Chapter 7

Social class and education

Dave Hill

*The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles... Our epoch... has simplified the class antagonisms... into two great hostile camps. into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat.*

*Marx [1848] 1978: 35—36*

**Introduction**

In this chapter I discuss the relationship between social class, society and education. The perspective adopted is Marxist. In Part One, I discuss social class and how it is measured. In Part Two, I present some of the main concepts of Marxist social class analysis. In Part Three, I relate these concepts to education, referring to the work of Bourdieu, Althusser, Bowles and Gintis, and recent work by Duffield and her associates. In Part Four, I differentiate between two types of Marxist analysis — Structuralist neo-Marxism and Culturalist neo-Marxism.

**Part One: What is social class and how is it measured?**

*What is Social Class?*

What social class are you? What social class were the people you went to school with, or work or study with? All people can be categorised, or classified in different ways — for example by religion, ethnicity, sex, sexuality, height, age, reading ability. One classification, social class, is generally recognised as having particular significance. Social class is generally recognised as both reflecting and causing major social, economic, and cultural differences in, for example, income, wealth, status, education, and lifestyle (see, for example, Ahmad 1997; Boseley 1998; Rowntree Foundation 1995). Income (pay packet, salary, and dividends) and wealth (what we own, such as housing, shares, money in the bank, and possessions) reflect our social class position. However, not only does social class reflect such social differences, it also causes them. Our social background, social class, social class-related ways in which we present ourselves tend to affect the ways in which we are treated by teachers, by the police, by friends, by employers, by sexual partners, and by many others in society. As with racism and sexism, this can take the form of personal discrimination — positive or negative stereotyping, labelling and expectation. It can also take the form of structural discrimination — taking place on a systematic, repetitive, embedded nature within particular social structures such as schooling, housing, employment, credit agencies, police, armed forces.

In the education system there are different social class-related;

- patterns of educational attainment (such as reading age, SATs scores, number of GCSE passes, entry into higher education);
patterns of teaching methods (or pedagogy) used by teachers for different social classes;

‘hidden curricula’;

formal (subject) curricula (to an extent, despite the existence of a National Curriculum in schools);

job destinations.

Of course these statements are generalisations. Not all sons and daughters of the upper class go into higher education and subsequently take up jobs with high social status, a high degree of power over others, and a high income. And not all the children of semi-skilled or unskilled workers leave school or further education at the age of 16 or 18, and work in low-status and low-paid jobs. But most do.

Official measurement of social class

The Registrar-General’s classification of occupations Tables 7.1 (used for official government purposes) has been the most commonly used system of classifying people between 1911 and 1998. It is based on Weberian’ notions of the status value of different occupations that have been grouped into a number of broad categories. In the Registrar-General’s scheme unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled manual workers were denoted ‘working class’. The ‘working class’ was differentiated from ‘the lower middle class’ — employees such as those in ‘routine’, low-paid white-collar jobs. These, in turn, were differentiated from other, better paid, more highly educated, and higher status sections of the middle class. These official classes (Classes I, II, IIINM, IIIM, IV and V) have also been also used as the basis for the A, B, C1, C2, D and E social class/consumption group indicators used by sociological research, market research bureaux, opinion pollsters and advertisers. They are also, incidentally, based on the occupational status of the male head of household, where there is a male ‘head of household’.

In November 1998 the Registrar-General’s classification was amended to take into account some recent changes in the occupational structure of the labour force. The new classifications shown in Table 7.2, will be used for the census in the year 2001.

Table 7.1 The Registrar-General’s Classification of Occupations 1911—1998 Social class distribution, economically active persons, 1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Occupations</th>
<th>Distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I (Class A)</td>
<td>Professional accountants, architects, clergymen, doctors, lawyers, university teachers</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II (Class B)</td>
<td>Managerial/Technical Intermediate aircraft pilots, chiropodists, MPs, nurses, police officers, teachers</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIINM (Class C1)</td>
<td>Skilled non-manual clerical workers, draughtsmen</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIIM (Class C2)</td>
<td>Skilled manual drivers, butchers</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social class and education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class IV (Class D)</th>
<th>Semi-skilled</th>
<th>bricklayer; cook</th>
<th>15%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class V (Class E)</td>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td>labourer; messenger; cleaner; porter</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures adapted from 1991 Census, HMSO

Table 7.2 The Office for National Statistics Classification of Occupations (1998)

| Class 1 Professionals; Employers, Administrators and Managers employing 25 or more people (e.g. doctor, lawyer, scientist, company director) |
| Class 2 Associate Professionals; Employers, Administrators and Managers employing fewer than 25 people (e.g. supervisor, nurse, sales manager, laboratory technician) |
| Class 3 Intermediate Occupations in Administrative, Clerical, Sales and Service Work (e.g. secretary, nursery nurse, salesman [sic], computer operator) |
| Class 4 Self-Employed Non-Professionals (e.g. plumber, driving instructor) |
| Class 5 Other Supervisors, Craft and Related Workers (e.g. factory foreman [sic], joiner) |
| Class 6 Routine Occupations in Manufacturing and Services (e.g. Lorry driver, traffic warden, assembly line worker). |
| Class 7 Elementary Occupations (e.g. fast-food waiter [sic], supermarket cashier, cleaner, labourer) |
| Class 8 Never Worked, Unemployed, Long-term Sick |

These types of classification are clearly useful. Positions within this wealth/income/status hierarchy clearly do have important correlation, with for example, health, diet, conditions at work, age of death, and educational attainment. However, in Part Three I critique such classifications.

Part Two: Marxist analysis of social class

There have been many theorists and activists over the centuries who wrote about, and acted upon, the belief that societies contained antagonistic classes. However, it was Karl Marx (1818—1883) more than anyone else who developed a comprehensive theory about the relationship between social class and social structures, in particular the relationship between social classes in capitalist society. In a capitalist economy the means of production (raw materials, machinery and so on) and the means of distribution (such as transport) and exchange (such as finance companies and banks) are concentrated into a few hands. This capitalist world order is based on a few owning the means of production, and the vast majority being forced to sell their labour power in order to survive. Workers are paid only a proportion of the value they create in productive labour. Therefore, the capitalist mode of production is a system of exploitation of one class (the working class) by another (the capitalist class).

For Marx this class exploitation and domination are reflected in the social relations of production. These are how people relate to each other — for example relationships between ‘bosses’ and senior management, supervisors/foremen/ women/middle management and, for example, shopfloor workers in factories, finance companies, telesales centres, offices and schools.

A condensed definition of social class is that,
Classes are large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation (in most cases fixed and formulated by law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organisation of labour, by the dimensions of the share of the social wealth of which they dispose and their mode of acquiring it. (Lenin 1965: 421)

Marx, as evidenced by the introductory quote to this chapter, believed that the proletariat and bourgeoisie (workers and capitalists respectively) are in objective conflict with each other: the former are materially exploited by the latter whether they subjectively know it or not, or whether they like it or not.

Furthermore, during most periods of history, the state acts, to a major degree, in the interests of the ruling capitalist class. Politics is about the allocation of scarce resources in society. It is about who gets what and who doesn’t, who wins and who loses, who is empowered and who is disempowered, ‘who gets the gravy’ and who has to make it. It is also about how this system is organised, legitimated and resisted. And it is about how, to refer to Althusser’s concepts, ideological state apparatuses (such as the education system and the mass media) and the repressive state apparatuses (such as the police, the law, the army) seek to ensure the continuation and enforcement of the current system.

**Class consciousness**

Marxists believe that the point is not simply to describe the world but to change it. Class consciousness does not follow automatically or inevitably from the objective fact of economic class position. Marx’s The Poverty of Philosophy [1847] distinguishes between a ‘class-in-itself’ (an objective determination relating to class position) and a ‘class-for-itself’ (a subjective appreciation of class consciousness). The Communist Manifesto [1848] (1978b) explicitly identifies ‘[the] formation of the proletariat into a class’ as the key political task facing the communists. In The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon [1852] Marx observes,

> In so far as millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that divide their mode of life, their interests and their cultural formation from those of the other classes and bring them into conflict with those classes, they form a class. In so far as these small peasant proprietors are merely connected on a local basis, and the identity of their interests fails to produce a feeling of community, national links, or a political organisation, they do not form a class. (Marx [1852] 1974: 239)

The process (and conceptual category) which links economic and social class is that of ‘class consciousness’. The class conflict arising from class consciousness and class struggle is fundamental to understanding economic, political and educational change. It is also fundamental in understanding why some social classes of children and students do, on average, so very much better than others.

**The changing composition of social classes**
In the introductory quotation to this chapter Marx refers to two mutually antagonistic classes in capitalist society, the proletariat (working class) and the bourgeoisie (the capitalist class). However, social class, for Marx, is not simply monolithic nor static. Under capitalist economic laws of motion the working class is constantly decomposed and reconstituted due to changes in the forces of production, technological changes in the type of work. New occupations, such as telesales and computing have come into existence, others, such as coal mining, manufacturing and other manual working class occupations, decline.

Class as internally differentiated

There are manifestly different layers, or strata among the working classes. Skilled workers, (if in work, and particularly in full-time, long-term work), in general have a higher standard of living than semi-skilled or unskilled, or unemployed workers. Their income and wealth are likely to be considerably higher. They are more likely, for example, to have equity on an owner-occupied home. In contrast, families in poorer sections of the working class, may have no wealth whatsoever, and are far more likely to live in private rented accommodation or in council housing. Whatever their stratum, or ‘layer’ in the working class, however, Marxists assert that there is a common identity of interest between these strata.

Intermediate class locations — the ‘new middle class’

Another economic change is the growth of a professional and managerial stratum, such as social workers, teachers, lecturers in further and higher education, probation officers, employment service workers, local government workers. These are ‘between capital and labour’ in the sense that while being entirely dependent on capital, often in the shape of the national or local state, they exercise supervisory functions over the working class (Walker 1979: 5). Teachers or supervisors or office managers are not capitalists — they do not themselves take profit from the surplus value extracted from working-class labour. Nor are they working class in the sense that they have surplus value directly extracted from their own labour. For many Marxists they are defined as working class. For others they are a new middle class, while for yet others they occupy a contradictory class location (see Edgell 1993 and German 1996 for discussion).

Many of them have a consciousness of status in which they place themselves above other, especially manual, sectors of the working class. However, on the other hand, their conditions of work and pay have resulted in a degree of proletarianisation — loss of autonomy, loss of status, loss of pay and also loss of jobs. Once secure professions are now, since the Thatcher governments, subject to loss of job security, privatisation, and redundancy. Many of ‘the new middle class’ identify with the aims and values of the working class.

Criticisms of Marxist social class analysis

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There are a number of objections to Marxist social class analysis put forward by rival sociological theories such as Weberian analysis, Functionalism and Postmodernism.

1. Social class and individualism

First, some say ‘we are all individuals, why can’t we treat people simply as individuals?’ A Marxist objection to this criticism is that this ignores or denies the well substantiated patterns of treatment, lifestyle, and ways in which we relate to others in the employment and educational processes. It ignores the social relationships we have with our employers/employees, our teachers. It also ignores the different relationships we have to ‘the means of production’. Do we own the bakery or the factory, or the school, or the bank, or the insurance company or fashion house or football club — either as outright owner, senior manager, or major shareholder — or are we employed by the owner(s)?

2. Social class and post-Fordism/Post-Modernism

Secondly, perhaps the most frequent ‘common-sense’ rejection of class is that it is an anachronistic, outdated category which is no longer relevant in the context of a (postmodern) society which has become ‘classless’ — as, for example, claimed by the former Conservative British Prime Minister, John Major. A similar claim — that the old establishment is being replaced by a new, larger, more meritocratic middle class. . . that will include millions of people who traditionally see themselves as working class but whose ambitions are far broader than those of their parents’ and grandparents’ has been made, more recently (in January 1999) by Tony Blair (White 1999). Since the consumer boom of the 1950s, they claim, and since social mobility — moving from one class to another — has been made easier by the expansion of higher education since 1960s, people are less imprisoned (or liberated) by their class — ‘anybody can become anything they want’.

For the most part these theories agree that class has only disappeared relatively recently from the historical stage (i.e. in the post-war period and for many not until the political changes of the 1980s — the virtual demise of Soviet style ‘communism’). They also argue that the disappearance of class has resulted from cultural changes occurring as a result of economic changes such as the transition from a mass production (‘Fordist’) to a specialist production (‘post-Fordist’) economy. Their claim is that relations of production have been superseded in political, educational and social importance by relations of consumption; that we live in a postmodern and post Fordist society and economy — there is no mass production assembly line culture, no longer mass production and no mass consumption any more. Instead there are myriad ways of working, types of work, types of product, types of consumption, brand names, niches in the market. The social and cultural order organised around class has been replaced, they allege, by a ‘new order’ based on individual rights, social mobility, job mobility, geographical mobility, consumer choice, lifestyle choice, choice over sexual identity and type of sexuality. Sanders et al. (1999), however, point out that such post-Fordist changes are limited to certain labour market and production sectors, in certain areas of the globe, and that these changes are cosmetic. Whether individuals work in computer- and consumer-driven niche production, their relationship to the means of production is essentially the same.

3. Social class and identity
Social class and education

Postmodernists and others (see German 1996) then proceed to say that people no longer identify themselves by their social class, or if they do, it is one, not a hugely important, self-identifier. Subjectivities, the ways we define ourselves are complex, and we define ourselves according to many aspects of our person and our behaviour — what we do, where we get our entertainment, how we dress, for example. They suggest that class identity and affiliation are outdated concepts.

Postmodernist accounts of identity, of a fragmented, de-centred subjectivity are currently intellectually dominant. Postmodernists have objected to the Marxist project of class struggle on the grounds that it denies or suppresses the facts of ‘social difference’. David Harvey summarises this critique:

Concentration on class alone is seen to hide, marginalise, disempower, repress and perhaps even oppress all kinds of ‘others’ precisely because it cannot and does not acknowledge explicitly the existence of heterogeneities and differences based on, for example, race, gender, age, ability, culture, locality, ethnicity, religion, community, consumer preferences, group affiliation, and the like. (Harvey 1993: 101)

At times in the history of the socialist project the white, male, heterosexual worker was represented as the exclusive (or at least the most significant) model of worker. However, current academic neo-Marxism, and Radical Left political activity have significantly departed from this exclusivity, and recognised the importance of non-social class movements.

Nomenclature

In Britain, official classifications of social class are based, not only on income, but Weberian notions of status and associated consumption patterns and lifestyles. Thus for Weberian sociologists, some classes are ‘higher’ and some lower’ than issues of nomenclature — what we call people — are crucial in understanding the nature of social class. For example, the use of the terms ‘upper class’ and lower class can imply a justification for the existence of differentiated social classes and says nothing about the relationship between these classes. For Marxists, the terms ‘ruling’ and/or ‘capitalist class’, on the one hand, and ‘working class’, on the other, however, implies a specific relationship between them.

Hiding the ruling capitalist class and its solidarity

Such classifications need to be criticised on a number of grounds. First, they ignore, indeed hide, the existence of the capitalist class — that class which dominates society economically and politically. This class owns the means of production (and the means of distribution and exchange). These consumption-based patterns mask the existence of the super-rich and the super-powerful — the ruling class. In the Registrar-General’s classification, the mega-rich John Paul Getty, Richard Branson and the Duke of Westminster are placed in the same class as, for example, university lecturers, journalists and solicitors.
Hiding working class unity and its solidarity

A related criticism of consumption based classifications is that, by segmenting the working class, they both (a) hide the existence of the working class and (b) serve a purpose of ‘dividing and ruling’ the working class. They segment different groups of (for example white-collar and blue-collar) workers. Such classifications hide and work to inhibit or disguise the common interests of these different groups. They serve, in some way, to inhibit the development of a common (class) consciousness against the exploiting capitalist class. In a similar way, Marxists note that the promotion of ethnic or ‘racial’ divisions between black and white workers, between women and men and between heterosexuals and homosexuals also serves to weaken the solidarity and ‘muscle’ of the working class.

Marxists note that sex or ‘race’ exploitation6 is very widespread. However, in contrast to the exploitation of women and particular minority ethnic groups, Marxists go on to note the fundamental nature of class exploitation in capitalist economy. Social class exploitation is seen as basic and necessary to the continuation of capitalism. Capitalism can (and may) survive with sex and ‘race’ equality — indeed, for neo-liberals7 these are desirable attributes of an economy and education/training system — but to conceive of equality between different social classes in a capitalist economy and society is impossible. Capitalism is defined as the exploitation of one class by another.

This is not to trivialise the issue of identity and of identity politics, either in the micro-sphere of day-to-day personal existence, delight and dismissal, or in the macro-sphere of structural forms of positive and negative discrimination. Social class is clearly only one of a range of possible identifications and one which is sometimes less immediately ‘obvious’ than, for example, those of gender or race or religion or fashion. However, for millions, the duality ‘worker/boss’ is not at all abstract. Despite political and academic claims that ‘class is dead’, it should be noted that the proportion of [British] voters believing there is a ‘class struggle’ in Britain rose from around 60 per cent in the early 1960s to 81 per cent in the mid-1990s, according to Gallup (Deer 1996). Similarly a New York Times poll in 1996 ‘found that 55 per cent of Americans now defined themselves as working class’ (Leys and Panitch 1998: 20—21).

4. Social class, class conflict and political strategy

A range of sociologists, politicians and political theorists and postmodernist social theorists have challenged socialist and Marxist analysis and socialist solidaristic, egalitarian educational and political programmes. In addition to postmodernist academics, there are a number of political tendencies seeking to bury Marxism and socialism and egalitarianism. These include Radical Right-wing Conservative Thatcherites/Reaganites and their neo-liberal/neo-conservative successors. They also include ‘Third Way’ politicians such as Bill Clinton and Tony Blair.8

The political argument related to the above is that ‘the class struggle is over’, that we live in a free and democratic society which is not characterised any more by such old-fashioned struggles as those of workers against bosses, or of the working class against the ruling capitalist class. Instead, for postmodernists, there are just local, particularistic struggles around a myriad of political issues and aspects of identity
Social class and education

Such arguments, together with status- and consumption-based classifications of social class, gloss over and hide the fundamentally antagonistic relationship between the two main classes in society, the working class and the capitalist class. In Marxist analysis, the working class includes not only manual workers but also millions of white-collar workers — such as bank clerks and supermarket checkout operators, as well, whose conditions of work are, in many ways, similar to those of manual workers. They are exploited in fundamentally the same way as are the manual working classes (German 1996). While it may be of sociological interest to be informed of, for example, the different leisure pursuits of different occupational groups, research based on occupational hierarchies tells us little, if anything about the relationship between social classes, which, Marxists argue, is based fundamentally on conflict. This conflict is not just ‘class war from below’, workers on strike, for example. Class war takes place from above as well as below, with the ruling capitalist class holding and using the levers of power, using, by and large, the ideological and repressive apparatuses of the state.

Part Three: Marxist theory and education

With respect to schooling and education, what are the detailed explanations for working class under-achievement in schools and in education that follow from the above four analyses? Who is to blame? What, therefore, should be the locus and the focus of policy?

• Should the blame be attached to the individual child, as lazy or individually unintelligent?

• Should the blame be spread more widely, attached to the working class itself — (its ‘defective culture’ and child-rearing patterns, its supposed attitude to life such as the demand for ‘immediate gratification’, or its ‘defective genetic pool’)?

• Should the blame be attached to individual schools and individual ‘ineffective’ teachers? Will the problem of differential social class achievement be sorted out by naming and shaming and improving ineffective schools and going along with the Effective Schools’ Movement, improving school management and performance.9

Or is the problem a larger one, that of (capitalist) society itself — that schools’ formal curriculum and the hidden curriculum are deliberately geared to failing most working-class children, and to elevating, middle- and upper-class children above them? In other words, is the problem with the way society is organised, organised around the exploitation of the working classes by the ruling capitalist class with the assistance — willing or unwilling — of teachers?

Marxists would accept the final one of the above explanations. I now explore Marxist analyses of education. In particular, I refer to some of the concepts of Althusser, Bourdieu, and Bowles and Gintis, and contemporary work of Jill Duffield and her colleagues.

The National Curriculum is clearly a political and ideological creation, as indeed is the creation of any education or schooling system, or school or college curriculum. The aims of the Conservative governments’ National Curriculum were clearly ‘culturally restorationist’, an attempt to purge the existing school curricula of their anti-Conservative content. A clear aim was to remove oppositional liberal progressive and socialist ideas from schools and from the minds of future citizens, to create and perpetuate a Conservative hegemony in ideas.*
Reproduction theorists (who were Structuralist neo-Marxist, looking at the power of the capitalist economic structure to heavily affect education and social structures) and analysts agree that this is, largely, what schools do. However, unlike Functionalisits, rather than welcoming this ideological hegemonising, this use of schools by the ruling capitalist class to reproduce society culturally, economically and ideologically, Marxists critique it and regard it as immoral and in need of radical change.

Below, I give examples of Structuralist neo-Marxist theorists, or theorists working broadly within this tradition, and seek to explain a number of their key concepts.

- Bourdieu and his theory of Schooling as Cultural Reproduction, and his concepts of Habitus and of Cultural Capital, whereby schools recognise and reward middle-class knowledge, language, body language.

- These theories can incorporate Bernstein and his theory of class specific Language Codes, whereby schools reward middle-class ‘Elaborated Language’ and devalue working-class ‘Restricted Language’.

- Bowles and Gintis’ theory of Schooling as Economic Reproduction, whereby the Correspondence Principle explains the way in which the hidden curriculum of schools reproduces the social (and economic) class structure of society within the school, training school students for different economic and social futures on the basis of their social and economic pasts — their parental background.

- Althusser and his theory of Schooling as Ideological Reproduction, whereby schooling as an Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) works to persuade children that the status quo is fair and legitimate.

**Schooling as cultural reproduction’1**

The concepts of culture and cultural capital are central to Bourdieu’s analysis of how the mechanisms of cultural reproduction functions within schools. For Bourdieu the education system is not meritocratic. Its major function is to maintain and legitimate a class-divided society. In his view schools are middle-class institutions run by and for the middle class. Cultural reproduction works in three ways.

**Cultural capital — knowing that**

Firstly, it works through the formal curriculum and its assessment. The curriculum and examinations serve to confirm the advantages of the middle-class while having the appearance of being a free and fair competition. They clearly privilege and validate particular types of ‘cultural capital’, the type of elite knowledge that comes naturally to middle- and, in particular, upper-class children, but which is not ‘natural’ or familiar to non-elite children and school students. Therefore, at the same time, and as a consequence, it disconfirms, rejects, invalidates the cultures of other groups. Individuals in classrooms and school corridors bring with them and exhibit different sets of linguistic and cultural competencies. Knowledge that is presented, and rewarded, (or disregarded and penalised) for being part of, or not part of, the formal curriculum.
Cultural capital — knowing bow
Secondly, cultural reproduction works through the hidden curriculum. This second type of cultural capital is ‘knowing how, how to speak to teachers, not only knowing about books, but also knowing how to talk about them. It is knowing how to talk with the teacher, with what body language, accent, colloquialisms, register of voice, grammatical exactitude in terms of the ‘elaborated code’ of language and its associated habitus, or way of behaving.

In a number of social universes, one of the privileges of the dominant, who move in their world as a fish in water, resides in the fact that they need not engage in rational computation in order to reach the goals that best suit their interests. All they have to do is follow their dispositions which, being adjusted to their positions, ‘naturally’ generate practices adjusted to the situation. (Bourdieu 1990:109, quoted in Hatcher 1998a)

For Bourdieu, children and teenagers bring their social class backgrounds into school with them (as well as, of course, other aspects of their subjectivities). Some ways of being and behaving, language, clothing, body language, and attitudes and values are not viewed quite as tolerantly or supportively by teachers as are others. ‘Loud-mouthed’ (i.e. assertive) girls/young women, or large African—Caribbean, or shell-suited cropped headed working-class white young men/boys tend to be regarded as regrettable, ‘nasty’, alien and/or threatening — indeed, suitable subjects for exclusion, if not from school itself then from academic success. Teenagers attending The Ridings Secondary School in Halifax tend to have different expectations, labelling and stereotyped work futures than those attending the selective London Oratory School or the most prestigious of private schools, Benenden or Eton.

Cultural reproduction through separate schooling
Thirdly, cultural reproduction works, in Britain, through the separate system of schooling for the upper and upper middle classes, nearly all of whom send their children to private (independent) schools. Adonis and Pollard show how Britain is still a deeply divided society, characterised by class distinctions. In particular, they focus on the system of secondary education, which is rigidly separated into a flourishing, lavishly-funded private sector, as compared to demoralised, underfinanced public sector. They point out that those who benefit from private education are almost invariably from privileged backgrounds: the fact that they attend ‘the best schools’ and/or the highest status schools in the country merely entrenches their privileges and enhances their prospects still further (Adonis and Pollard 1997).

Schooling as ideological reproduction
Althusser’s analysis of schooling was concerned with a specific aspect of cultural reproduction, namely, ideological reproduction. He suggested that schools are concerned with the reproduction, the recycling of what is regarded as ‘common sense’ — in particular, with an acceptance of current capitalist, individualistic, inegalitarian, consumerist society and economy.
How does the school function as an ISA? Althusser suggests that what children learn at school is ‘know-how’. But besides these techniques and knowledges, and in learning them, children at school also learn the ‘rules’ of good behaviour, rules of respect for the socio—technical division of labour and ultimately the rules of the order established by class domination. The school takes children from every class at infant-school age, and then for years in which the child is most ‘vulnerable’, squeezed between the family state apparatus and the educational state apparatus, it drums into them, whether it uses new or old methods, a certain amount of ‘know-how’ wrapped in the ruling ideology in its pure state (Althusser 1971).

**Schooling as economic reproduction**

Schools play a major role in reproducing educational, social, cultural and economic inequality. For Bowles and Gintis (1976), it is the ‘hidden curriculum’ of the school/further/higher education system which is crucially important in providing capitalism with a workforce which has the personality, attitudes and values which are most useful. Thus the educational system helps integrate youth into the economic system through a structural correspondence between its social relations and those of production. The structure of social relations in education develops the types of personal demeanour, modes of self-presentation, self-image, and social-class identifications which are the crucial ingredients of job adequacy. Specifically, the social relationships of education — the relationships between administrators and teachers, teachers and students, students and students, and students and their work — replicate the hierarchical division of labour (Bowles and Gintis 1976).

They suggest that different levels of education feed workers into different levels within the occupational structure. Furthermore, at each level of the certification process, they showed that, regardless of similar qualifications, job destination was class-related.

**In the classroom: the contemporary work of Jill Duffield and her colleagues**

As part of this social class-based differentiation between schools via ‘the hidden curriculum’, there is ample evidence that the pedagogies — the teaching and learning methods used by teachers and pupils — vary according to the pupils’ social class. Sally Brown, Sheila Riddell and Jill Duffield’s research in the second half of the 1990s involved following two classes in each of four Scottish schools through their first two years of secondary education, observing 204 lessons. Their findings were that children in the two working-class schools spent between 3 and 6 per cent of their time in English class discussion compared with 17 to 25 per cent in the middle-class schools. They observed that pupils in predominantly working-class secondary schools appear to be given many more time-consuming reading and writing tasks than children in middle-class schools and have less opportunity for classroom discussions. Their study demonstrated that teachers of English in the two middle-class schools were more likely to give a reading or writing assignment as homework leaving time in class for feedback and redrafting written work. The long writing tasks were very much associated with control and the lack of discussion was, the writers suggested, also to do with teachers thinking that the children could not really manage to discuss things among themselves.
According to this research, children at the middle-class schools were positive about the individual help they received. This was in contrast to a typical response from a pupil in a working-class school which was: ‘I’d rather get right into it, get on and let them mark it and if there is something wrong, do it again.’ Brown et al. concluded that although social class had been pushed off the research agenda by the focus on school effectiveness and improvement, this particular study indicated that it still needed to be investigated. It seems in many ways to replicate the findings of Bowles and Gintis’ (1976) Schooling in Capitalist America referred to above, concerning the social class based reproductive nature of the curriculum of schools (Brown et al. 1995, 1997; Duffield 1998a, b, c).

**Part Four: Two types of Marxist analysis**

Culturalist or Humanist neo-Marxist theorists of the 1980s and 1990s have paid more attention to the possibility of successful resistance by non-dominant subcultures and groups, and more attention to the ‘clash of ideologies’ than did Structuralist neo-Marxist theorists. They see rather more space for resistance to the dominant politics and culture, and to many of the messages within the National Curriculum (and pedagogy) than did theorists within the more deterministic Structuralist neo-Marxism of the 1970s such as Althusser, Bourdieu, and Bowles and Gintis. Culturalist neo-Marxists criticise the Structuralist neo-Marxist for focusing on the way in which the capitalist economic structures ‘determine’ state policy, with the capitalist state ‘inevitably’ reproducing the capitalist system within and through education.

Culturalist neo-Marxist writers suggest that teachers and schools can make a difference, that they can work to, and have some degree of success in promoting, an ideology, understanding of, and commitment to, for example, antiracism and anti-sexism. As such they refute what they see as the pessimism and determinism and fatalism of the Structuralist neo-Marxists, and stress the power of human agency, the power of people to intervene and to change history.

Sarup (1983) sets out the contribution of Antonio Gramsci (1891—1937) in the Culturalist neo-Marxist understanding of the concept of ideological hegemony, or dominance. For Gramsci, hegemony is the ability of a class to assume a moral and intellectual leadership over other classes without resorting to coercion. In this sense the battle of ideologies, or ‘culture wars’ between different versions of ‘common sense’ (for example, between Conservatism, Liberalism, ‘New Labourism’ and Socialism/Marxism) leaves more space for ‘resistance’ to ruling ideas than does Structuralist neo-Marxist analysis. For Gramsci, the state, and state institutions such as schools, rather than being the servant of the interests of capitalism and the ruling class, were, instead, an arena of class conflict and a site where hegemony has to be continually striven for. Thus schools and other education institutions such as universities are seen as relatively autonomous apparatuses, providing space for oppositional behaviour. They are sites of cultural contestation, where the central messages of schooling and education are often refused and rejected.

Having recognised validity in the above Culturalist Gramscian analysis, I do consider that the particular concepts of Althusser, Bourdieu, and Bowles and Gintis are valid and illuminating. In particular this seems to be the case with respect to the National Curriculum and to restructuring of other education state apparatuses, such as Initial Teacher Education and to the restructuring of education in general. Some neo-Marxists, such as Cole and Hill in the late 1990s, consider the neoMarxist pendulum has swung too far in the Culturalist direction and too far away from
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Structuralist neo-Marxist reproduction analysis. However, while I do think that Culturalist neo-Marxists are too starry-eyed about the possibility of major change, I also recognise the debilitating and counter-productive effects of unmitigated deterministic Structuralist analysis.

With ‘human agency’, with human resistance, and with collective class consciousness and action, Marxists would argue, then, although there are major difficulties, people can successfully struggle to change events and systems — at micro-levels and at societal levels. In this struggle for social justice the ideological state apparatuses of education can play a crucial role.

Conclusion
Postmodernists explain contemporary developments in society and the restructuring of schooling and education systems, such as that brought about by the 1988 Education Reform Act in England and Wales, as reflecting the increased diversity of society, the increased position and self-perception of people as consumers. They see, for example, the end of mass provision in schooling (such as the comprehensive school) and the emergence of educational niche-marketing with a variety of types of school as both welcome and inevitable — reflecting economic and social changes.

Marxist interpretation, whether Culturalist neo-Marxist or Structuralist neo-Marxist, is very different. These changes are seen as rendering the schooling and education systems as more locked into and more supportive of the current requirements of capitalism. The Conservative ‘reforms’, continued in essence by ‘New Labour’, are seen as reinforcing economic, ideological and cultural reproduction in support of the status quo of social class exploitation.

While it is not essentially the intention to demarcate and intensify gender and racial differentiation more rigidly, it is, through a use of the various Marxist concepts outlined in this chapter, possible to see that the essential intention and the effect of Conservative government policy has been to increase social class differentiation, that is, to increase differences between and within the social classes. The rich have got richer while the poor have got poorer, in income, wealth — and in education.

Suggested further reading

Notes

1 The sociological analysis of Max Weber (1864—1920), like that of Karl Marx, stressed the conflict between different groups in society. However, unlike Marx, he considered that this conflict was between different status groups as much as between different social classes.

2 Functionalists, following Emile Durkheim (1858—1917) justify inequality and stratification as being necessary for economic efficiency, profitability and social stability. Talcott Parsons and Davis and Moore are leading functionalist writers. For them, the primary function of schooling and education is fitting people into society. Post-modernism is described in Section 3 below. Its major theorists are Lyotard, Baudrillard, Foucault and Derrida. Sarup (1993) and Boyne and Rattansi (1990) are accessible summaries of postmodernism. Butler (1990) and Lather (1991) are prominent postmodern feminists.

3 By ‘classless’ John Major (Conservative Prime Minister 1990—97) presumably meant ‘socially mobile’ and meritocratic.

4 Fordist refers to assembly line mass production and, historically, its associated limited consumer choice. When the Ford Motor Company first started mass production of cars for a mass market, it was said that you could buy any colour you wanted as long as it was black.

5 This class and its occupational, familial, educational and other interconnections has been well documented, for example by Adonis and Pollard (1997), and might be described as the ‘overclass’.

6 In the light of this it is interesting to note the renewed interest in class analysis within British Feminism see, for example, Beverly Skeggs’, Formations of class and Gender (1997), and the first of a proposed new series on ‘Women and Social Class’, class Matters (1997) edited by Pat Mahony and Christine Zmroczek. Of course, for socialist feminists such as Jane Kelly (1999) the class basis of women’s oppression has remained their key ideological analysis. The class-based analysis can be applied to oppression and exploitation of some minority ethnic groups such as the African—Caribbean descended, Pakistani-descended and Bangladeshi-descended population. While there is ‘Paki-bashing’, widespread sexism, and, indeed homophobia, social class position is, for Marxists, the primary form of exploitation and oppression. In a nutshell, rich women and bourgeois blacks have, in important respects, an easier life than working-class populations, whatever their ethnicity, sex, sexuality.

7 Neo-liberals are one particular type of Radical Right conservatives, probably the dominant type/group. They believe in the primacy of profit, that the national and local state should be ‘rolled back’, that state-controlled industries and utilities should be privatised, that ‘competition’, diversity of product, ‘choice’ should characterise services such as schooling, pensions, health, welfare benefits. As such, the Conservative Education Reform Act of 1988, except for the statedetermined National Curriculum, are neo-liberal measures.

mainly management-based factors internal to the school. For criticisms of the School Effectiveness Movement, see Brown et al. 1995; Chitty 1997; Hatcher 1998h; Hill 2000 forthcoming. The main criticism is that the School Effectiveness Movement ignores questions of social class intake to a school, and ignores related questions about the nature of the curriculum.


11 See, for example, Bourdieu and Passeron (1977).

References


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