

Class Differences in Educational Achievement

Explaining Class Difference

- There is a big difference in the achievement of pupils from different social classes in education in Britain; The main comparison is between the working-class and the middle-class
- Working-class: generally manual occupations including skilled workers such as plumbers, semi-skilled workers such as lorry drivers, and unskilled or routine workers such as cleaners
- Middle-class: generally non-manual occupations including professionals such as doctors or teachers, together with managers and other 'white collar' office workers and owners of businesses
- On average, children from middle-class families perform better than working-class children, and this class gap in achievement grows as the children get older
- Children of the middle-class do better at GCSE, stay longer in full time education and take the great majority of university places
- One explanation is that middle-class parents tend to be better-off parents who can afford to send their children to private schools, which many believe provide a higher standard of education e.g. average class sizes are less than half those in state schools; although these schools educate only 7% of Britain's children, they account for nearly half of all students entering the elite universities in Oxford and Cambridge (Eton sent 211 pupils to Oxbridge in a 3-year period while over 1,300 state schools sent no pupils)
- However, the focus is on why middle-class students may still do better in state education than the working-class and we group the explanations into internal and external factors
- Internal factors: factors within schools and the education system, such as interactions between pupils and teachers, and inequalities between schools
- External factors: factors outside the education system, such as the influence of home and family background and wider society

Sociological Explanations for Class Differences in Achievement

Analysis

Evaluation

External (Outside School) Factors

1. Cultural Deprivation

A nationwide study by the Centre for Longitudinal Studies (2007) found that by the age of three, children from disadvantaged backgrounds are already up to one year behind those from more privileged homes and the gap widens with age. According to cultural deprivation theorists, many working-class families fail to socialise their children adequately. These children therefore end up being 'culturally deprived' i.e. they lack the cultural equipment needed to do well at school (such as language, parents' education and working-class sub-culture) and so they underachieve.

Language

Hubbs-Tait et al (2002) found that where parents use language that challenges their children to evaluate their own understanding or abilities (e.g. 'what do you think?' 'are you ready for the next step?'), cognitive performance improves. Leon Feinstein (2008) found that educated parents are more likely to use language in this way. By contrast, less educated parents use language in ways that only requires children to make descriptive statements (e.g. 'what's that animal called?') and this results in lower performance.

Basil Bernstein (1975) identifies differences between working-class and middle-class language that influences achievement, and he distinguishes between two types of speech code:

The Restricted Code: typically used by the working-class, consisting of limited vocabulary, and based on the use of short, often unfinished, grammatically simple sentences. Speech is predictable and usually consists of one word or gestures instead. The speaker assumes the listener shares the same set of experiences.

The Elaborated Code: Typically used by the middle-class and has a wider vocabulary and is based on longer, grammatically more complex sentences. Speech is more varied and communicates abstract ideas. The speaker does not assume that the listener shares the same experiences, and so they use the language to spell out their meanings explicitly for the listener.

Parents' Education

Douglas (1964) found that working-class parents placed less value on education. They were therefore less ambitious for their children, gave them less encouragement and took less interest in their education. They visited schools less often and were less likely to discuss their child's progress. Their children therefore had lower levels of motivation and achievement.

Educated parents' parenting style emphasises consistent discipline and high expectations of their children. Less educated parents show harsh or inconsistent discipline that emphasises 'doing as you're told' and 'behaving yourself'. Therefore the child fails to learn independence and self-control, resulting in problems with motivation and interaction with teachers at school.

Educated parents also are more aware of what is needed for successful education i.e. reading to their children, teaching them letters and songs, helping with homework etc. and will seek more help with childrearing. They also tend to encourage trips to museums and libraries.

Bernstein and Young (1967) found that middle-class mothers are more likely to buy educational toys, books and activities that stimulate intellectual development (because of their own education and better income than working-class families).

Working-class subculture

Lack of parental interest in their children's education reflects the subcultural values of the working class. Large sections of the working-class have different goals, beliefs, attitudes and values from the rest of society and this is why their children fail at school. Barry Sugarman (1970) proposed 4 key features that act as a barrier to educational achievement in the working-class subculture:

Fatalism: A belief in fate – 'whatever will be, will be' and there is nothing you can do to change your status. Unlike the middle-class, there is no belief that you can change your own status.

Collectivism: Valuing being part of a group more than succeeding as an individual. Unlike the middle-class who believe that an individual should not be held back by group loyalties.

Immediate gratification: Seeking pleasure now rather than making sacrifices in order to get rewards in the future. Whereas the middle-class have the view that you make sacrifices now for greater rewards later, known as deferred gratification.

Present-time orientation: Seeing the present as more important than the future and so not having long-term goals or plans. Whereas the middle-class culture has a future-time orientation that sees planning for the future as important.

There are however compensatory education programmes that aim to tackle the problem of cultural deprivation by providing extra resources to schools and communities in deprived areas e.g. Operation Head Start (which included Sesame Street as one initiative).

2. Material Deprivation

The term 'material deprivation' refers to poverty and a lack of material necessities such as adequate housing and income.

- According to the DfE (2012) barely 1/3 of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) achieve 5 or more GCSE's at A*-C including English and Maths, against nearly 2/3 of other pupils
- Jan Flaherty (2004) money problems in the family are a significant factor in younger children's non-attendance in school
- Exclusion and truancy are more likely for children from poorer families. Children excluded from school are unlikely to return to mainstream education, while 1/3 of all persistent truants leave school with no qualifications
- Nearly 90% of 'failing' schools are located in deprived areas

Housing

Overcrowding is common in working-class houses and has a direct effect by making it hard for the children to study at home e.g. no study space, disturbed sleep from sharing beds/rooms etc. Children in crowded houses also run a greater risk of suffering indirect effects such as increased likelihood of accidents due to overcrowding, cold or damp housing, or psychological distress from moving around temporary accommodation on a regular basis – all resulting in absence from school.

Diet and Health

The Myth of Cultural Deprivation

Nell Keddie (1973) describes cultural deprivation as a 'myth' and sees it as a victim-blaming explanation. She dismisses the idea that failure at school can be blamed on a culturally deprived home background. She points out that a child cannot be deprived of its own culture and argues that working-class children are simply culturally different, not culturally deprived.

They fail because they are put at a disadvantage by an education system that is dominated by middle-class values.

Keddie argues that rather than seeing working-class culture as deficient, schools should recognise and build on its strengths and should challenge teachers' anti-working-class prejudices.

Barry Troyna and Jenny Williams (1986) argue that the problem is not the child's language but the school's attitude towards it. Teachers have a 'speech hierarchy': they label middle-class speech highest, followed by working-class speech and finally black speech.

Tessa Blackstone and Jo Mortimore (1994) reject the view that working-class parents are not interested in their children's education. They say they attend fewer parents' evenings because they work longer hours or less regular hours, or even that they are put off by a school's middle-class atmosphere, and not because they aren't interested. They may actually want to help their child's progress but they lack the knowledge and education to do so.

Cultural or Material Factors?

The fact that some children from poor families do succeed suggests that material deprivation is only part of the explanation.

E.g. the cultural, religious or political values of the family may play a part in creating and sustaining the child's motivation, even despite poverty. Similarly, Feinstein shows that educated parents make a positive contribution to a child's achievement, regardless of their income level.

Nevertheless, Peter Mortimore and Geoff Whitty (1997) argue that material inequalities have the greatest effect on achievement. For this reason, Peter Robinson (1997) argues that

<p>Marilyn Howard (2001) says young people from poorer homes have lower intakes of energy, vitamins and minerals. These low energy levels can mean weakened immune systems (and so time off school) and lack of concentration in class.</p> <p>Richard Wilkinson (1996) found that among 10 year olds, the lower the social class, the higher the rate of hyperactivity, anxiety and conduct disorders which all have a negative impact on the child's education.</p> <p>Jo Blanden and Stephen Machin (2007) found that children from low-income families were more likely to engage in 'externalising' behaviours (e.g. fighting and temper tantrums) which disrupt their schooling.</p> <p><u>Financial Support and the Costs of Education</u></p> <p>David Bull (1980) describes 'the costs of free schooling' and refers to children from poorer families having to do without equipment and miss out on experiences and trips that would enhance their educational achievement. Also as a result, poor children may have to do with hand-me-downs and cheaper but unfashionable equipment which may result in isolation or them being stigmatised and bullied by peers. Theresa Smith and Michael Noble (1995) add that poverty acts as a barrier to learning in other ways, such as inability to afford private schooling or tuition, and poorer quality local schools. Lack of funds also means children from poorer families may have to work part-time (e.g. paper rounds or babysitting) which can have an effect on their education.</p> <p><u>Fear of Debt</u></p> <p>Claire Callender and Jon Jackson (2005) conducted a study using a questionnaire survey of nearly 2,000 prospective students and found that working-class students are more debt averse – that is, they saw debt negatively and as something to be avoided. They also saw more costs than benefits in going to university. Crucially, they found that attitudes to debt was important in deciding whether to apply to university and the most debt-averse students (generally working-class) were over five times less likely to apply than the most debt-tolerant students (generally middle-class). Increases in tuition fees from 2012 (max £9,000) may mean that the increased debt burden will deter even more working-class students from applying to university. E.g. according to UCAS (2012) the number of UK applicants fell by 8.6% in 2012 compared with the previous year.</p> <p>Working-class students who do go to university are less likely to get financial help from their families. An Online survey by the National Union of Students (2010) found that 81% of those from the highest social class received help from home, compared to only 43% from the lowest class.</p> <p>Diane Reay (2005) found that more working-class students would tend to choose a university near home to them, so they could save money by living at home and save on travel costs, even if it meant less chance of going to a higher status university. They were also more likely to get a job and work part-time to help fund their studies, meaning they would be less likely to gain a higher level degree.</p> <p>3. Cultural Capital</p> <p>Pierre Bourdieu (1984) argues that both cultural and material factors contribute to educational achievement and are not separate but interrelated. He uses the term 'capital' to explain why the middle-class are more successful. The term capital usually refers to wealth, but in addition to economic capital (money) he identifies two more types: 'educational capital' (qualifications) and 'cultural capital'. He states the middle-class generally possess more of all three types</p> <p><u>Cultural capital</u></p> <p>Refers to the knowledge, attitudes, values, language, tastes and abilities of the middle class. Middle-class culture is a type of capital because it gives an advantage to those who possess it. Like Bernstein, he argues that through their socialisation, middle-class children acquire the ability to grasp, analyse and express abstract ideas. They develop intellectual interests and an understanding of what the education system requires for success. They therefore have an advantage in school, where such abilities and interests are highly valued and rewarded with qualifications. By contrast, working-class children find that school devalues their culture as 'rough' and inferior, and their lack of cultural capital leads to exam failure. They 'get the message' that education is not for them and respond by truanting, early leaving or not trying.</p> <p><u>Educational and Economic Capital</u></p> <p>Middle-class children with cultural capital are better equipped to meet the demands of the school curriculum and gain qualifications. Similarly, wealthier parents can convert their economic capital into educational capital by sending their children to private schools and paying for extra tuition. Dennis Leech and Erick Compos (2003) conducted a study in Coventry, and found that middle-class parents are also more likely to be able to afford a house in the catchment area of a school that is highly placed in exam league tables. This is now known as 'selection by mortgage' because it drives up the costs of houses near to successful schools and excludes working-class families.</p>	<p>tackling child poverty would be the most effective way to boost achievement.</p> <p>Testing and Criticising Bourdieu's Ideas</p> <p>Sullivan (2001) found students who read complex fiction and watched serious TV documentaries developed a wider vocabulary and greater cultural knowledge, indicating greater cultural capital. However although successful pupils with greater cultural capital were more likely to be middle-class, Sullivan found cultural capital only accounted for part of the class difference in achievement. Where pupils of different classes had the same level of cultural capital, middle-class pupils still did better. She concludes that the greater resources and aspirations of middle-class families explain the remainder of the class gap in achievement.</p>
<p>Internal (Within School) Factors</p>	
<p>Internal factors and processes within schools can cause these class differences. Many of these involve the daily face-to-face interactions between teachers and pupils, and among peer groups. These internal factors and processes include labelling, the self-fulfilling prophecy, pupil subcultures and how pupils' class identities interact with the school and its values.</p>	
<p>Analysis</p>	
<p>1. Labelling</p> <p>This is where teachers may attach a meaning or definition to a pupil, and label them as bright or thick, troublemaker or hardworking. Studies show teacher's attach labels based on stereotyped assumptions about their class background and not on their academic ability, e.g. labelling working-class pupils negatively and middle-class positively. Becker (1971) found that teacher's would label pupils based on how close they came to fitting the image of the 'ideal pupil'. The pupil's work, appearance and conduct were key to influencing teacher's judgements. However, Amelia Hempel-Jorgensen (2009) found that the notions of the ideal pupil varies from teacher to teacher, and is in accordance with the social-class of the school i.e. in a largely working-class school where discipline was a major problem, the ideal pupil was defined as quiet, passive and obedient, but in contrast the mainly middle-class Rowan primary school had very few discipline problems and here the ideal pupil was defined instead in terms of personality and academic ability.</p> <p><u>Labelling in secondary schools:</u> Dunne and Gazeley (2008) found that in 9 state secondary schools, teachers 'normalised' the underachievement of working-class pupils, and they felt like they could do nothing about it. However they would overcome the underachievement of middle-class pupils. This is because they labelled working-class parents as uninterested in their children's education, but labelled middle-class parents as supportive. This led to the teachers setting extension tasks for underachieving middle-class pupils but entering working-class pupils for easier exams.</p> <p><u>Labelling in primary schools:</u> Rist (1970) found that the teacher used information about children's home background and appearance to place them in separate groups, seating each group at a different table in an American kindergarten. The pupils the teacher decided were fast learners whom she labelled the 'tigers' tended to be middle-class and of neat and clean appearance. She seated these at the table nearest to her and showed them the greatest encouragement. The other two groups were labelled the 'cardinals' and the 'clowns' and she seated them further away. These groups were more likely to be working-class. They were given lower-level books to read and fewer chances to show their abilities e.g. they read as a group, not as individuals.</p> <p>2. The Self-fulfilling Prophecy</p> <p>This is a prediction that comes true simply by virtue of it having been made. Interactionists argue that labelling can affect pupils' achievement by creating a self-fulfilling prophecy;</p> <p>Step one: the teacher labels a pupil (e.g. intelligent) and on the basis of the label, makes predictions about him (e.g. he will make outstanding academic progress)</p> <p>Step two: the teacher treats the pupil accordingly, acting as if the prediction is already true (e.g. give him more attention and expecting a higher standard of work)</p> <p>Step three: the pupil internalises the teachers' expectation, which becomes part of his self-concept or self-image so that he now becomes the kind of pupil the teacher believed him to be in the first place. He gains confidence, tries harder, and is successful. The prediction is fulfilled.</p> <p>This can work both ways i.e. if the teacher has low expectations of a pupil, and communicates these expectations in their interactions, these children may develop a negative self-concept. They may come to see themselves as failures and give up trying, thereby fulfilling the original prophecy.</p> <p><u>Teachers' Expectations: The Study</u></p>	<p>Evaluation</p> <p>Labelling Theory is Deterministic</p> <p>The labelling theory assumes that pupils who are labelled have no choice but to fulfil the prophecy and will inevitably fail. However other research says that that's not always true (see Mary Fuller, 1984 from ethnic differences). Marxists also criticise the labelling theory for ignoring the wider structures of power within which labelling takes place. Labelling theory tends to blame teachers for labelling pupils, but fails to explain why they do so.</p> <p>Marxists argue that labels are not merely the result of teachers' individual prejudices, but stem from the fact that teachers work in a system that reproduces class divisions.</p> <p>Alternative Responses to Labelling and Streaming</p> <p>Peter Woods (1979) argues there are other responses to labelling and streaming, not just pupil subcultures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ingratiation: being the 'teacher's pet'

Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) told a school they had a new test specially designed to identify those pupils who would 'spurt' ahead. This was untrue, because the test was in fact a simple IQ test. But the teachers believed what they had been told. They tested all of the pupils, but then picked 20% of them purely at random and told the school, again falsely, that the test had identified these children as 'spurters'. On returning to the school a year later, they found almost half (47%) of those identified as spurters had made significant progress, with a greater effect on younger children. The teacher's beliefs had been influenced by the 'test', and these beliefs had then been conveyed onto the children, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy in the pupils as a result.

3. Streaming

Streaming involves separating children into different ability groups or classes called 'streams'. Each ability group is then taught differently from the other. Working-class children tend to be streamed into lower ability classes, whereas middle-class children tend to be streamed into higher ability classes. A self-fulfilling prophecy then arises and those in low-ability classes (typically the working-class) will underachieve and those in higher ability classes (typically middle-class) will do well.

David Gillborn and Deborah Youdell (2001) showed that teachers use stereotypical notions of 'ability' to stream pupils, and they found that teachers were less likely to see the working-class and black children as having ability. As a result, these students were more likely to be placed into lower streams and entered for lower tier GCSEs. This streaming was linked to exam league tables. To be in a good position, it's all about the percentage of pupils who achieve A* to C. Schools need a good position in the league tables to attract pupils and funding. This publishing of league tables has led to the 'A-to-C economy' whereby schools focus their time, effort and resources on those pupils that have the potential to get 5 grade Cs or more to boost the school's league table position.

Gillborn and Youdell call this educational triage where students are 'sorted' into 3 groups:

- Those who will pass anyway and can be left to get on with it
- Those with potential, who will be helped to get a grade C or better
- Hopeless cases, who are doomed to fail

This educational triage becomes the basis for streaming. Teacher's beliefs about the lack of ability of the working-class pupils are used to segregate them into lower streams or sets, where they receive less attention, support and resources. This results in lower levels of achievement for the working class.

4. Pupil Subcultures

Pupil subcultures often emerge as a response to the way pupils have been labelled. Colin Lacey (1970) identified the concepts of differentiation and polarisation to explain how pupil subcultures develop:

Differentiation: categorising pupils on ability and attitude/behaviour. 'More able' pupils are given high status by being placed in a high stream, whereas those deemed as 'less able' are placed in a low stream.

Polarisation: Pupils respond to streaming by moving towards one of two opposite 'poles' or extremes' i.e. pro-school vs. anti-school subculture.

Pro-school subculture: pupils in high streams (mainly middle-class) remain committed to the values of the school. They gain status through academic success.

Anti-school subculture: pupils in low streams (typically the working-class) suffer a loss of self-esteem, thinking they are of an inferior status. They look for status another way e.g. cheeking a teacher, truanting, not doing homework, smoking etc. to feel accepted by peers now they have been 'rejected' by teachers and the school.

Stephen Ball (1981) showed that in Beachside comprehensive school, banding had produced the kind of polarisation described by Lacey. Ball found that when the school abolished banding, the basis for pupils to polarise into subcultures was largely removed and the influence of the anti-school subculture declined. However, differentiation continued and teacher's continued to categorise pupils differently and were more likely to label middle-class pupils as cooperative and able. This positive label resulted in better exam results, showing the self-fulfilling prophecy.

Since Ball's study and the Education Reform Act (1988) there has been a trend in more streaming and towards a variety of types of schools. Meaning there is still opportunity for schools and teachers to differentiate between pupils on the basis of their class, ethnicity or gender and treat them unequally.

5. Pupils' Class Identities and the School

'Habitus' (Bourdieu, 1984) is the learned ways of thinking, being and acting that are shared by a particular social class. Although one class' habitus is not intrinsically better than another's, the middle-class has the power to define its habitus as superior and to impose it on the education system. Therefore the school puts a higher value on middle-class tastes, preferences and so on.

These middle-class pupils gain 'symbolic capital' or status and recognition from the school are deemed to have more worth or value. The school then devalues the working-class habitus, so working-class pupils' tastes (e.g. clothing, appearance, accent) are deemed tasteless and worthless. Archer found that working-class pupils felt that to be educationally successful, they would have to change how they talked and presented themselves.

The 'Nike' identity refers to the working-class pupils seeking alternative ways of creating self-worth, status and value so they constructed class identities for themselves by investing heavily in 'styles' e.g. brand clothing such as Nike. Girls would also dress hyper-heterosexual feminine style. Style performances were heavily policed by peer groups and not conforming was 'social suicide'. The right appearance earned symbolic capital and approval from peer groups, also bringing safety from bullying. However, this can clash with the middle-class habitus as schools and results in the working-class being labelled as rebellious if they adopt this style. While the middle-class see these 'Nike' identities as tasteless, to the young working-class they are a means of generating symbolic capital and self-worth.

Nike styles also led to the rejection of higher education by the working-class because it is seen as *unrealistic* (not for 'people like us) and *undesirable* (it would not suit their preferred lifestyle or habitus). According to Archer et al, Working-class pupils' investment in 'Nike' identities is not only a cause of their educational marginalisation by the school; it also expresses their positive preference for a particular lifestyle. As a result working-class pupils actively reject education, not only because they 'get the message' that they do not fit into education, but also because it does not fit in with their identity or their way of life.

- Ritualism: going through the motions and staying out of trouble
- Retreatism: daydreaming and mucking about
- Rebellion: outright rejection of everything the school stands for

John Furlong (1984) observed that many pupils are not committed permanently to any one response, but may move between different types of response, acting differently in lessons with different teachers.

Working-class Pupils Can Achieve – But There Are Conditions

Nicola Ingram (2009) studied two groups of working-class Catholic boys from the same highly deprived neighbourhood in Belfast. One group had passed their 11-plus exam and gone to grammar school, one group had failed and gone to local secondary school. The grammar school had a strongly middle-class habitus of high expectations and academic achievement, whereas the secondary had a habitus of low expectations of its underachieving pupils. She found that in order for working-class pupils to achieve and fit in to the middle-class habitus of a grammar school, the pupil must make a choice between sticking to their neighbourhood habitus (e.g. wearing the same things everyone does where you live i.e. 'Nike' identities) or conforming to the middle-class habitus and being accepted (by abandoning their 'worthless' working-class identity).

The Relationship Between Internal and External Factors

Internal and external factors are often interrelated, and so cannot be viewed consistently as separate explanations:

- Working-class pupils' habitus and identities formed outside school may conflict with the school's middle-class habitus, resulting in symbolic violence and pupils feeling that education is not for the likes of them
- Working-class pupils using the restricted speech code (external cultural factor) may be labelled by teachers as less able, leading to self-fulfilling prophecy (internal factor)
- As Dunne and Gazeley show, an internal factor – what teachers *believe* about working-class pupils' home backgrounds (an external factor) – actually produces underachievement
- Poverty (an external material factor) may lead to bullying and stigmatisation by peer groups (an internal process within school), which may in turn lead to truanting and failure

Gender Differences in Educational Achievement & Subject Choice

Patterns and Trends in Achievement

- **On starting School:** In 2013, teacher assessments of pupils at the end of year one showed girls ahead of boys by between 7-17 percentage points in all 7 areas of learning assessed. Girls were also better than boys at concentrating. According to a DfE (Department for Education) 2013 study, boys are two and a half times more likely than girls to have a statement of special educational needs.
- **Key Stages 1 – 3:** Girls do consistently better than boys. This is especially so in English, where the gender gap steadily widens with age. In Science and Maths the gap is much narrower, but girls still do better.
- **At GCSE:** The gender gap in achievement stands at about 10 percentage points in 2013. This gap steadily widened from 1986. However in recent years boys are catching girls up. In English at GCSE, the gender gap is huge with 70% of girls getting an A*-C, compared to just 54% of boys in 2014.
- **At AS and A Level:** Girls are more likely to sit, pass and get higher grades than boys, though the gap is much narrower than at GCSE. In 2013, 47% of girls gained A or B grades at A Level, but only 42% of boys. Even in so-called 'boys' subjects such as maths and physics girls were more likely than boys to get grades A-C.
- **Further Education:** A higher proportion of girls stay on in sixth form and further education and post-18 higher education. Female students are more likely to get top 1st class and upper 2nd class degrees.

Sociological Explanations for Gender Differences in Achievement

Analysis

Evaluation

External (Outside School) Factors

1. The Impact of Feminism

Since the 1960s, the feminist movement has challenged the traditional stereotype of a woman's role as solely that of mother and housewife. These changes are partly reflected in media images and messages. A good illustration comes from Angela **McRobbie's** (1994) study of girls' magazines. In the 1970's they emphasised the importance of getting married and not being left on the shelf, whereas nowadays they contain images of assertive independent women.

2. Girls' Changing Ambitions

Sharpe (1994) interviewed girls in the 1970s and 1990s to show a major shift in how they see their future. In 1974 girls had low aspirations believing that educational success was unfeminine and that appearing ambitious would be unattractive. However in the 1990s girls had a placed importance on a career and being able to support themselves. Furthermore **Francis (2001)** found that girls now had higher career aspirations and so needed educational qualifications. The changes encouraged by feminism may affect girls' self-image and ambitions with regard to family and careers. In turn, this may explain improvement in their educational achievement.

3. Changes in the Family

Changes in the family such as an increase in the divorce rate, cohabitation and lone parent families have all affective girls' and boys' attitudes towards education. For example, increasing numbers of female-headed lone-parent families may mean more women need to take on a breadwinner role. This in turn creates a new adult role model for girls, the financially independent woman. Furthermore this may explain underachievement in boys through lack of a male role model in the family unit to aspire to.

4. Changes in the Labour Market

The 1970 Equal Pay Act makes it illegal to pay women less than men for work of equal value, and the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act outlaws discrimination at work. These changes have encouraged women to see their future in terms of paid work rather than as housewives. Greater career opportunities and better pay for women provide an incentive for girls to gain qualifications. Furthermore, there has been a decline in heavy industries such as iron, steel, shipbuilding and mining in the UK. **Mitsos and Browne** claim that this decline in male employment has led to an 'identity crisis for men'. Many boys now believe

The Impact of Feminism

McRobbie's research can be criticised for being an out-dated view since it is over 20 years old. Forms and the power of the media have changed considerably in the past two decade. However we are unsure whether this has had a much greater influence on young girls' attitudes.

Girls' Changing Ambitions

However, there are class differences in how far girls' ambitions have changed. Diane Reay (1998) found that some working class girls continue to have gender-stereotyped aspirations for marriage and children and expect to go into traditional low paid women's work.

Methodological Evaluation: How can we evaluate Sharp's use of interviews to investigate girls changing attitudes?

Changes in the Family

The sociological explanation of changes in the family has gained theoretical support from New Right sociologists. The New Right claim that a decline in the nuclear family has resulted in many boys developing an anti-school subculture which results in poor educational achievement.

Changes in the Labour Market

Sociologists have criticised Mitsos and Browne by pointing out that the decline has been in manual working class jobs that require few if any qualifications. This it seems unlikely the disappearance of such jobs would have much impact on boy's motivation to obtain qualifications.

that they have little prospect of getting a proper job. This undermines their motivation and self-esteem and so they give up on trying to get qualifications and underachieve at school.

NB: Make sure you are able to explain how all these sociological points leads to girls achievement/boys underachievement in school.

Internal (Within School) Factors

1. GCSE and Coursework

Gorard (2005) found that the gender gap in achievement was fairly constant from 1975 until 1989, which it increased sharply. This was the year in which GCSE was introduced, bringing with it coursework as a major part of nearly all subjects. Gorard concludes that the gender gap in achievement is a product of the changed system of assessment rather than of failing of boys. **Mitsos and Brown** (1998) explain this trend. They conclude that girls are more successful in coursework because they are more conscientious and better organised than boys. For example, girls spend more time on their work, take more care with the way it is presented and are better at meeting deadlines.

2. Challenging Stereotypes in the Curriculum

Research in the 1970s and 80s found that reading scheme portrayed women mainly as housewives and mothers, that physics books showed them as frightened by science, and that maths books depicted boys are more inventive. **Weiner** (1995) argues that since the 1980s, teachers have challenged such stereotypes. Also, in general, sexist images have been removed from learning materials. This may have helped to raise girls' achievement by presenting them with more positive images of what women can do.

3. Selection and Marketisation

Marketisation policies have created a more competitive climate in which schools see girls as desirable recruits because they achieve better exam results. **Jackson** (1998) notes that the introduction of league tables has improved opportunities for girls: high achieving girls are attractive to schools, whereas low-achieving boys are not. This tends to create a self-fulfilling prophecy – because girls are more likely to be recruited by good schools, they are more likely to do well.

4. Feminisation of Education

Sewell claims that boys fall behind because education has become feminised (BBC, 2006). This is when schools do not nurture masculine traits such as competitiveness and leadership. Instead they celebrate qualities associated with girls such as methodical working and attentiveness in class. As a result boys feel under-valued in the education system and therefore underachieve.

5. 'Laddish' subcultures

Epstein (1998) argues that the growth of laddish subcultures has contributed to boys' underachievement. She examined the way masculinity is constructed within a school and found that working-class boys are likely to be harassed, labelled as 'sissies' and subject to homophobic verbal abuse if they appear to be swots. This is because in working-class cultures, masculinity is equated with being tough and doing manual work. Non-manual work and by extension school work is seen as effeminate and inferior. As a result, working class boys tend to reject school work to avoid being called 'gay'.

NB: Make sure you are able to explain how all these sociological points leads to girls achievement/boys underachievement in school.

GCSE and Coursework

However, **Elwood** (2005) argued that although coursework has some influence, it is unlikely to be the only cause of the gender gap because exams have much more influence than coursework in final grades.

Challenging Stereotypes in the Curriculum

Weiner's research has gained theoretical support from **Liberal Feminists**. They take a march of progress view of education and claim that small improvements inside and outside schools has resulted in an increase in educational achievement amongst females.

Selection and Marketisation

Slee (1998) offers further explanation of the effects of marketisation by providing an explanation for boys' underachievement. He argues that boys are less attractive to schools because they are more likely to suffer from behavioural problems and are four times more likely to be excluded.

Feminisation of Education

The feminisation of education does not consider the fact that boys can still be seen to dominate lessons and take up more of the teachers' time. It can be said that perhaps girls are underachieving in school, but not so in relation to boys.

'Laddish' Subcultures

Epstein's work is supported by **Francis** (2007) who claims that boys were more concerned than girls about being labelled by peers as swots because this label is more of a threat to their masculinity than it is to girls' femininity.

Patterns and Trends in Subject Choice

- **National Curriculum Options:** Although design and technology is a compulsory subject, girls tend to choose the food technology option whilst boys choose graphics or resistant materials.
- **AS and A Levels:** Boys tend to opt for maths and physics and girls choose subject such as sociology, English and Languages. These differences are mirrored at University level.
- **Vocational Courses:** Only 1 in 100 boys opt to do a childcare apprenticeship, whereas only 2 in 100 girls opt to do vehicle maintenance and repair.

Sociological Explanations for Gender Differences in Subject Choice

Analysis

1. Gender Role Socialisation (EXTERNAL)

Gender role socialisation is a process of learning the behaviour expected of males and females in society. **Norman (1988)** notes from an early age boys and girls are dressed differently, given different toys and encouraged to take part in different activities.

Murphy and Elwood (1979) demonstrate how this can result in different tastes in reading and therefore subject choice. Boys read hobby books and information texts while girls are more likely to read stories about people. Hence why boys prefer science subject and girls subjects such as English.

2. Gendered Subject Images (INTERNAL)

Kelly argues that science is seen as a boys' subject because:

- Science teachers are more likely to be men.
- The examples used to teach concepts often draw on boys' rather than girls interests (such as using sports balls to demonstrate the orbit of the planets).
- In Science lessons, boys monopolise the apparatus and dominate the lessons.

3. Gender Identities within School (INTERNAL)

Pupils' experiences in school reinforce their gender identities, reinforcing 'hegemonic masculinity' – the dominance of a heterosexual masculine identity (**Connell, 1995**).

Verbal abuse – abusive language between pupils reinforces dominant gender identities. **Parker (1996)** found that a boy will be called 'gay' if he is friendly, polite and gets on well with girls and female teachers.

The male gaze – **Mac an Ghail** argue that the way male pupils and teachers look girls up and down, seeing them as sexual objects and making judgements about their appearance is a form of surveillance where dominant masculine identities are reinforced.

Double standards – **Lees (1993)** argues that boys will boast about their own sexual exploits but if girls do the same they will be called 'slags'.

Teachers and discipline – **Mac an Ghail (1988)** found that teachers play a part in reinforcing gender identities. Male teachers have told boys off for 'behaving like girls' in the classroom.

This therefore results in segregation of the genders within school which ultimately leads to girls opting for typically feminine subjects such as English and boys opting for typically masculine subjects such as Maths.

Evaluation

Methodological Evaluation of Subject Choice

Although subject choice and gender are relatively straightforward concepts to operationalise (define and measure – there are only two genders and subjects are easily identifiable); the process of making subject choice is very hard to observe and so a lot of the research into this area involves the sociologist making their own judgements on the patterns seen. Therefore this weakens the overall validity of the research into gender and subject choice.

Gender Identities within School

Leonard (2006) argues that single sex schools tend to hold less stereotypes subject images and make less traditional subject choices. She found that girls in girls' schools were more likely to take maths and science at A Levels compared to girls in mixed schools and boys in boys' schools were more likely to take English and Languages than boys from mixed schools.

Equal Opportunities Policies

Much of the research into gender differences in subject choice has not taken into account the impact of equal opportunities policies such as GIST and WISE that encourage women into more male dominated professions. These policies have ensured female scientists visit schools; non-sexist career advice is given and even reviewed learning material in science subjects. All of these initiative have gone some way to ensure a more equal split of genders in subject choice.

Note: You may be asked about:

Underachievement of Boys ONLY

Achievement of Girls ONLY

Achievement of boys and girls

Subject choice ONLY

Achievement and Subject Choice

Perspectives on Education	
Functionalism	Marxism
<p>1) Durkheim: Solidarity and Skills Teaching</p> <p>Social Solidarity: Durkheim argues that society needs a sense of solidarity. Without it, social life and cooperation would be impossible because each individual would pursue their own selfish desires. The education system helps to create social solidarity by transmitting society's culture (shared beliefs and values) from one generation to the next. For example the teaching of a country's history instils in children a sense of shared heritage and a commitment to a wider social group. This can also be achieved through the hidden curriculum.</p> <p>Specialist Skills: Modern industrial economies have a complex division of labour where the production of even a single item usually involved the cooperation of many different specialists. This cooperation promotes social solidarity but, for it to be successful, each person must have the necessary specialist knowledge and skills to perform their role. Durkheim argues that education teaches individuals the specialist knowledge and skills that they need to play their part in the social division of labour.</p> <p>2) Parsons: Meritocracy</p> <p>Parsons see schools as an important place for secondary socialisation; acting as the bridge between the family and wider society. This bridge is needed because the family and society operate on different principles, so children need to learn a new way of living if they are to cope in the wider world.</p> <p>Within the family, the child is judged by particularistic standards (rules that only apply to them). They also have an ascribed status (fixed at birth). For example, an elder son and a younger daughter may be given different rights or duties because of differences in age and sex.</p> <p>In school and wider society we are all judged by the same universalistic standards. For example in society the same laws apply to everyone. In school each pupil is judged against the same standards. They all sit the same exam and the pass mark is the same for everyone. Those students might be expected to achieve a place at university because of their exam grades, not because they knew someone who worked there. Meritocracy refers to a society where jobs and pay are allocated on the basis of people's individual talents, abilities, qualifications and skills.</p> <p>3) Davis and Moore: Role Allocation</p> <p>Davis and Moore see education as a device for selection and role allocation. They argue that inequality is necessary to ensure that the most important roles in society are filled by the most talented people. It would be inefficient and dangerous to have less able people performing roles such as surgeon or airline pilot. Not everyone is equally talented so society has to offer a high reward for these jobs. This will encourage everyone to compete for them and society can then select the most talented individuals for these positions.</p> <p>Education plays a key part in this process as it acts as a proving ground for ability. The most able gain the highest qualifications which gives them entry to the most important jobs in society.</p> <p>Evaluation</p> <p>Durkheim</p> <p>Sociologists have criticised Durkheim's ideas by pointing out that the education system does not teach specialised skills adequately. For example, the Wolf review of vocational education (2011) claims that high quality apprenticeships are rare and up to a third of 16-19 year olds are on courses that do not lead to higher education or good jobs.</p> <p>Parsons</p> <p>There is a great deal of evidence that equal opportunities in education do not exist. For example, achievement is greatly influenced by class/gender and ethnic background rather than ability. (Note: use information from your class/gender or ethnic learning table here to explain this evaluation point).</p> <p>David and Moore</p> <p>Tumin (1953) criticises Davis and Moore for putting forward a circular argument. How do we know that a job is important? Answer: because it is highly rewarded. Why some jobs are more highly rewarded? Answer: because it is important.</p>	<p>Althusser: The Ideological State Apparatus (ISA)</p> <p>According to Althusser, education is an important ISA. He argued that education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reproduces class inequality by transmitting it from generation to generation, by failing each successive generation of working class pupils in turn. Legitimises (justifies) class inequality by producing ideologies (sets of ideas and beliefs) that disguise its true cause. The function of ideology is to persuade workers to accept that inequality is inevitable and that they deserve their subordinate position in society. If they accept these ideas, they are less likely to challenge and threaten capitalism. <p>Bowles and Gintis: Reproduction of Social Class Inequality</p> <p>Functionalists argue that the education system is meritocratic, but Bowles and Gintis claim that meritocracy is an ideology legitimating inequality by falsely claiming that everyone has an equal opportunity and that unequal rewards are natural as a result of unequal ability.</p> <p>Bowles and Gintis argue that education reproduces an obedient workforce that will accept inequality as inevitable. From their own study of 237 New York High School students and the findings of other studies they concluded that schools reward precisely the kind of personality traits that make for a submissive, compliant worker. For instance, they found that students who showed independence and creativity tended to gain low grades, whilst those who showed characteristics linked to obedience and discipline (like punctuality) tended to gain high grades. From this, Bowles and Gintis concluded that education helps to produce the obedient workforce that capitalism needs.</p> <p>The Correspondence Principle and Hidden Curriculum</p> <p>Bowles and Gintis argue that there are close parallels between schooling and work in capitalist society. This is known as the correspondence principle – the relationships and structures found in education mirror or correspond to those of work. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both schools and workplaces are hierarchies, with head teachers or bosses at the top making decisions and giving orders. Alienation through students' lack of control over education (e.g. over what to study and timetabling) reflects alienation through workers' lack of control over production (e.g. managers decide what, how when and where to produce). Competition and divisions among students (e.g. to come top of the class, to be higher stream) reflects competition and divisions among the workforce (e.g. through difference in status and pay). <p>Bowles and Gintis claim that the correspondence principle operates through the hidden curriculum – that is all the 'lessons that are learnt in school without being directly taught. For example, through the everyday workings of the school, pupils become accustomed to accepting hierarchy and competition, working for extrinsic rewards and so on. In this way schooling prepares working class pupils for their role as the exploited workers of the future, reproducing the workforce capitalism needs and perpetuating class inequality from generation to generation.</p> <p>Evaluation</p> <p>Althusser:</p> <p>Althusser's approach to education is useful in exposing the 'myth or meritocracy'. They show the role that education plays as an ideological state apparatus, serving the interests of capitalism.</p> <p>Bowles and Gintis: Methodological Evaluation</p> <p>Bowles and Gintis conducted their own research into how schools reproduce social class inequality which may have been the result of researcher bias. (A tendency for researcher to find what they are looking to find by manipulation of data).</p> <p>Too Focussed on Class:</p> <p>Post-modernists Morrow and Torres argue that society is now more diverse. They see non-class inequalities, such as ethnicity, gender, sexuality, as equally important. They argue that sociologists must explain how education reproduces and legitimises all forms of inequality, not just class and how the different forms of inequality are related.</p>

The **New Right** approach to education reflects many of the ideas of the functionalist perspective. The New Right argues that education should:

- Train the workforce, making sure the most able students have their talents developed and are recruited into the most important jobs whilst others are prepared for lower-level employment.
- Socialise young people into a collective value and responsible citizenship, and thereby build social cohesion and social solidarity to ensure a stable and united society.

However, a key difference is that the New Right do not believe the current education system is achieving these goals. The reason for its failure is that it is run by the state.

Chubb and Moe: The Marketisation of Education

Chubb and Moe believe that state run education imposes a single type of school regardless of the wishes and needs of parents or local communities. They argue that there should be a free market in education, with a range of different types of independently managed schools and colleges, run like private business, answerable to the local communities' parents and students.

They based their arguments on a comparison of the achievements of 60,000 pupils from low income families in 1015 state and private high schools, together with the findings of a parent survey and case studies of 'failing' schools.

They found that pupils from low-income families consistently do about 5% better in private education than in state schools.

Based on these findings, Chubb and Moe call for the introduction of a market system in state education that would put control in the hands of the consumers (parents). They argue that this would allow consumers to shape schools to meet their own needs and would improve quality and efficiency.

The Role of the State

There remain two important roles for the state:

- To impose a framework on schools within which they have to compete. For example, by publishing Ofsted inspection reports and league tables of schools' exam results, the state gives parents information with which to make a more informed choice between schools.
- To ensure that schools transmit a shared culture. By imposing a single national curriculum, it seeks to guarantee that schools socialise pupils into a single cultural heritage.

Evaluation

Chubb and Moe

Chubb and Moe used surveys to investigate the efficiency of state schools – how can we evaluate surveys?

Marketisation of Education

Gerwitz (1995) and Ball (1994) argue that competition between schools benefits the middle class who can use their cultural and economic capital to gain access to more desirable schools.

Self-contradicting

Critics argue there is a contradiction between the New Right's support for parental choice on the one hand and the state imposing a national curriculum on all its schools on the other.

<p>Feminists</p> <p>Feminists focus on gender inequalities within society. Reveals male dominance in society and how this is maintained. Main role of education is to maintain gender inequality. From the 1960's onwards feminists highlighted the following gender inequalities in education. Gendered Language – reflecting wider society, school textbooks used gendered language e.g. him, man. Downgrades women Gendered Roles – how males and females are presented in textbooks and reading schemes. Gender stereotypes – stereotyping of gender in traditional reading schemes Women in the curriculum – missing in the background and hidden from history – plus stereotypes. Subject choice – traditional 'boys' and 'girls' subjects with lower status and market value put on girls ones. Discrimination – see 11+ exam. FE and HE – traditionally less girls went often due to less encouragement – but no longer the case. Liberal Feminists Different strands Liberal feminists argue that legislation and education can help to change gender inequalities in society. Many believe that this gradual process has had a great success rate already – males and females have access to equal opportunities in education. Marxist feminists blame the capitalist system for forcing women into the supporting role of wife/mother at home and in lower positions in the workforce. Education helps to preserve these expectations on both men and women. Radical feminists focus on the violent nature of patriarchy. The school classroom and playground are where this male violence (both physical and emotional) is learned. Black feminists argue that black females suffer different problems to white females. Their differential treatment at school by teachers and other students suggest that we should look at the situation of black women separately</p> <p>Evaluation</p> <p>+ Valuable in exposing gender inequality and partly because of the sociological research much of the Sexism has gone. BUT – now girls achieve better than boys at all levels and are more likely to go to university, SO focus is now on boy's underachievement.</p> <p>Post feminists in line with post-modern thinking argue that there is no single meaning to being a 'woman'. Working class women have different experiences from middle class women, gay women have different experiences from straight women, gay working class women have different experiences...etc. Consequently no overall theory can explain gender differences.</p>	<p>Social Democratic</p> <p>Social Democratic Perspectives: Start from the view that everybody should have an equal chance to succeed in the educational system. Equal Opportunity. - A.H.Halsey (1961; 1980) – criticised functionalist views. - Social class has a significant effect on educational attainment. Education and the Economy. - There is a close link between education and economic growth. - Educational system reflects this requirement. Evaluation. - Difficult to unravel the relationships between education and the economy. - Growth in vocational education with its focus on workplace skills</p>	<p>Post Modernism</p> <p>Postmodernism means literally 'after the modern era'. The modern era was a time of certainty and stretched from the 18th century to the late 20th century. Postmodernists believe that this era was far more predictable than the times we live in today, e.g. jobs were for life and class was a major source of identity. Since around the 1970's we have been living in times characterised by risk and diversity. Consequently this has had huge implications for education . Moor and Hickox 1994 Argue that such policies as the National Curriculum are doomed to failure because they can't keep up with the increasingly diverse nature of society. The continual testing, target setting and recording of results is seen as an attempt to keep some kind of order. Criticisms Some argue that no such thing as a post-modern world exists and that issues such as social class are just as important today as ever. Postmodernists criticise sociological theories for being 'meta-narratives' (large all-embracing explanations). However, in putting forward their views are not postmodernists falling into the same trap?</p>
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Functionalist theories of the family

Murdock: nuclear family is universal institution, present in all societies, 4 functions (sex drive, reproduction, socialisation, economic needs).

- × Other family types can perform functions
- × Murdock ignores patriarchy in families and how these functions can oppress women

Parsons: 'functional fit' theory, the nuclear family meets society's needs, nuclear family has 2 basic functions (primary socialisation, stabilisation of adult personalities), other functions taken over by institutions (e.g. education, healthcare)

- × Marxists - children are only socialised to accept the values of the ruling class
- × Marxists - emotional support is an 'illusory function' - it only benefits capitalism
- × Functionalism does not reflect reality of family life, ignores dysfunctions
- × Ignores diversity of families today – ignores importance of fictive kin

New Right view of the family

Nuclear family is cornerstone of society and is the most appropriate way to raise children, but is declining. Decline in nuclear has negative effects for society: loss of traditional values, increase in crime, welfare dependency and the underclass.

- × Blame individuals for their position which they may not be able to control
- × Ignores positive impacts of family diversity

A Level Sociology Knowledge Organiser Theories of the family and social policy

(Miss Cantwell)

Marxist theories of the family

The family meets the needs of capitalism. Family maintains class divide and capitalism in society through:

- 1) Reproducing **labour force** (families reproduce children to be exploited in the workplace/capitalist life)
 - × But... not all families have children to be exploited in society
- 2) **Inheritance of property** (nuclear families allow certainty over paternity and transmission of wealth to heirs)
- 3) Promoting **ruling class ideology** (promotes hierarchy – children learn to accept and don't question it)
 - × But... feminists would argue the family promotes patriarchal ideology instead
- 4) **Being a unit of consumption** (media targets families – profits go to capitalist business owners)
 - × Focuses on nuclear family, ignore family diversity – not all families benefit capitalism
 - × Ignore gender inequality within families – feminists believe families may promote patriarchal ideology
 - × Is too deterministic – not all children in families passively accept ruling class authority
 - × Do not recognise positive functions of the family

Personal life perspective of the family

Family life is complex and more diverse, believe in connectedness thesis - that people have more freedom to construct families that meet their needs but they are still influenced by their family history, their expectations of society and factors such as class, ethnicity and gender. Importance of fictive kin and non-blood relationships.

Feminist theories of the family

The family transmits patriarchal ideology and serves to oppress women. Family maintains gender inequality and patriarchy, through traditional roles and male dominance/power.

- * **Liberal:** family is becoming more equal (eg. Domestic division of labour) need change in attitudes and laws.
- * **Marxist:** male domination result of class inequality, need to overthrow capitalism.
- * **Radical:** men are source of oppression, need women to live separately from men.
- * **Difference feminism:** generalisations cannot be made about the position of women in the family, experiences may be based on sexuality, ethnicity, class etc.
- × Ignores class inequality in families
- × Ignores positive functions of the family
- × Radical feminists ignore building evidence suggesting family is more equal (symmetrical)

Postmodernist theories of the family

The family meets the needs of the individual – no idea family type, people construct families that meet their needs. Individualisation thesis – traditional social freedom to decide which family structures to create to meet individual needs. Postmodern family increasing – ambivalent and undecided.

- × Nuclear may still be seen as ideal type
- × May exaggerate freedom and choice
- × Ignore patriarchy/class

Impact of sociological policies on families/households

Policy/Act	Impacts
Divorce laws (1969, 1984)	Less nuclear families Increased reconstituted and lone-parent families Higher welfare dependency (new right)
Civil partnership act (2004) and gay marriage laws (2014)	Increased same-sex families Increased same-sex adoptions
Abortion act (1967), contraceptive pill legislation (1961/67)	Smaller family sizes Decline in the birth rate Increased freedom for women
Welfare benefits (e.g. JSA)	Increase in the underclass Increased welfare dependency Greater economic security in families
Married persons tax allowance	Increase in married couple/nuclear families Reinforcing patriarchy (feminism)
Longer compulsory education	Increased dependency on parents Extended childhood Better opportunities for young people

Sociological views of social policy

Functionalist: Social policies/laws benefit everyone in society, help the family to perform functions. E.g. benefits allow parents to perform economic functions, sure start helps socialisation.

New Right: Policies/laws undermine traditional nuclear family, make people dependent on welfare state. Murray argues the effects are fathers abandoning their children, more teenage pregnancies and boys growing up without male role models. Almond is critical of policies such as the gay marriage law which encourages non-nuclear structures.

Feminists: Policies/laws reflect patriarchal ideas, reinforce women's dependence on husbands, maternity leave reflects view that mothers should look after children. Hilary Land argues that policies assume families are traditional patriarchal nuclear families (e.g. maternity leave)

Marxist: Policies/laws benefit capitalism e.g. low pensions and raising the pension age means old workers are maintained at low cost. Argue policies to help working class have only been gained through struggle and are often abused by middle classes with cultural capital (e.g. sure start)

Donzelot: He sees policies/laws as a way for the government to control families. He argues that this promotes 'policing of the family' as professionals have the ability to influence families through the policies they introduce.

A Level Sociology Knowledge Organiser

Trends in families and diversity

(Miss Cantwell)

Trends in marriage

Trends Decline in first marriages, people marrying later (first marriages - 33 for men, 31 for women) increase in civil partnerships until 2014 (70% decline) and increase in gay marriage

Reasons

- * changing attitudes towards cohabitation – more acceptable to have sex outside of marriage
- * secularisation – do not need to be married to avoid living in sin
- * declining stigma to family diversity (e.g. lone-parent families)
- * change in position of women leading to greater focus on independence/careers
- * fear of divorce
- * increasing cost (average cost is £18,000)

Consequences

- * Increase in cohabitation, single person households, more same sex married couples, New right see a decline in marriage as negative, feminists view it positively due to increased freedom

Trends in childbearing

Trends: Women having fewer children (1.8) more children born outside of marriage (47.5%), having children at a later age

Reasons

- * Decline in stigma of cohabitation
- * Changing position of women
- * Better contraception
- * Financial issues

Consequences

- * Smaller family sizes, aging population (e.g. greater need for public services aimed at the elderly, pension changes, increase in taxes)

Trends in divorce

Trends: Rise in number of divorces and divorce rate since 1970. 42% of marriages now end in divorce. 70% divorce applications come from women.

- × But... divorce rates have started to decline over the past few years – could be a consequence of a rise in the age of marriage and the fact that more couples cohabit

Reasons for changes to divorce

- * Changes in laws (divorce reform act 1969 Matrimonial Proceedings act 1984)
- * Changing attitudes
- * Changes in the position of women
- * Higher expectations of marriage (functionalist view)
- * Individualisation thesis (postmodernist view)

Consequence of changes to divorce

Increase in family diversity- lone-parent and reconstituted families. New Right would argue this has detrimental effect on children and society, Personal life sociologists argue that you cannot generalise about the effects of divorce

Trends in family diversity

Trends

- * Decrease in nuclear families
- * Increase in reconstituted, lone-parent, same-sex, cohabitating, one-person households
- * Increase in diversity by class & ethnicity

Reasons

- * Changes in the position of women
- * Changes in divorce laws/marriage laws/benefits system
- * Changes in attitudes (more acceptable)
- * More choice/freedom post-modernist view)
- * Immigration – greater diversity of family structures
- × Chester – family diversity is exaggerated (only change is neo-conventional)
- × Weeks – families still remain traditional

Cohabitation

Trends: Significant increase

Reasons

- * Changing attitudes, effective contraception increased divorce rates, secularisation

Consequences

- * People marrying later or not marrying at all

Living apart together relationships

When a couple are in a long-term, committed and intimate relationship but they live separately

Views of family diversity

- * Functionalist – negative (others less able to perform functions)
- * New Right – negative (lone-parent, underclass)
- * Feminist – positive (freedom for women)
- * Postmodernist – evidence of increasing freedom
- * Personal life - exaggerated

Is the nuclear family the norm?

Yes

- * Most popular family type, cereal packet, people still aspire, many families nuclear in structure, life-cycle analysis, diversity exaggerated

No

- * In decline, greater family diversity, Rapoport's