Social class defined
Social class is an interaction between a person, a person’s behavior, and a person’s environment.

Why propose another definition of social class?
Definitions of social class tend to be specific. From one perspective specificity is effective and useful and from another perspective it is not. When definitions of social class are specific then seeing social class as both personal and social creates a clash of definitions. It is efficient to explore social class from within a specific paradigm, but it is not effective in understanding the totality of social class to remain within a single paradigm. A definition of social class from an interaction paradigm allows a broader understanding of social class.

The simple question “What is social class” leads to broadly complex answers. Definitions of social class abound and are often contradictory. Is social class a trait or a state, is it static or dynamic, is it internal or external to the person, is it contextual or eternal, is it objective or subjective? Often the marker of social class, for example occupational prestige, is substituted as a definition for social class. This is similar to the mistake of using IQ test scores for a definition of intelligence.

Different ideas of the nature of inquiry lead to different ideas about the definition of social class. Levels of accuracy are an ongoing question in the sciences and any discipline that uses any sort of measurement. Discussions about the Standard Error of Measurement are common in interpreting research results. The quest for absolute accuracy, for 0.00 Standard Error of Measurement, requires an absolute differential definition that is precise and universal and a measure that is unerringly accurate. Both the universal definition and the precise measure seem unlikely to emerge given the history of scholarship on social class. Social class is just too
messy for precision. A dynamic, contextual, and co-constructive definition of social class, or of anything else, is a problem if you are seeking accuracy. However, if you are seeking to explore human interactions, which are by definition messy, then dynamic, contextual, and co-constructive definitions are required.

Context

“Do you have a gender if you are alone?”

“Do you have a social class if you are alone?”

For me, the answer to these questions is “Yes, and . . .”. For me gender and social class are person issues and behavior issues and occur within an environment. Even alone you are in some physical environment.

Toward the end of understanding social class, and even to the extent of measuring social class, I found myself increasingly drawn to contextual and dynamic views of social class. Working on the idea of social class in mental health (Barratt, Burrow, Kendrick, Parrott, & Tippin, 2003) the contextual idea of an individual’s social class became an issue in our discussions. Think of the supervisor of a hotel cleaning crew and her work context with the women and men she supervises, her work context with her supervisor, and her home context. Her social status, one component of social class, changes in each context. Interrogating this idea, the members of my research group were confronted with the question of what exactly changes; her identity, her self-concept, her relationships, or what?

This problem of the contextual and dynamic nature of class seemed intractable to us at the time. After completing a book on social class on campus (Barratt, 2011) that used multiple lenses and multiple definitions of class the context problem re-emerged in the question of how and if to include all of the definitions of social class into a single and useful model. Combining the ideas of social class as identity, social class as capital, social class as prestige, social class as educational attainment, etc. was not on my agenda when I wrote the book. I was satisfied helping readers to consider social class from multiple perspectives.

As a doctoral student I had studied Lewin’s (1951) life space equation B=f(P,E) (Behavior is a function of person – environment interaction). I had later read Bandura’s (1989) B-P-E model. I had always liked these interaction models that put people and behavior into context. It occurred to me that I could map social class onto these ideas of behavior, person, and environment to understand and more accurately define social class in a dynamic and contextual way. After several trial sketches a pattern began to emerge and things began to fall into place. I wrote three (person, environment, behavior) short list of dimensions that would best reflect social class. There is a potentially huge list of dimensions under person, or environment, or behavior and this model can be expanded or contracted to meet the analytical needs of the moment. I chose contraction as a way to simplify the idea of social class as interaction here.

It is important to note that the lists of dimensions listed under person, environment, and behavior are neither exhaustive, not mutually exclusive, and those listed here were included for efficacy and efficiency. Readers are welcome to expand each list in order to highlight certain issues. For example I have often used academic capital and leadership capital when writing about students. Strict adherence to Bourdieu’s (1986) three forms of capital, economic, cultural, and social, would require that academic capital and leadership capital is included under cultural capital. Utility would suggest that academic capital and leadership capital may be featured prominently, and alone, as dimensions under the person section. The list of dimensions in person, environment, and behavior should reflect the problem the interaction model is being used to address.
Person

In the person category social class identity is the first dimension for many reasons. Bourdieu’s (1986) three forms of capital are very useful, and can fall under both person and environment and fill out the basic dimensions under person. There is a strong relationship between an individual’s social class identity and their economic capital, their cultural capital, and their social capital. These interactions within the person category reflect the interactions between the three categories of person, environment, and behavior. For example an individual’s social class identity will be sensitive to their economic environment. Were I to be in a meeting with the elite wealthy, an unlikely event, my current felt social class identity would be quite different than if I were in a meeting with people in my church.

Social class identity is similar to other forms of identity, and includes our social class of origin identity, current felt social class identity, and attributed social class identity. Economic capital is income and wealth. Cultural capital is prestige knowledge and skill, certificates of attainment like college degrees or even occupational titles. Cultural capital can include academic knowledge and skills, leadership knowledge and skills, or even spiritual knowledge and skills. Social capital is the network of people who can be called upon for mutual work and benefit. These networks take skill to build. All forms of capital take time to accumulate, and some people begin to accumulate these forms of capital at home at a young age, and some begin to accumulate capital at an older age. Beginning to accumulate any form of capital at a young age is obviously to anyone’s advantage.

Environment

Environments involve physical space, so the physical environment has been included as the first dimension. Space also reflects the economic, cultural, and social context in which that space is found. Look around you now as you read this. How many social class messages are there in your immediate physical space? Bourdieu’s (1986) three forms of capital map well to the disciplines of economics, sociology, and social psychology. This match in the categories listed in person and environment has great utility when exploring the interactions between a person and the world. My economic capital exists within a larger economic environment. My economic environment changes when I travel and consequently my economic capital changes. The relative costs of a good meal in Rio de Janeiro and Terre Haute, and my reaction to those costs differences, illustrates how the economic environment and my perception of economic capital interact.

The environment axis should be seen as reflecting the immediate physical, economic, cultural, and social environment as well as the local environment, the larger regional environment, and even the global physical, economic, cultural, and social environment. Where you choose to draw the boundaries between those ever increasingly sized environments will be a matter of the analysis you want. Bronfenbrenner (1979) developed a system describing our layers of physical environments ranging from the immediate microsystem to the, meso, exo, and macrosystem. Bronfenbrenner also included the chronosystem to include the passage of time as another way to understand the environment around us. This is an interesting analytical tool to explore the layers of the social class world around us.

Behavior

Behavior is both conscious and unconscious, is both psychological and physical. Behaviors mediates between the person and the environment. Actions are gross motor behaviors; actions are our bodies in motion. Gross motor actions are mostly conscious and mostly subject to voluntary control. Contemporary research indicates that many facial expressions are not easily
subject to voluntary control except by well trained actors. Awareness of one’s own and other’s body postures is one aspect of actions. For some people body posture is unconscious, and for others, like actors, it is a matter of conscious control.

Adding the psychological dimensions of perception and meaning making helps understand our interaction with the world more completely. How we perceive and how we make meaning is based on our previous perceptions, on our social capital, on our cultural capital, and on a myriad of other factors including what is in the environment to be perceived. Objects, phenomenon, people, and actions in the environment around us are all perceived and meaning is made of these objects, phenomenon, people, and actions. This is largely unconscious; however contemporary research shows us how individuals can modify their perceptions and meaning making through awareness and training.

Learning how to perceive consciously and make meaning consciously are central to class consciousness.

Theory in action

Exploring the question of the social status of the hotel maid supervisor helps to understand the usefulness of this model. Her social class is a function of the interaction between her self (person), her perceptions and meaning making (behavior) within a specific context (environment). Change the environment and you change the interaction. Meeting with people she supervises in the basement and meeting with people who supervise her in an upstairs meeting room are different environments with different effects on her perception and meaning making which in turn affect her current felt social class. The environment determines how she acts and feels and thinks in each setting. Her current felt social class (what she thinks about hers self) and her attributed social class (what others think about her) both vary according to her environment. In this interaction view social class is dynamic.

To assert that social class is occupational prestige or educational attainment is to assert that social class is based solely on cultural capital. To assert that social class is world view, that it is solely about perception and meaning making, is to assert that social class is only about psychological behavior. To assert that social class is about groups of people classified together is to assert that social class is solely about the environment.

Acquiring a college degree, part of cultural capital, changes your social class, and changes social class in the context of your behaviors and your environment. Your environment affects your social class identity. Your self-concept is one thing if you have a degree from The University of Iowa in a room of Harvard graduates. Your self-concept is something else if you have a degree from The University of Iowa in a room of Northwest Missouri State University graduates. Prestige is relative and social class is dynamic.

What’s your social class? Your social class is an interaction between you, your environment, and your behavior. As you change personally, your social class changes. As your behavior changes, your social class changes. As your environment changes your social class changes. You affect your environment through your behavior and your environment affects you through your perceptions and meaning makings in a constant state of dynamic interaction.

Static single variable definitions of social class are effective within a single paradigm. Static single variable definitions of social class inadequate when working with multiple paradigms of social class. The real world is complex and messy and requires definitions that capture an appropriate amount of that mess as a way to help make sense of social class and the world.
Social Class Consciousness on Campus

Will Barratt

I often feel that I grew along with the various consciousness movements; women’s consciousness, black consciousness, political consciousness, men’s consciousness, and the many other consciousness movements that have emerged in the past 60 years. I have always appreciated these movements because they add important dimensions to our lives. With the rise of each movement, and with its maturing, discussions become more and more interesting, the body politic gets more complicated, and the world gets a little more inclusive as each group claims more consciousness. Defining ourselves through increased consciousness has become part of every movement. Class consciousness, like other forms of consciousness, is individual. It is about you and it is about me.

Twice in my life I have lived in countries that were nominally Communist; Budapest, Hungary in 1987-1988 and Beijing, People’s Republic of China in 1995-1996. Communist rhetoric, especially about social class, was a background hum for both of these experiences. Class consciousness surfaced most often when I was discussing education with campus colleagues. Class consciousness was part of their world view, part of their ideology, part of their practice, and part of their lives. A Hungarian colleague was given a place in his university class because of his proletariat background — affirmative action for the proletariat. Because of this class based advantage in his early life his class consciousness got a huge jump start. A Chinese colleague was sent into the country side with his family for re-education because his father had a photograph of a Swedish missionary who had taught him English as a child. This Chinese colleague’s first school experience was when he stepped onto a college campus as a first year student in his 30s. Attributed social class kept this colleague out of the educational system until he was in his 30s, making class consciousness a foreground feature during his life. Attributed social class played a large part in the lives of these people. Communist rhetoric, education, and media pushed for a certain sort of class consciousness.

Students going to college in the US don’t have these experiences. Class consciousness and class awareness are well in the background. At most the typical US college first year student is aware that social class has something to do with money. If they have been paying attention to the current news they are aware of income disparity between the 1% and the 99%, but this is a different level of class consciousness than being sent to the country side for re-education.

In the US, and certainly on US college campuses, we don’t have any sort of push for class consciousness. While “First Generation Students” are the shiny new minority on campus the recognition of this new social class minority has not led to any emphasis on exploring social class on campus. This is a similar pattern to the recognition of ethnic minority students that does not lead to any exploration of ethnic majority students. Consciousness in the US is for members of minorities, not for members of majorities.
I would argue that most of the class consciousness that occurs on campus comes can be seen in the members of campus social class minorities and comes from their contrast with the social class majority on campus. That contrast initiated social class consciousness is a start. There are types and levels of class consciousness. More complexly, where you start determines your path to consciousness. Working Class / Poverty Class students on campus will begin the journey to class consciousness from their social class world view and from the consciousness that comes from experiencing social class contrast on campus. The majority class student on campus, child of college educated parents, has no contrast on campus to push the beginning of the journey to class consciousness. The reality is that the majority class student on campus has been set up to be isolated from social class contrast, to live in a bubble that prevents social class consciousness. This isolation may be intentional, but the forces of evil inhibiting class consciousness are more probably grounded in ignorance than in maliciousness.

So, how do we initiate discussions about class consciousness among the majority class student? How do we challenge their assumptions of their social class normality? How do we help them to realize that they are members of a minority social class group in the US and are in the majority on campus?

The answer is simple – start a discussion. Getting social class out into the open is the first step. Social class consciousness is a long journey with many steps, like all other forms of consciousness.

A level of social class consciousness is an interesting idea and is one way to think about developing increasing consciousness. Below are two endpoints on a scale of social class consciousness from 0 to 10. For an interesting exercise, fill in descriptions for the levels in the middle. What are the waypoints along the journey? What marks a step forward in consciousness for you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 0</td>
<td>Denial – “We really don’t have social class in the US.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Denial – “Social class isn’t important.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Denial – “Social class doesn’t affect me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>Denial – “Social class affects others, not me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>Level of awareness but no action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 5</td>
<td>Level of awareness with some action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 6</td>
<td>Level of awareness with significant action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 7</td>
<td>Level of awareness and action, but some limitations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 8</td>
<td>Level of awareness and action, with some significant limitations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 9</td>
<td>Level of awareness and action, with significant limitations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 10</td>
<td>Full Social Class Consciousness - I know that social class is about cultural, social, and economic capital, identity, culture, and is also about many other factors. I know that social class is personal, social, and economic. I recognize the privilege I have based on my social class of origin, current felt social class, and attributed social class. I recognize the social class market and population segmenting in the US. I recognize how social class is reproduced by social, political, media, and economic institutions. I advocate for minimizing the disadvantaging and advantaging of people based on social class groups. I understand different national and cultural contexts for social class. I recognize that my consciousness requires action.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your notion of class consciousness may go all the way to 11. Great. For me Level 10 requires constant work to maintain as the new things you learn are integrated with what you already know.

Whatever you do, start a conversation about social class.
Social class in English language movies

I was asked recently to help identify a few movies in which social class plays a significant part. While there are many, here is a short list (with dates) of some movies that I know. Some go back a ways, like *My Man Godfrey* (1936), and some are more contemporary, like *Crash* (2004).


Multiple Social Class Lenses and Concepts

As I move forward in my thinking about social class on campus I have occasion to revisit some past thoughts and writings. This makes me realize that some people will be starting to read about class now, and that I need to reprise some basic notions. Toward that end, here is a primer on multiple ways to think about social class and a few key concepts to use when working with social class on campus.

Abstract and personal paradigms for class

There are two primary ways that social class appears in the literature: First that social class is abstract. Second that social class is personal. The idea that social class is personal doesn’t yet have much literature, but that area is growing. These are two very different approaches to social class, and both are very useful. As a professor I appreciate the abstract, the generalization, the simplification of combining the many into the one. On the other hand, none of my students and none of my colleagues are an abstract, they are people. I appreciate the personal view of social class also. Obviously a combination of personal and abstract views of class will give us a richer and more complete view.

Two abstract views of social class

There are two primary schools of thought dealing with the abstract idea of social class: First is sociological. Second is economic. Again, both of these have contributions to make and insights into social class. Looking at aggregations of people, at societies, leads to certain types of abstractions. Looking at aggregations of people, at economies, leads to other types of abstractions. I am sure there are more lenses also.

Even within the economic models of social class there are all manner of ways to examine it. Macroeconomic and microeconomic models of social class come to mind. Even within sociology multiple models of social class come to mind, systemic, structural, and interpersonal models. There are more economic and sociological lenses also.

Six personal views of social class

There is no definitive list of personal views of class. I propose six views of social class as personal: Class as capital, class as identity, class as culture, class as enacted role, class as educational attainment, and finally class as occupation. While I am sure there are more, this is a good and mostly inclusive list. One advantage of this list is that most of us can remember six things.
**Social class as capital.** Bourdieu’s (1986) enumerates three forms of capital as he expanded on the traditional Marxist view of economic capital by adding cultural capital and social capital. His article is short and well worth reading so I will not repeat his words here. A moment’s reflection comes up with some of the limits of his list of three forms of capital. This is akin to recognizing the limitations of six ways to think about social class as personal. Other forms of capital are context specific, like academic capital, or leadership capital, or even spiritual capital. All forms of capital are important.

One issue that I have with Bourdieu’s ideas of cultural and social capital is that there is prestige cultural capital and prestige social capital, as well as non-prestige cultural capital, and non-prestige social capital. Prestige cultural capital reflects the knowledge, skills, and trappings of the prestige class, and non-prestige cultural capital reflects the knowledge, skills, and trappings of the underclass. Similarly, social capital is class bound. Knowing people who can help you with your financial portfolio is different than knowing people who can help you fix your car. Both your financial portfolio, if you have one, and your car, if you have one, are important. It is just that a financial portfolio has higher prestige.

**Social class as identity.** We each have a social class of origin, a current felt social class, and an attributed social class. Where we came from, what we think of ourselves, and what others think about us. As with gender identity and ethnic identity our social class of origin identity formed early at home and in the social settings we were in as children. Our current felt social class reflects the experience we have had with social class and in our ability to compare ourselves to others. While most college students will identify as middle class, this is probably not the appropriate social class identity for those who, if they graduate, will be among the 30% most well educated people in the US. If they have a graduate degree they are then among the 10% most well educated in the US, and are nowhere near the middle of the educational attainment distribution. One of the challenges for members of the majority social class on campus is creating a realistic current felt social class based on awareness and knowledge of the other social classes in the US.

**Social class as culture.** Cultures, and subcultures, share norms, expectations, values, and many more things. Social class can be seen as a collection of sub-cultures arranged in a hierarchy of prestige. Recent research has indicated clear cultural differences between social class groups. A trip to the three tiers of grocery stores or restaurants in a midsized city will illustrate this point better than 1000 words. Kraus, Piff, and Keltner recently (2011) published a piece titled *Social class as culture: The convergence of resources and rank in the social realm* which includes a great array of material from a social-psychological perspective on social class as culture.

**Social class as enacted role.** This comes from Irving Goffman (1959) and the idea that any social role has dialog, blocking, costumes, and stage dressing. Social classes each have distinct features, and fashion, or costumes, is an easy way to see the differences in enacted role. International Suit Up Day, October 13, is appropriate costuming holiday for a small range of social classes. Similarly big box discount stores have costumes, or uniforms, appropriate for their clientele, as well as stage dressings, or rather home furnishings. Similarly there are more prestigious varieties of English and less prestigious varieties of English that guide our dialogs and monologs.

**Social class as educational attainment.** Members of the majority social class in the US do not have a college degree. While half of US citizens over 25 have some experience in college, and about 10% have an Associate’s Degree, the college educated minority who have a degree have the prestige. Add on graduate and professional degrees and you have a hierarchy of social class. In reality the minority who is college educated normalizes that world view. What is not normal must be abnormal, deviant, bad, or negative in some way.
**Social class as occupation.** Some of the first work I found on measuring social class was from August Hollingshead (1975) and involved educational attainment and occupational prestige. I updated his work with some more modern research on occupational prestige, but the central point remains: Occupations are prestige ranked. Ganzeboom and Treiman (1996) have a list that provides an international perspective on occupational prestige rankings.

**Four Key Concepts**

**Measuring social class.**
Some models of class, like income, educational attainment, and occupational prestige are easy to measure, and others like identity and culture are not. Because income, education, and occupation are easy to measure, they get measured. In some ways this biases definitions of social class toward those measurable views of social class, ignoring identity, culture, role, and even ignoring other forms of capital.

The idea of prestige, while it can be measured and is often measured inadvertently in college rankings, is often omitted when taking the measure of social class. Prestige is in some ways a synonym for social class. Prestige goods like handbags with designer labels known to be expensive and therefore prestigious are a good example. Occupations are ranked by social scientists into a hierarchy of prestige. Asking “How prestigious is this?” is the same as asking “What social class is this?”

Below are three ways to quantify social class with easily counted and measured concepts related to social class. You can use this to calculate your social class of origin by ranking your parents, or you can use this to calculate your attributed social class by using your own data. There are five social class groups numbered 1 through 5, so feel free to assign whatever names you want. You may not, in good conscience, refer to the top group using any term like middle or upper-middle.

This material below is not that different that the material from the New York Times that is available at: [http://www.nytimes.com/packages/html/national/20050515_CLASS_GRAPHIC/index_01.html](http://www.nytimes.com/packages/html/national/20050515_CLASS_GRAPHIC/index_01.html)

Use the three tables below to calculate the social status for your family of origin or your own attributed social class. The data below are based on a US population.

**Annual Family Income Groups.** Estimated combined parental income. People in single parent households are at an obvious disadvantage. US Census 2009, Table F-1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lowest 20%</th>
<th>Middle 20%</th>
<th>Highest 20%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under $26,934</td>
<td>$26,934 to $47,913</td>
<td>$47,914 to 73,338</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Educational Attainment Groups.** Calculate for the most well educated parent. US Census 2010, Educational Attainment in the United States: 2010 – Detailed Tables, population over 25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No High School Diploma</td>
<td>High School Diploma</td>
<td>Some college, no degree</td>
<td>AA, AS</td>
<td>BA, BS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Occupational Prestige Groups. Calculate for the highest prestige parental occupation. If you do not find your parent(s) occupation then please select something similar.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Prestige</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physician, attorney, professor, chemical and aerospace engineer, judge, CEO, senior manager, public official, psychologist, pharmacist, accountant.</td>
<td>5 - Top</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanical, nuclear, and electrical engineer, educational administrator, veterinarian, military officer, elementary, high school and special education teacher,</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse, skilled technician, medical technician, counselor, manager, police and fire personnel, financial manager, physical, occupational, speech therapist.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor, librarian, aircraft mechanic, artist and artisan, electrician, administrator, military enlisted personnel, buyer.</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machinist, musician, bookkeeper, secretary, insurance sales, cabinet maker, personnel specialist, welder.</td>
<td>3 - Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automobile mechanic, typist, locksmith, farmer, carpenter, receptionist, construction laborer, hairdresser.</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painter, skilled construction trade, sales clerk, truck driver, cook, sales counter or general office clerk.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garbage collector, short-order cook, cab driver, shoe sales, assembly line workers, masons, baggage porter.</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day laborer, janitor, house cleaner, farm worker, food counter sales, food preparation worker, busboy.</td>
<td>1 - Bottom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(\text{Income} + \text{Education} + \text{Occupation}) \text{ divided by 3} ______

Social class contrast
The fish that lives entirely in water may have no knowledge of that water. A fish that spends any time at all in the air understands the existence of water based on the contrast with the air. Similarly students who have lived in a social class bubble all of their lives will not have experienced social class contrast. Consequently, they may think themselves middle class when in fact they would rank in the 5 category on the scales above.

Students whose parents have little or no experience in higher education are at risk because of the discomfort they feel on campus based on social class contrast. Research tells us that these students graduate at half the rate of students with college educated parents.

Students whose parents have experience in higher education come to campus with all manner of advantage and privilege. The risk for them is that they are the majority social class and experience little in the way of social class contrast. Further complicating this is first generation students seeking to class pass or blend in or assimilate in order to appear to be like majority social class students. This further normalizes the majority social class on campus. The risk for these students is that the lack of contrast will warp their world view so that it does not include the majority of US citizens with no experience in college and no college education.

Multiple ways to be in the same social class
There are multiple ways to be in the same social class. Astin’s (1993) college student typologies, or any of the other college student typologies, are ways to describe different students in the same group. Using my favorite example of Misty and Markey from the majority class on campus there is fashionable Misty, athletic Misty, academic Misty, and so on. In your social class subculture athletic Misty may be more prestigious, and in mine academic Misty may be more prestigious. I value culture capital, so I value academic Misty.

Class is inherently a hierarchy, gender, ethnicity, and GLBT are not
A classic way to pursue multicultural education is to have students realize that there is not a hierarchy among genders, between heterosexual students and GLBT students, between men and women, etc. Unfortunately the nature of social class is a hierarchy, so traditional methods of multicultural education will not work. While students learn that all cultures are equivalent, and social class is a culture, the culture of scarcity and the culture of plenty are different in important and hierarchical ways.

What can you do?
You can spread awareness of social class on your campus, in your life, and at your work. The multicultural industry is mostly fixated on gender, on ethnicity, on sexual orientation, and sometimes on religion. When students come to campus they have been exposed to many hours of multicultural programming. When students leave campus they have, we hope, been exposed to many hours of multicultural programming. Understanding and working positively with our differences is a good thing, it is the heart of democracy and the meaning of “E Pluribus Unum”.

As awareness of gender issues, of ethnic issues, of sexuality issues is key, so is awareness of social class. While we may keenly feel the injuries of gender, ethnic, and sexuality discrimination, the injuries of class are deep and lasting and happen like the unfelt cuts from a sharp blade.

References

Why is social class important?

"Why is social class important?" is a great question. In a podcast interview with Stu Brown (http://studentaffairs.com/podcasts/) he started with that question and I was not ready for it. It took me a while to come up with a good answer.

Why this question gets asked, and why this question doesn’t get asked are two interlocking pieces of the puzzle.

I will not ask why social class is important if I am unaware of the day-to-day issues of social class in my life and in the lives of people around me. Awareness is the key here.

Ask yourself these three questions:
1) Why is gender important?
2) Why is ethnicity important?
3) Why is GLBT important?

Now ask yourself why social class is important. The answers to these four questions should be similar. Gender, ethnicity, GLBT, and social class are important in our lives and in the lives of people around us.

Now ask yourself why so many people are asking, talking, and writing about gender, ethnicity, and GLBT, and so few people are asking, talking, and writing about social class.

Research shows us that social class, as defined by parental income and education, is the best predictor of whether or not high school students go to college, where they go to college, and if they graduate from college. This social class predictor works for men, for women, and for every tracked ethnic minority status. The US Census Bureau (http://www.census.gov/) has great collections of data on college attendance by ethnicity and gender (http://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/education/data/cps/2010/tables.html) that can be
Social class is a better predictor of college attendance and success than is gender. Women attend college and graduate from college at higher rates than do men. Even accounting for small numbers of women in STEM professions, gender is a weak, but positive predictor of college attendance and success in the US.

Ethnicity and social class are linked in some interesting ways in the US. Not all poor and uncolleged people are ethnic minorities and not all ethnic minorities are poor and uncolleged. The truth is that each identifiable ethnic minority group in the US can be arranged in a hierarchy of college attendance and graduation rates that are closely tied to parental income and educational attainment. Look at the US Census Bureau data links above. This is sociological and economic data on groups of people. Every day I teach and talk with individual exceptions to this rule, but I do not talk with the people not on my campus, who would confirm this rule. Based on abstract sociological and economic models, ethnicity is a real, but weak predictor of college attendance and success. We can statistically subtract the effect of parental income and education from ethnicity, and the effect of ethnicity remains important, though not huge.

The reasons above for the importance of social class focus on us on the challenges faced by first generation students on campus. What about the challenges faced by the second generation student on campus?

75% of students on campus come from 30% of the US population. 30% of the US adults have a college degree, or higher. I cannot find data on how many mothers and fathers in dual parent households both have a degree, so I will be make the mistake of overestimating the percent of US households with either parent having a college degree. 75% of our students on our campus come from homes in which there was probably an expectation to attend college and graduate. Again, the “probably” comes in because there is very little national data on family expectations of college attendance and parental education.

Social class is critical for the first generation student and their experiences on campus. I would venture to suggest, without data, that social class contrast is one of the main reasons that first generation students do not persist on campus to graduation.

Social class is also critical for the majority student, the 75% coming from homes with at least one college graduate. The reason for the importance of social class is not college success, but humanity. If students don’t become aware of social class and confront it in the same way they confront gender, ethnicity, and GLBT issues their ignorance of social class will lead them to be less effective in the workplace and as citizens. The level of publicized ignorance about income, insurance, and education during this political season is one effect of failing to learn about social class.

Democracy is about both the majority and the minority. In the case of the US the majority of citizens do not have a college education and have had a declining income recently (look at the US Census Bureau income data). The minority, the college or graduate educated individual who makes and enforces the rules remain ignorant of class in the US. If you are not interested in democracy, then ignore social class.

**Stars, winners, special people, losers, and hierarchy: How social class is different from gender, ethnicity, GLBTQ, and other forms of difference.**
When Kurt Vonnegut received the Eugene V. Debs award in 1981 he spoke about how people divided the world into stars and bit players.

Sheldon Kopp, writing in *If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him* notes that when you make someone special you diminish yourself, and conversely when you make yourself special you diminish others.

The single index finger pointing upward meaning “We’re number one” may be the most obscene gesture in the world because it means that everyone else is a loser, second place, an also ran. It overtly states a hierarchy with the gesticulator in a superior position.

The L for Loser gesture with the thumb and forefinger placed on the forehead is used by adolescents of all ages to indicate that you are a loser, and therefore I am a winner.

Social class is about hierarchy, about being a star, winning, and being special. Gender, ethnicity, GLBTQ, and other forms of diversity are about difference, about belonging to some category.

The seemingly ubiquitous nature of stars and bit players, special and not so special people, and winners and losers are part of what creates social hierarchy or social class. I would hazard a guess that the nature of hierarchy is part of the nature of the human experience. Yes, hierarchy is evil, wretched, and creates an overclass and an underclass. Yes, hierarchy is all around us and is co-created and re-created every day by every one of us.

I am suggesting that social class is different from gender, ethnicity, GLBTQ, and other forms of human difference because the inherent hierarchical nature of social class is fundamentally different from the inherent non-hierarchical nature of gender, ethnicity, GLBTQ, and other forms of human difference. Most diversity is about categories like male and female, European-American and African-American, and so on. Of course a close look at these categories reveals the truth that the boundaries between categories are not always clear, and that the categories are not always mutually exclusive. In spite of these problems with categories, they remain categories. Categories do not constitute a hierarchy. My measurement colleagues will notice that this is the distinction between categorical or nominal variables, like gender, and ordinal variables, like how much money you have.

**Winning, Losing, and Hierarchies**

How do we determine star status, number one status, special status, and winner status? Therein is an interesting question. Among a league of ten college football teams playing against each other on a Fall Saturday, five of the teams will win and five will lose, not counting potential ties. The team with the most season wins is number one. Professional sports teams have regular and post season play, eventually one team emerges as the winner and all others sink into the media abyss of losers. This winner and loser status is based on direct data. Determining the superior team when teams don’t play is not based on direct data. “Well the players in the xxx conference are tougher, meaner, taller, faster, . . . so they are superior”. Once there is no direct data, then arguments based on unexamined assumptions break out.

There are data-based hierarchies, for example standings of college teams within a league, and non-data-based hierarchies, for example standings of college teams between leagues. But, you say, between-league comparisons are based on data too. No, I say. Comparisons between leagues may use quantitative metrics, for example yards per play, completed passes, and whatnot for US Football, all of that data was created within a specific league context and cannot be used for comparison between leagues. I suggest that sports pundits use the data in a way
designed to confound and confuse the comparisons, to act as a distraction, to act as the illusion of quantitative certainty, when in fact between-league predictions in sports is a matter of unsubstantiated belief. Within league team comparisons are a matter of head to head competition – literally. Between league team comparisons are matters bereft of fact and are consequently matters of belief.

Winning, Losing, and Social Class

What has this all got to do with social class? “Everything” to quote Yoda.

Data views of social class, that class is personal income, use the direct evidence of income hierarchies to equate with social class hierarchies. Personal Income hierarchy= Social Class hierarchy. That is; PIₙ=SCₙ. That sounds scientific doesn’t it? Income is a nice metric, a nice way to measure something. I make $20 and you make $18. I win, you lose. I am a star, you are a bit part player. I am number one, you are a loser. It would be nice if social class was that simple. The metrics of income and wealth alone are not enough to capture the reality of personal social class.

Bourdieu, in *Forms of Capital*, notes that the idea of economic capital, income and wealth, can be supplemented with the ideas of social capital and cultural capital. Forms of capital all have the advantage of being, more or less, quantified. That is, I have more than you, or you have more than me. This capital-based idea is a more nuanced view of social class than money alone, but is not a full and complete view of social class. Capital can create a nice hierarchy, but that hierarchy misses many elements of personal social class reality. On first glance the quantity of economic capital, social capital, and cultural capital keep everyone in the same league, so all of the comparisons are within-league. In reality not everyone plays in the same league. You can have high prestige cultural capital, for example knowing a pinot noir from a pinotage, and / or you can have low prestige cultural capital, for example knowing the standings for NASCAR. You can have high prestige social capital, being able to form allegiances with people who have power and money and / or you can have low prestige social capital, being able to form allegiances with people who have tools to work on your house or car.

Another direct evidence view of social class is educational attainment. Educational Attainment hierarchy=Social Class hierarchy, or EAₙ=SCₙ. I have a Ph.D. and you have a M.S.. I win, you lose, etc. This gets complicated when you add the non-data-based prestige values of various undergraduate or graduate schools, and factor in the prestige hierarchy of disciplines. Is a Math degree from Door Prairie State University equivalent to an English degree from an Ivy League / Seven Sisters college? Prestige is largely data free when it comes to educational institutions and disciplines. The research on college rankings tells us that rankings are either about perceived prestige of the faculty or about student and institutional income. Neither source of rankings has to do with how well the faculty members teach the students.

Values Hierarchies and Social Class

Income, capital of many sorts, and educational attainment are the primary data based comparisons that can be made about personal social class. The assumption is that more is better. The idea that more is better is a value judgment. Money, capital, and educational attainment are a won/lost record in personal social class, and winning in these metrics of social class is generally thought to be better than losing in these metrics or social class. Other ways to talk about social class have no data that can be arranged in a hierarchy of more and less.

While income, educational attainment, and capital are quantifiable ways to explore personal social class, social class as identity in no way lends itself to quantitative or qualitative differences that allow ranking in a hierarchy. Suggesting that one identity is better than another
is a bold statement of values based on no data whatsoever. The lack of data does not curtail irrational assertions that people who have a higher class identity are better than people who have a lower class identity. Irrational beliefs about gender, about ethnicity, and about GLBTQ are all too common and are too often clouded with questionable and misapplied quantitative data. These data-free beliefs are probably held as a consequence of identity and ego expressions.

Viewing personal social class as culture, as shared values and norms, in no way leads to a data-based hierarchy. No culture is better or worse than yours in any countable that does not rely on unsubstantiated values. Suggesting a hierarchy of cultures, of values and norms shared by groups of people, is bereft of common sense. It is not uncommon to hear value-based data-free statements asserting that higher class culture is better than lower class culture.

Social class as prestige is interesting because prestige is collective belief and not quantifiable. While collective belief is quantifiable, we can survey 1000 people on their beliefs about the prestige ratings and rankings of various name brands, the actual prestige itself is not quantifiable. Things are prestige only because people believe they are prestige. While it is often believed that Expensive object = Quality object = Prestige object, E_O = Q_O = P_O, this tautology is not confirmed by research even though the formula does look scientific. Please note that formulas with subscripts are more prestigious than formulas without subscripts. Cost and quality are related and quality and prestige are related, and cost and prestige are related, but the relationships are weak. Prestige is usually a matter of marketing. Do $100 sunglasses protect my eyes better than $10 dollar sunglasses? Or is my metric of protecting my eyes the wrong metric? Do $100 sunglasses have more “cool” than $10 sunglasses?

**Working with Social Class as a Hierarchy**

Gender, ethnicity, GLBTQ, and other forms of diversity are about difference, about belonging to some category. Social class is about hierarchy. While some of the hierarchy behind social class is quantitative, like money, most of the social class hierarchy is irrational and data free.

Working with gender, ethnicity, GLBTQ, and other forms of difference is often about reducing and removing the ideas of hierarchy that people have generated about these differences. Working with social class requires a wholly different approach, because hierarchy is part of the nature of social class. Exploring the nature of our irrational creations of hierarchy is the beginning of a way to reduce the injustice of social class.
Chapter 10

Social class and schooling
Differentiation or democracy?

Richard Hatcher

Social class remains the strongest predictor of educational achievement in the UK, where the social class gap for educational achievement is one of the most significant in the developed world.

(Perry and Francis 2010, p. 2)

If you want to know how well a child will do at school, ask how much money its parents have. The fact remains that, after more than 50 years of the Welfare State and several decades of comprehensive education, family income and wealth is the single best predictor of success in the school system. Of course some children from well-off homes don’t do well at school and some children from poor backgrounds succeed, but the overall pattern is clear: social class, defined in terms of socio-economic status, correlates closely with attainment at school.

Inequality in Britain

Britain is an unequal country, more so than many other industrial countries and more so than a generation ago.

(National Equality Panel 2010, p. 1)

The report *An Anatomy of Economic Inequality in the UK* (National Equality Panel 2010) is a detailed analysis of Britain as a divided nation where the richest 10 per cent of the population are more than 100 times as wealthy as the poorest 10 per cent. The explanation for inequality lies in the workings of the capitalist economy and the neoliberal economic and fiscal policies pursued by the Labour government and its Conservative predecessors. Overall, income and wealth have risen, but the rise has disproportionately benefited the highest paid. Pensions and benefits for the poor, and the national minimum wage, have risen much less than the income of high earners, which remains relatively low taxed (Brown et al. 2010). As the National Equality Panel report points out, for the last 30 years the tax system as a whole (including indirect taxes) has had virtually no effect on income distribution - direct and indirect taxes have taken the same
proportion of income from each fifth of households throughout the period' (p. 50). The high level of economic inequality results in a low level of social mobility between the generations. The evidence we have looked at shows the long arm of people's origins in shaping their life chances, stretching through life stages, literally from cradle to grave' (National Equality Panel 2010, p. 398; see also Ermisch and Del Bono 2010).

The Conservative–Liberal Democrat Coalition government took office in May 2010. It rapidly implemented a radical programme of spending cuts, tax rises and benefit reductions; £18 billion of welfare cuts between 2011 and 2014 (Brewer 2010) represented the tightest squeeze on 'public service' spending since at least the end of the Second World War (Crawford et al. 2011). Most public sector workers' pay is frozen for three years while inflation increases. Local council budgets are cut by an average of 27 per cent in the four-year period between 2011 and 2015, involving cuts in services and loss of jobs, with the most socially deprived authorities facing the biggest spending reductions (Guardian, 14 December 2010). It is estimated that 500,000 public service workers will lose their jobs between 2011 and 2015, with a knock-on effect of perhaps as many again in the private sector. Particularly affected are young people, with unemployment among 16–24-year-olds rising to over one million.

The largest single saving from the welfare budget has come from the decision to link benefits and tax credits with the Consumer Prices Index (CPI), rather than the Retail Prices Index (RPI), giving a lower measure of inflation. Some benefit cuts particularly hit families with children, including child benefit, the child and working tax credits, and housing benefit; £3.5 billion is being saved in child benefit by freezing it for three years and then means-testing it (Brewer 2010). Another set of cuts particularly affects young people after age 16, including the scrapping of the Education Maintenance Allowance and the cuts in the Connexions service.

The resulting substantial increase in poverty for many and the widening equality gap will have a significant impact on social class inequality in education, which will be reinforced by cuts in school budgets and local authority support services budgets.

In 2011 the government published Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers: A Strategy for Social Mobility (HM Government 2011). It contained detailed evidence of inequality in Britain; but that was not accompanied by a strategy capable of tackling the barriers to greater social mobility through reducing income inequality, reversing the savage public sector cuts that impact most on the less well-off, and increasing the downward social mobility of the rich through taxation.

Children and poverty

Of particular relevance to school is the extent of child poverty. A central theme of the Child Poverty Action Group's report Ending Child Poverty (CPAG 2009) is the profound negative impact that being born poor has on children. Under the Labour government the number of children living in poverty fell by 600,000, but by 2007–08 there were still 2.2 million children, amounting to 17 per cent of all children, living in households below the poverty line (CPAG 2009). Under the Coalition government both absolute and relative poverty among children and working-age adults is expected to rise as the austerity programme is implemented: 'A baby born to a low-income family from April 2011 will be around £1,350 worse off compared to a sibling born in April 2010' (CPAG 2010). Between 2012–13 and 2013–14 absolute child poverty is predicted to rise by about 100,000, and relative child poverty by about 200,000.

The 2010 Child Poverty Act commits current and future governments to reducing relative child poverty to 10 per cent and absolute child poverty to 5 per cent by 2020–21 (Brewer and Joyce 2010). Achieving the goal of eradicating child poverty by 2020 would require a substantial redistribution of wealth towards the poorest families, which would run counter to the neoliberal policies of the Coalition government and those, at the CPAG trenchantly pointed out, of its Labour predecessor:

One of the most telling critiques of recent economic policy is that we privatise profit in the good times but were left to socialise debt when things went bad. Large and unequally shared profits attract little tax, but still the ordinary taxpayer has been forced to step in to cover losses once things have turned sour. Such a one-sided deal has bred massive and deeply corrosive social inequality in our society. This is no longer acceptable.

(CPAG 2009, p. 4)

Social inequality in education

These massive differences in the economic resources of families have huge consequences for the education of their children. The most common indicator in education of economic deprivation is eligibility for free school meals (FSM). However, the recorded figures of about 17 per cent of primary and 16 per cent of secondary school pupils are an underestimate because many parents do not claim the benefits that signal their eligibility. It also places the large majority of children in the same category of 'non-FSM' and therefore obscures the very wide difference between rich families, middle-income families and those just above the FSM threshold.

British children's educational attainment is overwhelmingly linked to parental occupation, income and qualifications. Social class differences become apparent during early childhood with regard to readiness for school. In some disadvantaged areas, up to 50 per cent of children begin primary school without the necessary language and communication skills (National Equality Panel 2010). During primary and secondary school the gap in attainment between children from poor families and those from more affluent backgrounds continues to widen (Cassen and Kingston 2007; National Equality Panel 2010). At the end
of Key Stage 2, 53.5 per cent of pupils eligible for free school meals reach the expected level (i.e. Level 4 or above) in English and mathematics, compared with 75.5 per cent of pupils who are not eligible (DCSF, 2009a). At secondary school in 2009, only 26.6 per cent of pupils eligible for free school meals achieved five or more A*-C grade GCSEs or equivalent including English and maths, compared to 54.2 per cent of pupils not eligible for free school meals.

Although social class is the strongest predictor of attainment in the school system it intersects in complex ways with gender and ethnicity. Girls tend to achieve better than boys, whatever their class background, and some ethnic minority groups underachieve compared to white students (Perry and Francis 2010). But the lowest-achieving group is white working-class boys (Casson and Kingdon, 2007). The achievement gap between white students in receipt of free school meals and non-FSM students is more than three times bigger than the gap between different ethnic groups (Svevinson 2010).

Is the class inequality gap in education narrowing over time? The attainment gap in GCSE results has reduced in recent years, but only slightly. For example, the proportion of FSM pupils achieving grade A*-C in GCSE English and in GCSE maths has increased at a faster rate than the rest of the cohort. In English the chances of an FSM pupil achieving a grade A*-C rose from 32 per cent in 2004 to 39 per cent in 2008, and in maths from 25 per cent to 33 per cent (DCSF 2009a, b).

**Why do poor children on average do less well at school and children from well-off families do better?**

What are the processes by which differences in income and wealth among families are translated into differences in educational attainment among children? One obvious consequence concerns differences in families’ ability to afford educational benefits such as books, broadband internet access or private tutoring (DCSF 2009a). But there are also powerful cultural factors – class differences in the ways of life of families and communities – which shape children’s identities and interact with the cultures of schools in different ways. The policies and practices of schools may serve to challenge and disrupt patterns of social inequality in education, or sustain and reinforce them. How this complex interaction of home and school factors works to shape individual children’s experiences of and attainment in school, and therefore what strategies are most effective in tackling educational inequality, is still not fully understood (Kerr and West 2010, p. 15).

**The home**

Parents transmit, actively and passively, cultural capital to their children: knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and behaviours. Different class cultures of the home tend to generate different forms of cultural capital that are differentially valorised by the school. Middle-class parents are more likely to have their children succeed in the education system and so provide role models for their children of the causal link between school success and career success. They are more likely to have high educational and career aspirations for their children. In turn, more likely to successfully integrate them in the child, and more likely to foster a self-concept of academic efficacy (Cabinet Office 2008). Low aspirations by working-class parents for their children have been frequently cited as one of the most significant barriers to working-class educational achievement (Perry and Francis 2010; e.g. DCSF 2009c). It is an argument that can easily lend itself to a ‘blame the family’ deficit model unless the reasons for low aspirations are located in how the class structure of society shapes class inequalities, and therefore class cultures, over generations. The National Equality Panel report concludes that, after taking account of changes in the labour market, ‘there is no evidence that rates of relative occupational mobility have changed at all since the early 1970s’ (National Equality Panel 2010, p. 324). Of course, many working-class parents have high aspirations for their children, but they may still lack the cultural and material capital to translate them into effective support. For example, middle-class families are more likely to provide a broader awareness of the wider ‘dominant culture’, in terms of literature, music, politics, art, science, etc. and the sorts of cultural experiences, ranging from shared reading activities to music tuition and involvement in clubs and other activities outside the home, that have significant benefits in terms of success at school (Sullivan 2007).

Class differences in relation to language have a particular importance. Middle-class children have more of the linguistic capital that is valorised by the school, in several ways. According to Casson and Kingdon (2007), a young child in a professional-class home will hear every day more than three times the number of words heard by a child in a home where the parents are of low socio-economic status; parents in such homes also tend to interact verbally with their children less than professional parents. School success depends on the ability to understand and use ‘academic’ forms of language. The spoken language of the middle-class home is more likely to be linguistically similar in register to that of the school, facilitating learning. Reading and writing are the fundamental skills that determine subsequent school success. It is not simply mastery of the technical skills, it is also the meaning of reading and writing for the child. Homes where children have few books and seldom see their parents reading or writing tend to generate a different orientation to literacy, a different cultural predisposition, from ones where reading and writing, in particular the sorts of texts that demand language skills similar to those required for school success, are everyday activities.

Middle-class parents are more likely to possess instrumental knowledge about how to succeed in the education system: knowledge about how to choose a school, knowledge about how to negotiate with teachers about issues concerning the child’s education; knowledge about how to effectively support the child's
homework or assessed coursework; knowledge about curriculum choices and their likely subsequent benefits; knowledge about how to apply to university and choose an appropriate course. Their knowledge comes partly because they have succeeded in the school system themselves and partly because of class difference in social capital: the interpersonal relationships, whether close or more distant, which bring educational benefits. Middle-class parents are more likely to belong to social networks that communicate knowledge about educational matters such as advantageous choice of school.

In short, middle-class parents tend to have the knowledge and understanding of the 'rules of the game' of school, and the communication skills, confidence and connections, which enable them to maximise their positional advantage in education (see e.g. Vincent and Ball 2006).

The school

We have noted that the class equality gap actually widens during schooling. What is the role of school itself in this? Does it tend to mitigate educational inequality resulting from external factors, which would otherwise be even greater, or does it actually contribute to the maintenance of inequality? Diane Reay has argued that school 'valorizes middle-class rather than working-class cultural capital' (Reay 2001, p. 334). In consequence, children from middle-class homes are more likely to experience a smooth transition between the class culture of the home and the culture of school, whereas children from working-class backgrounds are more likely to experience disjuncture and alienation (Archer et al. 2007). Cultural differences (in, for example, the language of the child and the language of the teacher) may be accompanied by teachers' perceptions of the working-class child and family as 'deficient', and by lower teacher expectations that tend to reinforce class differences. These, compounded by the cumulative experiences of lack of success in school relative to middle-class children, may have powerful negative effects on the pupil identities of children from poorer backgrounds (Perry and Francis 2010, p. 19).

The education policies of the Labour government

During the 13 years of the New Labour government a range of strategies were implemented to tackle social inequality in the school system. They can be broadly classified as:

- general interventions targeting all schools;
- interventions that target schools in disadvantaged areas;
- interventions that target underachieving groups;
- structural interventions, which target how school systems are organised;
- 'beyond school' interventions, which target neighbourhood and family background factors.

(Kerr and West 2010, p. 18)

General interventions targeting all schools

The dominant paradigm of Labour's education policy was the 'standards agenda', designed to improve schools and raise standards of attainment through a combination of a prescriptive national curriculum, a system of school attainment targets, national tests and examinations, and Ofsted inspections. It also included the national literacy, numeracy and Key Stage 3 strategies (subsequently incorporated into the National Strategies), which provided models for effective teaching that teachers were supposed to follow. Some studies showed positive results; many were critical. For example, the Cambridge Primary Review (Alexander 2009) argued that 'improvements were “negligible” in primary literacy, and “relatively modest” in numeracy; gains in reading skills were at the expense of children's enjoyment of reading; the emphasis on testing was “distorting” children's experiences of schooling; and that a much bigger gap persisted in England between high and low attaining children in reading, maths and science, than in many other countries' (Kerr and West 2010, p. 30). A review by Tynan and Merrell (2007) of evidence about changes in standards concluded that performance in both reading and mathematics at the end of primary school has 'remained fairly constant' since the 1950s. The extent of improvement has been partly achieved by teachers becoming more adept at teaching the test, at the expense of a broad and enriching curriculum, which particularly disadvantages children from poorer backgrounds who cannot rely on the compensation provided by the 'curriculum of the home'. Gilborn and Youedd (2009) provide evidence of 'triage' within schools, discriminating against low-performing and disproportionately poorer pupils by concentrating resources on boosting borderline pupils to reach threshold grades in SAT's and GCSEs.

The 'standards agenda' encouraged differentiation. Pupil grouping by ability increased, including in primary schools, as a result of government pressure (DCSF 2009a). Because of the greater likelihood of low attainment among pupils from deprived backgrounds, grouping pupils by ability inevitably results in overrepresentation of these pupils in the bottom groups. The authors of the book Learning without Limits (Hart et al. 2004) have explained how it functions as a mechanism of social selection. Government policy conceptualises children's learning in terms of scores, levels and targets, and this has had a profound effect on how teachers conceptualize the abilities of children.

The act of categorising young people by ability reifies differences and hardens hierarchies, so that we start to think of those in the different categories as different kinds of learners with different minds, different characteristics and very different needs.

(p. 29)

One important way in which the fixed ability template affects teachers' thinking is that it creates a disposition to accept as normal, indeed
inevitable, the limited achievement of a significant proportion of the school population.

(pp. 28–29)

Differentiation in pupil grouping results in a differentiated curriculum that functions as a process of social selection by means of negative discrimination – giving less to those who have less. Hoadley (2008), researching the reproduction of inequality through a comparison of teaching in middle-class and working-class classrooms, found that ‘orientation to meaning’ was ‘the crucial variable associated with social class’ (p. 76). In the working-class school learning was structured by a series of fragmented tasks rather than, as in middle-class contexts, a coherent conceptual trajectory. ‘In the working-class context, learners were learning to master the world; and the middle-class context, learners were learning to categorize the world’ (p. 75, emphasis in original). Hoadley’s findings echo Jean Anyon’s (1981) pioneering empirical research and are congruent with research carried out in France by Bernard Charlot and his colleagues, and discussed in the second edition of this chapter (e.g. Charlot et al. 1992).

Dunne et al. (2007) investigated how schools and teachers seek to maximise the benefits of attainment grouping and mitigate its disadvantages through smaller numbers in lower attainment groups, with teaching assistants and learning mentors providing learning support and customised curricula. But they also found that though the social class composition of low attainment sets was not widely acknowledged by teachers, they tended to stereotype pupils from lower socioeconomic backgrounds as low-achieving and to allocate them, irrespective of prior attainment, to lower sets, where pupils are at greater risk of exposure to reduced teacher expectations, disruption and loss of self-esteem (Dunne and Gazeley 2008).

Targeting schools in disadvantaged areas

The Labour government implemented a number of initiatives particularly targeting schools in socially deprived areas, including Education Action Zones (EAZ), the Excellence in Cities (EiC) programme, National Challenge, the Every Child Matters agenda and extended service schools. According to Kerr and West (2010, p. 31), ‘the evidence on the impact of interventions which have targeted schools in disadvantaged areas is also quite mixed’. Many of these programmes have now ceased.

Numerous school effectiveness and school improvement studies have attempted to identify the factors that have proved effective in raising pupil attainment, and a number of them have attempted to identify the factors that account for the relative success of some schools serving social deprived areas. The DCSF report *Breaking the Link between Disadvantage and Low Attainment* (DCSF 2009b) claims that ‘The highest performing maintained schools, serving some of the most deprived areas . . . have broken the link between poverty and attainment for their pupils’ (p. 2). The report summarises ‘the main symptoms and causes of the attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils, and the strategies which schools and local authorities can adopt to address them’ as follows (p. 23):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Some symptoms and issues</th>
<th>Possible school and LA responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive gaps already evident before age five</td>
<td>Children’s Centres, support for families and early reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaker home learning environment</td>
<td>Schools working closely with parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower prior attainment at each Key Stage</td>
<td>Personalisation, progress, ‘keep up not catch-up’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harder to recover from stalled learning</td>
<td>Tracking, early intervention, one-to-one tuition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of teaching for children in lower sets</td>
<td>In-school teacher deployment, training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour, exclusion and absence issues</td>
<td>Behaviour, exclusion and absence policies, SEAL, new curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspirations, peer influences, ‘not cool to learn’</td>
<td>Positive role-models, active information, advice and guidance policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak family/community networks</td>
<td>School/cluster/LA action to compensate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrow experiences and opportunities</td>
<td>Broader curriculum; extended school services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEN/disadvantage overlap progress</td>
<td>Ensure SEN policies focus on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaps are too often an ‘invisible issue’</td>
<td>Use new accountability framework</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The report proposes a ‘Framework for action’ (p. 31) comprising five strategies:

- **Raising visibility and awareness**
  - Head teachers/school leaders to ensure staff take special note of disadvantaged/other vulnerable pupils, and target and track their progress

- **Early years, parents**
  - Ensure that EY services, and school support for parents, target disadvantage. Focus on home/school interface (e.g. homework, reading, resources)
Targeted support in basics
Ensure teachers know and intervene early for FSM pupils (e.g. 1:1 tuition). Consider redeployment of teachers to support pupils with lowest attainment.

Beyond classroom – extended school and other services
Broaden pupils' experiences, raise aspirations, linked issues (health, etc.). Use extended services, and lessons from Extra Mile project, to target disadvantage.

School and LA accountability and funding
Use external and self-evaluation to focus on gaps and progress, not just average attainment. Consider deployment of extra resources where most effective.

The official perspective on school improvement has always seen the role of the head teacher as decisive. In that context the Ofsted report Twelve Outstanding Secondary Schools: Excelling Against the Odds (Ofsted 2009) focuses on the leadership characteristics of schools that serve disadvantaged communities, have a higher than average proportion of students in receipt of free school meals, have exceptionally good results, and have been judged outstanding in two or more inspections. Their features are categorised under the headings of 'achieving excellence' and 'sustaining excellence'.

Achieving excellence: having vision, values and high expectations; attracting, recruiting, retaining and developing staff; establishing disciplined learning and consistent staff behaviour; assuring the quality of teaching and learning; leading and building leadership capacity; providing a relevant and attractive curriculum; assessment, progress-tracking and target-setting; inclusion: students as individuals.

Sustaining excellence: continuity of leadership; maintaining a strong team culture; continually developing teaching and learning; developing leaders; enriching the curriculum; improving literacy; building relationships with students, parents and the community; no student left behind.

(Ofsted 2009, p. 9)

A report published by the NCSL and the NUT, Successful Leadership for Promoting the Achievement of White Working Class Pupils (Mongon and Chapman 2008), found that the leaders' strategies were similar to those used by most successful school leaders: building vision and setting directions; understanding and developing people; designing the organisation; managing and supporting the teaching and learning programme; collecting, monitoring, analysing and using information. Head teachers displayed three characteristics that they call 'intelligences': contextual intelligence; professional intelligence; social intelligence;

and showed four personality traits: self-efficacy; internal locus of control; conscientiousness; rapport (pp. 1–3).

While studies of successful school improvement should not be dismissed, they should, as Coe (2009) argues, be read with a certain scepticism. Many studies rely on teachers' and head teachers' perceptions, which may be biased (there are few accounts of unsuccessful school improvement projects); correlations between improvement strategies and successful outcomes do not necessarily entail causality – other factors may have contributed, including the normal annual fluctuations in student cohorts and attainment levels; and the schools might have improved anyway. If the improvement is real, a list of effectiveness strategies abstracted from their specific context may not result in successful transferability to other contexts (Thrupp and Lupton 2009).

Targeting underachieving groups
Perhaps the most popular of Labour's education policy initiatives aimed at socially deprived groups has been preschool support through the Sure Start Children's Centres, of which 3,500 were open by 2010. Evaluation by the National Audit Office (NAO 2009) showed good progress on one of the four sub-targets, increasing the number of Ofsted-registered childcare places, but the other sub-targets were not met. The number of children in lower income working families using formal childcare decreased rather than increased; 49 per cent of children reached a 'good level of development' at the end of the Foundation Stage, compared with a target of 53 per cent; and there was no reduction in inequality between child development achieved in the 30 per cent most disadvantaged communities and in the rest of England, against a target to reduce the gap by four percentage points. In addition, there was a low level of outreach activity to the most disadvantaged families. There is evidence that Sure Start has improved parenting in the early years and has resulted in improved behavioural outcomes for the children but by age five it has had little impact on their cognitive (reading, writing and maths) test scores (Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2011, p. 10). It may be too early to evaluate the extent to which Sure Start reduces social inequality in children's subsequent school attainment. All centres visited emphasised the difficulty of measuring the impacts of children's centres. Some believe it will take several years to demonstrate significant impacts on children's development' (NAO 2009, p. 29).

Structural interventions
The Labour government attacked the notion of the comprehensive school (itself only partly achieved) and promoted different types of state schools, claiming that 'diversity and choice' were the best way both to raise standards and to reduce inequality. The result was to exacerbate the existing historical divisions within the British school system. However, the evidence revealed that the combination
of more supply-side diversity and more choice for parents tended to increase social inequality (Ball 2008).

The Labour government's most radical and controversial structural reform aimed specifically at raising standards in schools predominantly serving areas of social disadvantage had been academies, state schools outside the local authority system run by private 'sponsors'. The evidence demonstrates that academies are no more successful than other schools with comparable intakes and taking comparable exams. The conclusion of the final evaluation of academies commissioned by the government concluded that 'there is insufficient evidence to make a definitive judgement about the Academies as a model for school improvement' (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2008, p. 220). Since then research by the National Audit Office (2010) found evidence of improved performance but as a result of two strategies by academies. First, changing the intake. The proportion of pupils on free school meals in academies in 2002–03 and 2009–10 fell from 45.3 to 27.8 per cent. Improvement was due to more middle-class students: 'it is substantial improvements by the less disadvantaged pupils that are driving academies' improved performance overall' (p. 27). The consequence has been a wider equality gap within academies: 'on average, the gap in attainment between more disadvantaged pupils and others has grown wider in academies than in comparable maintained schools' (p. 6; see also Wrigley 2011). The second strategy has been to enter pupils for non-GCSE exams that have a higher pass rate: 'For later academies, the proportion of entries for GCSEs decreased more rapidly than in other schools, and the proportion of entries to GCSE equivalents in 2008–09 was seven percentage points higher than earlier academies, and ten percentage points higher than comparator schools' (NAO 2010, p. 21).

A more successful structural reform, also often involving innovation in governance, was federations of high-performing and low-performing schools in order to raise standards (DCSF 2009d). A quantitative analysis of performance in 42 schools linked, generally in pairs, in 'performance federations' found evidence of significant improvement in the low-performing school compared to comparable schools (Chapman et al. 2009).

The evidence shows that Labour's strategies for reducing educational inequality had little success. The explanation lies in the contradictions within Labour policy:

there has been a basic fault line in government policy, where halfhearted efforts to 'narrow the gap' have been grafted onto an inherently inequitable system. Unequal educational outcomes arise out of deep social inequalities. These are compounded by competition between schools, narrowly conceived teaching and learning opportunities, and highly centralised and punitive accountability regimes. Endless initiatives targeting failing schools and underachieving groups will make little difference unless these underlying issues are tackled.

(Dyson et al. 2010, p. 3)

The Conservative–Liberal Democrat government and the marketisation of the school system

Michael Gove, the Coalition government's Secretary of State for Education, stated his commitment to tackling social inequality in the school system in his Foreword to the 2010 White Paper.

Our schools should be engines of social mobility, helping children to overcome the accidents of birth and background to achieve much more than they may even have imagined. But, at the moment, our schools system does not close gaps, it widens them. Children from poorer homes start behind their wealthier contemporaries when they arrive at school and during their educational journey they fall further and further back. The achievement gap between rich and poor widens at the beginning of primary school, gets worse by GCSE and is a yawning gulf by the time (far too few) sit A levels and apply to university. This injustice has inspired a grim fatalism in some, who believe that deprivation must be destiny. But for this Government the scale of this tragedy demands action. Urgent, focused, radical action.

(DfE 2010, pp. 6–7)

The key principle of the Coalition's strategy has been to extend supply-side school autonomy.

Across the world, the case for the benefits of school autonomy has been established beyond doubt. In a school system with good quality teachers, flexibility in the curriculum and clearly established accountability measures, it makes sense to devolve as much day-to-day decision-making as possible to the front line. In this country, the ability of schools to decide their own ethos and chart their own destiny has been severely constrained by government guidance, Ministerial interference and too much bureaucracy.

(DfE 2010, p. 11)

This objective is translated into two sets of policies. One promises all schools more autonomy through being freed from Labour's bureaucratic prescription—the national curriculum will be less detailed, targets will be abandoned, and school inspections eased. The other comprises academies and 'free schools'.

Autonomy and internal school policies

The curriculum

Michael Gove has promised increased autonomy over the curriculum for all schools.
I want to remove everything unnecessary from a curriculum that has been bent out of shape by the weight of material dumped there for political purposes. I want to prune the curriculum of over-prescriptive notions of how to teach and how to timetable. Instead I want to arrive at a simple core, informed by the best international practice, which can act as a benchmark against which schools can measure themselves and parents ask meaningful and informed questions about progress.

(Gove 2010a)

The Coalition government is currently reviewing the curriculum. It will be slimmed down, but it is unclear as yet what will be its scope and how prescriptive it will be. The promise of greater autonomy has been put into question by signs of increased regulation, including the insistence on a phonics approach to teaching reading, enforced by a new phonics-based reading test for six-year-olds.

The DCSF (2009a) regards a broad and appropriately challenging curriculum as a key element in promoting and sustaining educational achievement. However, research into pupils’ attitudes cites the curriculum as a major cause of disaffection, disengagement and truancy (Smith et al. 2005). The ‘standards agenda’ resulted in a narrower curriculum experience for pupils, especially in primary schools, at literacy and numeracy squeezed out other subjects. In secondary schools too there has been a move in recent years from a knowledge-based to a skills-based curriculum. With it comes the danger that skills are counter-posed to knowledge, as Robin Alexander argues:

The belief here is that skills combine contemporary relevance, future flexibility and hands-on experience: that is, those attributes which knowledge is presumed to lack. […] But to set them in opposition is foolish, unnecessary and epistemologically unsound, for all the most elemental skills — and certainly those that in educational circles are defined as ‘basic skills’ — require knowledge.

(Alexander 2009, p. 249)

The emphasis on the acquisition of skills and factual knowledge rather than on conceptual knowledge and the development of wider understanding (Young 2008) discriminates particularly against pupils in lower-achieving groups, who are disproportionately from poorer backgrounds, because teachers adapt their teaching to their perceptions of the child, resulting in less intellectually demanding teaching that restricts pupils’ access to the powerful modes of thinking afforded by abstract systems of knowledge and locks them into a cycle of increasing inequality of attainment.

Gove has stated his desire to focus the curriculum on ‘core knowledge’ (DfE 2010). However, this raises three issues that concern social equality. Two of them are evoked by Gove’s statement that:

I’m an unashamed traditionalist when it comes to the curriculum. Most parents would rather their children had a traditional education, with children sitting in rows, learning the kings and queens of England, the great works of literature, proper mental arithmetic, algebra by the age of 11, modern foreign languages. That’s the best training of the mind and that’s how children will be able to compete.

(Times, 6 March 2010)

The first concerns whose knowledge. The ‘English baccalaureate’ represents a socially selective set of subjects. The exclusion of the social sciences excludes those subjects which have proved capable of motivating lower-achieving students and of enabling them to develop a critical understanding of social justice issues. Second, the traditionalist pedagogy Gove advocates has also proved inappropriate for engaging lower-achieving pupils.

The third issue concerns the construction of new class-differentiated pathways in the curriculum. Gove states in his Foreword to the 2010 White Paper that ‘employers and universities consistently express concerns about the skills and knowledge of school leavers, while international studies show that other countries are improving their school systems faster’ (DfE 2010). The need for schools to be more effective in producing the ‘human capital’ that the employers demand in the future labour force is a key driver of government policy. The CBI has set the agenda for government:

First, a continuing and unswerving focus on raising literacy and numeracy attainment […]

Second, greater support for schools and pupils to develop vital employability skills.

(CBI 2010a, p. 8; see also CBI 2010b)

While there is a need for young people with higher level science and maths qualifications, the employers’ main concern is for basic skills and employability skills such as problem-solving, team-working and time management for future workers in relatively low-skill, low-qualification, low-paid jobs in sectors such as retail, distribution, care, security and routine administration, which are expanding as a proportion of the economy rather than, as the Labour government’s ‘knowledge economy’ rhetoric predicted, declining (Lawton 2009, p. 5). The Coalition government’s Review of Vocational Education — The Wolf Report (DfE 2011) echoes this analysis. The labour market is shaped like an egg-timer or hourglass, with growth at the top and bottom and shrinkage in the middle, rather than an inverted pyramid with more and more “top jobs” (p. 35) and our largest occupations are, in order, sales assistants, care assistants, general office assistants, and cleaners (p. 36). The Wolf Report rejects the vocationally related qualifications that became common at Key Stage 4 under Labour as being both
premature and worthless to employers, and instead proposes a general education to age 16 with English and maths at the centre, supplemented by options, including 'practical' subjects, which should not exceed 20 per cent of the timetable.

A common core curriculum up until age 16 with additional elective options is the most effective appropriate curriculum model for reducing social inequality through premature selection. There is however a danger that provision will be distorted by pressure to stratify curriculum pathways in accordance with the stratified labour market, with results that will inevitably be class-biased. The 'Eith' for the top layer, destined for higher education, itself increasingly hierarchised in class terms. A middle technical layer for whom the new University Technical Colleges (a vocational 14–19 academy) are designed. And for the bottom layer, a basic academic education coupled with what Gove calls 'practical learning'.

I'm absolutely clear that every child should have the option of beginning study for a craft or trade from the age of 14 but that this should be complemented by a base of core academic knowledge. (Gove 2010b)

**Marketisation and equality**

The Conservative–Liberal Democrat government aims to radically extend the marketisation of the school system, in two ways. First, all schools, primary as well as secondary, are encouraged to become academies, starting with those graded 'outstanding' by Ofsted. Like Labour's academies, they are outside local authorities, funded directly by government, and they gain more freedom over the curriculum and admissions and more control over staff. The second form of marketisation is 'free schools', fresh-start academies that alternative providers — private organisations and groups of parents and teachers — are allowed to open up, again outside local authorities and funded by government.

What effect will the Coalition government's market-oriented reforms have on social class inequality in the school system? There is relevant evidence from existing cases of marketised supply-side reform in school systems, and in particular from those that the government cites as models: charter schools in the US and free schools in Sweden. In 2009 the OECD published a review of international research on marketisation in school systems by Christopher Lubinski. Regarding attainment, his conclusion is as follows:

it is far from clear that quasi-market forces such as increased autonomy, competition and choice have led to improved outcomes, which would indicate that educational innovations are occurring. Evidence of improved academic outcomes is mixed, and improvements in academic performance may result from factors other than quasi-market incentives — for example, professional efforts, technocratic knowledge, policy alignments, or funding. If quasi-markets offered some type of elixir for educational performance, we might, over time, expect to see nations with more market-like systems outperforming countries where the state plays a more direct role in educational provision. But it is hardly clear that this is the case.

(Lubinski 2009, pp. 27–28)

The most recent large-scale study of US charter schools was published in 2009 by the Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) at Stanford University: Multiple Choice: Charter School Performance in 16 States. It concluded that 17 percent provide superior education opportunities for their students. Nearly half of the charter schools nationwide have results that are no different from the local public school options and over a third, 37 percent, deliver learning results that are significantly worse than their students would have realized had they remained in traditional public schools.

(CREDO 2009, p. 1)

There have been a number of studies of attainment in Swedish free schools. The most recent is by Bohmark and Lindahl (2008), who found evidence of only small and temporary positive effects.

While there is little evidence that marketised systems raise attainment, there is substantial evidence that they reinforce patterns of social differentiation between schools. This is the result of two intertwined factors: school selection policies and parental and student self-selection. Lubinski (2009) reports that 'when schools have greater autonomy in quasi-markets competitive incentives cause schools to develop marketing innovations that may effectively exclude segments of the population' (p. 24). He gives the example of US charter schools 'locating in more affluent neighborhoods or using admissions policies to disqualify or exclude more difficult-to-educate students' (p. 24). He identifies the mechanism: 'any independent schools now require parent or student contracts, volunteer hours, adherence to mission statements, or other means that encourage self-segregation by parents that obscure selection of students by schools' (p. 41).

Some charter schools have undoubtedly achieved above-average results. Students in the Knowledge is Power Program schools, predominantly from poorer backgrounds, achieve significantly higher than their peers in other schools (Educational Policy Institute 2005; Ravitch 2010). But major factors may be the selection of likely high achievers by rigorous interviews of potential parents and a high drop-out rate, especially by those students entering the schools with the lowest test scores (Woodworth et al. 2008).

In Sweden one consequence of the advent of 'free schools' is greater social segregation between schools. According to the Swedish National Agency for
Education. Several previous studies, and statistics, show that choice in the school system has led to a tendency to segregate in terms of pupils' sociocultural background, performance and ethnic background (Skolverket 2006, p. 51). Wiborg (2011, p. 282), summarising recent research, reports that

The children from highly educated families gain mostly from education in independent schools, but the impact on families and immigrants who had received a low level of education is close to zero.

Regarding the question of segregation, several studies reveal that school choice in the Swedish school system has augmented social and ethnic segregation, particularly in relation to schools in deprived areas.

In an attempt to compensate for social inequality in the school system the Coalition government has introduced a 'pupil premium', attaching additional funding to pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds as an incentive for higher-performing schools, often in middle-class areas, to admit more students from poorer families (presumably by changing their catchment areas or introducing 'fair banding' admission criteria). The premium is only £430 per pupil, in contrast to the £3,000 called for by the charity Save the Children. According to an analysis by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (Chowdry et al. 2010) the premium would need to be very high to sufficiently reduce the disincentive for many schools to attract such pupils, putting at risk their academic attainment and public image. The authors conclude that 'The pupil premium may lead to a small reduction in covert selection by schools but is unlikely to significantly reduce social segregation' (p. 2). Nor is the premium sufficiently large (in fact it may be smaller than some socially deprived schools were previously receiving under local authority positive discriminatory funding formula) to make a qualitative difference in provision for those pupils most in need.

Conceptions of class

Up until now I have discussed inequality in society in terms of income and wealth, and inequality in education in terms mainly of eligibility for free school meals (FSM). Often in education FSM is used as a proxy indicator for social class, but this drastically reduces the size of the working class to a small percentage (about 16 per cent) of the population. The most common concept of social class in education policy and research is 'occupational social class'. This is a classification of occupations that since 2001 has normally been based on the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC) (a reworking of the sociologist John Goldthorpe's class schema), which has eight categories ranging from 'Higher managerial and professional occupations' to ' Routine occupations' and 'Never worked and long-term unemployed'. Education researchers often use the collapsed three-class version of the NS-SEC scale - managerial and professional occupations; intermediate occupations; routine and manual occupations – but omit the intermediate category and define the first as middle class (or in Goldthorpe's term the 'service class') and the last as working class. For example, in his book Class Strategies and the Education Market: The Middle Class and Social Advantage Stephen Ball (2003) defines the middle class as Goldthorpe's service class. Similarly Diane Reay utilises occupational class in her research (e.g. Reay 2006). Ball and Reay have been among the most insightful writers on class cultural differences in parents' identities and practices in relation to school, illuminating how middle-class parents seek, albeit sometimes with moral dilemmas, to secure positional advantage for their children through choice of school. However, their reliance on an occupational concept of class leads to an implicit but seriously politically debilitating consequence: it poses competition between the middle class and the working class as the class struggle in education.

There are two political implications of this position that need drawing out. The first is this: if the principal issue at stake in education is positional advantage then it is not in the class interests of the middle class to have a more egalitarian school system. Those parents who want to combine greater social equality in education with positional advantage for their own children do so on the basis of moral values but not common class interests. To resolve this dilemma we need not an occupational but a Marxist definition of the working class. For Marx the working class was defined as all those who remain under the economic compulsion to sell their labour power to live (Mandel 1976, p. 47). In the UK this comprises over 90 per cent of the active population. Of course there are big differences between professionals and managers on the one hand and semi-skilled workers on the other, economically, culturally and in the education context, but these are differences within this broad conception of the working class. The working class should not be thought of as necessarily homogenous: on the contrary, it is continually being reproduced as a heterogeneous formation, divided into various class fractions – of age, gender, ethnicity, skill, education, geography, income, etc. – which offer positional advantages to some without being in their class interests. Ball's examples of middle-class parents clearly fall within this Marxist definition of working class. For example, in 'Social justice in the head: are we all libertarians now?' (Ball 2006) the Simpsons are a speech therapist and a civil engineer (trade redundant); the Wilkinsons are a senior civil servant and a teacher in a private school.

Goldthorpe bases his division between the middle class – the service class – and the working class on the nature of the employment contract in terms of benefits in addition to salary and of degree of professional autonomy. These may be useful criteria to distinguish class fractions but they obscure the underlying common structural identity of being exploited by capital (indeed, many members of the 'middle-class' fraction may well be more exploited, though less oppressed, than semi-skilled workers in terms of the surplus value they produce).

The second political consequence of posing the middle-class quest for positional advantage in education as the class struggle in education is that it obscures
the real class struggle in education, which is between the dominant class in society, the ruling class, and the inclusive working class as I have defined it, comprising the vast majority of the population. For example, Reay says:

Within the educational system almost all the authority remains vested in the middle classes. Not only do they run the system, the system itself is one which valorizes middle rather than working class cultural capital

(Reay 2006, p. 294, emphasis added)

It is true that the state system valorizes middle-class cultural capital, but it is not true that the middle classes run the system. It is the ruling class, as the major employers and owners of big capital, which exercises determining power over government education policy, as it does over the state as a whole (while sending their own children to private schools, comprising 7 per cent of the school population but gaining a quarter of all advanced level examination passes and over half the places in the 'top' universities: Doig 2010). The state school system does not just function to reproduce the advantages of the middle class over the working class. It has a more fundamental purpose, which is to help to reproduce the conditions of existence of capitalist society as a whole. In this context the principal function of the school is to produce the sorts of future workers that the capitalist economy needs. It is these capitalist interests that the Coalition government is enforcing today and that Tony Blair articulated when he said:

Education is our best economic policy ... This country will succeed or fail on the basis of how it changes itself and gears up to this new economy based on knowledge. Education is now the centre of economic policy making for the future.

(Blair 2005)

A Marxist perspective on class focuses not on static categories of income and occupational distribution but on the dynamic reproduction and evolution of the social system as a whole. It enables us to understand the class interests driving policy and to develop an integrated analysis of the political economy of education - the production of capital in the form of the production of stratified future labour power - and the cultural politics of education: social inequality in education as the consequence of the circulation of capital in the form of unequal distribution of income and wealth. In Ball's analysis the state is dominant but the ruling class is absent and the source of the dynamic of policy in the economic imperatives of capital is left unexplored.

This is not to imply that the relationship between the economy and education is unproblematic: a simple matter of correspondence. Not that the school system has solely a labour market function. Governments also have a concern for social inclusion and meritocratic equality of opportunity in education, for reasons of social cohesion, ideological legitimacy and electoralism, but it is always subordinate to the economic imperative and to the determination of governments of whatever political complexion to eschew reforms that might undermine the privileged position in education of 'middle-class' families and thereby lose their electoral support. School also has an important ideological function: governments attempt to shape and set limits to what can be taught in the curriculum. Finally, the Coalition government's policies, building on New Labour's foundations, are also designed to expand the economic function of the school system in the capitalist economy in a different sense, as a market for profit for edubusiness.

There is an alternative

It is possible to draw the conclusion that the weight of social class inequality in society is so great that schools can do little to counter it. Many teachers and educators have rejected this pessimistically determinist view and offer an alternative based on the principle that all children have the capacity to learn, even in a profoundly economically unequal society. Hart et al's (2004) starting point is that the core idea is not children's and young people's 'ability' but their 'transformatibility', the potential for learning capacity to be transformed. They speak of the need 'to find ways of making connections between school learning and the students' worlds, to find ways to make learning meaningful, relevant and important to them' (2004, p. 168). They explain that while ability-focused teachers 'attempt simply to match tasks to what they see as salient differences between their students',

Teaching that seeks to foster diversity through co-agency is concerned not with match but with connection, achieving a genuine meeting of minds, purposes and concerns between teachers and young people. [...] Tasks and outcomes are deliberately left open, or constructed in such a way as to offer choice of various kinds, so that young people have space to make their own connections [...] .

... the teachers project themselves empathetically into young people's minds and try to imagine, in relation to any particular set of curricular concerns and intentions, what will seem accessible, worthwhile and interesting from young people's point of view.

(Hart et al. 2004, p. 183)

The student needs to be able to use 'school knowledge' to organise understandings and actions in order to further his or her own meanings and purposes. All learning must start from problem situations, that is to say situations which have a meaning for the student, which pose a problem, which demand the elaboration of ideas to resolve this problem, and which lead effectively to the
mastery of rigorous concepts and language. The solution is not a diluted curriculum restricted to popular experience, but one in which 'academic' knowledge and popular experiences and meanings are interwoven and mutually and critically illuminate each other, so that 'school knowledge' infuses and informs the purposes and actions in the life-worlds of children and young people.

Terry Wrigley has shown how language is central to bridging academic and everyday forms of knowledge. In his book *Another School is Possible* he argues that 'The real issue is how to connect language [. . .] with experience, in ways that restore voice and agency to the learner' (Wrigley 2006, p. 91). He draws on Bruner's distinction between two ways of knowing: narrative (storytelling) and the logico-scientific method (academic language).

My argument is that improving access for marginalised young people requires grounding theoretical knowledge in lived experience, but as a road towards theoretical understanding, not in its avoidance [. . .] narrative styles can be more accessible than abstract academic language, and hold together effective and cognitive dimensions, but there are advantages to consolidating and critiquing the knowledge gained by a narrative by using more formal academic discourses.

(Wrigley 2009, p. 73)

Schools tend to trap learners who are struggling with abstract learning in work that is abstract but cognitively simple, instead of developing activities that 'root challenging ideas in experiences and richer forms of representation', providing 'opportunities for teachers to scaffold the learner's language from descriptive/narrative to more abstract theoretical discourses, and from colloquial to formal registers' (Wrigley 2009, p. 74).

This conception of knowledge informs the case studies in Apple and Beane's (1999) book *Democratic Schools*.

Rather than bring lists of concepts, facts and skills that students master for standardized achievement tests (and then go on to forget, by and large), knowledge is that which is intimately connected to the communities and biographies of real people. Students learn that knowledge makes a difference in people's lives, including their own.

(Apple and Beane 1999, p. 119)

Their case studies demonstrate that a curriculum which brings together 'school knowledge' and the real-life experiences and concerns of students is capable of enabling them to construct a meaningful problem-solving relationship to knowledge (see also Queensland's 'productive pedagogies' model: Hayes et al. 2006). One promising approach to this is the RSA's *Area Based Curriculum*, which aims to build on the resources already present within local communities:

- schools [. . .] could play an important role in tempering the segregation and competitive isolationism that could result from increased marketisation of schooling (potentially exacerbated by the coalition government's move to allow high achieving schools to become academies, and the expansion of the Free Schools model). The Area Based Curriculum approach contests the dominant view of parents as simply the consumers of education services, and also of parents as the only local stakeholders that should engage with schools. The involvement of a broader community in the creation and enactment of curriculum could anchor the curriculum more securely in the local area and community and allow that wider community to act in the interests of all children in a local area.

(RSA 2010, p. 18)

**Socially critical teaching and education for emancipation**

Social class in education is not solely about reducing inequality of attainment. Education is about the whole person, it is about helping children and young people to understand the world, and to develop the values, knowledge, skills and personal qualities to be able to act in it to change it for the better. There is a tradition within working-class education, stretching back to the early nineteenth century, of education providing 'really useful knowledge' as a means towards social emancipation.

Really useful knowledge involved, then, a range of resources for overcoming daily difficulties. It involved self-respect and self-confidence which came from seeing that your oppressions were systematic and were shared. It included practical skills, but not just those wanted by employers . . . Really useful knowledge was also a means to overcoming difficulties in the long term and more comprehensively. It taught people what social changes were necessary for real social ameliorations to occur.

(Johnson 1983, p. 22)

In *Democratic Schools* Michael Apple and James Beane (1999, p. 19) say, 'Our task is to reconstruct dominant knowledge and employ it to help, not hinder, those who are least privileged in this society'. One of their case study schools is Central Park East Secondary School, a public school in a poor district of New York. Its curriculum is based on the principle of critical enquiry, embodied in five questions:

- How do you know what you know?
- From whose viewpoint is this being presented?
- How is this event or work connected to others?
What if things were different?
Why is this important?

(Meier and Schwarz 1999, p. 35)

Many teachers are taking advantage of the opportunity to develop socially critical learning in their classrooms from a social justice perspective. For example, Remaking the Curriculum (Faulkney et al. 2011) records how two English secondary schools developed a cross-curricular thematic approach to the curriculum in Year 7. Here is an account of a lesson by Debra Kidd, a drama teacher in one of the schools.

I gave the group a piece of testimony from a child named Ashique – a child labourer in Bangladesh. 'My name is Ashique. I am eleven years old...'. Ashique recounts how he, his father and his three brothers work up to 18 hours per day in brick kilns for very little return. He understands that the family is in debt to the owner of the kilns – he mentions the fact that his father borrowed money. His testimony is factual and bare. He does not speak of his feelings except to say that he once went to school and 'liked it' but that he was removed by the owner.

The group were asked to work out what we knew to be true about the situation, and to draft two questions they would like to ask. In all cases, one of the questions was 'Why did Ashique's father borrow the money?' [...] We quickly learned that Ashique's father Mohammed had borrowed the money to pay for medical treatment for his daughter, but there were other questions to be answered. How long will it take to pay off the loan? Why do the boys have to work? How do they feel? All of these questions were subsequently explored by developing dramatic explorations of Mohammed's increasingly desperate attempts to secure money for his daughter. [...] Gradually, the group 'discover' that Mohammed's fate is not down to stupidity but to the social conditions he lives in. We look at the data on LEDCs [Less Economically Developed Countries] – infant mortality rates, literacy rates, doctors per capita etc. and understanding dawn.

(Faulkney et al. 2011, pp. 37–38)

This lesson led to students discussing goods they have bought, such as trainers, which might have been made by child labour in poorer countries, and what might be the effects of boycotting them.

Lessons like these raise the question of how 'critical' is socially critical pedagogy? How does it conceptualise the object of its critique? To what extent can it go beyond developing a critical understanding of specific issues within capitalist societies and enable pupils and students to develop, in ways appropriate to their age, a critical understanding of capitalism itself, and how it pervades and shapes every aspect of social life including their own identities?

In the 1970s and 1980s teachers began to raise issues of 'race' and gender in the classroom, exploring how they worked themselves out in the lives of their students and what their roots were in the structures and cultures of society. They achieved a radical reform of the curriculum and the culture of teaching, which still resonates in schools today, in spite of decades of neoliberalism. Little comparable curriculum innovation took place about issues of social class oppression and exploitation, yet they are even more salient and urgent today, in the context of a deep economic recession, widening inequality, and overtly conflicting class interests. If this is what is dominating the lives and futures of the children and young people in schools, what is the responsibility of teachers? To remain silent is to collude in injustice by depriving our pupils of the knowledge and conceptual tools they need to make sense of the world, leaving them vulnerable to racist and other reactionary explanations. Teaching about class, like 'race' and gender (with which it is often intertwined), is as vital and appropriate in the primary school as it is in the secondary school, whether deconstructing the presentation of class in stories or television programmes, making visible class conflict in history, enquiring how work is organised, what work produces, and how the products and profits of labour are distributed, or exploring class in the contexts of pupils' own lives and the communities they live in.

Engaging in socially critical teaching is a question of professional perspective and principle that depends on the extent to which teachers recognise that critical pedagogy is integral to the teacher's role; and the extent to which they develop the confidence, knowledge, and skill to try out ways of teaching about class and other social justice issues from a radical perspective and get positive feedback from their students. The new government's claim to be restoring professional autonomy to schools offers a window of opportunity now for teachers to explore new approaches to teaching and learning and develop a curriculum that meets the needs of both reducing social class inequality in attainment and helping the development of a critical understanding of social class in society.

Finally, there is another aspect of social class and school that I have not mentioned: the effective exclusion of the working class (as I have defined it, though especially but not exclusively, those not in the 'middle-class' fraction), from the decision-making processes in education, whether at school, local authority or national level. The imposition of academies by the Labour government regardless of popular campaigns of opposition was a case in point (Hatcher 2009, 2010). The bypassing of local education authorities by the Conservative–Liberal Democrat government's academies and free schools policies will further reduce the democratic accountability of the school system. Tackling social class inequality in the classroom has to be complemented by pressure outside the classroom to open up new possibilities for popular participation in educational decision-making in order to change the economic and education policy contexts in which schools work (Hatcher 2011).
Note

1 This raises the question of how we define and distinguish sexuality and sexual orientation. For the purposes of this and the chapter that follows, we regard sexual orientation as a fairly narrow concept relating to where an individual’s sexual attraction lies, which is usually regarded as being in either the same, other, or another gender. Our argument progresses by demonstrating that orientation is often a basis for categorising individuals and discrimination against them. However, sexual orientation is but one part of sexuality that we regard as the totality of expression, experience, attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviour that go to make up identity as a sexual being.

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...the crisis in American education, on the one hand, announces the bankruptcy of progressive education and, on the other hand, presents a problem of immense difficulty because it has arisen under the conditions and in response to the demands of a mass society.

—Hannah Arendt, 1961

Introduction

1.1 At the dawn of the new century no American institution is invested with a greater role to bring the young and their parents into the modernist regime than public schools. The common school is charged with the task of preparing children and youth for their dual responsibilities to the social order: citizenship and, perhaps its primary task, learning to labor. On the one hand, in the older curriculum on the road to citizenship in a democratic, secular society, schools are supposed to transmit the jewels of the enlightenment, especially literature and science. On the other hand, students are to be prepared for the work world by means of a loose but definite stress on the redemptive value of work, the importance of family, and of course the imperative of love and loyalty to one's country.

1.2 As to the enlightenment's concept of citizenship, students are at least putatively encouraged to engage in independent, critical thinking. But the socializing functions of schooling play to the opposite idea: children of the working, professional, and middle classes are to be molded to the industrial and technological imperatives of contemporary society (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985). Students learn science and mathematics, not as a discourse of liberation from myth and religious superstition, but as a series of algorithms the mastery of which are presumed to improve the student's logical capacities, or with no aim other than fulfilling academic requirements. In most places, social studies do not emphasize the choices between authoritarian and democratic forms of social organization, or democratic values—particularly criticism and renewal. Rather, it is presented as bits of information that have little significance for the conduct
of life. Perhaps the teaching and learning of world literature where some students are inspired by the power of the story to, in John Dewey’s (1980) terms, "reconstruct" experience is a partial exception to the rule that for most students high school is endured rather than experienced as a series of exciting explorations of self and society.

1.3 In the wake of these awesome tasks fiscal exigency as well as a changing mission have combined to leave public education in the United States in a chronic state of crisis. For some the main issue is whether schools are failing to transmit the general intellectual culture, even to the most able students. What is at stake in this critique is the fate of America as a civilization, particularly the condition of its democratic institutions and the citizens who are, in the final analysis, responsible for maintaining them. Arendt (1961) goes so far as to ask whether we "love the world" and our children enough to devise an educational system capable of transmitting to them the salient cultural traditions. Other critics complain schools are failing working-class students, Blacks, Latino/as and Whites, to fulfill the promise of equality of opportunity for good jobs. While they are concerned to address the class bias of schooling they unwittingly reinforce it by ignoring its content. The two positions, both with respect to their goals and to their implied educational philosophies, may not necessarily be contradictory but their simultaneous enunciation produces considerable tension for, with exceptions to be discussed below, the American workplace has virtually no room for dissent and individual or collective initiative not sanctioned by management. The corporate factory, which includes sites of goods and symbolic production alike, is perhaps the nation’s most authoritarian institution. But any reasonable concept of democratic citizenship requires an individual who is able to discern knowledge from propaganda, is competent to choose among conflictual claims and programs, and is capable of actively participating in the affairs of the polity. Yet the political system offers few opportunities, beyond the ritual of voting, for active citizen participation (Arendt, 1961).

1.4 Even identifying the problem of why and how schools fail has proven to be controversial. For those who would define mass education as a form of training for the contemporary workplace, the problem can be traced to the crisis of authority, particularly school authority. That some of the same educational analysts favor a curriculum that stresses critical thinking for a small number of students in a restricted number of sites is consistent with the dominant trends of schooling since the turn of the twenty-first century. In a quest to restore authority conservative educational policy has forcefully caused schools to abandon, both rhetorically and practically, the
so-called "child-centered" curriculum and pedagogy in favor of a series of measures that hold students accountable for passing standardized tests and for carrying a definite quantity of school knowledge on penalty of being left back from promotion or expelled. Such policies have also imposed performance-based criteria on administrators and teachers. For example in New York City the chancellor of schools has issued "report cards" to principals and has threatened to fire those whose schools do not meet standards established by high-stakes tests. These tests are the antithesis of critical thought. Their precise objective is to evaluate the student's ability to imbibe and regurgitate information and to solve problems according to prescribed algorithms.

1.5 On the other side, the progressives, who misread Dewey's educational philosophy to mean that the past need not be studied too seriously, have offered little resistance to the gradual vocationalizing and dumbing down of the mass education curriculum. In fact, historically they were advocates of making the curriculum less formal, reducing requirements, and, on the basis of a degraded argument that children learn best by "doing," promoted practical, work-oriented programs for high school students. Curricular deormalization was often justified on interdisciplinary criteria, which resulted in the watering down of course content and deemphasizing writing. Most American high school students, in the affluent as well as the "inner city" districts, may write short papers which amount to book reviews and autobiographical essays, but most graduate without ever having to perform research and write a paper of considerable length. Moreover, in an attempt to make the study of history more "relevant" to students' lives, since the late 1960s the student is no longer required to memorize dates; she/he may have learned the narratives but was often unable to place them in a specific chronological context. Similarly, economics has been eliminated in many schools or taught as a "unit" of a general social studies course. If philosophy is taught at all, it is construed in terms of "values clarification," a kind of ethics in which the student is assisted to discover and examine his/her own values.

1.6 That after more than a century of universal schooling the relationship between education and class has once more been thrust to the forefront is just one more signal of the crisis in American education. The educational left, never strong on promoting intellectual knowledge as a substantive demand, clings to one of the crucial precepts of progressive educational philosophy: under the sign of egalitarianism, the idea that class deficits can be overcome by equalizing access to school opportunities without questioning what those opportunities have to do with genuine education. The access question has been at the forefront of higher education debates since the early 1970s; even conservatives who favor vouchers and other forms of public funding for private and parochial schools have justified privatizing instruction on access grounds.
1.7 The structure of schooling already embodies the class system of society and, for this reason, the access debate is mired in a web of misplaced concreteness (Whitehead, 1931). To gain entrance into schools always entails placement into that system. "Equality of Opportunity" for class mobility is the system's tacit recognition that inequality is normative. In the system of mass education, schools are no longer constituted to transmit the enlightenment intellectual traditions or the fundamental prerequisites of participatory citizenship, even for a substantial minority. While acquiring credentials that are conferred by schools remains an important prerequisite for many occupations, the conflation of schooling with education is mistaken. Schooling is surely a source of training both by its disciplinary regime and its credentialing system. But schools transmit not a "love for the world" or "for our children" as Arendt (1961) suggests, and contrary to their democratic pretensions, they teach conformity to the social, cultural, and occupational hierarchy. In our contemporary world they are not constituted to foster independent thought, let alone encourage social agency.

1.8 In Black and Latino/a working-class districts, schools are for many students way stations to the military or to prison even more than to the civilian paid labor force. As Michelle Fine (2003) observes: "Visit a South Bronx high school these days and you'll find yourself surrounded by propaganda from the Army, Navy, and Marines... look at the 'stats' and you'll see that 70 percent of the men and women in prison have neither a GED nor a diploma; go to Ocean Hill-Brownsville 40ish years later, and you'll see a juvenile justice facility on the very site that they wanted to build their own schools" (personal communication with the author). In the current fiscal crisis afflicting education and other social services, there is an outstanding exception: prisons continue to be well-funded and despite the decline of violent crimes in the cities, drug busts keep prisons full and rural communities working.

1.9 School knowledge is not the only source of education for students, perhaps not even the most important source. Young people learn, for ill as well as good, from popular culture, especially music, from parents and family structures, and perhaps most importantly, from their peers. Schools are the stand-in for "society," the aggregation of individuals who, by contract or by coercion, are subject to governing authorities in return for which they may be admitted into the world, albeit on the basis of different degrees of reward. To the extent that they signify solidarity and embody common dreams popular culture, parents, and peers are the worlds of
quasi-communities which are more powerful influences on their members.

Access to What?

2.1 In the mainstream the critique of education has been directed toward the question of access to its entailments—particularly the credentials that presumably open up the gates to higher learning or to better jobs. Generally speaking, critical education analysis focuses on the degree to which schools are willing and able to open their doors to working-class students because through their mechanisms of differential access, schools are viewed as, perhaps, the principal reproductive institutions of economically and technologically advanced capitalist societies. With some exceptions, most critics of schooling have paid scant attention to school authority, the conditions for the accumulation of social capital—the intricate network of personal relations that articulate with occupational access—and to cultural capital—the accumulation of the signs, if not the substance, of kinds of knowledge that are markers of distinction.

2.2 The progressives assume that the heart of the class question is whether schooling provides working-class kids—whether Caucasian, Black, Latino/a, or Asian—equality of opportunity to acquire legitimate knowledge and marketable academic credentials. They have adduced overwhelming evidence that contradicts schooling's reigning doctrine: that despite class, race, or gender hierarchies in the economic and political system, public education provides every individual with the tools to overcome conditions of birth. In reality, only about a quarter of people of working-class origin attain professional, technical, and managerial careers through the credentialing system. They find occupational niches, but not at the top of their respective domains. Typically graduating from third tier, non-research colleges and universities their training does not entail acquiring knowledge connected with substantial intellectual work: theory, extensive writing, and independent research. Students leaving these institutions find jobs as line supervisors, computer technicians, teachers, nurses, social workers, and in other niches in the social service professions.

2.3 A small number may join their better educated colleagues in getting no collar jobs, where "no collar"—Andrew Ross's (2003) term—designates occupations which afford considerable work autonomy, such as computer design, which, although salaried, cannot be comfortably folded into the conventional division of manual and intellectual labor. That so-called social mobility was a product of the specific conditions of American
economic development at a particular time—the first quarter of the twentieth century—and was due, principally, to the absence of an indigenous peasantry during its industrial revolution and the forced confinement of millions of Blacks to southern agricultural lands is conveniently forgotten or ignored by consensus opinion. Nor were the labor shortages provoked by World War II and the subsequent U.S. dominance of world capitalism until 1973 taken into account by the celebrants of mobility. Economic stagnation has afflicted the United States economy for more than three decades and, despite the well-known high-tech bubble of the 1990s, its position has deteriorated in the world market. Yet, the mythology of mobility retains a powerful grip over the popular mind. That schooling makes credentials available to anyone regardless of rank or status forms one of the sturdy pillars of American ideology (Ross, 2003).

2.4 In recent years the constitutional and legal assignment to the States and local communities of responsibility for public education has been undermined by what has been termed the "standards" movement, which is today the prevailing national educational policy enforced not so much by federal law as by political and ideological coercion. At the State and district levels the invocation to "tough love" has attained widespread support. We are witnessing the abrogation, both in practice and in rhetoric, of the tradition of social promotion whereby students are moved through the system without acquiring academic skills. Having proven unable to provide to most working-class kids the necessary educational experiences that qualify them for academic promotion, after more than a decade after its installation, the standards movement reveals its underlying content: it is the latest means of exclusion whose success depends on placing the onus for failure to achieve academic credentials on the individual rather than the system. Although state departments of education frequently mandate certain subjects be taught in every school and have established standards based on high-stakes tests applicable to all districts, everyone knows that districts with working-class majorities provide neither a curriculum and pedagogy nor facilities which meet these standards because, among other problems, they are chronically under-funded. But there is no shortage of money for the private corporations that are making huge profits on school systems' high-stakes testing—a form of privatization that transfers huge amounts of public money to publishers, testing organizations, and large consulting companies. The State aid formulae which, since the advent of conservative policy hegemony, reward those districts whose students perform well on high-stakes standardized tests, tend to be unequal. Performance-based aid policies means that school districts where the affluent live get more than their share, and make up for State budget deficits by raising local property taxes and soliciting annual subventions from parents—measures not affordable by even the top layer of wage-workers and low-level salaried employees. The result is overcrowded
classrooms, poor facilities, especially libraries, and underpaid, often poorly prepared teachers—an outcome of financially-starved schools of education in public universities.

2.5 Standards presuppose students' prior possession of cultural capital—an acquisition which almost invariably entails having been reared in a professional or otherwise upper-class family. That, in the main, even the most privileged elementary and secondary schools are ill-equipped to compensate for home backgrounds in which reading and writing are virtually absent, has become a matter of indifference for school authorities.

In this era of social Darwinism poor school performance is likely to be coded as a genetic deficit rather than being ascribed to social policy. Of course the idea that working-class kids, whatever their gender, race, or ethnic backgrounds, were selected by evolution or by God to perform material rather than immaterial labor is not new; this view is as old as class divided societies. But in an epoch in which the chances of obtaining a good working-class job have sharply diminished, most kids face dire consequences if they don't acquire the skills needed in the world of immaterial labor. Not only are 75 percent of youth assigned to working-class jobs but, in the absence of a shrinking pool of unionized industrial jobs which often pay more than some professions such as teaching and social work, they must accept low-paying service sector employment, enter the informal economy, or join the ranks of the chronically unemployed.

2.6 From 1890-1920, the greatest period of social protest in American history before the industrial union upsurge of the 1930s, John Dewey, the leading educational philosopher of the progressive era, decisively transformed class discourse about education into a discourse of class-leveling. Dewey's philosophy of education is a brilliant piece of bricolage: it combines an acute sensitivity to the prevailing inequalities in society with a pluralist theory which, by definition, excludes class struggles as a strategy for achieving democracy. It was a feat that could have been achieved only by tapping into the prevailing radical critique of the limits of American democracy. But Dewey's aim was far from founding a new educational or political radicalism. True to the pragmatist tradition of "tinkering" rather than transforming institutions, Dewey sought to heal the breach between labor and capital through schooling. To the extent schools afforded workers' children access to genuine education, American democracy—and the Americanization of waves of new immigrants—would be secure.

2.7 Dewey was not only America's pre-eminent philosopher, he was a major intellectual spokesperson of the progressive movement at a time when
social reform had achieved high visibility and had enormous influence over both legislation and public opinion, principally among wide sections of the middle class as well as in the higher circles of power. Not only did his writings help bring education into the center of intellectual and political discourse by arguing that a society that wished to overcome the stigma of class distinction associated with industrial capitalism had to fervently embrace universal schooling. He was able to elaborate the doctrine that schooling was the heart of education, the core institution for the reproduction of liberal-democratic society, and the basis for the objective of class leveling. In the end, "democracy in education" signifies that by means of universal schooling all children, regardless of class origins, could have access to social mobility—which is not egalitarian at all.

2.8 Democracy and Education, Dewey’s (1916) main philosophical statement on education, may be viewed in the context of the turn of the twentieth-century emergence of mass public education which, among other goals, was designed to address a multitude of problems that accompanied the advent of industrial society and the emergence of the United States as a world power: the enormous task of "Americanizing"—ideological education—millions of immigrants' children, most of whom were of the working class; the rise of scientifically-based industrial and commercial technologies that, in the service of capital, required a certain level of verbal, scientific, and mathematical literacy of a substantial portion of the wage-labor force; the hard-won recognition by economic and political authorities as well as the labor movement that child labor had deleterious consequences for the future of the capitalist system; and, in an era of rapid technological change, the fact that industrial labor had become relatively expendable. In this context the high school became an important ageing vat or warehouse, whether adolescents learned anything or not. As Michael B. Katz (1970) has shown, this latter concern was the basis of the public education movement in the nineteenth century. The question for educators, law enforcement officials, and political and economic leaders was what to do with unemployed youth during the day. The day-prison was one solution but Horace Mann prevailed upon his colleagues to establish public schools as a more "productive" way of containing unruly youngsters. Later, the institution was expanded from six to twelve grades and the minimum age for leaving rose from twelve to sixteen. After a century of compulsory secondary schooling, the educational value of high schools is still in doubt (Katz, 1970).

2.9 At the outset, Dewey (1916) specifies the purposes of education: through adult transmission and communication to assist the young to direct their own lives. Dewey cautions adults that since the young hold in their hands society's future, the nature of their transmissions inevitably have serious consequences. Yet, having recognized, briefly, the role of "informal" education in the self-formation of the young, Dewey establishes the rule for
virtually all subsequent educational philosophy. Consistent with a liberal-democratic society, educators are admonished to devise a formal method for directing the future: by the organization of a "common school" that provides the necessary discipline and array of learnings and methods by which learning that reproduces the social order may occur. While transmitting and communicating knowledge are intended to provide "meaning to experience," and Dewey (1916) invokes "democratic criteria" as the basis for his concept of the "reconstruction of experience," the objective of "control and growth" in order to achieve "social continuity" occupies an equally important place with the creative possibilities of education in any educational enterprise (331).

2.10 Dewey walks a tightrope between the creative side of education as a playful and imaginative reflection on experience and the necessary task of reproducing the social order in which work, albeit as much as possible creative, remains the key educational goal. But he also endorses the role of the school for training the labor force. Dewey advocated for the ability of children to obtain the knowledge that could aid in their quest for an autonomous future even as he approached the problem of moral education (character building, values) from the perspective of society's need to reproduce itself on the basis of the criteria inherited from the past. He deplores the separation of labor and leisure and the cleavage of liberal arts and vocational education in which the former is regarded as activity to be tolerated but not enjoyed. Labor should not be viewed as a job, but rather, as much as possible, as a calling. Without addressing the nature of the rationalized labor to which wage workers, including most professional and technical workers are subjected, Dewey's educational philosophy is directed mostly by the ideal of educational humanism. Class distinctions are not denied but are assumed to be blurred, if not eliminated, by democratic education.

2.11 In both the critical and celebratory variants of his philosophy, Dewey's intellectual children have not, with few exceptions, addressed the issue of whether, given its conflictual purposes and hierarchical organization, schools can fulfill the liberal-democratic, let alone egalitarian, promise. Having narrowly confined itself to school practices, post-Deweyan progressive educational thought has recoded his philosophy by invoking phrases such as "self-realization" and "child-centered" to describe education's goals. Or worse, Dewey has been used to justify a relentless instrumentalism in curriculum design: in the name of anti-traditionalism and nationalism high schools do not teach philosophy and social history—principally the role of social movements in making history—or treat world literature as a legitimate object of academic study. Needless to say, few if any critics have challenged the curricular exclusions of working-
class history, let alone the histories of women and of Blacks. Nor have 
curricular critics addressed the exclusion of philosophy and social theory.

2.12 In recent years the philosophy of education has waned and been 
replaced by a series of policy-oriented empirical research projects that 
conflate democracy with access, and openly subordinate school knowledge 
to the priorities of the State and the corporations. Educational thought has 
lost, even renounced, Dewey's program directed to the reconstruction of 
experience. In fact, after the early grades student experience is viewed by 
many educators and administrators with suspicion, even hostility. Recent 
educational policy has veered towards delineating pre-school and 
kindergarten as sites for academic and vocational preparation. If the child 
is to grow to become a productive member of society — where productive is 
equated with work-ready — play must be directed and free time severely 
constrained. The message emanating from school authorities is to "forget" 
all other forms and sites of learning. Academic and technical knowledge 
become the only legitimate forms, and the school is the only reliable site to 
obtain these. Whatever its defects, in contrast to the penchant of modern 
educational researchers to focus on "policy" to the detriment of historical 
and theoretical analysis, Dewey's ideas demonstrate a passion for 
citizenship and ambivalence about the subordination of education to the 
impertives of the system: he deplored the subordination of knowledge to 
the priorities of the State, while at the same time extolling the virtues of the 
liberal State; he subjected vocational education to the scrutiny of the 
enlightenment prescription that education be critical of the existing state of 
affairs, while approving the reproductive function of schools.

2.13 The rise of higher education since World War II has been seen by many 
as a repudiation of academic elitism. Do not the booming higher education 
enrollments validate the propositions of social mobility and democratic 
education? Not at all. Rather than constituting a sign of rising qualifications 
and widening opportunity, burgeoning college and 
university enrollments signify changing 
economic and political trends. The scientific 
and technical nature of our production and service sectors increasingly 
require qualified and credentialed workers (it would be a mistake to 
regard them as identical). Students who would have sought good factory 
jobs in the past now believe, with reason, they need credentials to qualify 
for a good-paying job. On the other hand, even as politicians and educators 
decry social promotion, and most high schools with working-class 
constituencies remain ageing vats, mass higher education is, to a great 
extent, a holding pen which effectively masks unemployment and
underemployment, which may account for its rapid expansion over the last thirty five years of chronic economic stagnation, deindustrialization, and the proliferation of part-time and temporary jobs, largely in the low-paid service sectors. Consequently, working-class students are able, even encouraged, to enter universities and colleges at the bottom of the academic hierarchy—community colleges but also public four-year colleges—thus fulfilling the formal pledge of equal opportunity for class mobility even as most of these institutions suppress its content. But grade-point averages, which in the standards era depend as much as the Scholastic Aptitude Test on high-stakes testing, that measure the student's acquired knowledge, often restrict his/her access to elite institutions of higher learning—the obligatory training grounds for professional and managerial occupations. Since all credentials are not equal, graduating from third and fourth tier institutions does not confer on the successful candidate the prerequisites for entering a leading graduate school—the preparatory institution for professional/managerial occupations—or the most desirable entry level service jobs which require only a bachelor's degree (Aronowitz, 2000).

2.14 Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron (1977) argue that schools reproduce class relations by reinforcing rather than reducing class-based differential access to social and cultural capital, key markers of class affiliation and mobility. These forms of capital, they argue, are always already possessed by children of the wealthy, professionals, and the intelligentsia. Far from making possible a rich intellectual education, or providing the chance to affiliate with networks of students and faculty who have handles on better jobs, through mechanisms of discipline and punishment, schooling habituates working-class students to the bottom rungs of the work world, or the academic world, by subordinating or expelling them (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Poorly prepared for academic work by their primary and secondary schools, and having few alternatives to acquiring some kind of credential, many who stay the course and graduate high school and third and fourth tier college, inevitably confront a series of severely limited occupational choices—or none at all. Their life chances are just a cut above those who do not complete high school or college. Their school performances seem to validate what commonsense has always suspected: given equal opportunity to attain school knowledge, the cream always rises to the top and those stuck at the bottom must be biologically impaired or victimized by the infamous "culture of poverty." That most working-class high school and college students are obliged to hold full- or part-time jobs in order to stay in school fails to temper this judgment for as is well known, preconceptions usually trump facts (Cicourel & Kitrae, 1963). Nor does the fact that children of the recent 20 million immigrants from Latin America and Asia speak their native languages at home, in the neighborhood, and to each other in school evoke more than hand-ringing from educational leaders; in this era of tight school
budgets English-as-a-second-language funds have been cut or eliminated at every level of schooling.

2.15 But Paul Willis (1981) insists that working-class kids get working-class jobs by means of their refusal to accept the discipline entailed in curricular mastery and by their rebellion against school authority. Challenging the familiar "socialization" thesis, of which Bourdieu's is perhaps the most sophisticated version, according to which working-class kids "fail" because they are culturally deprived or, in the American critical version, assaulted by the hidden curriculum and school pedagogy which subsumes kids under the prevailing order, Willis (1981) recodes kids' failure as refusal of [school] work, which lands them in the factory or low-level service jobs. Willis offers no alternative educational model to schooling; his discovery functions as critique. Indeed, as Willis himself acknowledges, the school remains, in Louis Althusser's (1971) famous phrase, the main "ideological state apparatus," but working-class kids are not victims. Implicitly rejecting Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb's (1973) notion that school failure is a "hidden injury" of class insofar as working-class kids internalize poor school performance as a sign of personal deficit, Willis argues that most early school leavers are active agents in the production of their own class position. While students' antipathy to school authority is enacted at the site of the school, its origins are the working-class culture from which they spring. Workers do not like bosses and kids do not like school bosses—the deans, principals, and often the teachers, whose main job in the urban centers is to keep order. The source of working-class kids' education is not the school but the shop-floor where their parents work, the home, and the neighborhood.

2.16 In the past half century the class question has been inflected by race and gender discrimination and, in the American way, the "race, gender, class" phrase implies that these domains are ontologically distinct, if not entirely separate. The race and gender question has often not been theorized as a class issue, but as an attribute of bio-identities. In fact, in the era of identity politics, class itself stands alongside race and gender as just another identity. Having made the easy, inaccurate judgment that White students, regardless of their class or gender stand in a qualitatively different relation to school-related opportunities than Blacks, class is often suppressed as a sign of exclusion. In privileging issues of access, not only is the curriculum presupposed, in which case Bourdieu's insistence on the concept of cultural capital is ignored, but also the entire question is elided of whether schooling may be conflated with education. Only rarely do writers examine other forms of education. In both the Marxist and liberal traditions
schooling is presumed to remain, over a vast spectrum of spatial and temporal situations, the theatre within which life chances are determined.

**Education and Immaterial Labor**

3.1 Education may be defined as the collective and individual reflection on the totality of life experiences: what we learn from peers, parents and the socially situated cultures of which they are a part, media, and schools. By reflection I mean the transformation of experience into a multitude of concepts that constitute the abstractions we call "knowledge." Which of the forms of learning predominate is always configured historically. The exclusive focus by theorists and researchers on school knowledge—indeed the implication that school is the principle site of what we mean by education—reflects the degree to which they have, themselves, internalized the equation of education with school knowledge and its preconditions. The key learning is they/we have been habituated to a specific regime of intellectual labor which entails a high level of self-discipline, the acquisition of the skills of reading and writing, and the career expectations associated with professionalization.

3.2 To say this, constitutes the self-reflection by intellectuals—in the broadest sense of the term—of their own relation to schooling. In the age of the decline of critical intelligence and the proliferation of technical intelligence, "intellectual" in its current connotation designates immaterial labor and not primarily those engaged in traditional intellectual pursuits such as literature, philosophy, and art. Immaterial labor describes those who work not with objects or the administration of things and people, but with ideas, symbols, and signs. Some of the occupations grouped under immaterial labor have an affective dimension, particularly people who, in one way or another, care for each other. The work demands the complete subordination of brain, emotion, and body to the task, while requiring the worker to exercise considerable judgment and imagination in its performance (Hardt & Negri, 1994). At sites such as "new economy" private-sector software workplaces, some law firms that deal with questions of intellectual property, public interest, constitutional and international law, research universities and independent research institutes, and small, innovative design, architectural and engineering firms, the informality of the labor process, close collaborative relationships among members of task-oriented teams, the overflow of the space of the shop floor with the spaces of home and play, evoke, at times, a high level of exhilaration, even giddiness among members (Ross, 2003). But these relationships are present in such work as teaching, child care, care for seniors, and the whole array of therapeutic services, including psychotherapy.

3.3 To be an immaterial worker means, in the interest of having self-
generated work, surrendering much of one's unfettered time. These people are obliged to sunder the conventional separation of work and leisure, to adopt the view that time devoted to creative, albeit commodified, labor is actually "free." Or, to be more exact, even play must be engaged in as serious business. For many of these people the golf course, the bar, and the weekend at the beach are workplaces where dreams are shared, plans are formulated, and deals are made. Just as time becomes unified around work, work loses its geographic specificity. As Ross (2003) shows in his pathbreaking ethnography of a New York new economy workplace during and after the dot.com boom, the headiness for the pioneers of this new work world was, tacitly, a function of the halcyon period of the computer software industry when everyone felt the sky was no longer the limit. When the economic crunch descended on thousands of workplaces, people were laid off and those who remained experienced a heavy dose of market reality.

3.4 It may be argued that among elite students and institutions schooling prepares immaterial labor by transmitting a bundle of legitimate knowledge. The diligent, academically successful student internalizes the blur between the classroom, play, and the home by spending a great deal of time in the library or ostensibly playing at the computer. Thus the price of the promise of autonomy, a situation that is intrinsic to professional ideology, if not always its practice in the context of bureaucratic and hierarchical corporate systems, is to accept work as a mode of life; one lives to work, rather than the reverse. The hopes and expectations of these strata are formed in the process of schooling; indeed they have most completely assimilated the ideologies linked to school knowledge and to the credentials conferred by the system. Thus whether professional school people, educational researchers, or not, they tend to evaluate people by the criteria to which they themselves were subjected. If the child has not fully embraced work as life, she/he is consigned to the educational netherland. Even the egalitarians (better read populists) accept this regime: their object is to afford those for whom work is a necessary evil into the social world where work is the mission.

**Media and Popular Culture**

4.1 Most educators and critics acknowledge the enormous role of media in contemporary life. The ubiquity and penetration of visual media such as TV, VCR, DVD, and electronic oral equipment like CD and tape players into the home has called into question the separation of the public and private spheres and challenged the notion that autonomous private life still exists. This has prompted writers such as Arendt (1958) to insist on the importance of maintaining their separation. When taken together with the advent, in the technical as well as metaphoric sense, of "big brother" where the government now announces openly its intention to subject every
telephone and computer to surveillance, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that media are a crucial source of education and may, in comparison to schools, exercise a greater influence on children and youth. Many claim that television for example is the prime source of political education, and certainly the major source of news for perhaps a majority of the population. And there is a growing academic discourse of the importance of popular culture, especially music and film, in shaping the values and the cultural imaginary of children and adolescents. Many writers have noted the influence of media images on children's aspirations, on their measurement of self-worth, both physically and emotionally. Of course debate rages as to what is learned, for example, the implied frameworks that are masked by the face of objectivity presented by television news, and by fiction which, as everybody knows, is suffused with ethical perspectives on everyday relations (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002; Macdonald, 1983, McLuhan, 1964).

4.2 Nor does every critic accept the conventional wisdom that, in the wake of the dominance of visual media in everyday life, we are, in the phrase of a leading commentator, "amusing ourselves to death," or that the ideological messages of popular music, sitcoms, and other TV fare are simply conformist (Postman, 1986). But it must be admitted that since the 1920s and 1930s when critics argued that the possibility of a radical democracy in which ordinary people participated in the great and small decisions affecting their lives was undermined by the advent of the culture industry, popular culture has, to a large degree, become a weapon against, as well as for, the people. As a general rule, in periods of upsurge, when social movements succeed in transforming aspects of everyday life as well as the political landscape, art, in its "high" as well as popular genres, has expressed popular yearning for a better world. In this vein, a vast literature, written largely by participants in popular culture since the 1960s, rejects the sharp divide between high and low art. While many contemporary cultural critics such as Griel Marcus (1975) and Robert Christgau (2001) acknowledge their debt to Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, particularly that of Herbert Marcuse and Theodor Adorno, both by dint of their independent judgment, and the influence of Walter Benjamin—who despite his elective affinity to critical theory, welcomed, with some trepidation, the eclipse of high art—they find a subversive dimension in rock n' roll music. It may be that the 1960s phrase, "sex, drugs and rock n' roll" no longer resonates as a universal sign of rebellion. Yet, when evaluated from the perspective of a society still obsessed with drug use among kids, pre-marital sex, and "blaming" the music for this non-conformity, the competition between school and popular culture still rages. From anthems of rebellion to musical expressions of youth rejection of conventional sexual and political morality, critics have detected signs of resistance to official mores.
Of course even as punk signaled the conclusion of a sort of "golden age" of rock n' roll and the succeeding genres—heavy metal, alternative, techno, among others—were confined to market niches, hip-hop took on some of the trappings of a universal oppositional cultural form which, by the 1990s, had captured the imagination of White as well as Black kids. Out of the "bonfires" of the Bronx came a new generation of artists whose music and poetry enflamed the embers of discontent. Figures such as Ice-T, Tupac, Biggie Smalls, and many others articulated the still vibrant rebellion against what George Bernard Shaw had once called "middle-class morality," and the smug, suburban confidence that the cities could be safely consigned to the margins. Like Bob Dylan, some of the hip-hop artists were superb poets. Artists like Tupac had many imitators and eventually the genre became fully absorbed by the culture industry, a development which, like the advent of the Velvets, the Who, and other avant-garde rock groups of the early 1970s gave rise to an underground. And just as rock n' roll was accused of leading young people astray into the dungeons of drugs and illicit sex, the proponents of hip-hop suffered a similar fate. Some record producers succumbed to demands they censor artistic material, radio stations refused to air some hip-hop, and record stores, especially in suburban malls, were advised to restrict sales of certain artists and records.

What White kids learn from successive waves of rock n' roll and hip-hop music is chiefly their right to defy ordinary conventions. After the mid-1950s, the varied genres of rock, rhythm and blues, and hip-hop steadily challenged the class, racial, and sexual constructs of this ostensibly egalitarian, but puritanical culture. Bored and dissatisfied with middle-class morality and its cultural values, teenagers flooded the concerts of rock and hip-hop stars, smoked dope, and violated the precepts of conventional sexual morality to the best of their abilities. Many youth adopt Black rhetoric, language, and disdain for mainstream values. Of course, middle-class kids are obliged to lead a double life: since their preferred artistic and cultural forms are accorded absolutely no recognition in the worlds of legitimate school knowledge. Since the 1960s, their shared music and the messages of rebellion against a racist, conventional suburban, middle-class culture has constituted a quasi-counter community. Yet on penalty of proscription they must absorb school knowledge without invoking the counter-knowledge of popular culture.

The products of visual culture, particularly film and television, are no less powerful sources of knowledge. Since movies became a leading form of recreation early in the twentieth century, critics have distinguished schlock from "films," produced both by the Hollywood system and by a
beleaguered corps of independent film makers. In the 1920s, elaborating the dynamic film technique pioneered by D.W. Griffith, the Soviet filmmakers, notably Sergei Eisenstein and Zhiga Vertov, and the great cultural critic Siegfried Kracauer fully comprehended the power of visual culture in its ornamental, aesthetic sense, and gave pride of place to film as a source of mass education. Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* and Eisenstein's *October* were not only great works of art, they possessed enormous didactic power (Kracauer, 1995). Vertov evoked the romance of industrial reconstruction in the new Soviet regime and the imperative of popular participation in building a new technologically-directed social reality. And in most of his films Eisenstein was the master of revolutionary memory. His work encouraged the people not to forget how brutal the ancient regime was and to understand that the future was in their hands, and he would produce the images that created a new "memory" even among those who had never experienced the heady days of the revolution. Of course Griffith conveyed a different kind of memory: in his classic *Birth of a Nation* he deconstructed the nobility and romance of the American Civil War and the Reconstruction period by depicting them as a corrupt alliance of Blacks and northern carpetbaggers, the epithet applied to the staff of the Freemens Bureau and the military which had been dispatched to guarantee the newly won civil rights of millions of African Americans.

4.6 In 1950, anthropologist Hortense Powdermaker termed Hollywood "the dream factory." While we were entertained by the movies, she argued that a whole world of hopes and dreams was being manufactured that had profound effects on our collective unconscious. Rather than coding these experiences as "illusion," she accorded them genuine social influence. With the later writings of Andre Bazin, Francois Truffault, Christian Metz, Stephen Heath, Laura Mulvey, and Pauline Kael, movies as an art form, but also a massive influence on what we know and how we learn, came into its own. Film, which was for Critical Theory just another product of the culture industry, is now taken seriously by several generations of critics and enthusiasts as a many-sided cultural force. At the same time film criticism has evolved from reviews in the daily and weekly press and television, whose main function is to advise the public whether to choose a particular film to spend an evening watching, or to hire a baby-sitter to attend a movie, into a historical and critical discipline worthy of academic departments and programs, and whose practitioners are eligible for academic rank (Bazin, 1961; Kael, 1994; Metz, 1991; Powdermaker, 1950).

4.7 Despite their ubiquity and vast influence, the kinds of knowledge derived from mass media and popular music remain largely unexamined by the secondary school curriculum. In this respect, public education may be regarded as one of the last bastions of high cultural convention, and of the book. Perhaps more to the point, by consistently refusing to treat popular culture—television, film, music, and video games—as objects of
legitimate intellectual knowledge schools deny the validity of student experiences, even if the objective would be to deconstruct them. Thus, a century after mass-mediated music and visual arts captured our collective imagination, notwithstanding its undeniable commodification, popular culture remains subversive, regardless of its content, because it continues to be outlawed in official precincts. By failing to address this epochal phenomenon, even as its forms are overwhelmingly influential in everyday life, school knowledge loses its capacity to capture the hearts and minds of its main constituents. And if schools cannot enter the students' collective imagination other forms of knowledge are destined to fill the vacuum.

4.8 Of course the power of television in shaping political culture is far less well understood. If the overwhelming majority of the people receive their news and viewpoints from television sources then, absent counterweights such as those that may be provided by social movements, counter-hegemonic intellectuals, and independent media, they are inevitably subjected to the ruling common sense in which alternatives to the official stories lack legitimacy, even when they are reported in the back pages or by a thirty second spot on the 11 o'clock news. Even journalists have discovered that the integration of the major news organizations with the ruling circles inhibits their ability to accurately report the news. For example, on October 26, 2002 more than 100,000 people descended on Washington, D.C. to protest the Bush administration's plan to wage war on Iraq. The New York Times reporter on the scene estimated the crowd in the "thousands" and stated that the turnout had disappointed organizers who had expected more than 100,000 demonstrators to show up. Since the New York Times functions as a guide to the rest of the American news media, including television and radio news, the coverage of the demonstration throughout the nation was scant, in part because other media relied on the paper's understated numbers. For the majority of Americans, the original report, and its numerous recapitulations, left the impression that the demonstration was a bust. But the Washington Post, perhaps the New York Times' only competitor in daily print journalism, estimated the number of demonstrators more or less accurately, and by the evening of the event a wealth of information and furious condemnation of the New York Times' biased coverage swarmed over the internet. Days later, in an obscure little piece, the paper's editors issued a correction without referring the readers to the previous report.

4.9 But more importantly, the relation between education and class is indicated by the way issues are framed by experts, opinion surveys, and the media, which faithfully feature them. That Iraq's president Saddam Hussein and his government constitutes an imminent threat to U.S.
security—a judgment that neither for the media nor for the Bush administration seems to require proof—is the starting point of virtually all of the media’s coverage of U.S. foreign policy. On the nightly news many programs of talking-head experts, no less than Sunday morning talk shows on commercial networks where experts mingle with the political directorate to discuss world and national events, rarely if ever posed the question of whether there was warrant for this evaluation. The commentary and discussion revolved instead around the issue not of whether the U.S. should go to war to disarm the regime, but when it inevitably would occur. The taken-for-granted assumption was that Saddam has viable "weapons of mass destruction" in his possession, whether or not the United Nations inspectors dispatched by the Security Council to investigate this allegation could affirm this U.S. government-manufactured "fact." Since the Bush administration knows that there nothing as efficient as a war to unify the underlying population behind its policies, and the media is complicit, citizens are deprived of countervailing assessments unless they emanate from within the establishment. And even then, there is only a small chance that these views will play prominently.

4.10 Thus when Brent Scowcroft, the national security advisor in the first Bush administration, and retiring Republican conservative U.S. Representative Dick Armey expressed reservations about the current administration's war plans, neither received the notice such an ideological breach might deserve. Only the tiny fraction of the population that reads a handful of liberal newspapers and magazines of opinion were likely to know about their objections. From the perspective of the leading media, Americans were in virtually unanimous agreement that we should and would go to war against Iraq. Yet, by the results of some polls, which are poorly reported in most media, we know that support for the war is not only soft, but is qualified; while few are opposed to a war on any terms, many Americans object to a unilateral attack by U.S. forces. But there were ample indications the administration would proceed as if public opinion were unified around its policy. In this mode of governance absent massive protest that may be manifested directly or electorally, silence is tantamount to consent. Without visible dissent, a visibility routinely denied by the media to protestors, the administration interpreted the Republican victory in the 2002 mid-term elections as a retrospective mandate for its war policies.

4.11 The pattern of government vetting and censorship of war news was established during World War II, but the first Bush administration elevated it to an art form. During the 1991 Gulf War, the administration took pains to shield reporters from the battlefield and insisted they be quartered in Saudi hotels, miles away from the action. Journalists received all of the war news from government sources, including video footage and photographs shown to them in special briefings. By the contemporary and subsequent
testimony of some journalists who had been assigned to cover the events, the Bush administration was intent on not repeating the mistakes of the Vietnam war when the Johnson administration permitted the press full access to American and enemy troops and to the battle scenes. Historians and political observers agree that this policy may have had a major impact on building the anti-war movement, especially the images of body bags being loaded on airplanes and the human gore associated with any close combat, supplied by staff photographers. Americans never got the chance to view the physical and human destruction visited by U.S. bombs and missiles on Baghdad or the extent of U.S. casualties. The war was short-lived so the political damage at home was relatively light. Needless to say, the fact that of the 700,000 troops who entered the combat area some 150,000 have since reported psychological or physical injuries barely makes it to the back pages of most newspapers, let alone the visual media.

4.12 Note well, at its inception some educators and producers touted the educational value of television. Indeed perhaps the major impact of the dominance of visual culture on our everyday knowledge is that to be, is to be seen. Celebrity is a word that is reserved for people whose names become "household" words. Celebrity is produced by the repetition of appearances of an individual on the multitude of television talk shows—Oprah, The Today Show, The Tonight Show with Jay Leno, Late Show with David Letterman, and others—in which personalities constitute the substance of the event. The point of the typical interview between the anchor or host and her or his subject is not what is said, or even that the guest is currently appearing in a film or television show, the ostensible purpose of the segment. The interview is a statement of who exists, and by implication, who doesn't. The event has little to do with economic or high-level political power, for these people are largely invisible, or on occasion may appear on the Charlie Rose Show on PBS or, formerly, on ABC's Nightline. The making of sports, entertainment, political, or literary celebrities defines the boundary of popular hope or aspiration. The leading television celebrity talk shows are instances of the American credo that, however high the barrier, anyone can become a star.

The Labor and Radical Movements as Educational Sites

5.1 The working-class intellectual as a social type precedes and parallels the
emergence of universal public education. At the dawn of the public school movement in the 1830s, the Ante Bellum labor movement that consisted largely of literate skilled workers, favored six years of schooling in order to transmit to their children the basics of reading and writing, but opposed compulsory attendance in secondary schools. The reasons were bound up with their congenital suspicion of the State which they believed never exhibited sympathy for the workers' cause. Although opposed to child labor, the early workers' movements were convinced that the substance of education—literature, history, and philosophy—should be supplied by the movement itself. Consequently, in both the oral and the written tradition, workers organizations often constituted an alternate university to that of public schools. The active program of many workers and radical movements until World War II consisted largely of education through newspapers, literacy classes for immigrants where the reading materials were drawn from labor and socialist classics, and world literature. These were supplemented by lectures offered by independent scholars who toured the country in the employ of lecture organizations commissioned by the unions and radical organizations (Tannenbaum, 1995).

5.2 But the shop floor was also a site of education. Skilled workers were usually literate in their own language and in English, and many were voracious readers and writers. Union and radical newspapers often ran poetry and stories written by workers. Socialist-led unions such as those in the needle trades, machinists, breweries, and bakeries sponsored educational programs; in the era when the union contract was still a rarity, the union was not so much an agency of contract negotiation and enforcement as it was an educational, political, and social association. In his autobiography, Samuel Gompers, the founding AFL president, remembers his fellow cigar makers hiring a "reader" in the 1870s who sat at the center of the work-floor and read from literary and historical classics as well as more contemporary works of political and economic analysis such as the writings of Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels. Reading groups met in the back of a bar, in the union hall, or in the local affiliate of the socialist wing of the nationality federations. Often these groups were ostensibly devoted to preparing immigrants to pass the obligatory language test for citizenship status. But the content of the reading was, in addition to labor and socialist newspapers and magazines, often supplemented by works of fiction by William Shakespeare, the great nineteenth-century novelists and poets, and the writings of Marx and Karl Kautsky. In its anarchist inflection, Peter Kropotkin, Moses Hess, and Michael Bakunin were the required reads (Gompers, 1924).

5.3 In New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and other large cities where the socialist and communist movements had considerable membership and a fairly substantial periphery of sympathizers, the parties established adult schools that not only offered courses pertaining to political and ideological
knowledge, but were vehicles for many working- and middle-class students to gain a general education. Among them, in New York, the socialist-oriented Rand School and the communist-sponsored Jefferson School (formerly the Workers' School) lasted until the early 1950s when, due to the decline of a left intellectual culture among workers as much as the contemporary repressive political environment, they closed. But in their respective heydays, from the 1920s to the late 1940s, for tens of thousands of working-class people — many of them high school students and industrial workers — these schools were alternate universities. These schools had diverse curricula and didn't just offer courses that promoted the party's ideology and program. Many courses concerned history, literature, and philosophy and, at least at the Jefferson School, the student could study art, drama, and music, as could their children. The tradition was revived, briefly, by the 1960s New Left which, in similar sites, sponsored free universities where the term "free" designated not an absence of tuition fees but signaled they were ideologically and intellectually unbound to either the traditional left parties or to the conventional school system. I participated in organizing New York's Free University and two of its successors. While not affiliated with the labor movement or socialist parties, it succeeded in attracting more than a thousand students in each of its semesters — mostly young — and offered a broad range of courses which were taught by people of divergent intellectual and political orientations, including some free market libertarians who were attracted to the school's non-sectarianism.

5.4 When I worked in a steel mill in the late 1950s some of us formed a group that read current literature, labor history, and economics. I discussed books and magazine articles with some of my fellow workers in bars as well as on breaks. Tony Mazzocchi, who was at the same time a worker and union officer of a Long Island Local of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers, organized a similar group and I knew of several other cases where young workers did the same. Some of these groups evolved into rank and file caucuses that eventually contested the leadership of their local unions; others were developed mainly for the self-edification of the participants and had no particular political goals.

5.5 In almost every workplace there is a person or persons to whom other workers turn for information about the law, the union contract, contemporary politics or, equally important, as a source of general education. This individual(s) may or may not be schooled but, until the late 1950s, rarely had any college experience. Schools were not the primary source of their knowledge. They were, and are, largely self-educated. In my own case, having left Brooklyn College after less than a year, I worked a variety of industrial production jobs. When I worked the midnight shift, I got off at 8:00 in the morning, ate breakfast, and spent four hours in the library before going home. Mostly I read American and European history.
and political economy, particularly the physiocrats, Adam Smith, David Ricardo, John Maynard Keynes, and Joseph Schumpeter. I read Marx's *Capital* in high school and owned the three volumes.

5.6 My friend Russell Rommele, who worked in a nearby mill, was also an autodidact. His father was a first generation German-American brewery worker with no particular literary interests. But Russell had been exposed to reading a wide range of historical and philosophical works as a high school student at Saint Benedict's Prep, a Jesuit institution. The priests singed out Russell for the priesthood and mentored him in theology and social theory. The experience radicalized him and he decided not to answer the call but to enter the industrial working class instead. Like me he was active in the union and Newark Democratic Party politics. Working as an educator with a local union in the auto industry recently, I met several active unionists who are intellectuals. The major difference between them and those of my generation is that they are college graduates, although none claims to have acquired their love of learning or their analytic perspective from schools. One is a former member of a radical organization and another learned his politics from participation in a shop-based study group/union caucus organized by a member of a socialist grouplet which dissolved in the mid-1990s when the group lost a crucial union election. In both instances, with the demise of their organizational affiliations, they remain habituated to reading, writing, and union activity.

**Parents, Neighborhood, Class Culture**

6.1 John Locke (1954) observed that, consistent with his rejection of innate ideas, even if conceptions of good and evil are present in divine or civil law, morality is constituted by reference to our parents, relatives, and especially the "club" of peers to which we belong:

> He who imagines commendation and disgrace not to be strong motives to men to accommodate themselves to the opinions and rules of those with whom they converse seems little skilled in the nature or the history of mankind: the greatest part whereof we shall find govern themselves, chiefly, if not solely by this law of fashion; and so they do what keeps them in reputation with their company, little regard for the laws of God or the magistrate. (478)

William James (1890) put the manner equally succinctly:

> A man's social self is the recognition which he gets from his mates. We are not only gregarious animals, liking to be in the sight of our fellows, but we have an innate propensity to get ourselves noticed, and noticed favorably, by our kind. No more fiendish punishment could be devised, were such a thing
physically possible, than that we should be turned loose in society and remain absolutely unnoticed by all the members thereof. (351)

Neither philosopher had a doubt that the social worlds of peers and family are the chief referents for the formation of the social self. Each in his own fashion situates the individual in social context, which provides a "common measure of virtue and vice" (Locke, 1954: 478) even as they acknowledge the ultimate choice resides with the individual self. These, and not the institutions, even those that have the force of law, are the primary sources of authority.

6.2 Arendt (1961) argues that education "by its very nature cannot forego either authority or tradition" (180-181). Nor can it base itself on the presumption that children share an autonomous existence from adults. Yet schooling ignores the reality of the society of kids at the cost of undermining its own authority. The society of kids is in virtually all classes an alternative and oppositional site of knowledge and of moral valuation. We have already seen how working-class kids get working-class jobs by means of their rebellion against school authority. Since refusal and resistance is a hallmark of the moral order, the few who will not obey the invocation to fail or to perform indifferently in school often find themselves marginalized or expelled from the community of kids. While they adopt a rationality that can be justified on eminently practical grounds the long tradition of rejection of academic culture has proven hard to break, even in the wake of evidence that those working-class jobs to which they were oriented no longer exist. For what is at stake in adolescent resistance is their perception that the blandishments of the adult world are vastly inferior to the pleasures of their own. In the first place the new service economy offers few inducements: wages are low, the job is boring, and the future is bleak. And since the schools now openly present themselves as a link in the general system of control it may appear to some students that cooperation is a form of self-deception.

6.3 If not invariably, then in many households parents provide to the young a wealth of knowledge: the family mythologies which feature an uncle or aunt, a grandparent, or an absent parent. These are the stories, loosely based on some actual event(s) in which the family member has distinguished her or himself in various ways that (usually) illustrate a moral virtue or defect, which constitute a kind of didactic message. Even when not attached to an overt narrative, parable, or myth, we learn from our parents by their actions in relation to us and others: How do they deal
with adversity? How do they address ordinary, everyday problems? What do they learn from their own trials and tribulations and what do they say to us? What are our parent's attitudes towards money, joblessness, and everyday life disruptions such as sudden, acute illness or accidents? What do they learn from the endless conflicts with their parent(s) over issues of sex, money, and household responsibilities?

6.4 The relative weight of parental-to-peer authority is an empirical question that cannot be decided in advance; what both have in common is their location within everyday life. The parents are likely to be more susceptible to the authority of law and of its magistrates and, in a world of increasing uncertainty, will worry that if their children choose badly they may be left behind. But the associations with our peers we make in everyday life provide the recognition that we crave, define what is worthy of praise or blame, and confer approbation or disapproval on our decisions. But having made a choice that runs counter to that of "their company" or club the individual must form, or join, a new "company" to confer the judgment of virtue on her or his action. This company must, of necessity, consist of "peers," the definition of which has proven fungible.

6.5 Religion, the law and, among kids, school authorities face the obstacles erected by the powerful rewards and punishments meted out by the "clubs" to which people are affiliated. At a historical juncture when, beneath the relentless pressure imposed by capital to transform all labor into wage labor, thereby forcing every adult into the paid labor force, the society of kids increasingly occupies the space of civil society. The neighborhood, once dominated by women and small shopkeepers, has all but disappeared save for the presence of children and youth. As parents toil for endless hours to pay the ever mounting debts incurred by home ownership, perpetual car and appliance payments, and the costs of health care, kids are increasingly on their own and this seriously affects their conceptions of education and life.

6.6 Some recent studies and teacher observations have discovered a not inconsiderable reluctance among Black students in elite universities to perform well in school, even those of professional/managerial family backgrounds. Many seem indifferent to arguments that show that school performance is a central prerequisite to better jobs and higher status in the larger work world. Among the more acute speculations is the conclusion that Black students' resistance reflects an anti-intellectual bias, and a hesitation, if not refusal, to enter the mainstream corporate world. Perhaps the charge of anti-intellectualism is better understood as healthy skepticism about the chance that a corporate career will provide the well-publicized satisfactions. There are similar indications among some relatively affluent White students as well. Although by no means a majority, some students are less enamored by the work world to which they, presumably, have
been habituated by school, especially by the prospect of perpetual work. In the third tier universities, State and private alike, apparently forced by their parents to enroll, many students wonder out loud why they are there. Skepticism about schooling still abounds even as they graduate high school and enroll in post-secondary schools in record numbers. According to one colleague of mine who teaches in a third tier private university in the New York metropolitan area, many of these mostly suburban students "sleepwalk" through their classes, do not participate in class discussions and are lucky to get a "C" grade.

6.7 In the working-class neighborhoods—White, Black and Latino/a—the word is out: given the absence of viable alternatives, you must try to obtain that degree, but this defines the limit of loyalty to the enterprise. Based on testimonies of high school and community college teachers, for every student who takes school knowledge seriously there are twenty or more who are time-servers. Most are ill-prepared to perform academic work and, since the community colleges and State four-year colleges and "teaching" universities simply lack the resources to provide the means by which their school performance can improve, beyond the credential there is little motivation among students to try to get an education.

6.8 In some instances, those who break from their club and enter the regime of school knowledge risk being drummed out of a lifetime of relationships with their peers. What has euphemistically been described as "peer pressure" bears, among other moral structures, on the degree to which kids are permitted to cross over the line into the precincts of adult authority. While being a success in school is not equivalent to squealing on a friend or to the cops, or transgressing some sacred moral code of the society of kids, it comes close to committing an act of betrayal. This is comprehensible only if the reader is willing to suspend prejudice that schooling is tantamount to education and is an unqualified good—as compared to the presumed evil of school failure, or the decision of the slacker to rebel by refusing to succeed.

6.9 To invoke the concept of "class" in either educational debates or any other politically charged discourse generally refers to the White working class. Educational theory and practice treats Blacks and Latino/as, regardless of their economic positions, as unified, bio-identities. That Blacks kids from professional, managerial, and business backgrounds share more with their White counterparts than with working-class Blacks is generally ignored by most educational writers. Just as in race discourse—in which "race" refers in slightly different registers to people of African origin and those who migrated from Latin countries of South America and the Caribbean—"Whites" are undifferentiated and treated as a unified category. The narrowing of the concept limits our ability to discern class at all. I want to suggest that, although we must stipulate ethnic, gender, race, and
occupational distinction among differentiated strata of wage labor, with the
exception of children of salaried professional and technical groups, where
the culture of schooling plays a decisive role, class education transcends
these distinctions. No doubt there are gradations among the strata that
comprise this social formation, but the most privileged professional strata
(physicians, attorneys, scientists, professors), and the high-level managers
are self-reproducing, not principally through schooling but through social
networks. These include private schools (some of which are residential),
clubs and associations, and, in suburban public schools, the self-selection
of students on the basis of distinctions. Show me a school friendship
between the son or daughter of a corporate manager and the child of a
janitor or factory worker and I will show you a community service project
that’s being used by the privileged student to help get into one of the
"select" colleges or universities such as Brown, Oberlin, and Wesleyan.

6.10 Schooling selects a fairly small
number of children of the class of
wage labor for genuine class mobility.
In the first half of the twentieth
century, having lost its appeal among
middle-class youth, the Catholic
Church turned to working-class students as a source of cadre recruitment.
In my neighborhood of the East Bronx, two close childhood friends, both of
Italian background, entered the priesthood. As sons of construction
workers the Church provided their best chance to escape the hardships and
economic uncertainties of manual labor. Another kid became a pharmacist
because the local Catholic college, Fordham University, offered
scholarships. A fourth kid was among the tiny coterie of students who
passed the test for one of the city’s special schools, Bronx Science, and
became a science teacher. Otherwise, almost everybody else remained a
worker or, like my best friend Kenny, went to prison.

6.11 Despite the well-publicized claim that anyone can escape their
condition of social and economic birth—a claim reproduced by schools and
by the media with numbing regularity—most working-class students,
many of whom have some college credits, but often do not graduate, end
up in low- and middle-level service jobs that do not pay a decent working-
class wage. Owing to the steep decline of unionized industrial production
jobs those who enter factories increasingly draw wages that are
substantially below union standards. Those who do graduate find work in
computers, although rarely at the professional levels. The relatively low
paid become k-12 teachers and health care professionals, mostly nurses and
technicians, or enter the social service field as case workers, medical social
workers, or line social welfare workers. The question I want to pose is
whether these "professional" occupations represent genuine mobility?
During the post-war economic boom which made possible a significant expansion of spending for schools, the social services, and administration of public goods, the public sector workplace became a favored site of Black and Latino/a recruitment, mainly for clerical, maintenance, and entry-level patient care jobs in hospitals and other health care facilities. Within several decades a good number advanced to middle and registered nursing, but not in all sections of the country. As unionization spread to the non-profit private sector as well as to public employment in the 1960s and 1970s, these jobs paid enough to enable many to enjoy what became known as a "middle-class" living standard as well as a measure of job security offered by union security and civil service status. While it is true that "job security" has often been observed in its breach, the traditional deal made by teachers, nurses, and social workers was that they traded higher incomes for job security. But after about 1960, spurred by the resurgent civil rights movement, these "second-level" professionals—White and Black—began to see themselves as workers more than professionals: they formed unions, struck for higher pay and shorter hours, and assumed a very unprofessional adversarial stance towards institutional authority. Contracts stipulated higher salaries, definite hours (a sharp departure from professional ideology), that seniority be the basis for layoffs (just like any industrial contract), and substantial vacation and sick leave.

This assertion of working-class values and social position may have been strategic; indeed it inspired the largest wave of union organizing since the 1930s. But, together with the entrance of huge numbers of women and Blacks into the public and quasi-public sector workforces it was as well a symptom of the proletarianization of the second-tier professions. Several decades later, salaried physicians made a similar discovery; they formed unions and struck against high malpractice insurance costs as much as the onerous conditions imposed on their autonomy by Health Maintenance Organizations and government authorities bent on cost containment, often at their expense. More to the point, the steep rise of public employees' salaries and benefits posed the question of how to maintain services in times of fiscal austerity which might be due to economic downturn or to pro-business tax policies. The answer has been that the political and public officials told employees that the temporary respite from the classical trade union trade-off was over. All public employees have suffered relative deterioration in their salaries and benefits. Since the mid-1970s fiscal crises, begun in New York City, they have experienced layoffs for the first time since the depression. And their unions have been on a continuous concessionary bargaining mode for decades. In the politically and ideologically repressive environment of the last twenty five years the
class divide has sharpened. Ironically, in the wake of the attacks by legislatures and business against their hard-won gains in the early 1980s the teachers unions abandoned their militant, class posture and reverted to professionalism and to a center-right political strategy.

6.14 In truth, schools are learning sites—even if only for a handful—of intellectual knowledge. In the main, they transmit the instrumental logic of credentialism, together with their transformation from institutions of discipline to those of control, especially in working-class districts. Even talented, dedicated teachers have more difficulty reaching kids and convincing them that the life of the mind may hold unexpected rewards, even if the career implications of critical thought are not apparent. The breakdown of the mission of public schools has produced varied forms of disaffection; if school violence has abated in some places, it does not signify the decline of gangs and other "clubs" that signify the autonomous world of youth. The society of kids is more autonomous because, in contrast to 1960s, official authorities no longer offer hope; instead, in concert with the doctrine of control they threaten punishment which includes, but is not necessarily associated with, incarceration. I note, however, that the large number of drug busts of young Black and Latino men should not be minimized. With over a million Blacks, more than 3 percent of the African-American population—most of them young—within the purview of the criminal justice system, the law may be viewed as a more or less concerted effort to counter by force of the power of peers. This may be regarded in the context of the failure of schools. Of course, more than three hundred years ago John Locke knew the limits of the magistrates indeed, of any adult authority to overcome the power of the society of kids (Giroux, 2000).

Conclusion

7.1 What are the requisite changes that would transform schools from credential mills and institutions of control to sites of education that prepare young people to see themselves as active participants in the world? As my analysis implies, the fundamental condition is to abolish high-stakes standardized tests that dominate the curriculum and subordinate teachers to the role of drill masters and subject students to stringent controls. By this proposal I do not mean to eliminate the need for evaluative tools. The essay is a fine measure of both writing ability and of the student's grasp of literature, social science, and history. While it must be admitted that math and science as much as language proficiency require considerable rote learning, the current curriculum and pedagogy in these fields includes neither a historical account of the changes in scientific and mathematical theory, nor a meta-conceptual explanation of what the disciplines are about. Nor are courses in language at the secondary level ever concerned with etymological issues, comparative cultural study of semantic
differences, and other topics that might relieve the boredom of rote learning by providing depth of understanding. The broader understanding of science in the modern world—its relation to technology, war, and medicine for example—should surely be integrated into the curriculum; some of these issues appear in the textbooks, but teachers rarely discuss them because they are busy preparing students for the high-stakes tests in which knowledge of the social contexts for science, language, and math are not included.

7.2 I agree with Arendt (1961) that education "cannot forgo either authority or tradition" (97). But authority must be earned rather than assumed and the transmission of tradition needs to be critical rather than worshipful. If teachers were allowed to acknowledge student skepticism, and if they incorporated kids' knowledge into the curriculum by making what they know the object of rigorous study, especially popular music and television, they might be treated with greater respect by their students. But there is no point denying the canon; one of the more egregious conditions of subordination is the failure of schools to expose students to its best exemplars, for people who have no cultural capital are thereby condemned to social and political marginality, let alone deprived of some of the pleasures to be derived from encounters with genuine works of art. When the New York City Board of Education (now the Department of Education) mandates that during every semester high school English classes read a Shakespeare play and one or two works of nineteenth-century English literature, but afford little or no access to the best Russian novels of the nineteenth century, no opportunities to examine some of the most influential works of Western philosophy, beginning with the Milesians through Plato, Aristotle and the major figures of "modern philosophy," and provide no social and historical context for what is learned, tradition is observed in the breach more than in its practice. And when, under budgetary pressures, elementary and secondary schools cut music and art from the curriculum, they deprive students of the best sources for cultivating the creative imagination. Schools fulfill their responsibility to students and to the communities in which they live when, at every level, they offer a program of systematic, critical learning which simultaneously provides students with "access" to the rich traditions of so-called Western thought, history, and the arts, including its literature, and opens parallel vistas of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (Aronowitz, 2000).

7.3 Finally, the schools

Finally, the schools should relieve themselves of their ties to corporate interests and reconstruct the curriculum along the line of
should relieve themselves of their ties to corporate interests and reconstruct the curriculum along the line of genuine intellectual endeavor. Nor should schools be seen as career conduits; although, this function will be difficult to displace, for among other reasons, in an era of high economic anxiety many kids and their parents worry about the future and seek some practical purchase on it. It will take some convincing that their best leg up is to be educated. It is unlikely in the present environment, but possible in some places.

7.4 One could elaborate these options; this is only an outline. In order to come close to their fulfillment at least three things are needed. First we require a conversation concerning the nature and scope of education and the limits of schooling as an educational site. Along with this, theorists and researchers need to link their knowledge of popular culture, and culture in the anthropological sense, that is, everyday life, with the politics of education. Specifically, we need to examine why in late capitalist societies, the public sphere withers while the corporatization process penetrates every sphere of life. We need teachers who, by their own education, are intellectuals who respect and want to help children obtain a genuine education, regardless of their social class. For this we need a new regime of teacher education that is founded on the idea that the educator must be educated well. It would surely entail abolishing the current curricula of most schools of education, if not the schools themselves. The endless courses on "teaching methods" would be replaced with courses in the natural and social sciences, mathematics, philosophy, history, and literature. Some of these would address the relation of education, in all of its forms, to their social and historical context. In effect, the teacher becomes an intellectual capable of the critical appropriation of world histories and cultures. And we need a movement of parents, students, teachers, and organized labor armed with a political program directed at forcing legislatures to adequately fund schooling at the federal, state, and local levels, and compelling boards of education to deauthorize high-stakes standardized tests that currently drive the curriculum and pedagogy (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985).

7.5 Having proposed these changes, we need to remain mindful of the limitations of schooling and the likelihood that youth will acquire knowledge that prepares them for life—like sex, the arts, where to find jobs, how to bind with other people, how to fight, how to love and hate—outside of schools. The deinstitutionalization of education does not require abandoning schools. But they should be rendered benign and removed as much as possible from the tightening grip of the corporate, warfare state. In turn teachers must resist becoming agents of the prison system, of the drug companies, and of corporate capital. In the last instance, the best chance for education resides in communities, in social movements,
and in the kids themselves.

References


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ECER KEYNOTE

New Modes of Reproducing Social Inequality in Education: the changing role of parents, teachers, schools and educational policies

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ABSTRACT This article is based on the Keynote Address to the European Conference on Educational Research (ECER), Crete, Greece, 21-25 September 2004. One of the most consistent results in sociology of education research has been the existence of inequalities in school results and educational trajectories related to social factors. Despite an important increase in number of years of schooling for all children in most European countries in the post-war period, research still shows important differences between social and ethnic groups and even a widening of the gap between the most advantaged and most disadvantaged in some countries. Factors shown by previous studies to account for these differences are still at work, but many of them are influential in new ways. In addition to this, new factors have to be taken into account. Using available sociological literature on European countries, while focusing specifically on France as an exemplary case, this article presents some of the new constraints on and opportunities for action by parents, teachers and schools that result from both economic, cultural and educational changes and recent policy orientations.

Introduction
Since the first large-scale studies conducted in the 1950s and 1960s, one of the most consistent results in sociology of education research has been the existence of inequalities in school results and educational trajectories related to social factors. Sociologists have provided powerful explanatory models of social reproduction of inequalities through schooling. Those developed by Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron in France (1970) or Basil Bernstein (1971) in England, influenced by Durkheim and Weber, have emphasised similarities and differences between cultural transmission in families from various social classes and social-class fractions and cultural transmission in schools. They have also analysed the role of schools in legitimating certain social practices. Marxist scholars such as Christian Baudelot and Roger Establet (1971) in France and Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (1976) in the USA have underscored the correspondence between cultural transmission in schools and the requirements of blue-collar and white-collar employers and labour contexts. From still a different perspective, rational choice theorists have analysed inequalities as a result of cost–benefit analysis by individuals located at different points in the social scale (Boudon, 1973).

Forty or fifty years later, research studies still conclude that despite the increase in number of years of schooling for all children, educational inequalities continue to be transposed upwards and that in some countries the gap between the most advantaged and most disadvantaged has actually widened (Duru-Bellat, 2002). Analysis of results from recent Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) studies shows that European youngsters’ level of educational attainment is very high compared to that of youngsters in emerging Latin American or African countries. However, in many European countries there are important differences between pupils with the best scores (level 5), very frequently from privileged backgrounds, and pupils with the worst scores (level 1),
associated with a low socio-economic status (SES) (Mons, 2004). Factors shown by previous studies to account for these differences are still at work, but many of them are influential in new ways. In addition to this, new factors have to be taken into account. Using available sociological literature on European countries, while focusing specifically on France as an exemplary case, this article presents some of the new constraints on and opportunities for action by parents, teachers and schools that result from both economic, cultural and educational changes and recent policy orientations.

**New Contexts for Parental Action: who wins, who loses?**

Parents have long been conceived by sociologists as major agents in the reproduction of social advantage through education. However, recent economic, cultural and educational changes have created new contexts for parental action inside and outside schools. These changes do not radically modify patterns of social-class advantage. However, they do create new conditions and possibilities for winning or losing at the educational game for various social-class fractions located at similar levels, introducing, for instance, a new balance between middle-class parents with high economic resources and those with high cultural resources, or between working-class ‘nationals’ and immigrants. This is another way of saying that given the fact that education is a positional good, educational inequalities have to be studied relationally because today, perhaps more sharply than in previous decades, what one group wins, another loses (Collins, 1979; Brown, 2003).

**Globalisation, National Competition and Local Segregation: a dynamic view**

Globalisation as opportunity or constraint. One main factor that will become more influential in the years to come but has only started to be explored in educational research is globalisation. Globalisation here means a general trend toward greater international interdependence and supranational integration as fostered by the restructuring of capitalist economies, new and more rapid means of communication and organisational and political strategies, as well as by the development of more internationally conscious national communities (van Zanten, 2004a). As concerns schooling, international and supranational processes are presently most powerful and visible in higher education, but they will undoubtedly affect other educational levels as well to some extent in the near future. As most parental educational strategies in European countries have been embedded until now in national economies, cultures and educational systems, globalisation may appear a new constraint or opportunity for families of all social classes, leading them to develop new educational strategies.

It is essential to point out, however, that families do not have the same resources for enacting these strategies (Brown, 2000). In most countries, members of the bourgeois, cultural elite have for centuries been internationally oriented in cultural matters, through reading, studies and travel abroad and the mastery of two or three foreign languages. Similarly, the globalisation of capital has already long been integrated into the reproduction strategies of the bourgeois economic elite. In that sense, globalisation can be seen as an opportunity for the bourgeoisie and the upper classes to consolidate and increase their positional advantage in relation to the middle classes (Pinçon & Pinçon-Charlot, 1998). These groups are the best placed to profit from the internationalisation of higher education. This is particularly the case since international connections are already much more developed between prestigious institutions such as the ‘Grandes Ecoles’ in France and Oxbridge universities in England, which possess important economic, cultural and social resources, than between non-elite institutions.

For middle-class families, on the contrary, globalisation can be seen as a new constraint, but one that does not apply equally to all members of this large group. It can be seen as an opportunity for entrepreneurs, managers and professionals whose educational trajectories, professional careers and work are already internationally oriented, such as managers of international firms (Wagner, 1998). This is much less frequently the case for entrepreneurs, managers and professionals whose training, activity and professional networks are more nation-dependent, such as teachers, nurses or social workers, and also, to a lesser extent, certain types of lawyers, doctors and managers. However, because the middle classes generally have more economic, cultural and social resources
for becoming ‘global’ than the lower classes, they may perceive the matter of preparing for globalisation, through schooling in international schools for instance, as an opportunity to draw new barriers between themselves and the lower classes.

In most countries, the lower classes are nationally and even locally oriented in matters of work, culture or education, although in the French context this is changing at least for work due to national and international displacement of firms. These social categories are thus more likely to be disconnected from globalisation and either uninterested by or afraid of it. In a recent study I conducted with middle-class families and a smaller group of lower-class ones, it was members of the second group who were least likely to think that the teaching and learning of foreign languages in French schools had to be improved (van Zanten, 2002). However, there might be some important differences among lower-class groups, especially between ‘nationals’ and immigrants who speak several languages, are used to international mobility and whose potential for globalisation may lead them to see it as an opportunity. This should be the focus of further study.

**Economic and cultural changes and competition between groups at the national level.** Globalisation combines with different national situations of economic competition between social groups. Although the factors that play a role in this competition differ from one country to another, it is possible to see a common trend toward a weakening of the welfare state model and the social groups strongly linked to it, that is, professionals working in the public sector. This trend has led some sociologists, such as Pierre Bourdieu, to put forward the idea that in present post-industrial societies, these social categories can be considered a kind of ‘new poor’. According to him, these groups, comprising mainly teachers and social workers, suffer not from ‘poverty of condition’, that is, lack of material resources, but from ‘poverty of position’, that is, social downgrading and lack of social esteem (Bourdieu, 1993). Meanwhile, there is a social rise of new managers who must possess the new dispositions and skills required by new varieties of capitalism: mobility, flexibility, leadership and communication skills (Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999).

This has important consequences for schooling. One is that traditional education, based on humanistic, content-oriented studies certified by qualified professionals, is not perceived as favourably as in the past by all middle-class and upper-class parents. It is still regarded highly by middle-class parents with high cultural resources who want their children to become civil servants in the public sector, where school certifications and general culture are still valuable assets. Nevertheless, middle-class parents whose position depends more on economic resources and who want their children to work in the private sector are presently putting pressure on schools to develop a more instrumental approach. They want schools to teach skills and *habitus* useful in all kinds of social situations including recruitment interviews, as well as to transmit knowledge (Gombert & van Zanten, 2004). In addition to intensifying this tension within the upper and middle classes, these changes may reinforce the distance between middle- and upper-middle-class children and children from the lower classes in a different, more insidious way than the traditional curriculum.

Whereas previous predominance of ‘encyclopaedism’, emphasis on subject matter and considerable distance between teachers and the taught in French secondary schools was a source of inequality between children from these respective backgrounds (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970), the changes being promoted by parents from the private sector might prove even more discriminating against lower-class children. The focus on skills rather than subject matter and on ongoing evaluation rather than examinations may well constitute a renewed form of integrated code using an ‘invisible pedagogy’ that handicaps pupils with less cultural and information capital (Bernstein, 1975).

Changes in the cultural function of the school may also alter the positions of different social groups in European countries. For at least a century, that is, from the end of the nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth, the school, having replaced the church as the main socialising agency, extended its monopoly in the cultural domain through the growth of compulsory education, the professionalisation of teachers and the development of a uniform school curriculum. However, this situation has changed in the last thirty years. On the one hand, children stay in school longer than before, but parents have to make increasing use of extra-educational resources such as private tutoring or various learning aids in order to help them remain engaged in their studies and improve their performance in a more competitive school and job market. On the other hand, increased use
of these learning aids and, more generally, the development of new cultural transmission media, especially television and Internet, present new challenges to school culture.

This has several implications, whose combined effect is difficult to assess at present, particularly in the absence of a consistent bulk of research. From one perspective, these changes can be seen as creating more opportunities for culturally endowed parents to use those cultural resources at home with their children and influence their children’s leisure activities in certain cultural directions that will increase their educational advantages. From another perspective, however, it gives more power to parents who have the financial resources to pay for more expensive technological equipment and devices and more expensive tutoring and leisure activities. In general, it is possible to analyse these developments as a delegitimising of those upper- and middle-class groups associated with traditional text-based knowledge, teachers of course, but also various kinds of intellectual white-collar workers, and in favour of upper- and middle-class groups oriented toward decision-making, management and technical tasks. In any case, it is clear that although lower-class children are very influenced by television and new technologies, their parents frequently lack the cultural and financial resources to use these media as educational resources. The erosion of the school-culture monopoly may thus work to maintain and even increase their disadvantage.

Urban mobility and segregation. Another dimension concerning constraints and opportunities for parents of different social groups has to do with living environment and its impact on education and schooling. In many European countries, most of the population lives in cities that have undergone profound changes in the last thirty years. One of those changes concerns mobility and social and ethnic mix, which have two important effects on education. The first has to do with the social environment in the neighbourhoods and schools children grow up in. This social environment can be conceived as a form of individual and collective social capital (Bourdieu, 1980; Coleman, 1988; Lin, 2001). Although research is scarce on this subject, what research there is shows that the social and ethnic composition of neighbourhoods has an impact on child socialisation (Maurin, 2004). The impact of the social and ethnic composition of schools and classrooms is much more fully documented (Coleman, 1966; Duru-Bellat et al, 2004). The second effect has to do with access to different educational institutions by location. Location is important because even if there is good public transportation or parents can drive their children to school, they generally prefer children and young adolescents to go to school near home, to be able to oversee their friends and activities. Furthermore, location is particularly important in countries such as France where there is no free choice of schools and children are assigned to schools by place of residence.

Research clearly shows that in most big European cities, social groups are not distributed evenly across neighbourhoods, although there are highly contrasting segregation patterns. In France, specifically in Paris and the Parisian periphery, several studies have shown that the bourgeoisie has consolidated and even reinforced its presence in a limited number of residential areas inside and outside Paris. It is in fact the most concentrated social group, but as segregation is usually conceived as an involuntary process associated with various forms of inequality and exclusion, it is better in this case to speak of ‘aggregation’, that is, a voluntary process associated with various benefits. Among the benefits of social concentration in the case of the bourgeoisie, is the accumulation of economic and cultural capital, which creates very valuable social capital in neighbourhoods and schools for its members. There is also easy access to the most prestigious public and private schools, which goes along with its capacity as the numerically and socially dominant local group to control the functioning of these schools (Pinçon & Pinçon-Charlot, 1989).

At the other end of the social spectrum, urban studies have shown that lower-class groups have been driven out of big European cities because of the rise in housing market prices and development of business districts. In Paris, the working class has been forced to move to the urban periphery north and east of the city. For the more distant groups, who are frequently either the poorest or those who wanted more space and their own house, this has created new constraints as concerns access to work and different services, including schools. In this connection there are important differences between French and immigrant workers. The first are more likely to move to far-away areas while the second, because of both job profile and concentration in social housing, have remained in the nearby periphery. Although living closer to the city means access to a wider range of services including schools – which may partly account for the higher aspirations and better
school careers of immigrant working-class children when compared to French working-class children (Vallet & Caille, 1996) – it also has important disadvantages, related to high concentration of lower-class and immigrant children in neighbourhoods and schools of the urban periphery, which in turn leads to a kind of socialisation inside and outside schools that can be characterised as ‘peripheral’ in more than a geographical sense (van Zanten, 2001). This socialisation is characterised by externally imposed social closure, limited economic and cultural resources and therefore scarce social capital in terms both of aspirations and values, and social networks.

The departure of the lower classes from city centres has also been provoked by the arrival of pioneer middle-class groups which has in turn stimulated this process for following, less risk-taking, middle-class groups. Altogether these groups have encouraged a process of ‘gentrification’, that is, the transformation of old, lower-class and industrial areas into settings adapted to middle-class interests and tastes, through changes in housing, town planning, commercial and cultural services (Butler with Robson, 2003). However, this process cannot in many cases lead to complete social closure as there is a need for workers in the service industry in cities, and these are more and more migrant lower-class workers. While these workers are frequently segregated within some areas, they are also spread throughout the cities. The implication of this is that in cities, and especially in city schools, but to an extent that varies within categories and localities, the middle classes are faced with social and ethnic mix. This mix is valued by some of its members, at least rhetorically, but it is more frequently perceived as a constraint and even a threat to the reproduction of their social advantage through education (van Zanten, 2003). That is why middle-class parents develop a series of more subtle closure strategies, partly described below. At the same time, such urban mix can be analysed as an opportunity for the lower-class groups who have stayed inside big cities, especially immigrants, more likely to work in certain sectors of the service industry such as small shops or restaurants. Indeed, mix of this sort can increase the economic, cultural and social resources in their nearby environment and thus have an impact on their aspirations and choices.

The Impact of Policy on Parents’ Views and Strategies: hopes and threats

Comprehensivisation and positive discrimination as unlocking political strategies. In analysing new contexts for parental action, it is also necessary to focus on the effects of the main trends in educational policy. An important dimension in this respect is the ‘comprehensivisation’ of school systems. This process, which has entailed the creation of a common middle secondary school and concerns all European educational systems in various degrees, has had contrasting effects. On the one hand, it can be seen as an important opportunity for lower-class groups to improve their educational and social position. Research studies in different countries have shown that ‘comprehensivisation’ is not equivalent to real democratisation of education, which implies that all groups have access to the same educational quality and obtain comparable educational results. Nevertheless, as the same studies have also shown, it has certainly increased the probability of getting a better, longer education for the most disadvantaged groups. Although for school performance and careers immigrants are still located at the bottom, in many countries they seem to be the group to have benefited most from this process in the last thirty years, perhaps because they are more disposed than established ‘national’ or minority groups to believe in and take advantage of new opportunities (Ogbu, 1987; van Zanten, 1997).

It is important to note that in many countries ‘comprehensivisation’ has been accompanied by different forms of positive discrimination in favour of lower-class and immigrant pupils. This policy orientation is in principle geared toward greater equality and has undoubtedly in many cases limited some of the most material, visible causes of educational inequality. In practice, however, positive discrimination has had some undesirable, negative effects. One of the most important, at least in countries such as France where positive discrimination has been applied on a territorial basis, is that ‘positive discrimination’ schools have remained academically, socially and ethnically segregated. They have even, in some cases, become even more so, as the label ‘positive discrimination’ has encouraged white-middle-class flight. This has prevented the policy from being as effective as it should have been: segregation has limited the scholastic progress of lower-class children for the reasons discussed above (Meuret, 1994; Caille, 2001). Another negative effect, which concerns both territorially and individually based positive discrimination measures, is that it
has benefited the less ‘problematic’ lower-class and immigrant children. This is due to the fact that, as in many other social policies of this kind, teachers, parents and pupils themselves have contributed to various forms of selection and self-selection of ‘deserving’ pupils.

On the other hand, predictably, policies of ‘comprehensivisation’ and positive discrimination have also been perceived as a constraint and even a threat to social closure through education by middle- and upper-class parents (Parkin, 1974; Murphy, 1988), especially by those parents whose children go to socially and ethnically mixed schools. English and French research shows, for instance, that these policies have fostered middle-class parents’ anxiety about the quality of education in urban secondary schools. These parents are afraid that teachers will adapt school programmes and educational pace to those children and that discipline and social problems will take time away from teaching and learning in the classrooms (Ball & Vincent, 2001). They also tend to see lower-class and immigrant children as not very valuable friends for their children and as potential bad influences as concerns schoolwork and the acquisition of social habits (Gewirtz et al, 1995; van Zanten, 2003). On the contrary, it is significant that German middle-class parents seem much less anxious about the effects of social composition on learning and socialisation. This is so because they can still rely on the institutional division provided by the system to sort out pupils on an academic and social basis, although this is changing in cities like Berlin with the arrival of a growing proportion of immigrant pupils into gymnasien (Flitner, 2004).

School choices as main individual closure strategies. Furthermore, the positive impact of comprehensivisation and positive discrimination on equality has in many cases been limited by the simultaneous introduction in many countries of parental school choice, or reinforcement where it already existed. Even in countries such as France and Spain where there is no official national support for school choice, the existence of a large, strongly subsidised but weakly controlled private sector has provided important possibilities for choice in recent years. In the French case, it is necessary to add the development of options that are not equally distributed in all schools and the existence of measures for being exempted from official regulations prohibiting choice; namely, by citing these options or other family factors. In fact, in order to consider all the possibilities and implications of choice, it is necessary to take into account four major strategies open to parents to various degrees in different countries: residential choice linked to school choice, choice of the private sector, choice within the public sector and ‘colonisation’ of local public schools. The last of these implies that parents who stay are not just ‘loyal’ in Hirschman’s (1970) sense, but attempt to control the functioning of local schools through individual demands and pressures and collective participation in parents’ associations (van Zanten, 2006).

Research on choice shows that because these strategies suppose parents’ economic, cultural and social resources, they tend to be used much more frequently by upper and middle-class parents and thus increase the advantages of the already advantaged (Walford, 1992). As for the other dimensions that we have been discussing in this paper, there might be more subtle differences between social groups. It is possible, for instance, to argue that there has been no significant change in the strategies and position of upper-class groups as a result of the official and ‘grass-roots’ extension of school choice. These groups have always used elite private schools extensively and had access to the best-reputed public schools through residential segregation. Rather than develop ‘closure’ strategies through choice, they are more inclined to develop ‘conquering’ strategies, which they deploy presently at an international scale. I have observed in France, however, that some members of this group, located in specific more mixed school contexts, may feel threatened by offensive strategies from some middle-class groups and develop new distinctive strategies such as putting pressure on elite private and public schools to develop specific high-ability classes (van Zanten, 2002).

Although middle-class parents are the most inclined to use choice as a closure strategy, it is difficult to assert its consequences for them. School choice has certainly meant greater opportunities for educational and social mobility for families who want and are able to take more risks, but also a greater investment, both personal and financial, more anxiety and more guilt for many others (Ball, 2002). Parents who want to gain access to the best schools must spend more time choosing schools and developing successful strategies to get their children into them and more money on private lessons or psychological help so that their children can meet the school requirements and get by in competitive environments. They may also be torn between pushing for
their children’s success and making sure they are happy (Coldron & Boulton, 1991) or feel guilty about the effects of their action on social segregation (van Zanten, 2003). Choice also gives different advantages to different middle-class groups: those who have more financial assets can use the private sector more extensively and provide more extra-school support; those who have more cultural capital, especially teachers, can get more information about schools and better prepare their children to get into them and to succeed; while those who have more social capital can use it to gain access to the best schools (Wong, 2004). It is difficult, however, in the absence of longitudinal quantitative studies, to evaluate if choice is really an important element in ‘upgrading’ the school careers of middle-class children, although it certainly appears to have played a role (Power et al, 2003; Devine, 2004).

Lower-class families are at a disadvantage in the choice game not only because they lack the financial, cultural and capital resources necessary to make the best choices, but also because, in many cases, they do not want to choose (Broccolichi & van Zanten, 2000). This is so for various reasons, such as their perception of the school as a homogeneous public service, respect of teachers’ judgement and advice, attachment to localities and local schools. This is even truer for immigrant families, who frequently have little information on policy changes and opportunities and who, likely to feel that they are ‘illegitimate’ citizens, are afraid of infringing upon school regulations (van Zanten, 2001). At the same time, lower-class pupils and families are victims of middle-class choices that increase the already very high levels of academic, social and ethnic segregation in the schools they are enrolled in. Should these groups be then encouraged to choose to get away from segregated residential and school environments and their potential negative effects? Some American research shows that giving incentives to poor families to choose, while limiting choice through quota parts from other social groups, might be more advantageous to lower-class groups. It is not certain, however, that lower-class children fit easily into middle-class schools (Wells, 1998), and this system may prove inapplicable in other countries, such as France, because there is strong resistance to any kind of ‘affirmative action’ on an ethnic basis.

New Contexts for Teachers’ and School Action: the effects of autonomy and control

Although parents have come to play an essential role not just in children’s education at home and outside schools but also in the schooling process itself, they are not the only agents that contribute to the transformation of reproduction modes in the educational field. Teachers and schools are important too, and they have also undergone significant changes. These changes are related in part to changes in sociological perceptions: certain factors, such as organisational and social composition factors or teachers’ work patterns and conditions neglected before due to theoretical and methodological focus, have now come to the fore. However, these changes are also real. Some of them result from processes described above such as segregation resulting from residential choice and constraints, but many others are related either to the internal functioning of schools and teachers’ practices or to new policies that aim to modify school organisation or teachers’ work.

Teachers and Schools: the importance of organisation and social mix

School effectiveness and school mix. Up to the 1970s, teachers’ role in increasing or reducing inequality was analysed mostly by studying the relationship between their social-class or ethnic origin and educational practice and ideology, or teacher–pupil relationships. Important attention was also given to the extent to which school curriculum reflected middle-class, white culture. Anthropologists and sociologists of education developed powerful cultural and structural theories to account for the educational failure of lower-class and ethnic minority children faced with school and teacher expectations, conceptions of knowledge, methods and manners all very different to those of their home and parents. New teacher training programmes and curricula were developed to reduce what was perceived mainly as a ‘distance’ problem between knowledge and teacher on the one side, learner on the other. Much less attention was given to the internal functioning of schools, although a large body of not very rigorous research was developed on urban schools, especially in the USA (Henriot-van Zanten, 1991; Henriot-van Zanten & Anderson-Levitt, 1992).
Since then, however, more attention has been given to these factors and their impact on equality and inequality among pupils. Research on ‘effective schools’ has shown, for instance, that some schools are more successful than others in helping children learn and that this ‘effectiveness’ is related to certain organisational characteristics, such as good pedagogical leadership by principals and head teachers or the existence of teachers’ collaborative cultures. Research has also shown that effective schools are characterised by a collective ideology centred on learning and based on the hypothesis or belief that all children can learn. Studies of this kind also insist on the positive role of pupils themselves when they have high academic expectations and judge their classmates and even form friendships using academic criteria. These results have been used in several countries to design programmes to help lower-class and ethnic minority schools improve their performance.

Nevertheless, research has also shown that there are important limitations to improvement in these schools and that pedagogical and organisational effectiveness are in fact strongly related to school intake or school-mix effects. What this means is that the concentration of academically and socially disadvantaged children in certain schools and in certain tracks or classes within schools tends to produce effects in terms of teaching and learning that cannot be totally, or even to a great extent, counteracted by professional involvement and organisational arrangements (Thrupp, 1999). These effects are related to the development of teachers’ practices and ideologies in segregated contexts. While in heterogeneous contexts teachers tend to adapt their teaching to fit the ‘average’ pupil, in homogeneous, low-achieving classrooms, they over-adapt to pupil intake, providing a more limited, less challenging curriculum and fewer, less ambitious evaluations of pupils’ work. Teachers also tend to adjust their professional ideologies to school contexts, moving from an instrumental focus on learning in average or ‘good’ schools to an expressive focus on interpersonal relationships in schools with a concentration of low-achieving pupils (van Zanten, 1996). While this expressive focus is necessary both in itself and as a lever to motivate these learners, what has been observed in many lower-class, ethnically segregated schools is that teachers tend to move from an egalitarian to a humanitarian ideal where inclusion and compassion, but not equality, become key elements (Grospiron & van Zanten, 2001).

School competition. Segregation among schools, partly the consequence of the urban segregation patterns and parental school flight evoked before but also resulting from competition among schools, is thus an essential factor to be taken into account. This competition is related to increasing school autonomy, which, in the absence of a clear egalitarian ideal and the presence of strong pressure on schools to become more effective, leads to competitive rather than collaborative relations between them. Competition can be encouraged as an explicit mode of market regulation, as in the English system, or in more discreet ways, as in France. It can also merely be tolerated or even formally discouraged, but it appears as a central process in many educational systems, especially in urban areas because of the number of schools, their nearness and their frequent hierarchical ordering on a scale of performance and attractiveness. In a recent European research project entitled ‘Changes in regulation modes and social production of inequalities in European educational systems’ and covering six local spaces in five countries (France, Belgium, England, Hungary and Portugal), it was found that in all settings except perhaps in the Portuguese city there was strong competition between schools (Maroy, 2006). This competition led schools to adapt school provision, curriculum, classroom organisation and even disciplinary practices not only to pupil intake but also to the practices of other schools, either through imitation or specialisation and niche creation.

However, like previous research conducted in England or France (Gewirtz et al, 1995; Ball & van Zanten 1998), this research also concludes that schools are not affected by other schools in the same ways. The impact of the surrounding institutional environment on a given school’s functioning is in fact strongly related to two main factors. The first is school reputation, which is strongly linked to pupil intake and pupil performance. The second is degree of competition in the local area, which is linked to demographic factors, parental strategies and local policies concerning school choice and autonomy. These are objective factors but they are not always perfectly perceived or used by schools as a basis for developing strategies. This means that in some cases there is a gap between the objective situation of the school and the external and internal strategies developed by school personnel (Delvaux & van Zanten, 2004).
At the top, schools that have a good, well-established reputation and are located in a stable, closed school market are hardly affected by competition. Their main strategy consists in maintaining the external and internal factors that have created their reputation, such as selection, strong learning expectations or severe discipline. Schools with a good reputation that start losing pupils will develop ‘conquering strategies’, that is, entrepreneurial, externally oriented practices. They will focus on developing attractive school provision and on ‘scanning’ the potential market, sometimes neglecting internal pressures (Bagley et al, 1996). Further down on the reputation scale, academically and socially heterogeneous schools will frequently try both to cater to pupils with learning needs and remain attractive to middle-class parents. This might lead, in some extreme cases, to bipolarity, that is, strong segregation of school provision, with special classes for children with learning difficulties and special classes for high-ability students. Some of these schools may select lower-class failing or average pupils on a behavioural basis and some may concentrate almost entirely on the success of middle-class ‘good’ pupils. At the bottom, ‘ghetto’ schools will frequently adopt a position of retreat from the local market and focus mainly on helping children with learning problems and limiting discipline problems through expulsions and suspensions, specific procedures and therapeutic interventions.

It is important to note, however, that these adaptations also depend on the internal organisation of schools, another factor that must be taken into account. In some schools, there is a strong consensus on a similar value orientation (whether it be elitist, performance-oriented, entrepreneurial, expressive, social …) among head teachers, teachers and parents (Power et al, 2003). This is more frequent in private schools, especially in countries such as France and Belgium, because of the existence of a strong moral Catholic ethos but also because of patterns of teacher recruitment and pupil selection (Ball & Maroy, 2004). In other schools, on the contrary, there are strong divisions between head teachers and teachers. Very frequently this is related to the fact that head teachers are externally oriented, focusing mainly on pupil intake, school provision and school promotion, while teachers are internally oriented, focusing on teaching and discipline. Teachers act in this way because of their professional orientation towards the classroom, but also because they are against competitive ethics and behaviour or because they prefer to leave this ‘dirty work’ to school directors and ignore the impact of the local environment (Hughes, 1958; Ball & van Zanten, 1998). Parents participate in these processes in various ways, becoming allies of head teachers or teachers, or enemies of both. For instance, in the European research, schools that had succeeded in changing their social mix had done so with parents’ help. This also has an important effect on equality and inequality in schools, as research shows that ‘ineffective’ schools are frequently characterised by anomie, tension or conflict among different actors.

Educational Policies: external control and personal responsibility

Efficiency and accountability. Not everything that goes on inside a school can be related to its intake or institutional environment. As is the case for changes in parental strategies, many of the changes in teacher and school practices can be traced back to changes in education policy. It is of course not possible to explore here all policies that have an impact on equality and inequality patterns; three that seem to have major effects will be briefly analysed. The first is focus on efficiency, school performance, evaluation and accountability. This focus is observable in many countries, but rationale and procedures for implementation may vary by national ideologies, organisational structures and characteristics of administrative personnel. In countries such as France, evaluation and accountability have meant a shift in state control from process to product evaluation (Broadfoot, 1996). Nevertheless, contrary to other countries such as England, product evaluation is not used to sanction teachers, propose specific procedures to schools, or construct ‘best practice’ models that all schools must follow. It serves mainly to inculcate a ‘culture of evaluation’ in school personnel and hold a ‘mirror’ for them to improve on their own (Thélot, 1993; Pons, 2004). The emphasis on efficiency and accountability has also implied a shift from direct normative regulation through national directives, teacher training and inspection to a more indirect, normative type of regulation through projects, contracts and personal responsibility. Moreover, parents have been brought into the process of overseeing schools through league tables and participation in school councils.
Some research studies show that these policy changes seem to have been able to render educational professionals more conscious about inequalities and help them improve their practice. There are, however, a number of problems in the way these policies are applied. One main problem is the creation of feelings of guilt and discouragement among many education professionals, especially those working in 'failing schools', when they are not able to improve their pupil performance because of the various dimensions mentioned above. Although there are no material sanctions, the present French mode of regulation tends to reinforce feelings of being professionally inadequate. This is the result of giving teachers and school personnel a great deal of apparent freedom to innovate and adapt to local conditions but preventing them from actually doing so by lack of training, professional accompaniment and bureaucratic control. In addition to this, moral guilt is reinforced by a political and administrative discourse that emphasises personal responsibility for success and failure much more than collective, organisational and political responsibility – perhaps even more so as policies are increasingly less integrated in a coherent political framework.

Another problem is that, as in England, external surveillance encourages schools and teachers to put up a 'good image' in terms of performance and practice. They do so by concentrating on the progress of some pupil categories only, that is, those than can improve, or by having less strict practices concerning grading and passing pupils up from one year to the next (Ball, 1997). A third problem still has to do with the alteration of relations between educational professionals. In many schools, head teachers and teachers no longer see each other as colleagues, but as occupying distinct hierarchical positions, the first very much oriented toward external demands and control and the second toward internal tasks and improvement. The relation of both groups to parents is also potentially conflicting. This is due to the fact that parents, especially middle-class and upper-class parents, in uncooperative school climates, may seize on policies of evaluation and accountability to satisfy their individual interests or the collective interest of their social group (van Zanten, 2002).

Decentralisation. Another main policy change concerning the external and internal control on schools and teachers has to do with processes of educational decentralisation. Decentralisation is a tricky word. It is used to cover a variety of political and administrative changes such as school autonomy, devolution of new responsibilities to local-level administrations or redistribution of power between national states, regions and municipalities. It is also legitimised through a heterogeneous political rhetoric ranging from the promotion of local diversity, enlarged participation and grass-roots democracy to that of local autonomy of schools, school restructuring and school effectiveness. The first type of justifications is used in countries like Spain, Portugal and to a lesser extent France, where decentralisation has been a political and administrative process of devolution of educational responsibilities to regions and municipalities. The second type of justifications is more common in systems that have already been decentralised on a territorial basis like England, where decentralisation has meant mostly devolution of responsibilities to schools.

There are, however, dimensions common to both processes. The first has to do with the role of the state, which is not weakened but becomes more legitimate and, in some countries, stronger than before through its capacity to steer the system at a distance, leaving responsibility for implementation and results to the local level (Weiler, 1990). The second has to do with a move from institutionally established procedures at the national or intermediate levels towards arrangements and conventions between individual agents and pressure groups at the local level. One of the main consequences of this is the reduced power of teacher unions or parents' associations and the erosion of established rules of participation and control, in favour of idiosyncratic arrangements among parents, teachers and head teachers and among schools. In fact, decentralisation is not just a specific policy orientation but a much more general restructuring of state/civil society relations (Popkewitz, 2000).

But does decentralisation impact on equality or inequality? Recent research shows that there is no simple relationship between degree of decentralisation and equality of performances across the countries that participated in the PISA evaluation (Mons, 2004). This is due to at least two factors. The first is that decentralisation concerns different domains in different countries, and it appears that some types of decentralisation are more related to inequalities among pupils than others. The second is that decentralisation implementation can vary substantially within the same
country, within regions and municipalities and within schools by political factors, administrative organisation, teachers’ compliance or resistance. In France, a global overview shows that the decentralisation implementation process has been slow and quite limited. However, analysis of specific schools, municipalities, départements or regions show that some of them are operating in an extra-legal perspective as they have developed projects and activities that go well beyond present laws and regulations. These are in general educational institutions or political bodies with important economic and social resources. Therefore their actions might lead to an increase of inter-school and inter-territorial inequalities. Other problems that might have an impact on inequality in France are lack of effective participation of organised groups of teachers and parents in the decentralisation process and lack of effective control and coordination by local and national educational authorities (van Zanten, 2004b).

**Professionalisation and deprofessionalisation.** A third policy trend that is important to mention concerning inequality is the professionalisation or deprofessionalisation of the teaching profession across different countries. As for decentralisation, discourses on professionalisation that circulate internationally seem to cross ideological positions: in classic liberal discourses professionalisation is related to autonomy; in progressive ones, to empowerment (Popkewitz, 2000). It is perhaps possible to see in this contradiction a global process of deprofessionalisation and reprofessionalisation (Seddon, 2000). Positive discourses on teachers’ professionalism can be seen as attempts to rehabilitate teachers’ work in the face of reforms that have tended to be responses to distrust and criticism from parents, head teachers and local and national educational authorities. These positive discourses have come from educational decision-makers but also educational researchers in many countries who have insisted on teachers’ capacity to act as ‘reflective practitioners’ or develop a sense of collegial responsibility (Schön, 1983, Talbert & McLaughlin, 1996). It is important to add that in some countries, such as France, teacher unions have used the term to provide a stronger link between their demands for better salaries, better working conditions and better training and a modern image of the teaching occupation.

However, some discourses on teacher professionalisation are in fact subtle ways of introducing new managerial modes of control. This is the case of some of the discourses focusing on cooperation, which, when they come from the administration, are perceived by teachers as forms of ‘contrived collegiality’ (Hargreaves, 1992). This perception is not totally erroneous, as in France, at least, it is by introducing various arrangements and activities implying collective work that the government and administration have tried to put more pressure on teachers to obtain better results more quickly. This managerial tendency is also present in the link proposed by some policy-makers, administrators and head teachers in France between professionalisation and teachers’ acquisition of new skills, through initial or on-the-job training, that will allow them to adapt to different working environments and especially to ‘difficult’ schools. All this points to a reduction of professional autonomy, at least as it was traditionally conceived, and thus to some kind of deprofessionalisation. And there are other, more objective indicators of deprofessionalisation in several European countries, such as the reduction or stagnation of teacher salaries and the development of part-time work where it was not the norm before. There is no clear relationship between this policy trend and equality, but it is probable that teachers’ feelings of being instrumentalised, scrutinised and expected to adapt to specific school contexts contributes to the blurring of a common professional ethic, a notion strongly related to the equality ideal in many countries (Gewirtz, 2002).

It is important to note that this new trend towards ‘deprofessionalisation’, or at least some of its dimensions, may not be as unfavourably perceived by young teachers as by their older colleagues. Recent research shows that many young French teachers no longer share the feeling of belonging to the same profession. They tend to perceive teaching as a very segmented profession, according to level of teaching, pupil intake and type of school. They do not believe that they can carry skills and techniques developed in one segment over to another and they are thus more receptive to discourses about adaptation and flexibility. Nor do these young teachers believe that large, all-encompassing teacher unions can represent teachers’ very diverse points of view on the profession. They are in favour of multiple teacher unions and pressure groups defending plural interests. Furthermore, they do not think that global national reforms can fundamentally change
the educational system and are instead in favour of decentralised, local reforms and innovations (Rayou & van Zanten, 2004).

Conclusion

To put various threads together, it is important to summarise the conclusions that can be drawn from the two sections of this paper. The first section was concerned with changes in the structure of opportunity for parents both outside and inside school. If we look at the hierarchy between upper-, middle- and lower-class pupils, the global picture of social advantage in education remains similar to what it was in the past. This paper has insisted, however, on tensions and changes between categories within each group. One tension concerns power relations between intellectual and public professionals and executives on one side, private-sector managers and executives on the other. In France, the former group long occupied the foreground in matters of education, but it seems the latter is overpowering it. It is nevertheless difficult to know if this due only to the relative erosion of cultural capital and growing importance of economic capital in schooling or is also the result of a change in sociological perspective. Another tension concerns the relative advantages and disadvantages of the ‘national’ and ‘immigrant’ groups located at the bottom of the class structure. Although immigrant groups suffer much more from discrimination than ‘national’ ones, some of their characteristics, such as higher aspirations or place of residence, may contribute to better school careers for their children in the end.

The paper also documented some new routes to social advantage or disadvantage for all social groups, such as globalisation, economic and cultural competition and urban mobility and segregation. The relationship between changes in these areas and in education is essential, but needs to be explored further. I have also insisted on the fact that the space of possibilities has grown for the lower classes, through these processes and policies explicitly aimed to help them, such as comprehensivisation and positive discrimination. Nevertheless, I have also tried to show that subtler closure mechanisms are simultaneously being developed by the middle and upper classes either at their own initiative or in relation to policy, first among them, school choice.

The second section analysed changes in teachers’ work and schools. The overall picture is of teachers and schools contributing to processes of social reproduction of educational inequalities through various mechanisms and mostly involuntarily. In addition to dimensions already studied and discussed in previous sociological literature, such as social-class based expectations, curriculum and teacher styles, this paper has insisted on the importance of social mix and school competition. Although research shows that some schools are more effective and more equalising than others, the factors leading to a reduction in the gap between lower-class and middle- and upper-class children are much more frequently present in schools where the majority of the student body is of middle- or upper-class background. This means that while failing schools attended primarily by students of lower-class background can make some progress thanks to pedagogical and organisational change, real improvement will come mainly from changes in the social and ethnic composition of schools. I have also insisted on the fact that school competition may also affect school functioning in ways that are detrimental to students’ learning, either because school personnel neglect children with learning difficulties because of external pressures or because they over-adapt to their supposed problems and needs.

Policy has introduced important changes in school administration and organisation and in teachers’ work in many countries. The overall picture seems to be a considerable increase in external, supposedly objective, control over schools. This is not true in all national contexts. In France, such control is weak both because there are strong resistances against product evaluation and material sanctions or offensive interventions not only from teachers but also from administrators and policy-makers and because decentralisation has created new problems of coordination at the local level. The situation is not necessarily better in systems that have introduced more directive forms of control, however, as schools then tend to develop ‘impression management’ techniques to give a flattering image of themselves. The overall picture also seems to be of more internal, indirect and subjective control of teachers’ work. This has encountered some resistance from teachers, though it is much stronger among older than younger ones. It has also
generated feelings of discouragement and diminishing morale among teachers and may lead them to be less willing to fight against inequalities.

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New Modes of Reproducing Social Equality in Education


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