



International School

Chapter 4: Education

4.5 Social class and educational attainment



Key concepts in 4.5

- **KC 1 – Inequality and opportunity**
- **KC 2 – Power, control and resistance**
- KC3 – Social change and development
- **KC4 – Socialisation, culture and identity**
- KC5 – Structure and human agency



The key concepts for Cambridge International AS & A Level Sociology





The relationship between material factors and educational attainment

- Traditional Marxist approach (materialist explanation) - poverty and deprivation are main sources of differential achievement

Material deprivation: as a cause of educational underachievement, material deprivation refers to factors such as poverty, a lack of physical resources and so on.

- **Material deprivation:** factors that give working-class students disadvantage:
 - Poor diet/nutrition
 - The lack of private study facilities and resources
 - The need to work for supplement family income
 - More vulnerable to illness and disease





The relationship between material factors and educational attainment

- Disadvantages of the area students live in:
 - Lack of community facilities
 - Levels of crime, drug abuse etc.
- Ramachandran (India)
- Douglas (1964) - underachievement, labelling
- Gazeley and Dunne (2005)

Underachievement: when individuals or groups do not do as well in the education system as they might be expected to do.

Labelling: a process that involves naming something and, by so doing, associating it with a specific set of social characteristics.





Key sociologist



Diane Reay

- Professor of education at the University of Cambridge
- Daughter of a coal miner
- Worked as a primary school teacher for 20 years
- Inequalities within schools in Britain
- Social class, gender and ethnicity

<https://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/people/staff/reay/>





Cultural explanations, including parental attitudes, values, speech codes, and cultural capital

Cultural deprivation: as a cause of educational underachievement, cultural deprivation suggests a lack of important cultural resources, such as parental encouragement.

- Douglas (1964)
 - Parental attitudes
 - Family size
 - Position within the family
 - Deficient care of babies in large families





Cultural explanations, including parental attitudes, values, speech codes, and cultural capital

- Applications of cultural deprivation in terms of achievement:
 - a. Bernstein (1971): restricted speech codes vs. elaborated speech codes
 - b. Immediate gratification vs. deferred gratification; Goodman and Greg (2010)

Restricted speech code: uses simple language to convey direct meanings, is predictable, expresses relatively simple, straightforward ideas and is directed towards an audience that already understands most of what is being expressed.

Elaborated speech code: involves complex vocabulary and ideas and subtle meanings that can be used and understood in a wide range of different situations.

Immediate gratification: involves taking something as soon as it is offered.

Deferred gratification: involves not taking something immediately in the hope that by waiting you will receive something better.





Cultural explanations, including parental attitudes, values, speech codes, and cultural capital

- The development of different class cultures:
 - Middle-class students - cultural reproduction
 - Working-class students - work-based route to money
- Marxists: education systems are dominated by middle-class norms, values, beliefs, and ideologies.
- Westergaard and Resler (1976)
- Middle- and upper-class parents investment in their children's education:
 - Economic investment
 - Emotional investment





Speech codes

- Bernstein
 - Elaborated codes
 - Restricted codes
- Education involves
 - The development of new knowledge
 - New, higher levels of understanding
 - Abstract thinking and reasoning
 - Moving away from simple shared meanings
 - A requirement to use elaborated codes





Speech codes

- Hanafin and Lynch (2002): working-class parents take a keen interest in their children's education, but they feel excluded from participation in decision-making within schools.
- Reay (2000): middle-class women were better positioned to involve themselves in school decision-making.
- Mirza (2001) - '[Saturday Schools](#)' among Black Caribbean communities
- MacDonald and Marsh (2005) - social exclusion
- Mac an Ghail (1996) - changes in the labour market

Social exclusion: being excluded from participation in social institutions such as education or employment.





Labelling

- Padfield (1997): 'informal reputations'
- Labelling theories examine how school processes shape meanings:
 - The purpose of education
 - Roles and relationships within schools
 - Students' self-perceptions developed through process such as streaming, banding and setting
- 1. Brimi (2005): labelling processes involve cultural capital.
- 2. Nash (1972): 'success' or 'failure' is not simply a matter of person's background

Streaming: a form of ability grouping in which students are in the same group of similar ability (stream) for all their lessons.





Labelling

- Streaming, setting, banding - positive and negative labelling
- Student's reference groups
 - The role of a teacher
 - The role of the fellow students
- The educational significance of teacher labelling is partly expressed in terms of self-fulfilling prophecies
- Nash's study about teacher's beliefs
- Keddie (1971)

Self-fulfilling prophecy: a prediction that, by being made, causes it to come true.





Labelling

- Schools are labelled
- Gewirtz (1998)
- Labelling explanations are both a *cause* and a *consequence* of differential achievement
 - Teachers must already be aware of differences in educational achievement
 - Differential achievement cannot be a cause of differential achievement
- Interactionists: Labelling and self-fulfilling prophecies concepts are to deterministic





Ability grouping

Ability grouping: when students are put in classes according to their ability, covers streaming, setting and banding.

- Hargreaves (1967) - study of Lumley School
- Two common variations of streaming:
 - Banding
 - Setting

Setting: process by which students are streamed on a subject-by-subject basis.

- Hallam et al. (2001): benefits and drawbacks of setting
- Keddie (1971): creative vs. routine tasks





Key sociologist



David Hargreaves

- One of the first to adapt interactionist approach
- He studied how teachers label students
- Interviewed boys in subcultures - formation of anti-school subcultures
- Book: Deviance in Classrooms (1975)





Students subcultures

Student subcultures: groups that develop within schools around similar interests, beliefs and behaviours.

Pro-school subculture: cultural grouping in which the values and the attitudes of students are the same as those of school, so that students conform and work hard.

Counter-school culture (anti-school subculture): subcultural grouping that explicitly rejects the norms and values promoted through traditional types of schooling.

- Woods (1976)
- Mac an Ghail's (1996) study of British school
 - 'Crisis of masculinity'
 - Academic achievers and new enterprisers
 - 'Real Englishmen'
- Hughes and Church (2010)



Compensatory education programmes

Compensatory education: supplementary educational programmes designed to compensate children for their deprived home background.



- Explain what compensatory education programmes are. Illustrate with examples.
- What is the purpose of such programmes? How do they work and what are they trying to achieve?
- Evaluate their effectiveness.
- Make connections with previous material on educational attainment and class.

