

**PRESENTED TO**

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**BY**

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**TITLE**

Education and the Working-Class

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Sociolinguistic Codes.

## ABBREVIATIONS

BEV      Black English Vernacular

E        Encode

D        Decode

NSE     Nonstandard English

NV      Non Verbal

SE      Standard English

SS      Signal Store

V        Verbal

## INTRODUCTION

*"All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others"*

*(George Orwell).*

George Orwell's sane and cynical masterpiece suggests a deliberate manipulation of the slogans of democracy by self-seeking traitors to the revolutionary ideal. My concern is that children are equal in educational opportunity but some are more equal than others, in other words, that in spite of almost universal agreement about the aim of giving every child an equal chance, we fall very short of achieving it.

Education is seen as the preparation of young people for paid employment. According to Emile Durkheim

*"Education is the influence exercised by adult generations on those that are not yet ready for social life. Its object is to arouse and develop in the child a certain number of physical, intellectual and moral states which are demanded of him by both the political society as a whole and the special milieu for which he is specifically destined."*

*(Emile Durkheim, 1956, p71)*

In Chapter 1, I expand on this definition of education and its role, looking at it under three perspectives:

1. Functionalist Perspective.
2. Neo-Weberian Perspective.
3. Neo-Marxist Perspective.

In an age where unemployment is a serious problem, educational qualifications have become an essential asset. However, it is the middle-class who tend to benefit most. But why is this? Again in Chapter 1, I attempt to explain educational inequality. Explanations of educational inequality can be divided into two categories:

1. The family, community and the child. This type focuses on presumed deficiencies in the child's cognitive, cultural and linguistic abilities and those of his/her family and community.
2. The second type focuses on the role of knowledge system, school organisation and educational practices in the reproduction of inequality.

Chapter 2, focuses on Basil Bernstein's theory of Elaborated and Restricted Codes. According to Bernstein language is one of the most important means of initiating, synthesising and reinforcing ways of thinking, feeling and behaviour that are functionally related to the social group.

In Chapter 3, (i.e., Conclusions), I provide a critique of Bernstein's work looking at the work of William Labov (1973). Bernstein may be placed within the deficit theory of disadvantaged children. However, he claims that his work has been misinterpreted and aligns himself with the difference positions. Both Labov (1973) and Trudgill (1975) are quite critical of Bernstein's work.

*"One does not uncover the logical complexity of a body of speech by counting the number of subordinate clauses. The cognitive style of a speaker has no fixed relation to the number of unusual adjectives or conjunctions that he uses."*

(Labov, (1977, p258)

Having looked at educational inequality with special reference to linguistics, my aim was to evaluate if compensatory education would succeed.

My sources of information were mainly secondary, integrating the findings of multiple empirical studies within a general framework.

*"Secondary information consists of sources of data and other information collected by others and archived in some form. These sources include government reports, industry studies, archived data sets and syndicated information services as well as the traditional books and journals found in libraries. Secondary information offers relatively quick and inexpensive answers to many questions and is almost always the point of departure for primary research."*

*(Steward, D.W. and Kamins, M.A., (1993) - p1).*

Secondary analysis has some distinctive advantages over primary source analysis. The most significant of these advantages are related to time and cost. Secondary sources provide a useful starting point for additional research by suggesting problem formulations. Consultation of secondary sources provides a means for increasing the efficiency of the research. Secondary data may also provide a useful comparative tool. New data for purposes of examining differences and trends. They may also provide a basis for determining whether or not the new information is representative of a population.

However, it does have its disadvantages also. Information collected with a specific purpose in mind, may produce deliberate or unintentional bias. Also data collected may be so extensive that the individual whose job it is to interpret the findings can potentially arrive at many different even, conflicting conclusions.



*"Some reports do however, actually misinterpret and emphasize quite erroneous conclusions, thus helping to bring statistics into unjustified disrepute."*

*(Reichmann, W.J., 1962 - p32)*

In my study I have attempted not to accept conclusions at face value, just because they are in print or because the claim is made that they are based on empirical research. I attempted to evaluate and weigh carefully evidence in support of conclusions in order to determine whether they are justified. Alternative research findings were provided as factors other than those identified may have the same result.

### Limitations to the Study.

1. The Literature of the subject was so broad, that I had great difficulty in narrowing the material down to suit my argument.
2. I found it difficult to fit the study into the time span allotted. It would have been my hope to carry out interviews and use primary source material to back up my secondary sources. However, this was not possible within my time span.

**CHAPTER 1**

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

## DEFINITION OF EDUCATION AND ITS ROLE

Given the centrality of education as a social institution in society, it is not surprising that it has been an important area of sociological interest. It would be misleading to suggest that the sociology of education, offers a single interpretation of the role of the education system. Therefore, I will outline the principal approaches to the interpretation of the education systems and the role of education in the social structures of modern societies.

### The Functionalist Perspective.

Until the 1970's the dominant theoretical approach was that call 'functionalism', 'structural functionalism' or 'consensus theory' (Clancy et al 1986). This form of analysis has its origins in the work of Durkheim and to some extent Weber.

Functionalist analysis to a very large extent is concerned with social structures and with processes at a macro level (i.e. at the level of whole societies or of major social structures, such as the education system or the economy). The model of society proposed by the functionalist analysis is that of a social 'system', analogous in many ways to a biological organism. The component parts of the system are thought to be interrelated. They can be divided into subsystems such as the education system, the family, the economic system the religious system and the political system. It is argued that change in one part of the system will lead to changes in other parts or indeed, in the whole.

For Functionalist Analysts, the great engine of change and development in modern societies is industrialisation. Industrialisation and economic change are thought to bring changes in all areas of the social structure. Following industrialisation one can expect modernisation, which involves such phenomena as increased urbanisation, secularisation, the development of democratic political structures and the growth of mass 'education', (Wickham, 1986).

Functionalist thought suggests that a society could facilitate and encourage economic growth and industrialisation by altering other institutions (e.g. the education system).

Although functionalists address the problem of conflict and social disintegration, there is an assumption that modern societies are based more on consensus and co-operation, and are normally in a state of equilibrium. A major question of preoccupation is, how do societies remain cohesive and maintain themselves from one generation to another? The answer tends to be couched in terms of shared values, or the central value system. Although many institutions are thought to play roles in the maintenance and transmission of shared values, the education system is seen as playing a central part in the process (Parsons, 1961).

This approach is not exclusive to sociology. It is shared by other social sciences, to some extent, history and political science. Assumptions of this kind appear to underlie many political decisions. Sociological frameworks could be said to provide conceptualisations of the way the world works, for managers and administrators, politicians, reformers and political movements (Acker, 1989). We can find strong overtones of functionalism in the majority of Government policy documents on education especially *Investment in Education (1966)*.

Equality of educational opportunity has been one of the most enduring debates in sociology and educational policy in Ireland and elsewhere this concept is firmly fixed within the functionalist framework. The problem of education and social class has tended to be discussed in terms of 'equality of educational opportunity' (Floud, Halsey and Martin, 1956; Sliver, 1973). This approach examines the influence of 'educationally irrelevant' variables, such as social

class background, gender and place of residence, on educational outcomes (Greaney and Kellaghan, 1984).

The idea that modern industrial societies are, or should be, meritocratic in other work achievement and success should be based on a combination of ability and effort and not on one's social position, family background, race, gender etc. is central to the 'equality of opportunity' argument. Identifying ability and talent, nurturing it, accrediting it and eventually assisting in slotting it into appropriate positions in the social and economic hierarchy, is seen as a crucial role played by the education system. This approach does not assume that inequalities can and should be eliminated, indeed functionalism argues that a certain amount of social and economic inequality is both inevitable and necessary for the proper functioning of society of industrial societies (Marshall, 1971).

One of the principal functions of education, according to functionalists is to encourage and facilitate social mobility i.e., horizontal or vertical. Functionalism assumes that occupations and social classes are ranked in hierarchical fashion according to the degree of prestige, rewards and skills attached to them (Lipset and Bendix, 1959). Therefore, it is the task of the education system to ensure that every member of society has an equal chance and can move into a social position appropriate to their talents.

Greaney and Kellaghan (1984) in their study, divides conceptual thinking on this idea into three phases:

1. access;
2. participation rates;
3. rates of achievement.

### **Phase One: Access.**

In the early part of the twentieth century and up to the period after World War II, the concept of educational equality was couched in terms of access by children from different social groups to different levels of the education system, (Silver, 1973). In order to remove inequalities in education, it was assumed necessary to remove financial barriers (e.g. fees) in order to equalise access and facilitate social mobility. This lay behind the reforms in the 'Butler' Education Act of 1944 in Britain and twenty years later underlay the thinking of *Investment in Education in Ireland*. It quickly became apparent in Britain, that the removal of fees, transport costs etc. was insufficient to bring about parity among the different social classes in relation to education, (Floud, Halsey and Martin, 1956). Similarly in Ireland, the opening up of the post-primary education system in 1967 did not benefit all equally (Tussing, 1978 and 1981).

### **Phase 2: Participation Rates.**

More recently the question of equality of educational opportunity, has been examined by considering participation rates of different social groups at the various levels of the education system, (Rottman et al, 1982; Clancy, 1988). This approach measures educational equality by comparing the representation of different social groups at the various levels of the education system with the representation of the appropriate age group in age social category in the population at large, each social group may be proportionately represented, underrepresented or overrepresented, thus indicating educational inequalities.

### **Phase 3: Rate of Achievement.**

This approach examines the level of achievement of different social classes at

successive stages of the education system (e.g., the achievement of a minimum of five D grades at Leaving Certificate). Assessment of differential levels of achievement is a useful yardstick by which to measure the degree of educational inequality.

Participation rates and achievement are the two indicators most commonly used in contemporary research.

Although there had been some debate on equality of opportunity in Ireland before the mid-1960's, *Investment in Education* was the first major report to give public expression to the principle of 'equality of opportunity'. One of the more recent contributions to the debate has been Greaney and Kellaghans work *Equality of Opportunity in Irish Schools (1984)*. More recently an equality debate arose as a result of the Green Paper on education (Department of Education, 1992). The Green Paper proposes giving priority to schools in disadvantaged areas in the matter of resources, when extra resources become available and positive intervention in favour of students from disadvantaged areas in access to third level education. (Department of Education, 1992). It also proposes, that there be an obligation on all educational institutions to develop and publish an active policy to promote gender equity and to aim at gender balance in all boards of management and selection committees. (Department of Education, 1992).

### Neo-Marxism and Education.

Since the early 1970's, and continuing into the 1980's and 1990's, Marxist perspectives have made a significant contribution to educational debate. Educational sociologists working in this frame reference apply concepts that originate in the socio-economic analysis that Marx made of the capitalist system. These concepts have been modified to take account of the social,

economic and technological changes that have taken place, and are applied to contemporary societies. Neo-marxists suggest that the social relations of capitalist societies are characterised by class based conflict rather than consensus. It is the nature of capitalist production, with its attendant social implications, that is thought to be crucial, rather than industrialisation perse.

It is suggested that every kind of production system entails a definite set of social relationships existing between individuals involved in the production process. It is the relationships that people enter into during the process of producing the ordinary material things of life that bring about the characteristic shape and form of any society. This is theoretically defined as the theory of base and superstructure. This theory contends that in any society, at any given historical epoch, the nature of the relationships in the economic base determine the nature and the form of the social and cultural superstructure. By base is meant the dominant type of technology in use in production, the level of industrial production, the nature of ownership and control of the means of production (i.e., whether production is privately owned and whether ownership or management is highly concentrated or more widely distributed), the type of class structure and the distribution of income and wealth. The term superstructure refers to structures such as the political system, judiciary system, the family, the media and the educational system. (Miliband, 1973). It is suggested that over time some of these institutions develop a dynamism of their own - relative autonomy. This is the argument that while economic forces condition the nature of superstructural institutions, there is a reciprocal interaction in which these institutions have an impact on the economic base.

The notion of relative autonomy has been thought to be particularly applicable to the education system. The education system unlike other systems, has a strong relative autonomy with respect to the economy. A capitalist system, thus



may have an education system containing medieval elements, such as a focus on classics. (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). Bourdieu also states that under certain conditions of capitalism, the education system becomes the main agency for the production of producers i.e. training for industrial work (Bourdieu and Boltanski, 1977). It is also argued that, the economic forces are dominant. (Althusser 1972).

It is suggested that the education system mirrors and reflects the characteristic relationships found in the system of industrial production. For instance, if the structure of industrial relations is hierarchical, authoritarian and bureaucratic, one can expect the education system to be organised in a similar fashion. The relationships within and the discipline of the school prepare and inure the pupil for the relationships and discipline of the work-place. It is suggested by many neo-marxist researchers, that one of the principal functions of modern education systems is the reproduction and legitimation of the social relationships of the capitalist economic order. (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). This is achieved by the role played by education systems in the reproduction of class inequalities.

Within the neo-marxist framework, the parameters of the debate shift from the concept of 'equality of opportunity' to the concept of 'the reproduction of inequalities'. Marxists do not accept that the existence of socio-economic inequalities are necessary to the orderly and harmonious functioning of societies. They do accept that such inequalities are characteristic and inevitable under the capitalist system of production. This is because the nature of this system stems from the relationship between two fundamental groups involved in the production process: the bourgeoisie and the working class. It is suggested that this relationship, is one of inequality, domination, exploitation and conflict. The relationship between these two is a crucial one. Education is seen as playing a vital role in the maintenance of these relations.

Some neo-marxists have suggested that the intense focus on social mobility in the analysis of the relationship between education and the economy is a mistaken one - "an absurd problematic" (Poulantzas, 1978). The reasoning being, that were there to be perfect mobility from one generation to the next, the structural inequalities would still exist. However, not all Marxists would dismiss the problem of social mobility as lightly as Poulantzas, being rephrased in terms of the 'reproduction' of inequality from one generation to another.

Neo-marxist theorists, diverge from functionalist analyses of educational inequality in three principal ways:

1. the acceptance of socio-economic inequality;
2. the idealism of meritocracy;
3. the preoccupation with social mobility.

However, while there are important differences between functionalism and Marxism in their assumptions and interpretations, there are also some similarities.

1. Both can be described as structuralist approaches to the social order, as they conduct much of their analyses at the level of social systems and focus primarily on social structures e.g., class and occupational structures.
2. Both use very similar methodologies and rely heavily on aggregate statistical data e.g. censuses and official figures.

Likewise, these two approaches share some weaknesses.

1. There has been a comparative neglect in both approaches of the internal process of the school and the dynamics of classroom interaction.
2. Both traditions have failed to analyze the interrelationship between class, gender, race, and disability related inequalities.

### **The Neo-Weberian Perspective.**

'Neo-Weberians', their work is influenced by the theories of the German sociologist, Max Weber, like Durkheim and Marx, Weber is commonly regarded as one of the founder fathers of modern sociology. Weber's work represents an attempt to come to an understanding of the workings of the capitalist society. Weberian sociology is much less inclined to see human behaviour as determined by the social structures in which people participate.

It seeks to 'interpret' the behaviour of individual human beings, to understand the subjective meaning of their actions. But it also attempt to locate individual conduct in its social context. All action takes place within a social and economic structure, which to some extent, limits what the individual can do. This structure is, of course, the result of past action. It has been constructed by innumerable men and women throughout history. Never the less, for each individual it forms an 'objective reality' that has to be reckoned with. Furthermore, the social system of which we are a part shapes our ideas, beliefs and values as well as controlling our actions. Our conception of the world and of ourselves is influenced by it. In turn, we may, as an individual, come to modify society's institutions; certainly, large numbers of individuals acting together in co-operation, competition and conflict will have such an effect.

A Weberian perspective, then attends to the individuals action, to his intentions, purpose, goals and 'definition of the situation'. It also considers the 'interaction' of individuals. But, in addition it examines the way that action and interaction are influenced by, and influence the existing social and economic system. In doing this it pays attention to the following features of social life, power, authority and domination, the conflict over economic resources and rewards the competition for status and prestige, the struggle for political control, and the role of bargaining, negotiation and compromise. It does not, prejudge the nature and the outcome of conflict and struggle. It is an 'open' approach which, like pluralism, recognises that class domination may be crucial at certain points in history, but not in others.

In Ireland, neo-Weberian analysis of the education system is most obvious in the work of the Economic and Social Research Institute. Their theoretical model attributes inequalities in income to the distribution of resources - property, skills and educational credential. These, they suggest are associated with the main social class categories (Rottman et al, 1982).

Their theory of the state within which their analyses of the education system are located, suggests that the state, as the main administrative institution in society, is continually engaged in the regulation of conflict between the other structures of society. Their interest lies in the extent to which the state can determine societal outcomes, such as the distribution of life chances (Breen et al, 1990). Their main objective in examining educational reforms since the 1960's has been to assess the goals the state hoped to achieve through reform and to look at the degree of success in attaining these goals and the unexpected consequences that resulted. They argue that the state's lack of control over the system has been crucial in determining these consequences (Breen et al, 1990).

Although Weber's work represented a challenge to the Marxist analysis of the capitalist society, however there are areas where there is substantial agreement e.g., in relation to many aspects of the class structure (Westegaurd and Relser, 1976). It is not possible, in recent times to see an element of synthesis of concepts originating in Marxist and Weberian theory in the study of education systems in Ireland, (Lynch, 1988) and elsewhere e.g., the analysis of the French education system offered by Bourdieu, (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977).

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## SOCIAL CLASS AND EDUCATION

### Social Class.

Social Class is a topic to which sociologists have given much attention. There are many common forces influencing the behaviour of all who fill the same position in any society. (Musgrave, 1975). Under contemporary conditions the social constraints at work on any person as he fills his economic role as a producer are of crucial importance because this position gives him his livelihood and, in any society above the subsistence level, his standard of life. In a capitalist society, the majority are workers with little property other than their own capacity to work, whilst the minority are either owners of businesses or salaried employees, often of professional status, both categories having considerable security and often much property. (Dahrendorf, 1959).

### Indices of Social Class.

Since social class rests primarily on economic foundations, the objective indices most often used are of an economic nature.

#### 1. Occupation.

Virtually all studies of education and social class use a measure based on occupation, usually that of the father. Although it is somewhat, inadequate as a single indicator of class position. There are some problems.

- (a) children can be included with their parents;
- (b) the retired may be allocated to the occupation that they followed last, though this may not have been their life's career;

- (c) Wives are usually included in their husband's class regardless of their own occupations.

2. Income.

Another possible index is income, however a problem here is to decide whether it is individual or family income that matters.

3. Consumption.

Consumption is an index that is rarely used. How is the income spent? Many people ear £10,000 p.a., but they may spend it in very different ways. To be specific, some factory workers and teachers earn the same income, but their expenditure follows different patterns, and these consumption patterns are the outward signs of their different social class position. Each individual expresses the pattern of values that he holds in the way that he spends his money.

E.G. the teacher may be buying a house and spending a considerable amount on his children's education, whilst the factory worker lives in a council house and owns a car. These different patterns of values are vital in determining social class. Aggregates of individuals with the same or nearly the same income are clearly, not necessarily of the same social class, although it must be stressed that even groups who hold the same values are not a class until they are conscious of having important common values and interests. Class consciousness makes a mere aggregate into a social class.

#### 4. Ownership of Wealth.

The ownership of wealth plays an important part in determining social class, since an unequal distribution of wealth leads to the unequal incomes that make it possible to give children a more advantageous start in life. However, income does seem to be less unevenly distributed than fifty years ago. High incomes have been taxed heavily and part of the proceeds transferred to the lower income groups, often in the form of social services and welfare benefits. Working class incomes have risen in real terms, however the proportion of national income that they earn seems to have been stationary through the 1950's and declined slightly since the 1960's.

There have been a number of attempts to construct measures of social class using one or a combination of the above indices. The most used divisions of social class in Britain and in Ireland are those used in Government censuses. The five broad categories are socio-economic in character, ranging from:

- i Professional and similar occupations - e.g., lawyers, doctors, professional engineers.
  - ii Intermediate occupations - e.g., farmers, retailers, teachers.
  - iii Skilled and Clerical workers - e.g., most factory workers, shop assistants, most clerical workers.
  - iv Semi-skilled occupations - e.g., domestic servants.
  - v Unskilled occupations - e.g., most kinds of labourers.
- (D.C. Marsh, 1965).

From the data gathered, it is possible to give a rough indication of the distribution of the population by socio-economic status or by 'social class' both through time and at the most recent census.

Throughout the discussion of class a number of interlocking strands have been traced. (D.C. Marsh, 1956).

1. Economic.

Occupation is vital here, mainly in that it yields an income, though wealth can provide than this. Different sizes of income lead to differences in life changes.

2. Status.

Status measures prestige accorded to an individual. Status tends to vary with economic criteria such as income and occupation.

3. Power.

Power can be defined as the ability to control the behaviour of others. This unusually varies directly with economic criteria.

(Musgrave, 1975).

Therefore, it is difficult to define 'social class'. However, for convenience we continue to talk about the upper, the middle and the working classes. As pointed out previously, these groups only become social classes when they realise that they hold interest in common. (R. Dahrendorf, 1959).

### Education and Social Class: Irish Research.

Since the 1960's, there has been an enduring interest in the relationship between social class and education. The first major inquiry into the education system was the *Investment in Education* report (1966). This study showed substantial social class inequalities in the rates of access and participation in post-primary schooling. In 1963, 69.1% of boys and 74.8% of girls transferred to post-primary education. There were substantial differences according to socio-economic background, e.g., 87.1% of boys and 89.6% of girls were from professional and skilled occupations background, compared to 54% of boys and 54.4% of girls from a semi-skilled and unskilled background.

*(Investment in Education, 1966).*

Following these findings and equality, considerations in mind and a drive for economic expansion, Irish education spending increased. From almost £29.5 million in 1961/'62 (*Investment in Education, 1966*), to over £307.5 million by 1977 and by 1990 over £1,274 million (*Department of Education, 1992*).

This increased expenditure was accompanied by marked increased in participation rates in post-primary education. In 1965 the number engaged in full-time second level education was 134,090, by 1991 this was 345,941. However, not all classes benefited to the same degree.

e.g. In 1961 24.9% of the population aged 15 - 19 was in full-time education. By 1971, 47.9% of the population aged 14 - 19 was in full-time education. In 1987, this figure was 63.1% (Rottman et al., 1982).

The rise in educational expenditure and in participation rates disproportionately benefited the middle-classes. Report after Report showed that middle-class children were better represented at all levels of post-primary education and at

entry to third-level education than their working-class counterparts, (Clancy, 1988). From an early stage after the introduction of 'free' post-primary education, inequalities of access by social group sharpened. When the rates of participation in full-time education of the children of semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers and those of the children of professionals, employers and manager were compared for 1961 and 1971, the differential between them had increased. Through the rate of increase was greater among those families with least resources, the absolute differential between the two social groups had widened slightly (Rottman et al., 1982).

Greaney and Kellaghan's study showed marked differences in education participation by class. Of the five hundred children they followed through the education system from primary school, 92% entered a second-level school and three-quarters stayed at school to complete a junior-cycle course, while 45% completed a senior-cycle course (Greaney and Kellaghan, 1984).

In these survival rates, there were considerable social class variations. Greaney and Kellaghan's findings on socio-economic background indicated that from the end of primary schooling up to third-level education, the representation of students from lower socio-economic groups decreased, while the representation of those from higher groups increased. Their data suggested that the higher one goes in the education system, the greater the disparity in participation by socio-economic status. They argued, the conditions that affected a student's future education chances were laid down relatively early in life and were clearly in evidence before the end of primary schooling. For those who survived, they argued that the inequalities were reduced though not entirely eliminated. (Greaney and Kellaghan, 1984).

Whelan and Whelan, (1984), suggested that socio-economic inequalities increase rather than decline as one moves up through the system. In a comparative study of the relationship between education and male social mobility, Whelan and Whelan suggest that the association between social origins and educational achievement is stronger in Ireland than in a number of countries e.g., England, France, Sweden. This is important, as intragenerational or career mobility is particularly restricted and educational qualifications are a strong determinant of social class (Whelan and Whelan, 1984). Occupational positions are passed from one generation to another, not as in the past through direct inheritance but through the medium of differential access to educational qualifications. Further, they argue, that the Irish education system is confronted not simply with a minority of disadvantaged children and schools that have obvious social problems but rather a great problem posed by the great majority of working-class children who are not achieving to their full potential. (Whelan and Whelan, 1984).

The expansion of the education system and the growth of credentialism have acted as intervening factors between class origins and class destinations, but have not appeared to have changed them to any marked degree. (Breen et al., 1990). They also argue that public educational expenditure is regressive, in that the benefits accrue to pupils of better off families. (Breen et al., 1990).

During the 1980's, participation rates in second-level schools continued to increase for all social classes. This may be due to:-

1. high rates of unemployment;
2. rising expectations in an increasingly competitive education system.

(Department of Labour, 1991).

However, there are still significant social class differentials in participation rates and achievement at post-primary level. It is at the point of entry to third-level education that these are most clearly visible *The Investment in Education* team observed that only 1190 of university places were taken up by the least advantaged socio-economic groups. By 1986 the share of this group increased to 14.8% (Clancy, 1988).

Looking at the position of the higher and lower professional, employers, managers, salaried employees, Clancy saw that their share of university places increased from 65% in 1965 to 69.1% in 1986 (Clancy, 1988). From these figures we can see that over the period the inequalities in university participation of children from the most and least advantaged groups increased rather than diminished.

Dowling (1991), in his study, found that students from semi-skilled and unskilled working-class backgrounds were either not represented at all or under-represented in the professional facilities, e.g., dentistry, law, medicine and commerce. The disparities between this group and others were less marked in arts and science facilities. Looking at RTC's working-class students and the children of lower income groups are generally better represented. In 1986, the number of new entrants from the five lowest-income groups was 33.3% in RTC's and 29.4% in DIT's while for the higher income groups the figures were 38.9% and 59.2% respectively (Clancy, 1986). Farmers' children also transfer to RTC's in great numbers, however, colleges of education still attract the highest proportion of farmers' children, especially their daughters. In 1963, farmers' children accounted for 25% of university entrants (*Investment in Education, 1966*). Clancy found that farmers were the only group to have



increased their share of third-level places from 1980 to 1986. (Clancy, 1988). The increased participation of farmers' children may be related to the decline in the proportion of small farmers. (CSO, 1992).

Also, there are differences in the transfer rates to third-level colleges from different types of schools. The schools with the highest transfer rates are secondary schools and those with the lowest rates are vocational schools (Clancy, 1988). This primarily reflects differentials in social background among the intake of these schools rather than differences in schools effectiveness. There are significantly lower proportions of working-class pupils in secondary schools than in vocational schools. Breen (1986) observed that at the end of the junior-cycle 29% of male secondary schools were from working-class backgrounds, while 63% in vocational schools. In the case of working-class girls the proportions were 45% for secondary schools and 70% for vocational schools (Breen, 1986). In relation to performance in public examinations, vocational schools would appear to perform badly at first glance, however, once intake differences are taken into account, there is no evidence that vocational schools are else effective than others (Breen, 1986).

Inequalities in educational participation are not only most obvious at entry to third-level education, they are evident at other points in the system. The educational attainment levels of the different social classes thus indicate educational inequality. The most vulnerable group within the labour market and those most prone to unemployment are those who leave school with no qualifications, this group is disproportionately working-class - in particular of semi-skilled and unskilled working-class background. Breen (1986) found a significant relationship between social class and both Intermediate and Leaving Certificate results. Although Greaney and Kellaghan argue that socio-economic background is not related to examination performance. Breen's (1986) study

found that working class pupils performed more poorly than others.

### Conclusions.

There has been increased educational expenditure since the 1960's, however, this has not eliminated educational inequalities that exist. Rising participation rates benefited all categories, however, not all classes benefited to the same degree. This increase in expenditure and participation rates disproportionately benefited the middle-classes.

With economic recession and increased levels of unemployment has meant that qualifications have become a prerequisite for entry to a job. Third-level education has become more important than ever in obtaining a job. As research has shown at entry to third-level education the middle-class groups occupy the greater share of university places and RTC places. Since the 1960's the greatest beneficiaries of educational change has been the middle class and upper-middle-class.

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**CHAPTER 2**

**THEORETICAL**

**FRAMEWORK**

### **Language and Socialization.**

For Bernstein socialization refers "to the process whereby a child acquires a specific cultural identity and to his responses to such an identity". Social relationships determine a person's speech and a person's speech according to Bernstein, helps determine educational attainment. The socialization of the child therefore is extremely important because his potential for language will be acquired either at home or in the school. Social class background is also highly significant because Bernstein contends that the role of the mother in the different social classes (i.e., working-class or middle-class) is crucial in the socialization of the child. The importance the mother attaches to language in socializing the child into basic skills and interpersonal relationships, has received considerable attention by Bernstein and his colleagues. Early research findings indicate that the middle-class mothers socialize their children into an active role in preparation for infant school, while working-class mothers in the same situation socialized their children into a far more passive role. Bernstein maintains that social class is the single most important element in socialization. The speech variants manifest themselves in the upbringing of middle-class and working-class children. Also children have access to different speech systems, as they are socialized to learn different roles according to their family's class position in society. This disposes children to adopt quite different social and cognitive orientations despite the common potential they might possess. Parental control is seen as extremely important in regulating the flow of communication of the child's speech. Research has focused almost exclusively on the implications of mother-child communication.

### **Mother-Child Communication.**

In a monograph entitled: "Social Class differences in the relevance of language to socialization", (Sociology Vol. 3 No. 1 January 1969) Bernstein and Henderson wished to examine the role of social learning as mediated by the

mother through the linguistic process in socialization. They wish to validate:-

1. Both middle-class and working-class would place greater emphasis upon the use of language in interpersonal aspects of socialization than the emphasis upon language in the socialization into basic skills.
2. The shift in emphasis in the use of language from the skill to the person area would be much greater for the middle class group.
3. Within the skill area the middle-class group place a greater emphasis upon language in the transmission of principles.

In Bernstein's and Henderson's study fifty middle-class and fifty working-class mother's were randomly selected from a total of 312 mothers. The researchers employed an index of social class which was initially developed by W. Brandis. The scale was based upon the occupational status and terminal education of each parent. The research focused on two important areas of socialization:-

- (a) interpersonal relationships;
- (b) the acquisition of skills.

The Researchers used a closed schedule which consisted of eleven statements, covering the major aspects of socialization.

1. Teaching everyday tasks like dressing, using a knife and fork (Motor Skill).
2. Helping them to make things (Constructional Skill).
3. Drawing their attention to different shapes (Perceptual Skill).

4. Playing games (Dummy).
5. Showing them right from wrong (Moral Principles).
6. Letting them know what you are feeling (Mother-oriented affective).
7. Showing them how things work (Cognitive).
8. Helping them to work things out for themselves (Independent Cognitive).
9. Disciplining them (Control).
10. Showing them how pleased you are with their progress (Dummy).
11. Dealing with them when they are unhappy (Child-oriented affective).

Each mother was asked to assess the difficulty dumb parents would encounter in dealing with each situation outlined in the statements. The replies ranged on a six point scale from: "very difficult", "much more difficult", "more difficult", "not too difficult", "fairly easy" to "easy" and scored accordingly from +3 to -2

The responses were divided into three categories:

1. Skill area statements (i.e., transmission of skills).
2. Person area statements (i.e., aspects of social control).
3. Dummy statements.





The responses from all the mothers showed that a much greater emphasis was placed upon difficulty within the person area of statements than within the skill area of statements. The results also show a difference between the responses of the middle-class mothers in relation to the two areas of statements was significantly greater than the difference between the responses of the working-class mothers. Middle-class mothers placed a greater emphasis upon the difficulty of doing the things described in the person area than the working-class mothers, but they placed a much less emphasis upon the difficulty of doing things described in the skill area than the working-class mothers.

### **The Results.**

Differences in the response were principally due to:-

1. the statements within each area;
2. the social class of the mothers;
3. the interaction between social class and individual statements.

It was found that middle-class mothers find situations described by skill less relevant than working class mothers. There is but one exception i.e., statement 7 "showing them how things work". Middle-class mothers were of the view that it would be more difficult to deal with this area without language than working-class mothers. Middle-class mothers placed greater emphasis upon language than working-class mothers with regard to the person statements. In fact all mothers agreed that person situations were more difficult to cope with than skill situations.

Within the skill area, the middle-class group gives greater emphasis to speech in the transmission of principles, but with regard to the other three skill

statements (i.e., 1, 2, 3) the working-class mothers tended to place greater emphasis on language than the middle-class mothers, i.e., working-class mothers give greater emphasis to speech in the acquisition of skills.

### Review of Results.

Bernstein and Henderson account for the above findings by stressing the different emphasis placed on skill and person relationships which are transmitted in the process of socialization. The researchers suggest that in the learning situation between mother and child the working-class child adopts a more passive role, whereas the role of the middle-class child is active.

The researchers further suggest that the concept of learning is different for both social classes. They argue that the working-class mothers emphasize language in the acquisition of basic skills but in the process of instructing the child less emphasis is placed on the explanation of principles. The middle-class child retains a distinct advantage because the working-class child learns skills only in terms of operations. Furthermore the learning environment of the different social classes is also highly significant. The working-class child because he learns only the operations of the basic skills, is oriented to adopt a passive role and his experience is largely didactic in nature for in the learning situation the mother constantly tells him how things work. Conversely the middle-class child is socialized into learning both the principles and the operations of the basic skills, he is oriented to adopt an active role and thus his experience is largely autonomous and self-regulating in exploring the learning environment. Also within the person area the middle-class mother takes great care to make her meaning verbally explicit, but the possibility for such explicitness on the part of the working-class mother is greatly reduced because of the differential nature of the learning situation.

The researchers refer to evidence collected two years before from the first interview with the mothers to support their argument:-

1. Middle-class mothers are more likely than working-class mothers to take up the child's attempt to interact verbally with the mother in a range of contexts.
2. Middle-class mothers are less likely to evade answering difficult questions put to them by their children.
3. Middle-class mothers are less likely to use coercive methods of control.
4. Middle-class mothers are more likely to explain to the child why they want a change in his/her behaviour.

### **The Theory of Elaborated and Restricted Codes.**

It is a fundamental sociological fact that working-class children are less successful than middle-class children at school. Even at third-level the working class child has much less chance than the middle-class child of reaching university. There is also the undisputed fact that working-class children use a type of language which is characteristically different from that of middle-class children. In the sequel to the study *The Home and the School* (1967), the authors state that:

*"Much has been written about the acquisition of language in the manual working class and how the small vocabulary used by the parents and the crude grammatical construction of the sentences spoken restrict children's ability to express themselves precisely and effectively in words. We would suggest that insufficient attention has been paid to the lack of verbal stimulation that may result when a child during the years when he is learning to speak, spends much of his time with others near his own age, and models his language on theirs. The Plowden Committee (Central Advisory*

*Council 1967) advocated the extension of nursery school education implicitly to counter among other things the lack of verbal stimulation in some families".*

*(Douglas 1971, pp136 - 137)*

The above quotation helps to illustrate what may be considered as one of Bernstein's major concerns, which is his attempt to focus specially on the working-class child and educability (i.e., does one's language affect and/or determine one's progress in school). Bernstein in the sixties was often written off as one of the main advocates of theories of cultural and linguistic deficit. In fact, Bernstein is diametrically opposed to such theories which imply that there is something lacking both in the family and the child. Like Labov (1969) and the Baratzes (1970) Bernstein emphasises the importance of the child's own existing culture because he believes that if a child is labelled as culturally deprived:

*"It follows then that the school has to compensate for the something which is missing in the family and the children become little deficit systems. If only the parents were interested in the goodies we offer, if only they were like middle-class parents, then we could do our job. Once the problem is seen even implicitly in this way then it becomes appropriate to coin the terms 'cultural deprivation', 'linguistic deprivation' etc. And then these labels do their own sad work".*

*(Bernstein 1974, p192)*

### The Origin of the Sociolinguistic Codes.

Bernstein's contribution is unique in the area of the Sociology of Language because he not only examined social class differences in language but endeavours to propose a causal relationship between a child's social class background, the language he uses and the success or failure he encounters in school. He is in fact proposing a very complex relationship between social class, language and educability. As he states himself his whole outlook is dominated by the more 'general problem of the structure of cultural transmission and change with special reference to speech. Cultural transmission

is Bernstein's term for socialization', the process whereby a child acquires a specific cultural identity, and to his responses to such an identity.

In the process of cultural transmission Bernstein places great importance on how children assume roles. Social roles are learned through social interaction and a social role is defined as:

*"a constellation of shared learned meanings through which individuals are able to enter stable consistent and publically recognised forms of interaction with others".*

*(Bernstein 1974, p144)*

More importantly the role is also a complex coding activity because it controls the creation and organization of specific meanings (contained in speech) and thus provides the conditions for both the transmission and reception of specific meanings. For Bernstein speech is essentially what makes communication possible and defines what any given social role is. Bernstein uses the term "critical social roles" to describe the means through which culture is transmitted. These critical social roles also regulate their own forms of speech. This happens because children have access to different forms of speech or what Bernstein calls 'linguistic codes', for during the process of socialization they learn different social roles because of the class position their family occupies in society. This in turn predisposes them to adopt a different range of intellectual and social possibilities which are open to them, irrespective of the common abilities they may possess.

Bernstein outlines two basic types of linguistic codes and strives to demonstrate how they regulate speech events. Socialization orients the child to an elaborated or restricted code. The middle-class mainly employ an elaborated code and the working-class mainly employs a restricted code. Children from both the middle-class and the working-class have the capacity to switch codes as the situation demands. In an earlier version of the theory Bernstein

advocated a crude correlation between forms of language and social class but he no longer subscribes to this view. He now states that the class system limits access to the elaborated code. As both social classes employ different kinds of socialization they produce two distinct cultures, which tend to have a profound influence on the way children conceptualize and express themselves by means of language. he uses the expression 'restricted code' to typify the type of language of the working-class which uses a lexical and syntactic system that is fundamentally different from the type of language of the middle-class which he refers to as an 'elaborated code'.

### **Definition of Sociolinguistic Codes.**

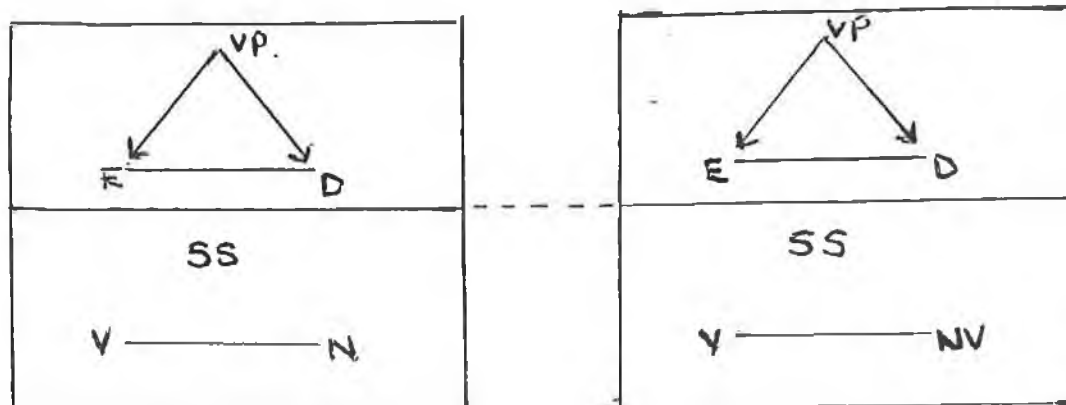
For Bernstein the sociolinguistic codes have an important regulative function in that they mediate between the environment and what is learnt. The sociolinguistic codes play a decisive role in social learning in that they indicate what in the environment is available to be learned the conditions of learning and the constraints on subsequent learning.

The sociolinguistic codes are simply planning devices having existence only at a psychological level. They also have a sociological dimension because special social relationships inherent in the codes and changes in the forms of the social relations act selectively on one's selection of lexical and syntactic options. More simply this means that the type of speech used on army manoeuvres will be significantly different from the type of speech used at a religious service because different forms of social relations generate or give rise to quite different forms of speech or linguistic codes by affecting the planning procedure.

Bernstein provided a useful model to illustrate his definition of the central concept of code and attempted to show its relationship with the verbal planning procedure.

**Figure 1.**

Bernstein's concept of Code and Verbal Planning.



This simplified model demonstrates how communication is possible between two people. There is a verbal planning procedure (VP) in each individual which allows him to encode (E) and decode (D) or in other words which allows him to send messages and understand messages. Each individual has also access to a signal store (SS) made up of verbal (V) and non-verbal (NV) or paralinguistic signals. Bernstein maintains that when A communicates with B the following occurs:

- (i) Orientation: B tries to establish the dominant signals in A's message which is the beginning of verbal planning.
- (ii) Associations: What is selected from the signal store (SS) both verbal and non-verbal (V & NV) depends upon the associations for the individual with the dominant signals he picks up.
- (iii) Organization: The verbal and non-verbal signals are then integrated or organized (V & NV) to form a sequential reply.

The code therefore is the principle which regulates all three processes outlined above. The originating determinants of these three processes it is maintained, is the form of the social relationship which Bernstein sees as the more general quality of the social structure. The socio-linguistic codes are best understood in what Bernstein term 'predictability'.

*"Two general types of code can be distinguished: elaborated and restricted. They can be defined, on a linguistic level, in terms of the probability of predicting for any one speaker which syntactic elements will be used to organize meaning across a representative range of speech".*

*(Bernstein 1974, p76)*

This means that the codes regulate the ease of difficulty the syntactic alternatives available to individuals in organizing meaning. For example an elaborated code will facilitate an individual to explore more fully the grammatical system at his disposal and therefore he has more possibilities of combination. Thus an individual using an elaborated code has an advantage over his counterpart using a restricted code because he has access to a wide knowledge of the linguistic rule system. Bernstein claims that the verbal planning of an elaborated code promotes a higher level of syntactic organisations and lexical selection, so whereas there is low syntactic prediction for an elaborated code the reverse is the case with the restricted code which has high syntactic and lexical prediction.

The sociological conditions for the emergence of the elaborated and restricted codes depends for Bernstein on a typology of meaning and models or code users.

*"To the extent that meanings are made explicit and are conventionalized through language meanings may be universalistic, whilst if they are implicit and relatively less conventionalized through language, meanings may be called particularistic. Similarly if the speech models are potentially generally available, such models can be called*



*universalistic, whilst if speech models are much less available they can be called particularistic".*

*(Bernstein 1974, p124)*

An elaborated code can be universalistic with regard to its meaning, but particularistic with reference to its speech models or code users, because everyone has not equal access to its syntax and universal meaning. Conversely the restricted code is particularistic with reference to its meaning but universalistic with regard to its models or code users because all people have access to its syntax. Bernstein delineates a special case of a restricted code (syntactic prediction) where both the speech model or code user and meaning is particularistic. Here the individual is said to be totally constrained by the code. The model behind the sociolinguistic code is Durkheim's concept of mechanical and organic solidarity. Bernstein's restricted code is equivalent to mechanical solidarity or the way people relate to each other principally through similarity of function. The elaborated code is equivalent to organic solidarity where dissimilarity of function is the motivating force. The sociological conditions for the emergence of the sociolinguistic codes may be summarized as follows:

**Figure 2.** Bernstein's sociological conditions for the Emergence of the sociolinguistic codes.

Restricted Code (lexical prediction)

Restricted Code (high syntactic prediction)

1. Model: universalistic; meaning: particularistic.

2. Model: particularistic; meaning: universalistic.

Elaborated Code (low syntactic prediction)

1. Model: particularistic; meaning: universalistic.

Bernstein argued that the perception of the unskilled and semi-skilled strata in comparison to the middle-class was of a qualitatively different order. He contended that this was primarily responsible for the difference in educational attainment of the social classes. Bernstein believed that an explanation of this problem could be found in the subcultural differences between the working-class and the middle-class. He postulated that predispositions to perceive or modes of cognitive expression held the key to understanding the educational performance of the social classes. The mode of cognitive expression leads to two types of ordering of relationships arising out of:

1. Sensitivity to the content of objects.
2. Sensitivity to the structure of objects.

Bernstein attempted to relate the sociological determinants of these two stages in relation to formal educational structures and attainment. The ideas involved maybe diagrammatically represented as follows:

- (i) Sociological determinants - (i.e., working-class/middle-class culture).
- (ii) Mode of cognitive expression.
- (iii) Educational attainment of performance.

Working-class culture produces a child where there is a resistance to formal learning which expresses itself.

- (i) indiscipline;
- (ii) rejection of teacher's values;

- (iii) failure to enlarge or extend vocabulary;
- (iv) preference for descriptive rather than analytical cognitive processes.

Bernstein sees that the perception of the working-class (i.e., members of the semi-skilled and unskilled strata) is qualitatively different from the middle-class because the working-class express themselves by sensitivity to the content of objects which is defined as learned ability to respond to the boundary of objects rather than the matrix of relationships and interrelationships in which it stands with other objects. The middle-class express themselves by sensitivity to the structure of objects which is defined as a function of learned ability to respond to an object perceived and defined in terms of a matrix of relationships. The difference between the classes is further reinforced because the middle-class possess a type of rationality which is realised by:

- (a) an understanding of the relationship between means and long term ends both at the cognitive and effective levels;
- (b) the ability to orient behaviour to specific values;
- (c) the facility to attain distant ends by a purposeful means - ends chain!

Middle-class children possess the further advantage because:

- (i) Children of the middle-class are socialized within a formally articulated structure (i.e., they can verbalize their needs and wants).
- (ii) Learning is directed to achieving distant ends.

- (iii) Behaviour is oriented to an explicit set of goals and values.
- (iv) In socialization they are afforded a more stable set of rewards and punishments.
- (v) The child's future is continually appraised in relation to his present educational and emotional needs.
- (vi) The child matures in an ordered and rational structure - the totality of his experience is closely supervised from an early age.
- (vii) Expression of feelings especially of feelings of hostility are strongly discouraged.
- (viii) A high premium is placed on the verbalization of feeling.

Bernstein states that language particularly words and sentences reflects a particular form of the structuring of feeling and are the very means of interaction and response to the environment. To illustrate this point Bernstein gives few examples of casual language use. A middle-class mother says to her child 'I'd rather you made less noise darling'. The operative words here are rather and less. The middle-class child is sensitized to this type or form of language in socialization. The words rather and less are translatable cues for the child's immediate response. If the above statement were made to a child from the working-class it would contain the same imperative cues for response. 'Shut up!' may very well be the typical imperative command of the working-class mother. Here again the middle-class child will have an advantage because he learnt to respond to both statements which for him may be specifically discriminated within his own highly articulated world of meaning. The working-class person makes the first statement to a working-class child will

immediately translate it as shut up! and explain it as a difference in social class usage. As the working-class child is unable to respond to the different language structure of the first sentence he thus finds it necessary to translate the language structure of the middle-class person into what he considers his own logically simpler language if this is to have any meaning for him. Failure on the part of the working-class child to accomplish this, often, leads both to lack of understanding and confusion.

Bernstein designates the form of language of the middle-class as formal (i.e., elaborated code). The form of language of the working-class he calls public (restricted code). The middle-class child grows up in a home where the parents respond to him as an individual in his own right having his own social status. The process of individuation has important consequences for the child. The language use of the middle-class because it is rich in individual and personal qualification, facilitates advanced logical operations, it is not so much that the number of words or extensive vocabulary which is important, but rather the specific form and subtle arrangement of words, and correction of sentences that convey feeling, which distinguished this child's socialization. In order to avoid tension with the environment and foster a close relationship with his mother, the child is encouraged to verbalize his feeling in an individual and personal manner. The mode of relationship here is therefore crucial because of the nature of the child's sensitivity to the structure of objects. The cues to which the child will respond because of the nature of his language are structural ones. The child matures in an environment which is tightly controlled, space and time and social relationships are carefully regulated both inside and outside the family. When the child is oriented to structure many interpretations or meanings can be given to any one object and this in turn will increase the curiosity of the child and his receptiveness to new learning. This leads to an environment ordered in time and space and will allow primitive interpretive concepts to develop. For Bernstein the crucial fact in socialization of the child

at this stage is the mode of establishing relationships which is of major importance because the mode determines the levels of conceptualization possible.

In contrast the public language of the working-class contains a big proportion of short commands, statements and questions are generally simple so that as a result symbolism tends to be tangible, descriptive, concrete and visual, producing a low order of generality. The family structure of the working-class is less formally organised. Authority despite being made explicit, does not give rise to values conducive to an ordered universe like that of the middle-class child. The environment of the working-class child according to Bernstein clearly manifests itself, where long term goals are diminished immediate gratification is the norm and vague notions with regard to the future prevail. Consequently the perception of the maturing child tends to be limited by his environment. More specifically the public language controls the relationship between mother and child. As the public language contains few personal qualifications and employs concrete symbolism the child is rarely afforded the opportunity to verbalize his feelings, which means that both the cognitive and affective dimensions of the child's world are less developed. The fact that the working-class child is sensitive only to the content of objects, his language restricts his ability to interpret the complex of meanings an object possesses.

The difference between content and structure represents degrees within a conceptual hierarchy. Sensitivity to the content of objects means that for the working-class child only the simplest logical implications or boundaries of the structure will be cognized. In this situation the verbal response of a child from a working-class environment is inadequate because of the form of language he uses and consequently he can only inadequately determine the complex of meanings an object may possess. Furthermore, the working-class environment is only capable of producing a descriptive cognitive process in which events are

seen as separate and distinct entities rather than part of an overall integrated logical pattern. Thus:

*"The child lives in the here-and-now experience of his world, in which the time-span of anticipation or expectancy is very brief, and this is reinforced by the lack of a rigorous working out of connections between means and distant ends as discussed previously. One important consequences of this patterning of perception is that it produces a descriptive cognitive process e.g. the recognition of events A, B, C, D as separate unconnected facts or, at best crude casual connections, are made. Sustained curiosity is not fostered or rewarded, as many answers to questions rarely lead beyond the object or further than simple statement about the object. The social structure continues to reinforce the early patterning of perception".*

*(Sapir, E. 1929, pp207 - 214)*

Finally, Bernstein believes that the pattern of perception transmitted by the working-class family in the process of socialization accounts for much of the resistance to formal education. For the working-class child this manifests itself as follows:

1. There will be a clash between the home and the school.
2. Communication between teacher and pupil is often inadequate because two distinct forms of language are being used.
3. The working-class child's inability to use language appropriate to the situation, adds to the inequality of status between him and the teacher.
4. The fact that the form of language of the working-class is different from the language of the learning situation, there is a resistance to enlarge vocabulary.
5. Difficulty will be experienced with abstract concepts in mathematics and

other subjects because working-class language emphasizes concrete symbolism.

6. The level of curiosity is also reduced as there is a preference for descriptive and concrete analysis. The working-class child's response to stimuli is immediate and his notion of time and space is vague, so there is difficulty in sustaining interest unless punitive means are used.
7. The working-class child is afforded little opportunity to enhance his self respect.
8. Formal educational institutions unwittingly reinforce social inequality by individualizing failure.

### Sociolinguistic Codes and Educability.

Bernstein claims that not all children have access to restricted codes but the access to elaborated codes is selective because of the role system which he sees as highly significant in the process of socialization. To Bernstein role is a key concept. Roles as we have seen possess a complex coding activity in that they both create and organise meanings and the conditions for their transmission and reception. Roles for Bernstein are highly significant because as products of the socialization process they enable the individual to internalize something external to himself. More importantly because roles facilitate internalization they are seen as almost a cognitive process which give rise to patterns of behaviour conveying meanings.

A child's experience of society is realized or made possible through these two codes (i.e., restricted or elaborated). If a child's focusing of experience is exclusively by means of a restricted code, Bernstein contends that this creates a major problem of educability because schools are predicted upon an



elaborated code which have different role relationships and systems of meaning. Elaborated Codes are based upon individualized roles; here the individual achieves his own role and learns at an early age to make explicit or verbalize his individual ideas, intentions and judgements. Restricted codes are based upon communalized roles; here the individual is not facilitated in his attempt to verbally elaborate or explore his own individual differences, intentions or motives as these are considered secondary to the formal requirements of the group. The sociolinguistic codes therefore, play a highly significant role through their differential focusing of experience in the socialization process. Bernstein claims, that schools are most insensitive to children who are restricted code users and tend to reinforce and perpetuate the differential focusing of experience of the socialization process. Bernstein states:

*"Let it be said immediately that a restricted code gives access to a vast potential of meanings, of delicacy, subtlety and diversity of cultural forms, to a unique aesthetic the basis of which in condensed symbols may influence the form of the imagining. Yet in complex industrialized societies its differentially - focused experience may be disvalued and humiliated within schools, or seen, at best, to be irrelevant to the educational endeavour. For the schools are predicted upon elaborated code and its system of social relationships. Although an elaborated code does not entail any specific value system the value system of the middle-class penetrates the texture of the very learning context itself.*

*(Bernstein, B. 1974 - p186)*

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## **IS INEQUALITY IN EDUCATION A MYTH?**

Research attempting to explain educational inequality falls under two broad headings.

1. The first type focuses on presumed deficiencies in the child's cognitive, cultural and linguistic abilities and those of his/her family and community.
2. The second type focuses on the role of knowledge systems, school organisation and educational practices in the reproduction of inequality.

### **The Child, the Family and the Community.**

Research has shown that a proportion of children from all social classes succeed and remain up to the highest level of the education system. However, educational failure is disproportionately concentrated among the children of the semi-skilled and unskilled class and the unemployed. Research has focused on a number of issues:

### **Attitudes and Values.**

In the 1960's and 1970's, there was a great deal of emphasis on attitudinal factors in education underachievement, especially in the case of working-class families. This was based on the theory that working-class families have different life-chances and life experiences from middle-class families, which dispose them towards different views of the world around them, and of their place in it. (Banks, 1976).

Ryan in explaining class differences in university entrance, argued that the differences in the educational aspirations of the various social classes lay not so

much in their desires but in the attitudes that parents and their children had that the educational goals could be attained (Ryan, 1966). Craft argued that the lower-educational and occupational aspirations of working-class children was linked to their value orientations. (Craft, 1970). Craft explored the relationship between value orientations and educational achievement in a study of children in working-class suburb in Dublin. (Craft, 1974). He found that the value orientations of parents (especially mothers) determined whether teenagers were early leavers or stayed on at school past the minimum age. (Craft, 1974).

Studies of working-class attitudes and values have suggested that the background and education of mothers had an important bearing on the attitudes of their children. For example, in Britain, mothers who married 'downwards' from a middle-class background had a better chance of a son going to college. Mothers whose occupation before marriage was 'superior' in status to that of their husbands were more likely to have children who were successful in the Eleven Plus Examination. It was argued that such mothers were motivated by a desire to regain status. Their close association with the middle-classes through their social origin, their job or their educational background provided them with the necessary knowledge and values to ensure a successful school career for their children. (Banks, 1976). This form of analysis assumes a hierarchy of occupations based on status, income and education. It also implies a deficit model of working-class life (especially Banks).

Cullen (1969) explored some of these issues in a study of a sample of 'educationally retarded' children (those whose literacy or numeracy fell below the norm for their age group), and 'educationally advanced children (those whose literacy or numeracy was above the norm) and their mothers in a small town on the east coast of Ireland. This study suggested that the majority of

educationally 'retarded' children came from homes where neither parent had experiences post-primary education. It was found that educational aspirations were lower among the educationally retarded group. The study suggested that:

*'culturally induced educational retardation may occur where the child is deprived of a stimulating relationship with an adult during his infancy and childhood'.*

*(Cullen, 1969 - p128)*

While the deficit model of working-class family life is evident in Cullen's work, it is more explicit in some of the studies conducted in Britain and the United States. Dale and Griffiths (1970) in their study claim that while defective home backgrounds can occur in any class, 'deteriorators' (children who had been moved from an upper stream to a lower one in a grammar school) tended to congregate in the unskilled working-classes. The study argued that a good supporting home background was of crucial importance for the satisfactory academic progress of children. (Dale and Griffiths, 1970).

Deficit models however tend to tell us more about the researchers' perspectives than about the children who are underachieving and their families. Also deficit theory is based on untenable assumptions about the superiority of one set of cultural values vis-a-vis others.

### **Language and Educability.**

According to Bernstein language is one of the most important means of initiating, synthesising and reinforcing ways of thinking, feeling and behaviour that are functionally related to the social group. He distinguished two types of language: restricted code and elaborated code.

Bernstein suggested a link between linguistic codes and authority and control

structures in families. In the middle-class family a dynamic interaction is set up: the pressure to verbalise feelings in a personally qualified way socialises the child into elaborate patterns of verbal articulation. This becomes part of the socialisation process of the middle-class child, and it synchronises with what is required in school. He contrasts the person-oriented middle-class family with the position oriented working-class family. In the working-class family roles are fixed according to Bernstein. There is less negotiation about status boundaries, and thus less emphasis on the individual elaboration of feeling (Bernstein, 1974 - 2nd ed).

This now provides the link with education. For the middle-class child, the school which links the present to a distant future, does not clash with the values of home. The ability of the child to switch from formal to public language enables him/her to communicate appropriately in a wide range of social circumstances. The working-class child, comes from a situation where long-term goals are less tenable than immediate gratification because the general notion of the future is vague. The language between mother and child is public containing few personal qualifications and employing concrete symbolism, it tends to limit the verbal expression of feeling, thus the emotional and cognitive differentiation of the working-class child there is a cultural discontinuity between the home and the school, and the ability of the child is depressed. (Bernstein and Brandis, 1970).

There are some similarities between Bernstein's analysis and that of Bourdieu and Passeron (1977). They suggest that there are two well defined modes of speech: 'bourgeois parlance' and 'common parlance'. Bourgeois language has a tendency to formalism, abstraction and intellectualism. Common parlance uses devices such as banter and joking. Bourdieu and Passeron argue that unequal class distribution of educationally profitable linguistic capital constitutes

one of the best hidden mediators through which the relationship between social origin and scholastic achievement is set up. (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977).

Bernstein's work which is better known provoked considerable debate and a good deal of criticism, most notable from Labov (1973, 1977). Labov suggested that the poor verbal skills that had been attributed to working-class children and those from ethnic minorities were more the result of the context in which the research was carried out than of innate deficiencies in the children. He illustrated this by demonstrating the improvement in linguistic skills that became apparent in New York children from a poor minority background when interview situations were made less formal and less threatening.

Although Bernstein's work is included in his critique, Labov's main target was a body of America research, mainly by psychologists, that comes under the heading of 'cultural deprivation theory'. This theory referred to the complex variables that it was believed were responsible for retarding the child's progress at school. The term 'cultural deprivation' became a euphemism for saying that working-class groups and ethnic minorities have cultures that are inferior to the mainstream culture of society. It was argued, that culturally deprived children come from homes where mainstream values do not prevail and are therefore less educable than other children (Keddie, 1973). Labov suggests when failure reaches grand proportions it is necessary to look at the social and cultural obstacles to learning and the inability of the school to adjust to the situation. (Labov, 1973). Some similar themes are raised in a more recent English study of girls in nursery school and in the home setting. (Tizard et al., 1988). Working-class girls displayed a smaller range of complex language usages in talking to their teachers than to their mothers, and their talk to teachers contained a smaller proportion of these usages. There was no difference in the middle-class children's use of language at home and at school. For middle-

educational experiences of these parents. People in low-income occupations and those who are unemployed, are more likely than others to have few or no qualifications on leaving school. Thus low-income parents in semi-skilled and unskilled working class jobs or those who are unemployed are most likely to have <sup>found</sup> fund their own schooling to be unrewarding and alienating and to have likely to have experienced failure. (Hannan and Shorthall, 1991). Consequently parents who visit the school infrequently or miss parent-teacher meetings are more likely to be displaying a lack of confidence and a lack of knowledge of the purpose of the meetings than a lack of interest. They are also most likely to lack the knowledge and economic resources to make the best use of the school system and to compensate for any inadequacies that it may have e.g., getting grinds for their children.

### Cultural Capital.

'Cultural Capital' refers to the cultural goods transmitted by different families, the amount of which, according to Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) can be inferred by the father's occupation. Bourdieu (1986) claims that cultural capital can take three different forms.

1. The embodied state in the form of long lasting dispositions of mind and body (e.g., accent, tone way's of holding one's body).
2. The objectified state, in the form of cultural goods such as books, films, works of art and machines.
3. The institutionalised form, in the character of education credentials.

Cultural capital is not evenly distributed throughout the population. The middle and upper classes possess much greater quantities of cultural capital. However,



the distribution of both cultural and economic capital among the various dominant groups is not identical. Teachers and professionals for example possess greater amounts of cultural capital, whereas heads of industry and commerce possess greater quantities of economic capital (Bourdieu, 1973). He contends that those with economic capital are more easily able to do without cultural capital, since academic qualifications are a weal currently and possess all their value only with the limits of the academic market (Bourdieu, 1973).

However, in an economically peripheral, <sup>colonial</sup> postcolonial society such as Ireland academic qualifications have a greater value. Breen (1986) in his examination of performance at the senior cycle of Irish second-level schools. assesses the impact of cultural capital on performance. The educational qualifications of fathers and mothers are used as an indicator of cultural capital this can be used as referent for the skills, attitudes and abilities of pupils that derive from their home environment (Breen, 1986). It was found that cultural capital had a more significant impact on senior cycle performance than did other dimensions of class difference.

The question of cultural capital is closely linked to the issue of cultural reproduction. Willis (1977) in his ethnographic study of a small group of working-class boys in an English school, argues that there are direct and basic continuities between the anti-school culture of these underachieving 'lads' and the 'shop-floor' culture of their fathers and the local community. The most profound transition made by these boys, was not their physical passage from school to work but rather their entry into the distinctively non-conformist group and its culture within the school. Willis argued that this can be understood as a kind of self-election to future class membership: that of the middle and lower working class. (Willis, 1977).

McRobbie (1978) from a similar perspective looked at the culture of a group of working-class girls. The culture of these girls was typified by an endorsement of the traditional female role and of femininity simply because it seemed to be natural. For most of them marriage would be an economic necessity, the wages they would earn would be insufficient to keep them. For a number of middle class girls attending the same school there were possibilities of a career other than marriage. Middle-class girls were directed to different kinds of jobs than working-class girls, although both were pushed in the direction of the home. (McRobbie, 1978).

Both of these studies suggest that schools are involved in cultural as well as social reproduction. They also suggest that there is a certain degree of self-election on the part of working-class youth to future working-class culture and occupations. Schools are among the sites where such reproduction occurs.

### **Knowledge Systems and School Organisation.**

*Young's Knowledge and Control at the beginning of the 1970's* focused on the role played by knowledge and the curriculum in the perpetuation of inequality. Young's argument was that knowledge was socially constructed. 'Formal education is based on the assumption that the thought systems organised in curricula are in some sense superior to the thought systems of those who are to be educated. (Young, 1973 - p13).

Giroux focused on the kinds of strategy that teachers could employ to combat bias of the curriculum. Teachers would have to develop forms of knowledge and classroom social practices that validate the experiences students bring to school. This would demand acknowledging the language forms, style of presentations, dispositions, forms of reasoning and cultural forms that give meaning to student experiences. Therefore, the cultural capital of students from

subordinate social categories must be related to the curriculum developed or taught and to in questions raised in classes (Avonowitz and Giroux, 1985).

In Ireland this type of approach is most likely to be found in community education than in the mainstream system. Educational programmes with working-class communities in Dublin are open in nature and informal. They are flexible, they start from people's real position and place great emphasis on the social aspects of the programmes. Acquiring 'self confidence' is just as important as acquiring 'vocational skills' (Faughnan, 1987). It maybe argued that this structural isolation of the working class does not occur to the same degree for any other group because no other group's culture is defined in its totality as being structurally inferior and inadmissible in education in the content of education it is in the arts, humanities and social sciences that one finds the most obvious exclusion of working-class culture. Working-class literature, art, music, history and social analysis are generally ignored in education. Hence the curriculum is another mechanism through which social and educational inequality is perpetuated.

### **School Organisation.**

The second level system in Ireland comprises of three distinct sectors which cater for different combinations of social classes.

1. Secondary Schools.
2. Vocational Schools and Community Colleges.
3. Comprehensive Schools.

It is clear that the differential performance of the various types of schools

reflects differences in individual pupil characteristics at intake, it is also certain that the social class composition of schools has a significant effect on student aspiration and achievement, independent of the class background of any individual student (Clancy, 1986).

One of the reasons why there are substantial intake differences is that in some schools - those in the voluntary private sector are entitled to select at entry, whereas those in the public sector are not. Lynch (1989) suggests that secondary schools are perceived as being educationally advantageous, since over half the secondary schools sampled had more than one application for each place. Rarely in Vocational Schools were there more applicants than places. Therefore, Secondary Schools were most likely to operate a competitive system at entry. However, this pattern was reversed at the class allocation stage, Vocational Schools were most likely to stream pupils (Lynch, 1989). A high proportion of second-level schools either stream or band. The practice of streaming combined with a pattern where many schools select at entry reinforces social and economic inequalities.

Such practices become part of the hidden curriculum of the school. One of the best known arguments is presented by Bowles and Gintis's *Schooling in Capitalist America* (1976). They argue that the education system helps in integrate youth into the economic system through a structural correspondence between its social relations and those of production. The structure of social relations not only inures the student to the discipline of the work-place but also develops the types of personal demeanour, modes of presentation, self-image and social class identifications that are the crucial ingredients of job adequacy. The inheritance of wealth, family connection and other more or less direct advantages play a role also. Bowles and Gintis argue that the experiences of parents on the job tend to be reflected in the social relations of family life.

Thus through family socialisation, children tend to acquire orientations towards work, aspirations and self concepts preparing them for similar educational positions themselves. They contend, that the American education system works, to justify economic inequality and to produce a labour force, whose capacities, credentials and consciousness are dictated in substantial measure by the requirements of profitable employment in the capitalist economy (Bowles and Gintis, 1976).

Bourdieu also analyses the hidden curriculum of education. The social functions of education outlined by Bourdieu are fourfold:

1. to produce individuals with predispositions and attitudes capable of adapting to social and economic structures;
2. to allow for the controlled mobility of a limited category of individuals, carefully, selected and modified by and for individual ascent;
3. to legitimate the perpetuation of the social order and the transmission of power and privileges;
4. to mask the real nature of its relationship to the structure of class relations.

(Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977).

Research and analysis that focuses on school knowledge, school organisation and the formal and hidden curriculum suggest that it is the nature of the education system itself and its relationship with the economic system that must be challenged if inequality is to be tackled.

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## CHAPTER 3

## CONCLUSIONS

## WHO ARE THE DISADVANTAGED?

To be at a disadvantage is to suffer unfavourable conditions or circumstances and, in this ordinary sense of the word, virtually everyone can claim to have been at a disadvantage at some time, in some situation. However, in educational literature, disadvantage most often signifies a relatively enduring condition descriptive of the lifestyles of certain social groups - the working-class, immigrant populations and ethnic minorities among them - which contributes to poor academic achievement for children at school and generally lowered chances of success in the larger society.

Passow (1970) defines the disadvantaged child as one who

*"because of social or cultural characteristics (e.g., social class, race, ethnic origin, poverty, sex etc.) ... comes into the school system with knowledge, skills and attitudes which impede learning."*

*(Passow, 1970 - p16)*

This definition simply implies that membership in a social group which differs in important ways from society at large may create difficulties at points of interaction with that larger society. The definition implies that, from the time of first entry into school, a child may be at a disadvantage relative to other children if his/her early home life is somehow discontinuous with life at school.

There are several factors to be considered here:-

1. **Disadvantage is seen as socio-cultural in nature.**

i.e., disadvantage is viewed as the result of class and/or cultural differences in patterns of early socialization. Passow's view of disadvantage would argue, that for ethnic minorities and for lower-social class groups, there are many aspect of lifestyle, child-rearing practices etc., which diverge from those of the middle-class and which are sufficient to place group members at a disadvantage.

2. Disadvantage receives its definition at points of contact between groups which are at once distinguishable and yet part of the same larger society. This is most noticeable in the school situation, since school is the single most important contact points. It is only in such a context that the values, attitudes and behaviour of one group or of one group member, can be seen to be less than ideal within some larger framework. Since groups differ from one another and yet still share many features in common that disadvantage a relative time, can be reasonably applied.
  
3. You cannot simply equate disadvantage with poverty. Certainly, in areas of high unemployment, poor housing and low income one expects to find a concentration of social or educational disadvantage. However, since external and visible cues many mask a great deal of heterogeneity, it would be incorrect to assume that all those who can be classed within such gross categories are *ipso facto* disadvantaged. Also, it is equally incorrect to equate more comfortable physical surroundings with absence of social disadvantage. Wiseman (1968), noted that there are many 'good' homes in working-class areas and many 'bad' ones in middle-class suburbia.

From this we can conclude that the 'Knowledge, skills and attitudes which impede learning', (Passow, 1970 - p16), arise in the home situation in the first instance, become characteristic ways of dealing with the world and yet may be inappropriate in a school system which stresses different values and approaches to life.

## DEFICIENT LANGUAGE.

*"Speech is a mirror of the soul: As a man speaks, so is he."*

*Publius Syrus*

*"... the operative class, whose massacre of their mother tongue, however inhuman, could excite no astonishment."*

*Thomas Hamilton*

### Schatzman and Strauss (1955)

This was one of the first attempts to investigate class differences in speech. Their study took the form of interviews with lower and upper middle-class people in Arkansas who had been present during a tornado. The authors were concerned with investigating class differences in their descriptions of this event. Overall the lower-class respondents were found to transmit much less information about the occurrence than those of the middle-class. There was little attempt to see the scene, as it were, for the interviewer, and respondents were apparently able to do little more than reconstruct the event as it had appeared to them directly and personally in particularistic or concrete terms. There was much digression which though perhaps meaningful for the speaker was irrelevant and/or confusing for the listener. This often resulted in spatial and temporal ambiguity and it proved difficult for the interviewer to obtain a rounded picture of what had happened. People were mentioned in narrative who were not known to the interviewer and whose roles were unclear and yet little attempt was made properly to identify and integrate such persons. Schatzman and Strauss note that lower-class respondents appeared to assume that the interviewer shared much contextual information which in fact was not so. They conclude that some lower-class respondents 'literally cannot tell a straight story describe a simple incident coherently', (Schatzman and Strauss, 1955, p336).

Middle-class interviewees, on the other hand, were generally able to reconstruct the event in a logical and meaningful way, such that the listener was more fully informed. Hence, the differences between these descriptions and those of the lower-class respondents are marked. Part of this Schatzman and Strauss ascribe to the fact that the lower-class respondents were communicating across class lines to a middle-class interviewer and were more unfamiliar with the requirements of the task. Nevertheless, Schatzman and Strauss felt that the lower class have an inferior capacity for perceiving and communicating abstract thoughts unlike the middle-class whose speech is rich in abstract conceptual terminology.

In a later paper, Strauss and Schatzman (1960), elaborate further on class speech differences. Lower-class sensitive to the needs of the questioner who therefore ' must accept greater responsibility for strong control in the lower-class interview', (Schatzman and Strauss, 1960 - p212). Again they allude to the possibility that the obvious differences in background and education between the interviewers and the respondents, may account for the results.

**Note:** Bernstein's earlier work appeared to support the deficit view of lower-class speech. However, it may not be entirely correct to discuss his work under the general heading of language deficit. However, whether through his own ambiguity or through misinterpretation of his work by others. Bernstein has been associated with language deficit approach. I have already outlined Bernstein's work in the previous Chapter. Here I will provide some criticisms of his work.

## CRITIQUE OF BERNSTEIN'S WORK:

Bernstein's early work, and the difficult, often obscure nature of his writing have made linguists and others very cautious in their approach to it. One, who seems more favourable is Halliday (1973). In a foreword written for Bernstein's second book (1973), Halliday sketches his understanding of Bernstein's work and its relevance. He begins by noting that Bernstein has never supported a deficit view of working-class language nor pointed to the greater intrinsic value of elaborated codes of speech. In short, Halliday points to the fact that linguistic disadvantage is an incorrect labelling of what is, in fact, social disadvantage - that the educational difficulties of certain children derive from attitudes towards their speech styles. He also goes on to note that attitudes towards language do not tell the whole story. One must also consider the different 'orders of meaning' that different groups emphasize, such that the functions of language may vary considerably. Thus:

*"Just as the language element in educational failure cannot be reduced to a question of linguistic forms, so also it cannot be wholly reduced to one of attitudes .... It is necessary to think of language as meaning rather than of language as structure."*

*(Halliday, 1973, XVI)*

Halliday feels that Bernstein's work is of great importance since it points to the sociological bases of language differences and in particular to functions of language, some of which are more accessible to some groups than to others.

A good general summary of Bernstein's work and its implications is provided by Trudgill (1975). He outlines five important criticisms of Bernstein.

1. The notion of elaborated codes and restricted codes as linguistic phenomena is suspect, they are better seen as different language styles (Labov) or as Bernstein himself, later states, as socio-linguistic variants.

2. Given that class differences in customary language use exist, it is not clear how such differences operate to produce educational problems. Here Trudgill refers to the differential frequency of usage of certain grammatical elements.
3. Any school requirements of elaborated speech are best considered as social conventions only.
4. Trudgill notes the distressing effects that Bernstein's work (or misinterpretation of it) has had upon teachers and others who often equate working-class language with inferior language.
5. Working-class children can use elaborated code under some circumstances.

Robinson (1965) found that working-class children writing formal letters did not show grammatical use markedly different from that of their middle-class counterparts. Rushton and Young (1975) also eliciting writing samples from working-class and middle-class subjects, report that class differences were influenced by the context of the task (in their study, different essay topics: imaginative, opinionative or technical). These studies demonstrate above all the importance of the context in which language is observed and recorded and also the danger of simply equating working-class language with the restricted code.

Overall, it appears that Bernstein's work can be placed in the differences camp, although the greatest impact of this work has been to support the language deficit view of lower-class language. After years of misinterpretation, can one conclude that Bernstein has pointed out that there are class differences in speech which operate to the detriment of working-class children because of

unfavourable attitudes? Trudgill states, that linguistically Bernstein's work only demonstrates that

*"in situations more artificial and alien to them than to middle-class children, working-class children use a higher proportion of pronouns. Is this what it has been all about?"*

*(Cited in Stubbs, 1976 - 47)*

Halliday (1973) has drawn attention to possible differences in functions of language for the working-class and middle-class. The elaborated and restricted codes could then be seen as manifestations of alternative ways of looking at and reacting to the world. At this point I will acknowledge the influence of Whorf on Bernstein's earlier work.

Whorf formulated the linguistic relativity hypothesis that any given language influences the ways in which a speaker perceives the world and hence, his cognitive functioning. This strong form of Whorf's hypothesis is not accepted. In asking why different languages or language varieties differ the most obvious answer is that they reflect the environments in which their speakers live. Thus, the fact that Eskimos may use many different words to refer to varying types of what we simply term snow can be seen as an indication of the greater importance of one concept in one given environment. However, anyone could expand their lexicon if the situation demanded it. There are, as well, more complicated examples of language difference, ones which are not so visibly linked to the external environment - the presence or absence of gender nouns, or the manner of indicating tense. Nevertheless, whatever synchronic or diachronic linguistics tells us about the reason of such differences, there is not sense in which one mode of expression can be judged better than another, nor are concepts dealt in one language inaccessible to another, if this was so, translation would not be always possible. (Carroll, 1972).



A weaker Whorfian hypothesis - that language influences our customary or habitual ways of thinking has some validity. Thus, the Eskimo will tend to view his environment in a manner different from that of the outsider and the tense system of the Hopi Indian will doubtless influence his usual way of conceiving time, (Carroll, 1972). It seems reasonable to accept that language will thus influence our habitual views of our environment influences language. In fact, language on the one hand and the sociocultural environment on the other are part of a circular and mutually reinforcing process. On the basis of this, we can note that in this process, Bernstein has tended to emphasise the primacy of society or as Dittmar (1976) points out the social structures which influence language which in turn reinforces the social structures. Thus Bernstein might be thought of as stressing the circularity of the society-language relationship and assigning society to a more important role. Further Dittmar (1976) unlike Whorf, Bernstein has transferred enquiry from differences between languages to differences within the same language. Hymes (1974) points out, too that Bernstein has given Whorf's insight new life and sociological substance.

With the benefit of these writings, it is suggested that the problems of disadvantaged working-class children derive not only from middle-class attitudes to their speech styles, but also perhaps from functional language differences (Halliday, 1973). This last point might be viewed as an extension of the basic difference position and a useful resuscitation of Whorf. One important issue in the light of work demonstrating that working-class children can use elaborated code in certain contexts (Robinson, 1965, Rushton and Young, 1975), is the disentangling of contextual constraints on working-class speech from an real language function differences which may operate. However, the fact remains that any difficulties encountered by disadvantaged children can still legitimately be considered as social in origin.

## DIFFERENT LANGUAGE.

*"When I use a word, 'Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, ' it means just what I choose it to mean - neither more or less."*

*Lewis Carroll.*

*"No one has succeeded in finding a primitive language ..... No one has convincingly demonstrated that there is some thought or idea, expressible in some language, that cannot be expressed in another."*

*Gleitman and Gleitman, 1970.*

## The Work of Labov.

William Labov is among the best known of those supporting the difference view of disadvantaged language. His studies have been directed at dispelling the myth of verbal deficiency which animated so much of the educational intervention movement. In one sense, Labov may be seen as the counterpart to Bernstein (or rather to Bernstein misinterpreted). As Stubbs (1976) has noted, there are difficulties in comparing the work of Bernstein and Labov.

One of Labov's general criticisms of Bernstein and one which stands regardless of whether or not Bernstein is misinterpreted, is the influences his work has had upon programmes of compensatory education. He also refers to some of the grammatical analyses made by Bernstein and his colleagues:

*"One does not uncover the logical complexity of a body of speech by counting the number of subordinate clauses. The cognitive style of a speaker has no fixed relation to the number of unusual adjectives or conjunctions that he uses."*

*(Labov, 1977 - p258)*

Labov expands upon Bernstein's theory of elaborated and restricted code, as well as upon the work of Lawton (1969). Labov points out that, although the elaborated code can be very useful, much is eliminated by the most skilled users

of language (storytellers, narrators etc) and the most desirable language is often the simplest. Thus at the same time he denies the validity of equating the elaborated code with 'better' language, Labov implies that lower class speech may often be more direct and powerful than the hesitant and pause-filled conversations of the middle-class which, he notes may well be seen as 'turgid, redundant and empty', (Labov, 1973 - p34).

Labov's most publicized assault on the concept of verbal deprivation comes in his paper on the logic of black English (1973). It documents the rule-governed nature of the black English vernacular (BEV) and demonstrates that it is not an inadequate or substandard variety of the language. Labov begins by giving an example of the sort of interview upon which much of the verbal deprivation myth is based, a situation which shows the black child in less than ideal circumstances. A small black boy is questioned by a large white middle-class interviewer in an attempt to elicit speech, in such a threatening context, the child says little, reporting only in what Labov terms 'defensive, monosyllabic behaviour' (Labov, 1973 - p27). Thus considering the context, the child's behaviour is unsurprising, Labov's point, of course is that very often

*"such interviews are used as evidence of the child's total verbal capacity, or more simply his verblity. It is argued that this lack of verblity explains his poor performance in school."*

*(Labov, 1973 - p27)*

The bulk of Labov's article is an attempt to show that such an argument is totally invalid, as it is based upon spurious findings. When, for example, an eight-year-old child is interviewed in a more relaxed situation, his increase in verblity is amazing. With the addition of another eight-year-old child, a supply of potato chips, the introduction of taboo words and an interviewer who

literally drop to the child's level by sitting on the floor, the child's volume of speech is vastly larger than that obtained in the formal interview.

By this simple demonstration, Labov shows that the young black child is not 'non verbal' and in addition, that formal tests involving speech production will likely put him in an unfavourable light. Referring directly to the deficit theorists, Labov notes that

*"the view of the Negro speech community which we obtain from our work in the ghetto area is precisely the opposite from that reported by Deutsch, Englemann and Bereiter. We see a child bathed in verbal stimulation from morning to night."*

*(Labov, 1973 - p33)*

Labov next turns his attention to the popular connection between the elaborated speech of the middle-class and the greater flexibility and subtlety which it is supposed to entail. Here he wishes to show that it is possible to see lower-class speech as more forceful, less redundant and more direct than that of the middle-class. He contrasts the speech of a lower class black 15 year-old with that of an upper middle-class black adult. In response to a question asking why God (if he exists) would be white, the adolescent replies

*"Why? I'll tell you why. Cause the average whitey out here got everything, you dig? And the nigger ain't got shit, y'know? Y'understan'? So-um-for- in order for that to happen, you know it ain't no black God thats doin' that bullshit."*

*(Labov, 1973 - p38)*

Labov notes the skill and complexity of this response, it is not standard English (SEE) but the message is unequivocal. One also feels the willingness of the speaker to commit himself to a position and to relate this directly to the questioner. This is quite different from the approach of the second speaker -

an adult, college-educated man - in discussing witchcraft. He says in part

*"I do believe that there is such a thing that a person can put himself in a state of mind (Mhm), or that - er - something could be given them to intoxicate them in a certain - to a certain frame of mind - that - that could actually be considered witchcraft."*

*(Labov, 1973 - pp39 -40)*

Here we see that the speaker is less willing to commit himself to a position, wishing no doubt to avoid overstatement and making it plain that the subject is one which admits of subtle shades of opinion. Analysing the full passage from which this excerpt is taken, Labov feels that impressions of the speaker as an educated and informed person are merely reflections of our 'long-conditioned reaction to middle-class verbosity'. (Labov, 1973, - p41).

Labov's comparison of the two speakers is an attempt to show that when one looks at what is actually said having suspended the usual middle-class norms by which we identify the cues of 'good' speech or speakers, it is by no means clear that the second respondent is any more rational or intelligent than the former. In fact, Labov obviously feels that the redundancy and verbosity of middle-class speech often masks that the basic idea communicated, if clearly thought out, is lost in a welter of qualifications and hesitations.

Another important aspect of Labov's (1973) article bears upon the distinction between the comprehension of a statement and the reproduction of it. Here a simple test is employed in which a child hears a statement and is asked to repeat it. Thus:

I asked Alvin if he knows how to play basketball.

May be repeated by the black child as

I ax Alvin do he know how to play basketball.

or

I axt Alvin does he know how to play basketball.

A teacher hearing such a sentence might be inclined to think the child's grammar, pronunciation or even cognitive ability less than adequate. However, the grammar and pronunciation evidenced in such repetitions are regularities of the child's dialect, and are not substandard attempts to imitate SEE patterns. With regard to the child's thinking, and his grasp of the meaning of the original statement, it is clear that there is no deficiency. He has comprehended the meaning and has simply reproduced it verbally in the form most familiar to him. Labov acknowledges that it may prove useful to the child to consider more carefully the explicit structure of SEE and in short to better recognize the value in some contexts, of paying closer attention to surface detail. The danger to which Labov points, is the false equation that may be made between the child's use of a nonstandard English (NSE) form and some putative deficiency in cognitive ability, thus Labov reiterates that 'there is nothing in the vernacular which will interfere with development of logical thought'. (Labov, 1973, p52).

Labov has suggested that the 'nonverbality' of the black child is an artefact of the situation, that there is at least some doubt that middle-class speech is more desirable than that of the lower-class, and it is difficult to infer cognitive ability from verbal style.

For the most part Labov's work has been accepted without much criticism. Bernstein is critical not of Labov's work but of the interpretation of his work by Labov. Bernstein notes, that Labov has considered only his early work,

which he admits himself to have been less than completely clear. Bernstein reiterates his rejection of the verbal deficit theory and aligns himself with the difference approach to language variation.

Robinson (1972) also comments on Labov's rejection of Bernstein's work especially on his remarks concerning the inappropriateness of counting a speaker's clausal constructions as a measure of logical complexity (Labov's quote at the beginning of this section). Although Robinson agrees that one cannot argue from quantitative differences back to any qualitative distinction, he does feel that Labov's approach tends to close off questions about the significance of these quantitative differences themselves. Robinson is concerned with the possible functional differences in language and language use which may exist between groups, these presumably, could be reflected in language structures.

Another point concerns Labov's description of a sample of black middle-class speech as verbose and redundant. Although Labov was critical of the middle-class speaker's unwillingness to commit himself to a position, it may be that his interpretation is less than complete. Differences in style may have been due, in part, to the age difference between the two speakers, thus the directness of the adolescent may reflect a certain brashness of youth. A related and more important point, is that although the middle-class sample was vaguer and less direct, these qualities may be appropriate when discussing such issues as witchcraft or the existence of God. The longstanding historical interest attaching to such issues presumably attests to the fact that they do not admit of easy resolution. Thus it may well be that the directness of lower-class speech is not appropriate in this context as it might be in others. Hence, perhaps Labov's range of topics should have been broader.

Withstanding these comments Labov's work has scotched the idea of verbal deficiency among black speakers and the import of his work is simply that BEV is not the substandard variant it has long been considered to be.



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## 'EDUCATION CANNOT COMPENSATE FOR SOCIETY'. (BERNSTEIN)

Compensatory education emerged out of concern for the education of children of low social class whose material circumstances are inadequate. New education categories were developed:-

1. the culturally deprived;
2. the linguistically deprived;
3. the socially deprived.

Language was seen as the central pillar of many programmes of compensatory education for disadvantaged children.

In one of the earliest programmes, Bereiter and Engelmann (1966) begin from the premise that the disadvantaged child is retarded in reasoning ability and language skills. Thus, his language is seen as 'immature', he lacks 'the most rudimentary forms of constructive dialogue', (Bereiter and Engelmann, 1966, p39), and has virtually no ability to use language to process information. In fact Bereiter and Engelmann claim, more than once, that the disadvantaged child attempts to get along without language wherever he can. Thus, they state that 'language is apparently dispensable enough in the life of the lower-class child for an occasional child to get along without it altogether', (Bereiter and Engelmann, 1966, p31), some of these children 'manage as far as possible to get along without it' (Ibid, 39-40), and 'language for the disadvantaged child seems to be an aspect of which is not of vital importance (Ibid, p42). On this fantastic basis Bereiter and Engelmann, who apparently have never observed lower-class children at play, construct their remedial programme.

Their immediate problem was to break down what they termed the 'giant word' syndrome. Here it claimed that disadvantaged children do not recognize single

works, but instead, chunk together words to make some larger amalgam. They provide the following example:

*"Instead of saying, 'He's a big dog', the deprived child says, 'he bih daw'. Instead of saying, 'I ain't got no juice, 'he says 'Uai-ga-na-ju'.*

*(Bereiter and Engelmann, 1966 - p34)*

The giant word problem Bereiter and Engleman see as directly consistent with Bernstein's notion of restricted code and in particular with his descriptions of the lack of speech pauses used by working-class boys. Since the child cannot break down these giant words into their constituents, he cannot transform and recombine the elements Bereiter and Engelmann's programme consists largely of intensive and highly specific drills in the use of 'correct' English. Detailed instructions are provided for teachers, of which one example will suffice.

- A. *.Present an object and give the appropriate, identity statement. 'This is a ball'.*
- B. *Follow the statement with a yes-no question. 'Is this a ball?'*
- C. *Answer the question. 'Yes, this is a ball'.*
- D. *Repeat the question and encourage the children to answer it.*
- E. *Introduce what questions after the children have begun to respond adequately to the yes-no questions.*

*(Bereiter and Engelmann, 1966 - p140)*

Gradually the disadvantaged child is led through the refinements of 'correct' English so that he proceeds from having virtually no language at all to a position of some mastery. It is apparent, however, that Bereiter and Engelmann's conception of the language of disadvantaged children is very naive

and most of his derives from a lack of understanding of the linguistic background of black American children. Labov (1973) notes, for example, that Bereiter and Engelmann view the expression 'they mine' as incorrect and in fact illogical, in black English however, the deletion of the copula (in this case 'are') is a regular feature and one which detracts not at all from the meaning of utterance. In addition to ignorance of the norms of black English, Bereiter and Engelmann also reject as wrong examples of speech which are more widespread. Thus Labov (1973) points to their unfortunate dismissal of

*"In the tree as an illogical, or badly formed answer to Where is the squirrel? Such elliptical statements are of course used by everyone .... The reply, In the tree demonstrates that the listener has been attentive to and apprehend the syntax of the speaker."*

*(Labov, 1973 - p46)*

Perhaps it might be argued that, to the extent to which Bereiter and Engelmann's programme aims to inculcate a knowledge of a socially approved style, it could be useful. It is doubtful however, that one would wish to approve of a programme built upon such shaky linguistic underpinnings and which accepts a deficit view of the language of disadvantaged children. It is true from a difference viewpoint, one may wish to add to a child's repertoire. A policy of addition, however, is philosophically far removed from one which claims children's language to be deficient or nonexistent. Misunderstanding of the linguistic capabilities of a social group, can serve to perpetuate myths.

Another programme designed to repair the language of the disadvantaged child was that of Blank and Soloman (1968). Like Bereiter and Engelmann deficiency of children is the starting point:

*"Their behaviour reflects the lack of a symbolic system by which to organize the*

*plentiful stimulation surrounding them."*

*(Blank and Soloman, 1968 - p380)*

Lacking a firm 'language base' three-to-five-year-old children were provided with short daily sessions of individual tutoring. From a general overview, we find that Bernstein's early work was instrumental in the pre-programme planning. Blanks (1970) approach is very similar in many ways to that of Bereiter and Engelmann Except that individualized instruction is stressed. However, the underlying philosophy is virtually identical. In order to foster the precursors of abstract thinking needed by the young disadvantaged child, the teachers presents everyday material and then

*"pose many related questions about it which would require the child to reflect, seek information, maintain concentration, examine alternatives and so on."*

*(Blank, 1970 - p75)*

Another well known project for disadvantaged children was that of Klaus and Gray (1968). The programme was aimed at black children in Tennessee whose home life was characterized as noisy, disorganized and generally less than ideal for the proper development of cognitive skills. Klaus and Gray, provide their definition of the lower-class restricted code:

*"A restricted code is one in which most of the meaning must be carried by other aspects of the total situation: facial expression, intonation rather than words spoken, the circumstances. The child, thus, does not learn to use language effectively.*

*(Klaus and Gray, 1968 - p8)*

*The essence of this quotation is traceable to Bernstein's paper (1958).*

Like Bereiter and Engelmann, Klaus and Gray feel that the language of disadvantaged children is 'conspicuously retarded' and therefore, their

educational programme placed considerable stress upon teaching such children how to speak. A similar programme is that of Lambie and Weikart (197) - they too emphasize, the need for the disadvantaged child's language to be attended to in a formalized, structure manner. They show somewhat more sophistication, however, in their realization of the linguistic heterogeneity found among disadvantaged children and thus stresses an individualized approach.

Overall, a usual characteristic of early programmes of compensatory education is an acceptance of the linguistic deficit theory and this acceptance is often based upon some acquaintance with Bernstein's early work. In recent years, the concept of compensatory education has soured. In part this is because the hoped for gains in children's academic performance were either nonexistent or ephemeral. Also important, was the growing support for the difference position on disadvantaged, which not necessarily ruling out some forms of intervention, made the term compensatory education seem quite inappropriate.

Some programmes of intervention have approached the difficulties of disadvantaged children in a more enlightened manner. The Plowden Report (1967) focused attention upon the problems of children in urban areas and recommended the identification of educational priority areas on the basis of a number of visible criteria including large family size, receipt of state benefits and poor housing. The result is thus a geographical approach to disadvantage. However, the reports of educational priority projects do give considerable information about children and their communities which tends to look somewhat beyond the more obvious criteria of material disadvantage.

These British projects, have like the American programmes attempted remediation of childrens language, they have generally tried to pay more

attention to the individual child. Lady Plowden (1970) noted that

*"we are in danger of thinking that overnight we must make the whole population think the same way as we do ourselves .... education for the deprived child (should be) complementary to his home .... rather than compensatory which really means that the home has no merit".*

*(Lady Plowden, 1970 - p12)*

*This view may not be firmly within the difference line on disadvantage but it is some way removed from the hard-line deficit approach.*

### CRITIQUE:

*The whole structure of compensatory education seems to be built on sand. If the language of disadvantaged children is not deficient, then there is nothing to compensate. We may wish to increase or broaden a child's linguistic repertoire, however, any attempt to do so is not likely to succeed if it is founded on a basic ignorance or misunderstanding of a child's linguistic capabilities. I believe that most intervention programmes have suffered from a lack of linguistic awareness.*

*The ignorance of the importance of cultural relativism and the blind imposition of middle-class standards, to which this ignorance leads are the major issues in any discussion of compensatory education and verbal deprivation (Sroufe, 1970), of specific importance is the use of middle-class testers or interviewers, using middle-class instruments, in middle-class settings to investigate lower-class behaviour. Such an approach has yielded large amounts of data, all of which are suspect on the grounds that they derive from contexts unfamiliar and possibly upsetting to lower-class respondents. Hess and Shipman on the basis of their investigations pointed to the need for 'resocializing' the disadvantaged child. This is a direct imputation of lower-class family inadequacy and a view shared to a greater or less extent by most involved in compensatory education.*



However:

*Do we have the right to impose middle-class standards on lower-class and black families? .... Are we confident that the middle-class value system including the current school system, is an appropriate standard of health? If middle-class behaviour patterns are to provide the outcome criteria, is it not necessary to seek and explore shortcomings in these patterns?"*

*(Sroufe, 1970 - p143)*

Sroufe's point is a good one but the argument against compensatory education is still incomplete.

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