

ONE: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Evidence: Teacher Pupil Relationships

What is the self fulfilling prophecy?

Teachers' expectations

In their study of Oak community school, a California primary school, Robert **Rosenthal** and Leonora **Jacobson (1968)** show the self-fulfilling prophecy at work. They told the school that they had a new test specially designed to identify those pupils who would 'spurt' ahead. This was untrue, because the test was in fact simply a standard IQ test. Importantly, however, the teachers believed what they had been told.

The researchers tested all the pupils, but then picked 20% of them purely at random and told the school, again falsely, that the test had identified these children as 'spurters'. On returning to the school a year later, they found that almost half (47%) of those identified as spurters had indeed made significant progress. The effect was greater on younger children.

Rosenthal and Jacobson suggest that the teachers' beliefs about the pupils had been influenced by the supposed test results. The teachers had then conveyed these beliefs to the pupils through the way they interacted with them - for example, through their body language and the amount of attention and encouragement they gave them.

This demonstrates the self-fulfilling prophecy: simply by accepting the prediction that some children would spurt ahead, the teachers brought it about. The fact that the children were selected at random strongly suggests that if teachers believe a pupil to be of a certain type, they can actually make him or her into that type. The study's findings illustrate an important interactionist principle: that what people believe to be true will have real effects - even if the belief was not true originally.

The self-fulfilling prophecy can also produce under-achievement. If teachers have low expectations of certain children and communicate these expectations in their interaction, these children may develop a negative self-concept. They may come to see themselves as failures

What is streaming?

Streaming involves separating children into different ability groups or classes called 'streams'. Each ability group is then taught separately from the others for all subjects. Studies show that the self-fulfilling prophecy is particularly likely to occur when children are streamed.

As **Becker** shows, teachers do not usually see working-class children as ideal pupils. They tend to see them as lacking ability and have low expectations of them. As a result, working-class children are more likely to find themselves put in a lower stream.

By contrast, middle-class pupils tend to benefit from streaming. They are likely to be placed in higher streams, reflecting teachers' view of them as ideal pupils. As a result, they develop a more positive self-concept, gain confidence, work harder and improve their grades. For example, **Douglas** found that children placed in a higher stream at age 8 had improved their IQ score by age 11.

What are the effects of the hidden curriculum on pupil subcultures?

A pupil subculture is a group of pupils who share similar values and behaviour patterns. Pupil subcultures often emerge as a response to the way pupils have been labelled, and in particular as a reaction to streaming.

A number of studies have shown how pupil subcultures may play a part in creating class differences in achievement. We can use Colin **Lacey's** (1970) concepts of differentiation and polarisation to explain how pupil subcultures develop.

- **Differentiation** is the process of teachers categorising pupils according to how they perceive their ability, attitude and/or behaviour. Streaming is a form of differentiation, since it categorises pupils into separate classes. Those that the school deems 'more able' are given high status by being placed in a high stream, whereas those deemed 'less able' and placed in low streams are given an inferior status.
- **Polarisation**, on the other hand, is the process in which pupils respond to streaming by moving towards one of two opposite 'poles' or extremes.

In his study of Hightown boys' grammar school, Lacey found that streaming polarised boys into a pro-school and an anti-school subculture.

The pro-school subculture

Pupils placed in high streams (who are largely middle-class) tend to remain committed to the values of the school. They gain their status in the approved manner, through academic success. Their values are those of the school: they tend to form a pro-school subculture.

The anti-school subculture

Lacey found that those placed in low streams (who tend to be working-class) suffer a loss of self-esteem: the school has undermined their self-worth by placing them in a position of inferior status.

This label of failure pushes them to search for alternative ways of gaining status. Usually this involves inverting (turning upside down) the school's values of hard work, obedience and punctuality. As Lacey says, 'a boy who does badly academically is predisposed to criticise, reject or even sabotage the system where he can, since it places him in an inferior position.'

Such pupils form an anti-school subculture as a means of gaining status among their peers, for example by cheeking a teacher, truanting, not doing homework, smoking, drinking or stealing.

Unfortunately, however, although joining an anti-school subculture may solve the problem of lack of status, it creates further problems for the pupils who become involved in it. As Lacey says,

'the boy who takes refuge in such a group because his work is poor finds that the group commits him to a behaviour pattern which means that his work will stay poor — and in fact often gets progressively worse'.

In other words, joining an anti-school subculture is likely to become a self-fulfilling prophecy of educational failure.



What is marketization and selection?

So far, we have focused on small scale, '**micro**' level processes within classrooms and schools, such as labelling, the self-fulfilling prophecy and streaming. However, schools operate within a wider education system, whose policies directly affect these micro level processes to produce class differences in achievement. Such policies include **marketisation and selection**. Marketisation brought in:

- **a funding formula** that gives a school the same amount of funds for each pupil.
- **Exam league tables** that rank each school according to its exam performance and make no allowance for the level of ability of its pupils. For example, secondary schools are ranked in terms of what percentage of their pupils succeed in gaining five or more GCSE grades A*-C.
- **Competition** among schools to attract pupils.

The A-to-C economy and educational triage

These changes explain why schools are under pressure to stream and select pupils. For example, schools need to achieve a good league table position if they are to attract pupils and funding. However, this can widen the class gap in achievement within a school, as **Gillborn and Youdell's** study of two London secondary schools shows

The policy of publishing league tables creates what Gillborn and Youdell call the '**A-to-C economy**'. This is a system in which schools ration their time, effort and resources, concentrating them on those pupils they perceive as having the potential to get five grade Cs at GCSE and so boost the school's league table position.

Gillborn and Youdell call this process '**educational triage**'. Triage literally means 'sorting'. The term is normally used to describe the process in battlefields or in major disasters whereby medical staff decide who is to be given scarce medical resources. Medics have to sort casualties into three categories: (1) the 'walking wounded', who can be ignored because they will survive; (2) those who will die anyway, who will also be ignored, and (3) those with a chance of survival, who are given treatment in the hope of saving them.

The authors argue that the A-to-C economy produces educational triage. Schools categorise pupils into 'those who will pass anyway', 'those with potential' and 'hopeless cases'. Teachers do this using notions of 'ability' in which working-class and black pupils are labelled as lacking ability. As a result, they are likely to be classified as 'hopeless cases' and ignored. This produces a self-fulfilling prophecy and failure.

Gillborn and Youdell's notion of 'triage' or sorting is very similar to Lacey's idea of differentiation, since both involve labelling and treating pupils differently. Both ideas are closely linked to the process of streaming, where teachers' beliefs about pupils' ability are used to segregate them into different classes, offer them different curricula and exams, and thus produce different levels of achievement.

However, Gillborn and Youdell put the labelling and streaming process into a wider context than simply individual teachers or schools. Instead, they link triage to marketisation policies within the education system as a whole (such as league tables) and show how these, when combined with teachers' stereotypical ideas about pupils' ability, lead to differences in achievement.

TWO: DIFFERENTIAL ACHIEVEMENT

These are the sorts of issues that the exam board will ask you about



Issue - What are sociologists trying to explain?

By the end of this section you should understand the following issues

Which groups do better or worse?

What explanations can be given for these differences?

Are individual, in-school (internal), or out-of-school (external) factors responsible for the differences?

Introduction: What is differential educational

It seems obvious: our educational success or failure is simply the result of our ability and motivation. When sociologists look at educational achievement, however, they find that there are distinct patterns. It seems that ability and motivation are closely linked to membership of certain social groups.

Differential educational achievement (also referred to as attainment) refers to the tendency for some groups to do better or worse than others in terms of educational success. The issue was initially considered by sociologists solely in terms of class, as they attempted to explain the huge class differences that existed between schools within the tripartite system. Differences between boys and girls and between different ethnic groups are a more recent focus, which will be explored in the next two study packs.



What are internal and external factors?

Internal factors

These are factors within schools and the education system, such as interactions between pupils and teachers, and inequalities between schools.

External factors

These are factors outside the education system, such as the influence of home and family background and wider society.

Theories About DEA & Social Class

IMAGES OF SOCIETY

	CONSENSUS	CONFLICT
STARTING FROM SYSTEMS	FUNCTIONALISM Working class children are poor (suffer the effects of MATERIAL DEPRIVATION) and therefore can't afford educational toys, trips, warm places to work, etc.. Second, working class children suffer from CULTURAL DEPRIVATION: that is, they live for the moment, don't respect education, and often don't have the SPEECH CODES and LANGUAGE SKILLS needed to do well in school. Note how these explanations focus on the way different institutions in the social system - in this case, families and schools, do or do not function well together. This is the essence of Functionalist analysis. It focuses on factors EXTERNAL to the school.	MARXISM Working class children lose out because they lack cultural capital, because of the effects of secondary stratification and because they resist education. Private schools and selection by mortgage also disadvantage them Marxists focus on factors EXTERNAL to the school.
STARTING FROM INDIVIDUALS	NEW RIGHT Recognise class differences in educational achievement, but aren't too concerned about them. Working class children do worse than middle class children because they are less intelligent and less committed. This is something to accept. Anti-poverty programmes and compensatory education are therefore not worth the expense.	INTERACTIONISM Working class children are more likely to be LABELLED negatively by teachers than are middle class children - regardless of ability. This comes through both in face-to-face interaction and in the way STREAMING and SETTING disadvantages working class pupils. Though some resist the labels, for many the SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY takes place. All these processes are INTERNAL to the school.
	FEMINISM Feminists think gender differences are the most important. But they do recognise that middle class girls do better than working class girls.	

How might Language relate to educational achievement?

The importance of language for educational achievement is highlighted by Carl **Bereiter** and Siegfried **Engelmann** (1966). They claim that the language used in lower-class homes is deficient. They describe lower-class families as communicating by gestures, single words or disjointed phrases.

As a result, their children fail to develop the necessary language skills. They grow up incapable of abstract thinking and unable to use language to explain, describe, enquire or compare. Because of this, they are unable to take advantage of the opportunities that school offers.

Like Bereiter and Engelmann, Basil **Bernstein** (1975) also identifies differences between working-class and middle-class language that influence achievement. He distinguishes between two types of speech code:

The restricted code is the speech code typically used by the working class. It has a limited vocabulary and is based on the use of short, often unfinished, grammatically simple sentences. Speech is predictable and may involve only a single word, or even just a gesture instead. It is descriptive not analytic. The restricted code is context-bound: that is, the speaker assumes that the listener shares the same set of experiences.

The elaborated code is typically used by the middle class. It has a wider vocabulary and is based on longer, grammatically more complex sentences. Speech is more varied and communicates abstract ideas. The elaborated code is context-free: the speaker does not assume that the listener shares the same experiences, and so s/he uses language to spell out his or her meanings explicitly for the listener.

These differences in speech code give middle-class children an advantage at school and put working-class children at a disadvantage. This is because the elaborated code is the language used by teachers, textbooks and exams. Not only is it taken as the 'Correct' way to speak and write, but in Bernstein's view it is also a more effective tool for analysing and reasoning and for expressing thoughts clearly and effectively - essential skills in education.

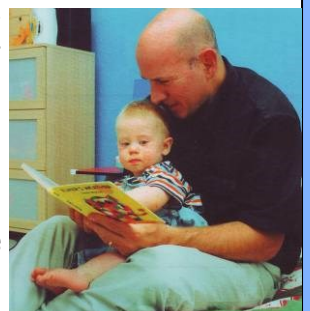
Early socialisation into the elaborated code means that middle-class children are already fluent users of the code when they start school. Thus they feel 'at home' in school and are more likely to succeed. By contrast, working-class children, lacking the code in which schooling takes place, are likely to feel excluded and to be less successful.

Critics argue that Bernstein is a cultural deprivation theorist because he describes working-class speech as inadequate. However, unlike most cultural deprivation theorists, Bernstein recognises that the school - and not just the home - influences children's achievement. He argues that working-class pupils fail not because they are culturally deprived, but because schools fail to teach them how to use the elaborated code.

How Might the development of thinking & reasoning skills differ between social classes?

J.W.B. **Douglas** (1964) found that working class pupils scored lower on tests of ability than middle class pupils. He argues that this is because working-class parents are less likely to support their children's intellectual development through reading with them or other educational activities in the home.

Basil **Bernstein** and **Douglas Young** (1967) reached similar conclusions. They found that the way mothers think about and choose toys has an influence on their children's intellectual development. Middle-class mothers are more likely to choose toys that encourage thinking and reasoning skills and prepare children for school.



How does Cultural Capital relate to educational attainment?

Bourdieu: three types of capital

Pierre **Bourdieu** (1984) argues that both cultural and material factors contribute to educational achievement and are not separate but interrelated. He uses the concept of 'capital' to explain why the middle class are more successful.

The term capital usually refers to wealth but in addition to this economic capital, Bourdieu identifies two further types. These are 'educational capital' or qualifications, and 'cultural capital'. He argues that the middle class generally possess more of all three types of capital.

- **Cultural capital**

Bourdieu uses the term cultural capital to refer to the knowledge, attitudes, values, language, tastes and abilities of the middle class. He sees middle-class culture as a type of capital because, like wealth, it gives an advantage to those who possess it. Like Bernstein, he argues that through their socialisation, middle-class children acquire the ability to grasp, analyse and express abstract ideas. They are more likely to develop intellectual interests and an understanding of what the education system requires for success.

This gives middle-class children an advantage in school, where such abilities and interests are highly valued and rewarded with qualifications. This is because the education system is not neutral, but favours and transmits the dominant middle-class culture.

By contrast, working-class children find that school devalues their culture as 'rough' and inferior. Their lack of cultural capital leads to exam failure. Many working-class pupils also 'get the message' that education is not meant for them and respond by truanting, early leaving or just not trying.

- **Educational and Economic capital**

Bourdieu argues that educational, economic and cultural capital can be converted into one another.

For example, middle-class children with cultural capital are better equipped to meet the demands of the school curriculum and gain qualifications. Similarly, wealthier parents can convert their economic capital into educational capital by sending their children to private schools and paying for extra tuition. As Dennis Leech and Eric James (2003) study of Coventry shows, middle-class parents are also more likely to be able to afford a house in the catchment area of a school that is highly placed in the exam league tables. This has become known as 'selection by mortgage' because it drives up demand for houses near to successful schools and excludes working-class families.

Alice **Sullivan** (2001) used questionnaires to conduct a survey of 465 pupils in four schools. To assess their cultural capital, she asked them about a range of activities, such as reading and TV viewing habits, and whether they visited art galleries, museums and theatres. She also tested their vocabulary and knowledge of cultural figures.

She found that those who read complex fiction and watched serious TV documentaries developed a wider vocabulary and greater cultural knowledge, indicating greater cultural capital.

The pupils with the greatest cultural capital were children of graduates. These pupils were more likely to be successful at GCSE.

However, although successful pupils with greater cultural capital were more likely to be middle-class, Sullivan found that cultural capital only accounted for part of the class difference in achievement. Where pupils of different classes had the same level of cultural capital, middle-class pupils still did better. Sullivan concludes that the greater resources and aspirations of middle-class families explain the remainder of the class gap in achievement.



DIFFERENTIAL ACHIEVEMENT: GENDER

Issue - What are sociologists trying to explain?

By the end of this section you should understand the following issues

Why did girls previously underachieve?

Why have girls' improved?

Why haven't boys kept up?

How does the behaviour of boys affect girls' achievements?

What explains the different subject choices of boys & girls?



Introduction

Along with social class and ethnicity, gender has a major impact on people's experience of education. In recent years, there have been some important changes in this area. In particular, while both sexes have raised their level of achievement, girls have now overtaken boys.

On the other hand, one area where gender patterns have been slower to change is in subject choice, with boys and girls often opting to study traditional 'sex-typed' subjects and courses. Similarly, there is also evidence that schooling continues to reinforce differences in gender identity between boys and girls.

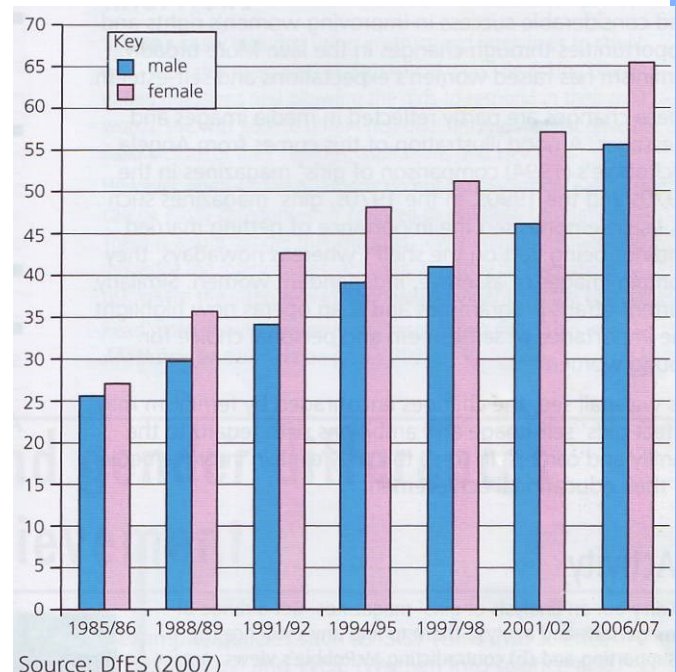


How does gender relate to educational achievement?

Until the late 1980s, there was considerable concern about the underachievement of girls.

They did not do quite as well as boys in exams, and were also less likely to take A-levels and enter higher education. However, since the early 1990s, girls have begun to outperform boys at most levels of the education system. For example, they do better at every stage of the National Curriculum SAT results in English, Maths and Science, and in all subjects at GCSE and A-level.

In 2006, 48 per cent of females progressed to higher education, compared with 38 per cent of males. With regard to the number achieving first-class degrees, the gender gap has remained consistent, with women outperforming men by about 7 percent (Higher Education Statistics Agency 2007).



Percentage of pupils achieving five or more GCSE grades A* - C or equivalent, 1985/6 to 2006/7: by gender

Evidence About Gender Differences in Education

WHY HAVE GIRLS' PERFORMANCES IMPROVED?

INTERNAL FACTORS

GCSE and coursework

Some sociologists argue that changes in the way pupils are assessed have favoured girls and disadvantaged boys. For example, Stephen **Gorard** (2005) found that the gender gap in achievement was fairly constant from 1975 until 1988-9, when it increased sharply. This was the year in which GCSE was introduced, bringing with it coursework as a major part of nearly all subjects. Gorard concludes that the gender gap in achievement is a "product of the changed system of assessment rather than any more general failing of boys".

Eirene Mitsos and Ken Browne (1998) support this view. They conclude that girls are more successful in coursework because they are more conscientious and better organised than boys. Girls:

- spend more time on their work
- take more care with the way it is presented
- are better at meeting deadlines
- bring the right equipment and materials to lessons.

Mitsos and Browne argue that these factors have helped girls to benefit from the introduction of coursework in GCSE, AS and A level. They also note that girls gain from maturing earlier than boys and from their ability to concentrate for longer.



Along with GCSE has come the greater use of oral exams. This is also said to benefit girls because of their generally better developed language skills.

Sociologists argue that these characteristics and skills are the result of early gender role socialisation in the family. For example, girls are more likely than boys to be encouraged to be neat, tidy and patient. These qualities become an advantage in today's assessment system, helping girls achieve greater success than boys. The New Right thinker, **Madsen Pirie**, makes a similar point.

However, **Janette Elwood** (2005) argues that although coursework has some influence, it is unlikely to be the only cause of the gender gap. Analysing the weighting of coursework and written exams, she concludes that exams have more influence on final grades.

Policies

Policies to promote marketisation include:

- Publication of exam league tables and Ofsted inspection reports to give parents the information they need to choose the right school
- Business sponsorship of schools, e.g. city technology colleges
- Open enrolment, allowing successful schools to recruit more pupils
- Formula funding, where schools receive the same amount of funding for each pupil
- Schools being allowed to opt out of LEA control
- Schools having to compete to attract pupils.
- Some politicians have proposed educational vouchers.

The reproduction of inequality

However, despite the claimed benefits of marketisation, its critics argue that it has increased inequalities between pupils, for example because middle-class parents are better placed to take advantage of the available choices.

Similarly, Stephen **Ball** (1994) and Geoff **Whitty** (1998) examine how marketisation reproduces and legitimates inequality. They argue that it reproduces inequality through:

Exam league tables

The policy of publishing each school's exam results in a league table ensures that schools which achieve good results are more in demand, because parents are attracted to those with good league table rankings. This allows these schools to be more selective and to recruit high achieving, mainly middle-class pupils. As a result, middle-class pupils get the best education.

For schools with poor league table positions, the opposite applies: they cannot afford to be selective and have to take less able, mainly working-class pupils, so their results are poorer and they remain unattractive to middle-class parents. The overall effect of league tables is thus to produce unequal schools that reproduce social class inequalities.

The funding formula

Schools are allocated funds by a formula based on how many pupils they attract. As a result, popular schools get more funding and so can afford better-qualified teachers and better facilities. Again, their popularity allows them to be more selective and attracts more able or ambitious, generally middle-class applicants.

On the other hand, unpopular schools lose income and find it difficult to match the teacher skills and facilities of their more successful rivals. Thus, popular schools with good results and middle-class pupils thrive; unpopular schools fail to attract pupils and their funding is further reduced.

The myth of parentocracy

Not only does marketisation reproduce inequality; it also *legitimises* it by concealing its true causes and by justifying its existence.

Ball believes that marketisation gives the appearance of creating a 'parentocracy'. That is, the education system seems as if it is based on parents having a free choice of school. However Ball argues that parentocracy is a myth, not a reality. It makes it appear that all parents have the same freedom to choose which school to send their children to.

In reality, however, as **Gewirtz** shows, middle-class parents have more economic and cultural capital and so are better able to take advantage of the choices available. For example, as **Leech and Campos** show they can afford to move into the catchment areas of more desirable schools.

Theories About The Role of Education

IMAGES OF SOCIETY

	CONSENSUS	CONFLICT
STARTING FROM SYSTEMS	FUNCTIONALISM Within limits, education is functional for society in providing secondary socialisation, teaching skills and allocating people to the appropriate roles based on merit. These functions are being sustained in a post-Fordist economy. Failings are being overcome through compensatory education and anti-poverty programmes. More needs to be done to reconcile private and state education	MARXISM Education reproduces the class system – there is SOCIAL REPRODUCTION, in Marxist terms. Children of the rich take advantage of private schools. Children of the middle classes use private schools or, thanks to MARKETISATION, the best state schools. The role of education is (unfortunately) to reproduce the class system: it favours the middle classes, channels the workers' children into low-level occupations, and inflicts hidden injuries on the working classes.
STARTING FROM INDIVIDUALS	NEW RIGHT The New Right find a big gap between the role education ought to play and the role it does play in society. Though it has improved, the education system is still too expensive and still turning out too many students who lack work disciplines and appropriate skills.	INTERACTIONISM Education favours particular groups – the middle class and the ethnic majority. More than that, it teaches conformity instead of creativity
	FEMINISM Liberal Feminists see the education system as slowly changing from patriarchal to more equal. This change benefits women, men and society itself. Radical Feminists, on the other hand, see the whole education system as still promoting patriarchal values like competition. Girls who succeed in competitive exams are merely accepting a male-dominated system even if they do well in it. Likewise, science is a male activity -- with its concern for objectivity and control. It damages girls and makes them subject to a patriarchal ideology.	

However, teachers and educationalists make things worse by offering inappropriate courses. Children need courses which will appeal to their self-interest. That means vocational courses. Even pupils who come from undisciplined homes will see the benefits. Then they will get something from school and be less bored, disaffected, and anti-education.

- Working class pupils are more likely to be anti-school than are middle class pupils because they are likely to be the least intelligent pupils.
- But they will respond well to vocational courses.

EDUCATION (2a): CLASS DIFFERENCES IN ACHIEVEMENT

The New Right recognise class differences in educational achievement, but aren't too concerned about them.

They start their analysis with the parents. People, they say, are born with differences in intelligence. So the less intelligent ones tend to slip to the bottom of the class system where they marry people like themselves. When they breed they have unintelligent children who don't achieve much.

This is something to accept. Anti-poverty programmes and compensatory education are therefore not worth the expense.

- Working class children do worse than middle class children because they are less intelligent and less committed.

EDUCATION (2b): ETHNIC DIFFERENCES IN ACHIEVEMENT

Differences in the achievement of ethnic minority children depend on inherited intelligence. Black people are (on average) just less intelligent than White people -- and White people are (on average) less intelligent than Chinese people.

- Some ethnic minority pupils do better than White pupils. Some do worse. It depends on intelligence.
- Afro-Caribbean pupils are also disadvantaged if they come from fatherless household, as they disproportionately do.

EDUCATION (2c): GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ACHIEVEMENT

Achievement also depends on how strongly pupils want to achieve. In this case the encouragement of strong Asian families is more helpful than the dysfunctional single-parent households found disproportionately among Black people, and increasingly in the White working classes.

- On average, girls have always been better at academic work than boys, partly because of their superior language skills. But boys have always been the very best and the very worse. These facts were not apparent at 16 and 18 until large numbers of poor quality pupils stayed on at schools.

FUNCTIONALIST THEORIES OF EDUCATION

Functionalism is based on the view that society is a system of interdependent parts held together by a shared culture or value consensus - an agreement among society's members about what values are important. Each part of society, such as the family, economy or education system, performs functions that help to maintain society as a whole. When studying education, functionalists seek to discover what functions it performs - that is, what does it do to help meet society's needs?



STARTING POINT & IMAGE OF SOCIETY

Functionalists start by studying society as a whole (the **SYSTEM**) and argue that successful societies need shared values (**CONSENSUS**). Otherwise, there will be chaos and violence.

If we look at society as though it was a system, we can see how each institution contributes to the functioning of the whole.

Thus one function of the family is to stabilise adult personalities. Another is to socialise children that is, to teach them society's values so that those values become part of their personalities. Functionalists call this **PRIMARY SOCIALISATION**.

One function of education is to continue socialising young people: functionalists call this **SECONDARY SOCIALISATION**. Another function of education is to teach people skills. A third and related function is to sort them into the types of jobs they will do. Functionalists call this **ROLE ALLOCATION**.

A function of religion is to bind members of society together. Functionalists argue that the experience of collective worship reinforces feelings of collective solidarity. Modern societies may have people of many different religions, but these societies still have **SACRED SYMBOLS** and shared ceremonies. Even the United States, home of various immigrants, has Thanksgiving Day and the Fourth of July.

Functionalists argue that even people's reactions to crime can have a function. Their reactions bind members of society together. Whenever a noteworthy crime takes place we talk about it. And we define our values in opposition to what's taken place: "we wouldn't do that." Functionalists call this process **BOUNDARY MAINTENANCE**.

Functionalists don't think that there is any guarantee societies will be harmonious and function properly. Some societies will see shared values and community feeling decline. Then people become unsure of moral rules. Functionalists call this condition **ANOMIE** (normlessness -- "a-nomic").

People may also become concerned only for themselves. Functionalists call this condition **EGOISM** ("ego" is Latin for "I").

In these conditions, say the Functionalists, crime rates and suicide rates go up and society ceases to function properly. There can be other **SOCIAL PROBLEMS**. For example, families may need support. People's talents may be wasted in the education system. This is **DYSFUNCTIONAL** for society.

In all these cases **SOCIAL POLICIES** are needed to keep society functioning.

EDUCATION (1): PROCESSES IN SCHOOLS

Pupils who share society's values will successfully accept the school's culture, including teachers' judgments and streaming. However, the culturally-deprived are likely to suffer **STATUS FRUSTRATION** when they realise they are unlikely to succeed, especially if they are put in lower **STREAMS** and **SETS** and the **SCHOOL ETHOS** undervalues the lower streams and sets. Therefore they are likely to create **ANTI-SCHOOL SUBCULTURES**.

MARXIST THEORIES

INTRODUCTION

This theory is named after its founder, Karl Marx (1818-1883).

STARTING POINT & IMAGE OF SOCIETY

Marxists argue that human life depends on how we produce what we need to exist. In different historical epochs humans have organised the production of goods and services in different ways. Marxists say that these epochs are based on different **MODES OF PRODUCTION**. This is a way of describing whole **SOCIAL SYSTEMS**, which is the Marxist starting point.

The current mode of production is **CAPITALISM**: that is, a system in which businesses are privately owned and their owners try to maximise profits. They don't necessarily do this out of greed, but because they have to (1) maximise profits to (2) accumulate the capital to (3) invest in new technology to (4) be competitive to (5) survive.

To maximise profits, they have to force down the wages of their workers (or even enslave them) and, if necessary, make them work in unhealthy conditions. The workers **RESIST** this exploitation. The result is **CLASS CONFLICT**.

Marxists call the employers by the French term **BOURGEOISIE** and the workers by the Latin term, the **PROLETARIAT**.

Marxists argue that the bourgeoisie tries to make all the major institutions of society serve their needs. The **FAMILY** is where the new generation workers is bred. **EDUCATION** is used to prepare the next generation of the proletariat for exploitation by the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie also tries to teach the proletariat that the system is both fair and inevitable -- even though, according to Marxists, neither is true. **RELIGION** is also used to justify the power of the bourgeoisie. Employers control the state and turn Education into part of **THE IDEOLOGICAL STATE APPARATUS**. If this ideological conditioning doesn't work, then the employers turn to **THE REPRESSIVE STATE APPARATUS** -- the law, the police and, ultimately, the Army -- to declare the workers' activities illegal and destroy their organisations.

Marxists argue, however, that the system has **INHERENT CONTRADICTIONS**. Because employers force down wages and improve productivity, workers can't afford to buy what employers can produce. Therefore there are periodic slumps and mass unemployment. These slumps force the workers into poverty. Therefore they come to realise that they have to overthrow the system to survive. The capitalist system actually gives them the means to destroy it. Not only have the workers got access to modern means of communication, but education gives them the ability to understand what's happening. Religion may also give them a moral critique of society.

The workers will therefore replace the current exploitative system with a **COMMUNIST** system, in which the major productive enterprises are held in common. Then there will be no more exploitation and people will be free.

EDUCATION (1): PROCESSES IN SCHOOLS

Marxists say that the employers control the system. Therefore there is a **LONG SHADOW OF WORK** over education. Working class children are not only taught skills, they are taught a **HIDDEN CURRICULUM**. This hidden curriculum teaches them the rules they will have to conform to if employers are to take them on.

Some working class children accept this hidden curriculum, but others resist it and create anti-school subcultures. The rest of the Marxist theory focuses on the "middle classes" -- which is a far broader term than the bourgeoisie. It includes people like managers, doctors and teachers who own no capital but whose culture is close to that of the bourgeoisie.

Evaluation of Marxist theory

- Marxist approaches are useful in exposing the 'myth of meritocracy'. They show the role that education plays as an ideological state apparatus, serving the interests of capitalism by reproducing and legitimating class inequality.
- Postmodernists criticise Bowles and Gintis' correspondence principle on the grounds that today's post-Fordist economy requires schools to produce a very different kind of labour force from the one described by Marxists. Postmodernists argue that education now reproduces diversity, not inequality.
- Marxists disagree with one another as to how reproduction and legitimation take place. Bowles and Gintis take a deterministic view. That is, they assume that pupils have no free will and passively accept indoctrination. This approach fails to explain why pupils ever reject the school's values.
- By Contrast, Willis rejects the view that school simply 'brainwashes' pupils into passively accepting their fate. By combining Marxist and interactionist approaches, he shows how pupils may resist the school and yet how this still leads them into working-class jobs.
- However; critics argue that Willis' account of the 'lads' romanticises them, portraying them as working-class heroes despite their anti-social behaviour and sexist attitudes. His small-scale study of only 12 boys in one school is also unlikely to be representative of other pupils' experience and it would be risky to generalise his findings.
- Raymond Morrow and Carlos Torres (1998) criticise Marxists for taking a 'class first' approach that sees class as the key inequality and ignores all other kinds. Instead, like postmodernists, Morrow and Torres argue that society is now more diverse. They see non-class inequalities, such as ethnicity, gender and sexuality, as equally important. They argue that sociologists must explain how education reproduces and legitimates all forms of inequality, not just class, and how the different forms of inequality are inter-related.

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Further reading

References on Marxist Theories

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