils stayed on at school beyond 16.
- **Bernstein – Language Codes - Class Subcultures;** Bernstein suggested that middle class families were more likely to bring up their children to speak a language or "code" which developed conceptual thought. He called this "Elaborated code" and contrasted it with the limited vocabulary of the "Restricted code" of the working class. Middle class pupils therefore have an immediate advantage in education because of the language they speak.
- **Harker - Material Deprivation - Class Differences** also found a relationship between poor-quality housing and low attainment at school. Harker's research found: Less space to play meant a restricted a child's cognitive development, increased likelihood of being bullied at school which increased truancy rates, higher stress levels of the parents, leading to less support.
- **Ridge – Material Deprivation – Class Differences –** She found that the cost of items such as transport, uniform, books, computers and equipment places a heavy burden on poor families. Not fitting in increases the risk of children being bullied which has a direct effect on attainment. Fear of stigmatisation also explains why 20% of those eligible for free school meals don't take up on their entitlement.
- **JWB Douglas 1964 - Parental Interest - Class Subcultures;** JWB Douglas in a longitudinal study of UK school pupils asserted that the greatest impact on a student's progress was the level of interest shown in the child's education. MC parents gave greater attention to children's education than WC. MC parents expected more from their children and gave more rewards. The WC seen is "culturally deprived".
- **Sugarman - Gratification – Subculture;** instant and deferred gratification which is a study by Sugarman that displays WC as pupils more likely to leave school early and try getting a job at a young age. Whereas MC children are more likely to stay in education and attempt to get into universities. They are present time orientated and

don't. Rather than reducing inequality this system gives advantage to middle class parents as they are better placed to take advantage of parental choice.

➤ **Recent policies and trends in pre-school education and higher education.**

- **Sure Start – 2008** – Aim is to work with parents to promote the physical, intellectual and social development of babies young children, particularly those who are disadvantaged so they can flourish at home and in school and thereby break the cycle of deprivation.
- **GIST & WISE** - Girls into science and technology, Women into science and engineering, these encouraged women to pursue careers in non-traditional areas.
- **New Labour Policies** – Increase in specialist schools which allowed schools to promote its particular strength. Designating some deprived areas as Education Action Zones and providing them with additional resources.
- **Tuition Fees – 2011** – The increase in tuition fees have further marginalised the WC from accessing higher education as the high costs of going to uni are often unaffordable for the poor so they would much rather prefer getting into low paid work immediately after secondary education, instead of taking the risk of higher education.

Evaluation.

Whitty suggests EMAs encourage working class pupils to carry on education but they can't get to uni due to the high fees. Not being able to get into uni or not wanting to go to uni because of the high fees also means WC pupils are less likely to try harder in their A levels meaning they come out with weak qualifications and therefore still end up in low paid work. Grammar and private schools also still exist meaning not enough has been done to turn inequality as students from grammar and private schools are still more likely to go into Oxbridge and higher education than their fellow counterparts.

5. The application of sociological research methods to the study of education.

➤ **Quantitative and qualitative data in education; the dominance of statistics (e.g. exam results, league tables).**

- **Quantitative data** is data in numerical form such as official statistics on the amount of marriages ending in divorce etc. this can be collected through opinion polls and market research polls.
- **Qualitative data** gives a feel for what something is like for example how it feels for a marriage to end in divorce. Evidence gathered by using participant observation can give us a sense of how it feels to be a member of a particular group. In depth interviews can give us an insight into what it would be like to be in the persons 'shoes'.

➤ **Positivist and interpretivist approaches as applied to education.**

Methodological perspective: - view on what society is like and how we should study it. There are two contrasting perspectives on the choice of methods: positivism and interpretivism. Functionalists and

- **Opportunity Sampling** – convenience sampling – choosing from those individuals who are the easiest access such as selecting passers-by on the street. The sample is not likely to be representative of the target research population.
- **Cluster sample** - This is a method of sampling which selects from groups (clusters) already existing in the parent population rather than assembling a random sample. This tends to be quicker and cheaper, but may lead to a biased sample if the clusters are not representative of the parent population.

Theoretical Issues

Interpretivists believe that it is more important to gain valid data and an authentic understanding of social actors' meanings than to discover general laws of behaviours. Because Interpretivists are less concerned to make generalisations, they have less need for representative samples.

Advantages of Questionnaires

Practical Advantages

- Quick and cheap when gathering large amounts of data from large numbers of people. *Helen Connor and Sara Dewson posted nearly 4000 questionnaires to students at 14 higher education institutions during their study.*
- No need to recruit and train interviewers or observers to collect the data because the respondents complete and return them themselves.
- The data are usually easy to quantify, particularly where pre-coded, closed ended questions are used and can be processed quickly to show the relationships between variables.

Reliability

- When the research is repeated the same questionnaire is used, so new respondents are asked exactly the same questions, in the same order with the same choice of answers, as the original respondents.
- With postal questionnaires there is no researcher present to influence the respondents answers. Unlike interviews, where interaction with the interviewer may affect the answer given.
- One advantage of questionnaires is that they allow comparisons to be made over time. By asking the same questions we can compare the results obtained.

Hypothesis Testing

- Questionnaires are useful for testing hypothesis about cause and effect relationships between different variables. From the analysis we can make statements about the possible causes of the topic and predictions. Because questionnaires enable user to identify possible causes, they are very attractive to positivist sociologists.

Detachment and Objectivity

- Positivists favour questionnaires because they are a detached and objective (unbiased) form of research, where the sociologist's personal involvement with their respondents is kept to a minimum.

Representativeness

- It is often impossible or unethical to control the variables
- Their small scale means that results may not be representative or generalizable

Practical problems

- It would be impossible to identify, let alone control, all the variables that might exert an influence on, say, a child's educational achievement or a worker's attitude to work.
- Cannot be used to study the past, since by definition it is impossible to control variables that were acting in the past rather than the present.
- Difficult to investigate large-scale social phenomena such as religious or voting patterns.

Ethical problems

Needs the informed consent of the research participants. This may be difficult to obtain from groups such as children or people with learning difficulties who may be unable to understand the nature and purpose of the experiment. It is also generally considered wrong to mislead people as to the nature of the experiment. *Milgram (1974) did in his famous studies of obedience to authority.*

Milgram lied to his subjects about the purpose of the research, telling them that they were assisting in an experiment on learning, in which they were told by the researcher to administer electric shocks when the learner failed to answer questions correctly. In reality the purpose of the experiment was to test people's willingness to obey orders to inflict pain.

The Hawthorne effect - If people know they are being studied, they may behave differently to what the researcher wants them to do. This will ruin the experiment, which depends on the subjects responding to the variables that the researcher introduces into the situation, not to the fact that they are being observed. *Mayo's (1927) experiment into factors affecting workers' productivity at the Western Electric Company Hawthorn plant, Chicago, involved working with 5 female workers who knew he was conducting his experiment. Mayo altered different variables such as lighting, heating etc. to see what effect they had on the volunteers' output. When working conditions improved so did the output, but it continued to rise even when conditions were worsened., the workers were not responding to the changes he was making in the experimental variables but simply to the fact that they were being studied and wished to please the experimenter who was showing an interest in them.*

Free will - Interpretivist sociologists argue that human beings are fundamentally different. Unlike these objects, we have free will, consciousness and choice. This means our behaviour cannot be explained in terms of cause and effect.

Field experiments

A field experiment takes place in the subjects' natural surroundings, such as school or workplace, rather than in an artificial laboratory environment. Those involved are generally not aware that they are the subjects of an experiment, in which case there is no Hawthorne Effect.

The researcher manipulates one or more of the variables in the situation to see what effect it has on the unwitting subjects of the experiment. *For example Rosenthal and Jacobson manipulated teachers' expectations about children's abilities in order to discover what effect labelling has on achievement. Similarly, in David Rosenhan's (1973) 'pseudopatient' experiment, a team of eight 'normal' researchers pretended to be mentally ill to gain admission to a mental hospital, once admitted they acted normally throughout. Nevertheless, hospital staff treated them all as if they were mentally ill.*